

Getting it right:

Tailoring communications and
engagement between disability
groups and Emergency Management

Presented by
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Introduction

- Involved in local and international research projects on disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction
- Past Australian Red Cross volunteer in the Philippines
- PhD Candidate at University of Sydney
- Working in Disability Inclusion with Fire and Rescue NSW



UNESCAP (2017) states people with disabilities are 4 *times more likely* to die than those without disabilities

Research

- Many researches on people with disabilities and emergencies
- First research Deaf Communities documented in 2003
 - Fear of being unprepared
 - Poor information dissemination
 - Lack of education on emergency preparedness
- 18 years later, this problem still exists worldwide, including Australia

Increasing the Resilience of the Deaf Community of NSW to Natural Hazards and Disasters



UNSW
SYDNEY



Emergency information and messaging data collected on:

- Identifying Deaf Communities' needs;
- experiences from past disasters, and
- what access and opportunities they would like to see improved in the future

“ Only 20% of deaf people around the world have access to education while 80% receive none at all.”

World Federation of the Deaf, 2021

Limited to no Auslan (Australian Sign Language) support in schools affects d/Deaf and hard of hearing Australians to experience exclusion and isolation

“ Disaster Literacy... ‘an individual’s capacity to read, understand, and use information to make informed decisions and follow instructions in mitigating, preparing, responding, and recovering from a disaster’ ”

Brown et al, 2014

There are disaster terminologies that d/Deaf and hard of hearing people do not always know or understand.

Common Communication Barriers in accessing to:

Health, education, social and mental health services

Support on emergency preparedness and response

Being involved in all emergency response planning

Disaster information in Auslan, plain English or pictures



Figure 1: Location of New South Wales, Australia and its regions*

- **Mismatch knowledge and skills**
- **Lack of Deaf Culture and skills awareness between both groups**
- **Communication and emergency messaging for:**
 - **Deaf Community members**
 - **Auslan interpreters**
 - **Deaf organisations and service providers**

**Disconnects
between Deaf
Community
and
Emergency
Services**

Current Practices

- Auslan interpreters and captioning live on TV emergency news
- Deaf and hard of hearing as emergency service volunteers



Example of Practice: Disability Inclusion in Fire & Rescue NSW

- Consultations with disability organisations
- Fire Safety Education and messaging tailored to different needs and abilities
- A Fire Safety Program for children with disabilities
- Internal training for firefighters on safety visits to ensure they meet the needs of the person with a disability



Future Practices

- More work is needed to improve access within emergency public spaces
- Strengthen inclusions of d/Deaf and hard of hearing people, Auslan interpreters, and Deaf organisations and service providers in all emergency planning

Thank you!

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