



November 2021

## Disaster resilience and risk reduction fund

### Background

Climate change is increasing the intensity and frequency of bushfires and extreme weather events across the world, including Australia and South Australia where extreme heat is a particularly significant issue.

All sections of our society share the responsibility of acting to minimise global warming and delivering on a commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050. New analysis warns that even with all new Glasgow pledges for 2030, global temperature could rise well above 2°C by the end of the century.<sup>1</sup>

Conference of Parties 26 (CoP26) has seen an increasing number of countries committing to mandatory climate related financial disclosure.<sup>2</sup> While Australia has not yet made this commitment, steps are being taken in that direction, and an increasing number of businesses are voluntarily disclosing and improving their climate related reporting.<sup>3</sup> The social service sector will need the skills and capacity to measure and report on their environmental impact in order to access funds and remain viable into the future.

The impacts of climate change are not felt by all people equally, with people experiencing poverty, poor health, frailty and disability bearing the greatest burden<sup>4</sup> due to:

- living in poor quality housing (often rental housing),
- living in higher flood or fire risk areas due to affordability,
- being under or un-insured,
- being unable to afford to implement mitigation or adaptation strategies, and
- because of the significant impacts that extreme heat, smoke, dust or pollen can have on their health.

Governments, the health and social service sector and communities need to work together to assist people who are more vulnerable to climate change to take steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change to enable them to remain healthy living in their communities. For example, Aboriginal communities face additional risks to traditional cultural practices due to

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<sup>1</sup>(Nov 21) Climate Action Tracker ([Glasgow's 2030 credibility gap: net zero's lip service to climate action](#) ,

<sup>2</sup> John Collet (2021) <https://www.smh.com.au/money/investing/new-corporate-climate-reporting-standard-a-game-changer-20211104-p59629.html> Sydney Morning Herald

<sup>3</sup> <https://igcc.org.au/mandatory-financial-disclosure-on-climate-risk/>

<sup>4</sup> Investors release plan to establish mandatory financial disclosure on climate risk in Australia (2021) <https://resilience.acoss.org.au/the-six-steps/introduction/disasters-climate-change-and-disadvantage-Inc> Investor Group on Climate Change

the effects of climate change. The cost of inaction is immense in human and dollar terms.

Minimising climate warming and its impact on South Australians, particularly those at higher risk, makes good economic sense and achieves better social and health outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

Traditionally in Australia, 97% of all disaster funding has been spent on the clean-up, with only 3% committed to mitigation, preparedness and resilience,<sup>6</sup> and this needs to change to prevent worsening inequity and poorer health outcomes.

### **Policy Response**

Since mid 2019, SACOSS has been working with the social service sector to build understanding of the risks that climate change poses to their organisations, staff, clients or communities. We have also worked to build the capacity of the sector to be more climate aware and resilient, and build climate and disaster resilience in their clients. This work is having an impact across the sector, but the social service sector does not currently have the capacity and resources to take all the actions needed.

We need a collaborative, sustainable and coordinated approach to enhancing the safety of people who may be at increased risk due to the impacts of climate change, emergencies or disasters. The funding of a 2 year collaboration between SACOSS and Red Cross to activate the People at Risk in Emergencies Framework for SA through the Disaster Risk Reduction Grant program is a great step in the right direction, but the funding is not sufficient to implement strategies that are outside the capacity of organisations to self-fund.

A pool of funding managed by the People at Risk Action Group which includes representation from emergency management, local government, peak bodies and key stakeholders from the health and social service sector would enable informed and strategic decision making about resource allocation. This would help to minimise the harms from climate change to people who are more vulnerable and enable actions to be taken that leverage on existing opportunities, commitments or actions to have maximum impact.

### **SACOSS Proposal**

SACOSS is proposing an investment of \$5m over 4 years to identify and address risks for people who may be more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and improve the environmental sustainability of the health and social service sector that supports them.

This fund would be managed by the People at Risk in Emergencies Action Group and administered through a member organisation. The purpose of the fund would be to:

- Undertake research and evidence gathering to identify the risks and likely impacts of climate change for communities identified as being more at risk.
- Identify and implement strategies to address risk to those population groups, including through attracting co-contributions from other funding sources.
- Implement strategies to build the capacity of health and social service organisations to understand their carbon footprint and work towards net zero by 2050.

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<sup>5</sup> Vijay S. Limaye, Wendy Max, Juanita Constible, and Kim Knowlton (2020) Estimating the Costs of Inaction and the Economic Benefits of Addressing the Health Harms of Climate Change <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.01109>

<sup>6</sup> National Recovery and Resilience Agency, (2021) Resilience is the way forward <https://recovery.gov.au/latest-news/resilience-way-forward> Australian Government