Resilience: A System to Support Communities

Over the last few years of work in the resilience space, my thinking around resilience has matured.

Below is a graphic we developed in 2017 for the NSW Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy.

This was based firmly on Critical Infrastructure Resilience, with the idea that the infrastructure assets and systems, and the organisations responsible for the infrastructure were underpinning the

The last few years of working in this space have matured this, with input from multiple sources, to something that looks a little more like this.

Community Resilience is not just about saving lives. It's about saving lives and livelihoods. Livelihoods includes the means to support yourself, your family and your means of earning income (either as an employee or business owner). It's greater than just ensuring there is a community that still exists after a disaster event – it's just as much about trying to ensure that a community can re-establish the mechanisms (people, business organisations, social groups etc.) that make it a community.

Environmental Resilience recognises the complex relationship between our natural environment (where literally everything is based), and our built environment, including critical infrastructure and the systems that supply communities with daily needs, such as water, electricity, communications, transport, and a host of other systems that we often don't give much consideration to that enable communities not just to exist, but to thrive.

Economic Resilience recognises that it is not just businesses (both large and small) that make up our economy, or the conditions under which our businesses can produce and sell goods. Local, state and federal governments, international governments as both sellers and purchasers of goods, and many other non-business organisations make up this economy, as well as all of the agreements, value transfer systems (such as banking and finance) and many other subsystems all create economic resilience on one level or another.

I'm excited to present this model as a way of thinking about greater societal resilience, and very keen to use it as a thought model in upcoming work, and continue to communicate the message of societal resilience in ways that might provide insight for other people working in this space.

I particularly like to pair this with Anne Leadbetter's work in Community Continuity, which analyses existing communities before hazard impact, and provides a community profile of what a community looks like, values and would be looking to prioritise to restore after a hazard or disaster event.

Paired with the tried and tested techniques around business continuity (e.g. understanding the critical functions of a community and finding mitigations and contingencies to protect or restore those functions) this can be a powerful way to view the work of both protecting and recovering our communities after what is likely to be more frequent and more disruptive hazards in the future.

This can create the best possible planning and preparation for hazard events, with the help of enabling communities to stop hazards becoming disasters. Even should a hazard become a disaster, good practice in this space before the event will likely reduce the emergency response period and also reduce the time spent for the community to recover from the disaster.

With the increasing frequency of hazards, it is timely to put easy-to-understand frameworks in place to help communities reduce disaster risk.

Works Referenced and Consulted

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