

RECOVERING STRONGER, TOGETHER

A humanitarian approach to building community resilience and participation

2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission

ABOUT RED CROSS

For more than 107 years, Australian Red Cross (Red Cross) has stood with people in need nationally and internationally. We are part of the world's largest humanitarian network, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), operating in more than 190 countries. Red Cross supports people and communities experiencing vulnerability as a result of weather-related hazards, emergencies, armed conflicts, migration, social isolation, contact with the justice system and work with First Nations communities. At all times, we are guided by the Movement's seven Fundamental Principles; Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.ⁱ

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, including Australian Red Cross, are auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field; through this partnership, we have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, in peacetime and during armed conflict, embedded in international and national instruments. In Australia, this mandate is outlined in the Royal Charter.ⁱⁱ These include providing risk reduction and disaster management activities in collaboration with government, programs supporting those in need and the promotion of international humanitarian law and humanitarian values.

Our work is supported by a network of 27,000 staff, volunteers and members across the country. We use a localised, strengths-based approach that recognises the inherent abilities in individuals and communities to overcome adversity and ultimately to thrive.

23-47 Villiers Street
North Melbourne, VIC, 3051

T +61 1800 733 276
E contactus@redcross.org.au
redcross.org.au

ABN: 50 169 561 394

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This budget submission focuses on strengthening our country's recovery from COVID-19, building more resilient communities in Australia and overseas, and increasing support for refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants to enable and increase their valuable contributions to our communities. It also recognises the opportunity to provide more support for countries in our region.

Red Cross is pleased to work in partnership with the Commonwealth to support the most vulnerable in our communities here in Australia and in the region during this challenging time. As we live through the pandemic, as a nation and across the globe, we are experiencing collective trauma. For the most vulnerable in our society, the effects are particularly significant and compounded, impacting employment, access to healthcare and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. By building resilient communities, the government can better prepare people for unexpected adverse events while simultaneously and cost-effectively creating jobs, protecting families and making communities stronger.

During the pandemic, Red Cross has so far provided emergency relief support to more than 185,000 people on temporary visas through financial support from federal, state and territory governments, and donors. Many were previously employed. Improving employment opportunities by increasing investment in employment support services for people on temporary visas has benefits for individuals, communities and the economy, and will also help alleviate critical labour shortages.

Natural disasters and the adverse effects of climate change can challenge our resilience and amplify inequalities, creating new risks and vulnerabilities for people and communities. While we welcome the Federal Government's investment of \$600 million in setting up the National Recovery and Resilience Agency, we are calling for further investment in a broad program of resilience-building measures targeting the least resilient communities as well as an adjustment of funding towards preparedness and resilience.

The Productivity Commission estimates that 97% of all disaster funding is spent on recovery and clean-up while just 3% is spent on mitigation, preparedness and resilience. However, every dollar invested in resilience-building now will save between \$3 and \$8 for the future.ⁱⁱⁱ A greater investment in mitigation, preparedness and resilience initiatives will yield measurable returns in community safety; substantial cost reductions in disaster recovery; and an immediate boost to local jobs, purchasing and community building. Increasing investment in resilience will help individuals and communities to cope and respond better to disasters and recover more quickly, which will reduce the cost to government.

This submission, *Recovering Stronger, Together* is built on six pillars:

1. BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES TO PREPARE FOR, RESPOND TO AND RECOVER FROM DISASTERS IN AUSTRALIA AND OVERSEAS

- i. Government investment in strengthening communities' capacity to prepare for and respond to all hazards, including droughts, heatwaves, floods, cyclones, earthquakes and bushfires. Implement community resilience programs in the 137 Local Government Areas most likely to experience, and most vulnerable to, a disaster.
- ii. Commit recurrent funding for a national, ready-to-deploy volunteer workforce of disaster responders.
- iii. Strengthen mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, enhancing anticipatory action and health security in the Asia Pacific region.

- 2. ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO FULL & SAFE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS; MEETING LABOUR SHORTAGES; INCREASING SAFETY AND SECURITY OF MIGRANT WOMEN**
 - i. Strengthen the ability of refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants to move into safe, dignified employment through access to specialist employment matching programs, noting this will also help alleviate critical labour shortages.
 - ii. Ensure safety of migrant workers through raising awareness of labour exploitation and associated rights and requirements, and ensuring there is humanitarian support for victims.
 - iii. Enhance safety and security for migrant women in Australia through increased family and domestic violence supports and assistance programs to strengthen socio-economic participation.

- 3. ENABLING FULLER PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY**
 - i. Increase the humanitarian intake by at least 5000 places per year, resume intake of 18,750 places and invest in additional humanitarian intake of at least 20,000 people from Afghanistan.
 - ii. Enable greater participation and contributions of migrants in the community by ensuring the humanitarian needs of migrants outside our social safety nets are met. This requires addressing uncertainty and providing a sufficient safety net to ensure people are safe and have access to services.
 - iii. Combat racism and discrimination experienced by refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants.

- 4. BUILDING RESILIENCE AMONG FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES**
 - i. Invest in targeted place-based programs that support First Nations communities to elevate local knowledge and solutions.

- 5. BUILDING RESILIENCE TO KEEP PEOPLE OUT OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM**
 - i. Improve supports for reintegration among released prisoners to reduce recidivism.
 - ii. National approach to keeping children out of prison.
 - iii. National leadership to embed justice reinvestment.

- 6. SUPPORTING THE REGION TO RECOVER FROM COVID-19**
 - i. Provide ongoing assistance to support the COVID-19 health response and economic recovery of our regional neighbours.

As a partner to the Australian Government's humanitarian action and in the development of emergency management policy and practice at all levels of Government, Red Cross is uniquely positioned to offer our experience and expertise to the ongoing development, refinement and implementation of a number of the proposals outlined.

1. BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES TO PREPARE FOR, RESPOND TO AND RECOVER FROM DISASTERS

- i. Government investment in strengthening communities' capacity to prepare for and respond to all hazards, including droughts, heatwaves, floods, cyclones, earthquakes and bushfires. Implement community resilience programs in the 137 Local Government Areas most likely to experience, and most vulnerable to, a disaster.**

Disasters can quickly degrade quality of life, disrupt life goals and aspirations, and undermine the social quality of communities. In addition to the loss of life, the impacts of disasters include short, medium and long-term impacts upon physical^{iv} and mental health,^v displacement from homes and communities,^{vi} disrupted access to cultural lands and practice,^{vii} significant personal and societal financial costs,^{viii} and poorer educational outcomes.^{ix} Yet 97% of disaster costs are in response and recovery.^x However, the most significant costs are not the readily quantified value of damaged property or lost facilities; but the often-hidden costs of post-traumatic stress and mental illness; family violence and family breakdown; suicide; spiralling debt and unemployment; poverty and ruined small businesses.

Resilience-building is critical in Australia, where we are now facing more frequent and extreme natural hazards affecting more people. First Nations communities are already on the frontline of climate change impacts such as sea level rise and saltwater inundation in the Tiwi Islands and Torres Strait. Communities in central Australia are facing extreme heat and water scarcity. These environmental factors exacerbate health and wellbeing issues, impact access to traditional lands, and increase the likelihood of places becoming uninhabitable.

Red Cross' century-long experience points to the success of putting in place measures that boost resilience at the earliest opportunity. The more resilient a person or community is, the better they are able to cope with and recover from adversity and trauma.

The current approach to building community resilience is piecemeal and subject to the different state and territory arrangements and inconsistencies in practice. A systemic, nation-wide approach to community resilience building is needed grounded in a strengths-based, community approach, harnessing local knowledge, capacities and skills. A strong sense of community and connection to place is a key driver for people taking action to prepare and build resilience^{xi}.

Investing in disaster resilience leads to major savings in the costs of recovery. Cost-benefit analyses of three case studies undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics for the Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience suggested that for every dollar spent, savings between \$3 and \$8 were made.^{xii} In addition, investment in disaster resilience, particularly social resilience measures, can have a double dividend, one in future avoided costs, and the second in stimulating local economic and social activity.^{xiii}

To address the greatest need, Red Cross is calling for investment in a broad program of resilience-building measures targeting the 137 Local Government Areas most at risk of a major hazard, including droughts, heatwaves, floods, cyclones, earthquake and bushfires. This will reduce the impact of disasters, shocks and crises, and help address inequalities. Red Cross has determined this profile using data from Risk Frontiers combined with overlaying socio-economic and demographic data (see Attachment A).

Red Cross has capability to build on existing community resilience programs and leverage our national reach into communities, including First Nations, refugee and migrant communities and regional areas through partnerships with State and Territory Governments, businesses, not-for-profits and community organisations together with the Commonwealth and National Recovery and Resilience Agency.

Recommendations 1-3:

- The government increase its investment to \$200 million annually to strengthen communities' capacity to prepare for and respond to all hazards as recommended by the 2015 Productivity Commission report, *Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements*.^{xiv}
- Implement community resilience programs in the 137 local government areas most likely to experience a disaster and most vulnerable to a disaster, including droughts, heatwaves, floods, cyclones, earthquake and bushfires. This would include several LGAs with First Nations communities. This could be achieved through a roll out of Red Cross' existing resilience model at a cost of \$25 million annually for five years.
- Expand Red Cross' Climate Ready Communities Project across Australia for communities to have their own conversations about how the things they value will be impacted by climate change, and what they can do to continue to thrive to both address climate anxiety and build more resilient communities, including targeted delivery at school age children [\$10 million annually].^{xv}

ii. Commit recurrent funding for a national, ready-to-deploy volunteer workforce of disaster responders.

Red Cross is part of the world's largest emergency response network and has demonstrated national capacity with an existing emergency services volunteer workforce of 4,200. As auxiliary to government in delivering humanitarian response, we are a natural partner to establish and maintain this active, skilled volunteer workforce. All volunteers are required to pass a training program to ensure they have the skills and ability to support both adults and children experiencing trauma in the aftermath of a disaster. This involves achieving psychosocial first aid qualifications; and undertaking a series of training modules on disaster management preparedness, response and recovery. Volunteers are supported by a team of 190 staff whose experience extends across the full breadth of capabilities: leadership, operational readiness, capacity, knowledge and research translation, analysis and reporting, regional coordination, systems and technology, and workforce wellbeing. With government support, Red Cross could expand its emergency services volunteer workforce and enhance the nation's ability to better support people in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

Recommendation 4:

- Commit recurrent funding to build and sustain a ready-to-deploy trained volunteer workforce skilled in psychosocial first aid and disaster relief to support individuals and communities impacted by disasters including extreme weather, acts of extreme violence, future pandemics, and other emergencies [\$13.5 million annually].

iii. Strengthen mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, enhancing anticipatory action and health security in the Asia Pacific region.

Globally, insufficient funding is being directed at anticipation and preparedness. Over 90% of humanitarian funding is allocated to response, versus less than 1% to anticipation, 3.8% to preparedness, and 5.5% to recovery and reconstruction.^{xvi} By focusing on '*what the weather will do*' rather than '*what the weather will be*', anticipatory action shifts emphasis from responding to an event to taking informed action in advance of a predicted event, enabling communities to actively mitigate the impacts of identified risks, protect lives and livelihoods and reduce suffering.

A key component of anticipatory action is the availability of funding to implement those actions. There is an opportunity for Government leadership in anticipatory action and risk reduction by linking development and humanitarian investments before disaster strikes.

Recommendation 5:

- Government invests 10% of an increased humanitarian aid budget in funding mechanisms to strengthen disaster risk reduction and enhance anticipatory action in the Asia Pacific region.
 - Government continue regular allocations to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) which enables anticipatory funding to local Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies globally.

2. ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO FULL & SAFE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS; MEETING LABOUR SHORTAGES; INCREASING SAFETY AND SECURITY OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- i. **Strengthen the ability of refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants to move into safe, dignified employment through access to specialist employment matching programs, noting this will also help alleviate critical labour shortages.**

During the pandemic, Red Cross has provided Emergency Relief support to over 185,000 people on temporary visas through support from Federal Government, a number of States and Territories, and donors. Many who received support were previously in full-time or part-time employment and now need assistance to regain employment. Employers tell us they want support to employ more migrants where shortages cannot be filled by local labour.

A national, integrated approach to improve employment opportunities for people on temporary visas, people seeking asylum and refugees would benefit individuals, communities and the economy. It would also help alleviate labour and skills shortages across the country which are projected to increase significantly. The basis for a nationwide approach is detailed in the *“Review into Integration, Employment and Settlement Outcomes for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Australia”* (the *“Shergold review”*) as well as reports by the Refugee Council of Australia and the Settlement Council of Australia.^{xvii}

The major barriers to employment - listed below - can be addressed with specialist employment matching services, case work, education, work experience opportunities and policy change.

- Visa restrictions for some people seeking asylum
- Lack of access to any services to support employment transitions
- Lack of Australian work experience, and knowledge of Australian workplace culture and systems
- Limited access to transport and affordable housing close to employment
- The refugee and resettlement experience and its impact on job-seeking
- The pressure to accept insecure employment
- Discrimination in employment
- Difficulties with recognition of skills, qualifications and experience.

Recommendations 6-7

- Establish a national employment initiative to support people already in Australia (including people on temporary visas, including people seeking asylum, and refugees) to gain meaningful employment. The initiative would need to address the barriers to employment, focus on specialist employment matching services, and identify employers who are committed to workplace diversity as well as address labour exploitation and modern-day slavery.

- Fund the expansion of specialist employment matching programs to support people on temporary visas, people seeking asylum and refugees as well as prospective employers to engage in safe, dignified and sustainable economic participation through pathways to work, study and volunteering.
 - Red Cross has capability to deliver specialist Connect, Match, Support employment service across 10 regional communities [\$25 million annually].

- ii. Ensure safety of migrant workers through raising awareness of labour exploitation and associated rights and requirements, and ensuring there is humanitarian support for victims.**

Migrants and people on temporary visas or without a visa, are at increased risk of labour exploitation and the need for additional support has been recognised in a recent report by the Select Committee on Temporary Migration.^{xviii}

Recommendations 8-9:

- Invest in prevention and awareness of labour exploitation of migrant workers, including those who arrive through labour mobility schemes, by increasing training and capacity strengthening for workers, recruitment agencies and employers.
 - Red Cross has capacity to assist through leveraging its extensive national reach and modern-day slavery expertise [\$5 million annually].

- Ensure all those who have been trafficked in Australia are able to access support through the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP) by expanding the referral pathway to the STPP beyond solely the Australian Federal Police.
 - Red Cross is able to act as an additional referrer and work with government to make the necessary operational changes to implement a 12 month pilot and evaluation of an additional referral pathway, based on our expertise and existing capacity [\$0.5 million annually].

INCREASING SAFETY AND SECURITY OF MIGRANT WOMEN

- iii. Enhance safety and security for migrant women in Australia through increased family and domestic violence supports and assistance programs to strengthen socio-economic participation.**

Women who are seeking asylum, refugees and temporary visa holders are among the most vulnerable in our society.^{xix} Many are financially insecure, socially isolated and have limited access to information and social support. Many lack knowledge of their rights and are without a safety net. Women on temporary visas in particular face unique and complex challenges with limited eligibility for mainstream family and domestic violence services and support. The current Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence pilot by the Federal Government is a welcome initiative. To further strengthen the safety and security of migrant women, we are proposing the government commit to increased and ongoing funding to support people on temporary visas who are experiencing family and domestic violence and initiatives to specifically support the socio-economic participation of newly arrived migrant women.

Recommendations 10-12:

- Provide access to a safety net for those on temporary visas experiencing family violence by providing access to the same supports as citizens/permanent residents and/or establishing the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence pilot as an ongoing program with increased support. The program should ensure access to financial, legal and support services as well as casework. As part of the broader program,

Red Cross, in continued collaboration with specialised family and domestic violence as well as legal services, would be able to provide enhanced casework as required and financial assistance for up to 3000 people per year until the supports can be mainstreamed [\$21.4 million annually].

- Invest in interventions to promote migrant women’s economic participation.
 - Red Cross can offer its expertise to support the socio-economic participation of newly arrived migrant women through our flagship Connected Women program nationwide [\$1.4 million annually].
- Invest in employment support services specifically for women.
 - As part of the expansion of our Connect, Match, Support employment services, Red Cross could specifically target women on temporary visas, people seeking asylum and refugees to support them to find employment. This will also include inviting them to join the Connected Women program.

3. ENABLING FULLER PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

i. Increase the humanitarian intake

There are 9.2 million refugees and people seeking asylum in the Asia Pacific region, including from two of the world’s most complex and protracted humanitarian crises in Myanmar-Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Despite the number of refugees under the UNHCR mandate increasing^{xx}, Australia’s intake has not increased in real terms relative to need. Border closures resulting from COVID-19 paused the Australian refugee resettlement programs in 2020-21, with people stuck in difficult and dangerous situations overseas, including people from Afghanistan, many of whom are women and children.

Recommendation 13:

- Increase humanitarian intake levels by at least 5000 places per year, resume intake of the current 18,750 humanitarian places and invest in an additional humanitarian intake of at least 20,000 people from Afghanistan.
 - Red Cross can expand our current humanitarian support program in WA, ACT and NSW and our staff and volunteers stand ready to assist nationwide to support this expanded intake.
- ii. **Enable greater participation and contributions of migrants in the community by ensuring the humanitarian needs of migrants outside our social safety nets are met. This requires addressing uncertainty and providing a sufficient safety net to ensure people are safe and have access to services.**

Within Australia, the pandemic has amplified structural barriers and inequalities experienced by temporary migrants, and historically high international migration levels.^{xxi} Many people on temporary visas move on to become permanent residents. Approximately half of all permanent visas are granted to people on temporary visas who are already in Australia.^{xxii}

For people seeking asylum, additional and complimentary pathways to permanent protection, including for people on Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas are needed. Tangible solutions are required to resolve the situation of people impacted by offshore processing as well as the length of time people spend in immigration detention, both of which often significantly impact on the health, wellbeing and dignity of people affected.

Australia has the capacity for greater collaboration with partners across the region to protect, assist and foster resilience for the most vulnerable people, particularly those navigating compounding challenges of climate change,

conflicts and pandemics. A suite of responses is needed to address the barriers to entry and to create a safe, welcoming environment where people are set up to succeed.

Further, Australia can adopt the Global Compact for Migration to improve over-arching migration governance; to ensure migration is safe, dignified, and voluntary; and people can meet their own needs.

Recommendations 14-16:

- Invest in ensuring a sustainable safety net for migrants and people seeking asylum, in crisis who don't have access to a sustainable mainstream supports (i.e. Centrelink / Medicare), leading into safe, dignified and sustainable employment through lighter touch employment support where appropriate. Red Cross can build on the current Emergency Relief program [\$11 million annually].
- Support people with an unresolved migration status and with low security risk moving from immigration detention into the community. Red Cross could support the re-integration of 500 people back into the community through the provision of wraparound casework support and pathways to independence [\$1.5 million annually].
- Invest and implement regional protection mechanisms to ensure Australia understands, is prepared for and addresses current and future humanitarian challenges relating to migration. For example, challenges as result of climate change, conflict and pandemics, including through capacity building on migration in the Asia Pacific, support for the Global Migration Lab, and adopting the Global Compact on Safe Orderly and Regular Migration [\$1 million annually].

iii. Combat racism and discrimination experienced by refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants

The intersectionality of a person's identity, attitudes, culture, alongside existing systems structures in Australia can interact to create inequality and exclusion. While attitudes towards ethnic diversity in Australia are increasingly positive, there has been an increase in people in the Australian community expressing concerns about racism^{xxiii}, which continues to exist in communities and systems. Addressing racism leads to greater equality, respect and inclusion.

Recommendation 17:

- Invest in programs to build inclusive communities to create a more welcoming and safer Australia by rolling out awareness raising programs in schools, communities and workplaces to educate the community, and create a more welcoming environment for all newcomers to our communities, especially people seeking asylum and refugees.

Red Cross currently delivers *In Search of Safety*, a program with a proven track record of successfully engaging young people and dispelling myths about refugees. This social inclusion initiative has demonstrated that through meaningful interventions, positive attitudinal change can be achieved at an early age to increase understanding and empathy towards communities of all backgrounds. With the support of government, we could deliver an additional 2000 community education sessions [\$4 million over 3 years].

4. BUILDING RESILIENCE AMONG FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

For generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have sought significant and lasting change to the lingering impacts of discriminatory policies and other structural barriers – to be the active planners of their lives and futures. Despite significant community resilience and cultural strengths, First Nations peoples continue to experience some of the most extreme vulnerabilities in Australia across almost all wellbeing measures.

Sudden events such as natural disasters and pandemics exacerbate existing social fault lines and gaps. The impact of COVID-19 on First Nations peoples not only heightens the existing socio-economic challenges, which places these communities at particular risk, but is already demonstrating the remarkable strengths and abilities of First Nations peoples and organisations in the pandemic response.

Overall, First Nations communities are disproportionately impacted by both the health risks and mental health impacts of the pandemic and have faced additional barriers to accessing safe cultural spaces for connection and psychosocial wellbeing. Across the country, the critical immediate information gap out to remote communities is being filled by Indigenous organisations launching information campaigns translating health information into Indigenous languages (through videos, posters, artwork, Facebook and other social media) to inform people about hygiene and testing for COVID-19, and providing support to the most vulnerable in the communities.

i. Invest in targeted place-based programs that support First Nations communities to elevate local knowledge and solutions.

Government investment in a range of equity-based solutions to help meet challenges identified by local communities with the goal of bridging the divide. Investing in place-based programs support First Nations communities to identify and work towards priorities and outcomes that reflect community aspirations. Red Cross successfully operates place-based programs in the following communities: Katherine, Daly River, Tiwi Islands (NT), Bridgewater (TAS), Woorabinda (QLD), Wallaga Lake and Kempsey (NSW), Ceduna (SA), Kalgoorlie (WA), and previously in Horsham (VIC). Our program is based on using Red Cross staff who live and work in the local community. These staff are trusted facilitators with local knowledge, relationships and the ability to work with First Nations people to identify priorities and develop local solutions. We have supported a broad range of initiatives, including operating community hubs in Ceduna and Tiwi Islands, a youth justice program in Katherine, emergency preparedness programs in Daly River, and a homework club for children in Wallaga Lake.

Recommendations 18-19:

- Invest to expand place-based programs in First Nations communities nationally.
 - Red Cross has the capacity to contribute to this solution by expanding to 25 additional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities [\$6.25 million annually/\$31.25 million over 5 years].
- Invest in resilience building activities for First Nations Communities affected by disasters and preparedness programs for First Nations communities vulnerable to the effects of climate change on and in their community as referred to in Recommendation 2.

5. BUILDING RESILIENCE TO KEEP PEOPLE OUT OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

i. Improve supports for reintegration among released prisoners to reduce recidivism

Australia is putting more people in prison despite a fall in the number of criminal offenders. The imprisonment rate in Australia – measured as prisoners per 100,000 adults – has more than doubled since the mid-1980s, and rose by 40% between the year 2000 and 2018.^{xxiv} This is being driven by the overrepresentation of First Nations people in the justice system and rising recidivism rates. People who are in contact with the justice system, including those in custodial settings, are amongst the most marginalised groups in our community. Moreover, upon leaving prison most people become homeless or unemployed.

Upon release, less than one in four people had organised paid employment that would begin within two weeks of release^{xxv}. More than half of people exiting prison are homeless. Access to stable housing affects whether a person reoffends after being released^{xxvi}. The development of the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement is an opportunity to include people transitioning from the justice system as a priority cohort for homelessness support.

While prisons are managed by State and Territory governments, people are being released into the community and require Federal Government support to resume their lives. Sufficient Federal employment, affordable and transitional housing, health programs and services, and homeless support is currently not available to people upon leaving prison. Access to support services upon release gives people a chance to rebuild their lives.

The government, in partnership with Red Cross, can increase the capacity of states and territories by funding programs that address the underlying contributors to crime and recidivism, including unemployment and homelessness. Support transitioning back into the community reduces the likelihood of reoffending, whether that be for employment, education, continuity of healthcare or housing services.^{xxvii}

Red Cross has a proven in-prison program, Community Based Health & First Aid (CBHFA) that can also contribute to these outcomes (based on the same program developed by Irish Red Cross, which received the 2011 World Health Organisation Award for best practice in prison health). CBHFA is based on community development principles that trains prisoners as ‘Special Status’ Red Cross Volunteers. These Volunteers provide a community wide response to health and wellbeing priorities within the prison and support people on a more positive path as contributing members of a community.

Red Cross initially works with prison management and staff to determine whether CBHFA is an appropriate program for a particular institution. If approved and supported, Red Cross provides training to a cohort of prison staff who will lead the implementation of the program. Volunteers go through a recruitment process supported by Red Cross and the nominated prison staff. The Volunteers then complete five core training modules before graduating. The program’s methodology ensures that Volunteers ‘learn by doing’ and encourages personal development and ownership for Volunteers. CBHFA has also been adapted to the Australian prison context with a specific focus on the high overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Recommendations 20-23:

- Include people transitioning from the justice system as a priority cohort for targeted housing and homelessness, and employment support under the future National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. Investing in housing and homelessness solutions will reduce the rates of recidivism. Increased dedicated funding under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement would support 2000 people exiting prison with housing and provide employment support [\$3.6 million annually/\$18 million over 5 years] and provide 5000 people with transitional housing when they leave prison [\$130 million annually/\$650 million over 5 years].

- The Federal Government further review the current *Jobactive* program with a view to better recognise the complex needs of people leaving prison and introducing employer incentives for employing people leaving prison.
- Invest in providing healthier and safer prison communities, and in improving skills and knowledge for people imprisoned to assist their successful reintegration to community post-release. Red Cross can help achieve this through expanding Community Based Health & First Aid to a further 20 prisons over 5 years [\$6.94 million annually / \$34.66 million over 5 years].
- Invest in Red Cross to deliver its Justice Employment Project nationwide which aims to create positive systemic and long-term change on how employers view the recruitment of individuals in contact with the justice system, and develop an “Online Resource Hub” to support industries to become inclusive [\$1.05 million annually / \$5.25 million over 5 years].

ii. National approach to keeping children out of prison

An independent review of the service system and implementation requirements for raising the age found that gaps within the current service system are a major concern affecting the future success of raising the age reform.^{xxviii} Children at risk of offending experience multiple health and mental health challenges, often with significant underlying trauma and disability. By the time children interact with the youth justice system, unmet needs have often multiplied and become more complex. Tackling this requires multiservice interventions as well as trauma-informed and culturally safe service responses. A ‘seed fund’, with matched contribution by state and territory governments, will accelerate the development of evidence-based diversion and prevention programs.

Recommendations 24-25:

- The Federal Government continue working with all State and Territory governments to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age in all Australian jurisdictions, and to ensure multiservice diversionary and prevention programs are in place nationwide.
- Invest in a ‘Seed Fund’ administered federally for diversion and prevention programs that focus on children aged 10-13. This would support states and territories to develop and evaluate evidence-based diversion and prevention programs for 10-13 year olds, to aid in transitioning to a minimum age of criminal responsibility of 14 [\$30 million over 3 years].

iii. National leadership to embed Justice Reinvestment

Justice reinvestment takes a geographic approach to addressing underlying causes of crime in high-incarceration neighbourhoods by investment in programs in education, health, job creation, and job training in low-income communities, and rebuilding human resources and physical infrastructure —schools, healthcare facilities, parks, and public spaces.^{xxix} There are currently only eight justice reinvestment sites across Australia, including Tiraapendi Wodli, a partnership in Port Adelaide between Red Cross and Justice Reinvestment South Australia.

Recommendations 26-27:

- Establish a Commonwealth agency to lead Justice Reinvestment as recommended by the Australian Law Reform Commission, and in support of Change the Record and Justice Reinvestment Network Australia’s Budget Submission [\$1.87 million annually/\$9.35 million over 5 years].
- Support and establish justice reinvestment sites in each state and territory, as per Change the Record and Justice Reinvestment Network Australia’s Budget Submission [\$10.5 million annually / \$52.5 million over 5 years].

6. SUPPORTING THE REGION TO RECOVER FROM COVID-19

i. Provide ongoing assistance to support the COVID-19 health response and economic recovery of our regional neighbours

The impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic have drawn heavily on an already stretched humanitarian sector and simultaneously intensified humanitarian needs globally, making emergencies more complex. As the global humanitarian landscape shifts, Australia also realigning its strategy will ensure it continues to reach the people in greatest need. Australia is well positioned to provide much-needed humanitarian assistance to our neighbours.

Red Cross welcomed the Australian Government's *Partnerships for Recovery — Australia's COVID-19 Development Response* to tackle COVID-19 in the region, announced in 2020 and the additional \$330 million in targeted, temporary and supplementary measures. However, the longevity of the pandemic continues to exacerbate the health and socio-economic impacts, creating pressure on livelihoods and increasing poverty rates in the region.

We continue to see low vaccination rates in neighboring countries such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Red Cross received critical additional COVID-19 funding from DFAT that has enabled it to support the roll-out of vaccines and address vaccine hesitancy in Asia and the Pacific. Through this additional funding, the Movement reached 31 million people in Asia and the Pacific through Risk Communications and Community Engagement activities (RCCE) to address vaccine hesitancy. We also supported eight million people with critical community-based water sanitation and hygiene activities.

Whilst we welcome budget increases to aid in the past two years, they stop short of what is required to address the escalating needs both in our region and globally. We therefore call on the Government to increase aid funding by 20% in the 2022-23 budget, leading to ongoing increases to reach the target of 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2025-26. These increases in consecutive budgets are critical to respond to additional waves of COVID-19 as well as address the ongoing socio-economic impacts on vulnerable communities.

Recommendation 28:

- In response to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, commit to rebuilding the international aid budget to 0.5% of Gross National Income by 2025-26, with an immediate increase of 20% in the next budget.

Recommendation 29:

- As part of sustaining Australia's international COVID-19 funding, provide \$600,000 annually to the Red Cross COVID-19 flexible fund. This fund was established with DFAT in 2020 and has provided valuable rapid funding to quickly support Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies to respond to rapid COVID-19 outbreaks and support vaccine rollouts across the Pacific and Timor Leste. Ongoing and additional funding could see this rapid response mechanism extended to support high-risk communities throughout Asia.

Recommendation 30:

- Protracted and compounded disasters are increasing in our region. Our ability to provide the most beneficial response depends on flexible funding and frontline organisations being able to determine the greatest need. The most effective approach is through predictable and multiyear core funding, which is critical for local and frontline organisations. This form of funding enables local organisations to prepare for, and address, the multiple waves and shocks of COVID-19 and other disasters on an ongoing basis. We welcome DFAT's commitment under the Grand Bargain to adopt a more flexible funding approach. The benefits of this have been demonstrated in the regional response to COVID-19.

As auxiliaries to the humanitarian services of their governments and with extensive branch and volunteer networks, Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies are uniquely positioned to work alongside their Ministries of Health in the roll out of national action plans for epidemic preparedness and response.



Further Information:

Kate Miranda

Head of Public Affairs and Advocacy

Australian Red Cross

Ph. 0408 409 155

E: kmiranda@redcross.org.au

ATTACHMENT A: AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES MOST AT RISK OF A NATURAL DISASTER Grouped into 137 LGAs

Australian Red Cross engaged Risk Frontiers to undertake risk mapping across the country to identify the communities most exposed to natural hazards (riverine floods, cyclones, earthquake and bushfires) and effectively plan how we can deliver community resilience services.

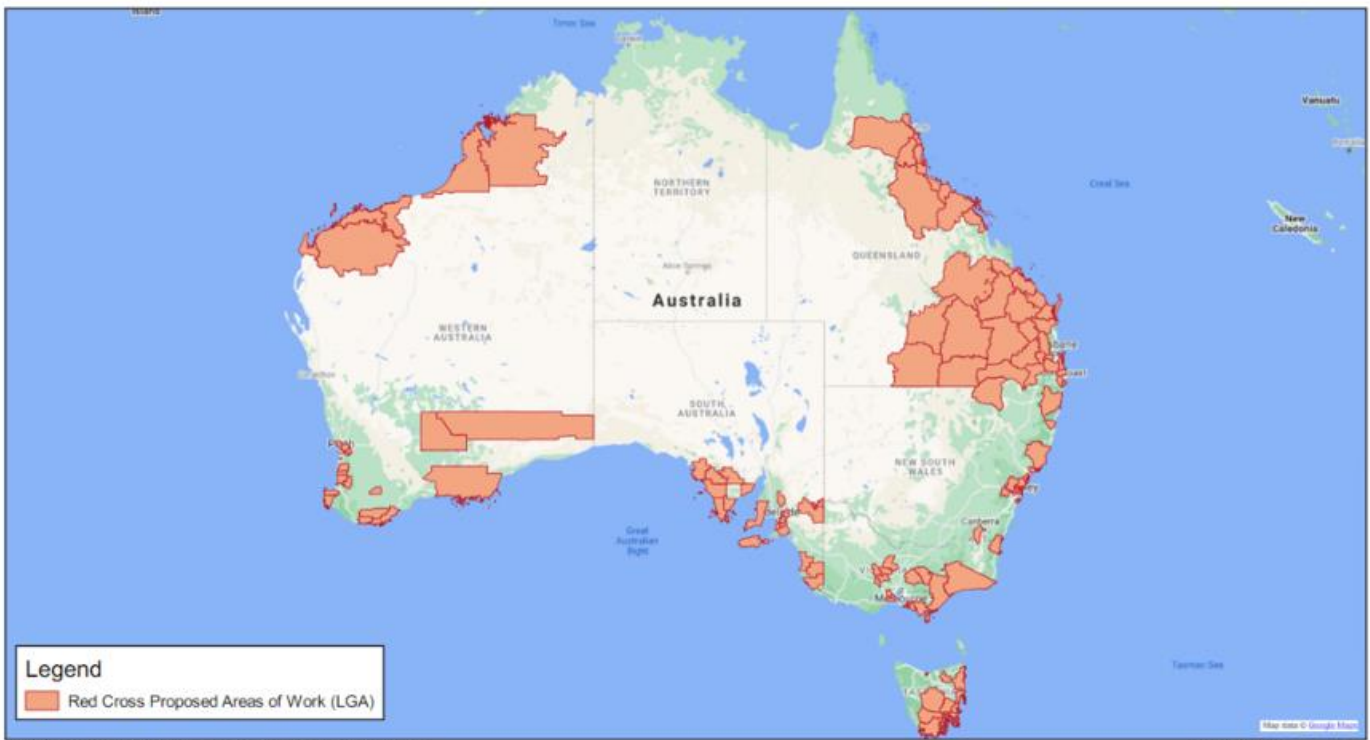
Risk Frontiers is the largest disaster research development centre in Australia, specialising in assessment and management of disaster risk across Australasia and Asia Pacific region. Their overall aim is to improve management of risk and safety of community.

The data is based on the address-based risk database provided by Risk Frontiers using their catastrophe models for riverine flood, cyclone, earthquake and bushfires, and overlaid by Australian Red Cross with additional data from:

- Risk Frontier Dataset - National and State Ranking Dataset (data acquired in late 2017)
- Usual Resident Population (ABS, 2016)
- Population Projection (ABS, 2012)
- Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) (ABS, 2016)
- Emergency Services Workforce (REDS, data export from early 2018)

States/Territories	Number of LGAs
ACT	1
NSW	18
NT	4
QLD	36
SA	25
TAS	14
VIC	13
WA	26
TOTAL	137

National Map of Red Cross Proposed Areas of Work by LGA



ENDNOTES

- ⁱ The Movement's seven Fundamental Principles are found at: [What we stand for | Australian Red Cross](#)
- ⁱⁱ Australian Red Cross' mandate is outlined in the 1941 *Australian Red Cross Royal Charter*: <https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/6665d790-eeb0-47da-927a-1a184c220b51/Royal-Charter-Consolidated-and-Fourth-Supplemental-Charter-12Oct10-Current.pdf.asp>; the role of National Societies is outlined in *The Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, (adopted by State Parties to the Geneva Conventions in 1986, amended in 1995 and 2006), and the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross is enshrined in the *Geneva Conventions* (1949).
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- ^{xiv} Productivity Commission (2014), *Natural Disaster Funding Arrangements*, Inquiry Report no. 74, Canberra. JEL code: H77, H84. <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/disaster-funding/report/disaster-funding-volume1.pdf>
- ^{xv} <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters/resources-for-teachers/pillowcase-program> (the expansion of the Climate Ready Communities Project can include the Pillowcase Program).
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