

-- Good morning.

Welcome to the first event as free conference webinars.

I am Phil Campbell, the chair of this year's emergency media and public affairs conference.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to the Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's today.

I am joining you today from the lands of the...people.

First some technical information.

If you have attended a webinar previously or last year's virtual conference you may notice the addition today of an Auslan Interpreter provided by Sweeney interpreting who will remain on screen all times during this webinar.

As well as the closed captions being provided by Bradley Reporting.

The captions should automatically appear on your screen.

If you do not see these please jump into the chat and we will attempt to trouble shoot.

Because of the viewing requirements any slides that are shown will not appear as full screen.

If you are unable to read the slides at any time be aware that they will be made available to download alongside the recording following the webinar.

You can jump on the chat panel at any time to talk to the panellists and to your fellow participants.

Be sure to have all panellists and attendees selected at the top of your chat window so everyone will see your comment.

After the presentation today there will be a Q and A session.

Type in your questions to the Q and A panel and I will read those out to our presenters on your behalf.

If you have any issues or questions and can't access the chat shoot us through an email.

The address is conferences@empa.org.au.

On to today's webinar.

Today's webinar is Getting It Right, tailoring communications and engagement between disability groups and emergency management.

We are going to hear from two speakers today, Leyla Craig and Sean Sweeney from Sweeney interpreting.

First to Sean.

Sean has become one of the most recognisable faces in Australia media since leading the Auslan interpreting team during the 2019/2020 bushfires in New South Wales.

He will share his perspective on interpreting emergency news on TV.

Leyla Craig is a PhD candidate from Sydney university.

As a practitioner in disability inclusive disaster risk reduction, Leyla has been involved in local and international projects focusing on deaf communities in Australia and Southeast Asia.

Her work involves exploring the underlying causes and gaps in exists between deaf communities, disability groups and emergency services as well as identifying sustainable solutions that meet the specific needs of different disability groups within the disaster and risk space.

The personal lived experiences as a deaf person and the disconnect seen between deaf communities as well as disability groups and emergency services has led her to become a PhD research candidate at the university of Sydney.

Focusing on deaf communities and organisations capacities to respond to and support those affected by hazards and disasters.

At present Leyla is working on disability inclusion with fire And Rescue New South Wales.

I would like to start by introducing Sean Sweeney.

-- Thank you Phil.

Thank you for that great introduction.

I live and work on the land of the Yuin people in the Jervis Bay District in south New South Wales.

I am Sean Sweeney on the co-owner of Sweeney Interpreting.

Our business has been around for seven years now.

You are probably thinking how does someone become an Auslan Interpreter.

In my case my family are deaf, I have great grandparents are deaf, my grandparents and parents are deaf.

Did I become an Interpreter early on in my career, no, I didn't.

I didn't become an Interpreter until my mid-30s.

I decided to become an Interpreter because I had a mid-life crisis at the time.

That is enough about me.

Look, I have been invited to talk about the 2019/2020 bushfires in New South Wales.

I received a phone call one day, I was getting ready to go on holidays.

I received a phone call from the RFS looking for an Auslan Interpreter.

After my conversation with the media team at the RFS in Homebush we - I decided that yep okay I will take the job on.

The next morning I went in at 6 a.m..

I got in there, nice and early ready for a 7 o'clock broadcast.

This was the first time I had ever worked in a broadcasting setting and I approached the media team and asked for preparation and information going forward.

Because it was new to everybody they couldn't give me the preparation I needed.

I was fortunate because the broadcasters had done a lot of information on the radio and TV so I gathered my preparation going through those different media outlets.

With the broadcast at 7 o'clock in the morning I was there, ready to go, getting started, with the preparation that I had.

Then the first person that came on was the assistant commissioner who provided the information for that morning.

That morning went well because it was nice and short and very brief.

I had done my preparation which put me in good stead to do a nice interpretation.

Preparation is key for all Auslan interpreters to do good work.

With the media team at Homebush and with all the information I gathered within the head office I was able to present the work as an Interpreter quite fluidly.

There were challenges though trying to get the information, because at the start I didn't actually understand how bushfires work.

I asked lots of questions around different reporters, different people actually working in head office.

As an Auslan Interpreter the key to a good interpretation is information.

You wouldn't yourself go in front of an audience without prep.

Preparation is the key to good interpretation.

I was very very fortunate because all the bushfires were in New South Wales and I am a bit of New South Wales boy and I bleed blue, as you know we have the State of Origin coming up.

Working as an Interpreter, being exposed to the television audience, the wider community and deaf community puts you in a really challenging position.

This is why it is really important from my point of view to have preparation.

In a perfect world what we should have had is a month leading up to the bushfires, what we could have done is get together with an Auslan interpreting team and did media training.

This is what I felt was missed on the day.

I drew on all my experience.

I have been an Interpreter for 20 years and drew on all my experience to be able to interpret what the commissioners were saying, the premier and even the Prime Minister.

I did lots of networking asking lots of questions about what was being said.

The key here is access.

What my suggestion to all the media teams out there is that when you are talking about access you need to have that front of mind.

It needs to be done at the start, not the end.

When you are preparing access you need to organise the interpreters first, prepare the interpreters getting ready for all the emergency disasters during bushfire season.

Having all these training prior to the actual broadcast would make it so much easier for the Interpreter to do their job.

My suggestion for the media teams out there working within the emergency realm is to ensure that access is something that is always front of mind.

If you get access right that means the wider community is getting access to the information that is needed.

If you get it right for the deaf community and the hard of hearing community this means the wider community will receive the information and it works really well.

Media teams need to work with Auslan interpreting teams to ensure this happens.

What I found on the day was interesting because when I first started the broadcast and when it actually finished I went up to the media team and said to them what would you like for me to do now.

Just take a seat and we will get back to you.

I was okay, then.

I need some more information.

What I found myself doing was sitting in front of screens at the head office there at Homebush trying to understand the tables on the screens.

I spoke to lots of reporters that were around the media room and I gathered all this information and wrote it all down and I just made sure that I was on the same track as what was being presented in the broadcast.

You got to remember; what I want you to remember is access.

Access is key here for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

I used to go into all the media rooms in head office and there was this big thick plate of glass between the media rooms and the main spokes, the wheel, where all the communication happened for the RFS.

I would look through the window and look and try and work out what they were all looking at, there was lots of TV screens for me to gather all my information from.

This is challenging because looking through the window I actually couldn't hear what they were all saying.

I found myself working really hard trying to get the prep together.

My suggestion to the media teams is for each state is to try and find a liaison person.

A liaison person who is deaf and understands what the community needs, somebody that knows how to coordinate interpreters and can pick the appropriate interpreters on a cultural level as well.

This is really important going forward.

Since we had the pandemic in the last 12 months we have seen lots of interpreters on the screen and we can see that the relationship between the media outlets and interpreters have improved but it can improve again.

We can raise the bar.

Over in the states they started to realise they are using interpreters but deaf interpreters.

Deaf people that act as interpreters, this is becoming a trend around the world.

What is happening is that we find that deaf people interpret the language on a higher level with a lot more detail.

This is quite an efficient way of getting the message across to the community.

Within the deaf and hard of hearing community, you remember the audience, the age difference from the 10 year old through to the 90 year old is huge.

So therefore we need to make sure that when the interpretation is being done, it is done correctly so everybody can understand what is being said.

I just want to make it really clear that, I will probably repeat the word over and over, preparation.

Preparation is the key for a successful interpretation.

I want you to understand as media teams it is in your good interests to make sure that you give the prep to it the Auslan interpreters.

We need to make sure everything is covered off.

We need to make sure the Auslan interpreters when they are interpreting they are going to be prepared to talk about what the commissioner or the premier are going to be talking about.

They could be talking about other areas of New South Wales and the Interpreter could be preparing in other parts of New South Wales.

An example; I went and got all this information because I knew the bushfires were going bad on the south coast.

I read up on everything on the south coast, learned the different towns on the south coast, the different regions and I thought I have done all my preparation, I was ready to go.

The assistant commissioner walked in, did the broadcast and talked about the north.

I was gosh, lucky being New South Wales person I understood the areas he was talking about and knew they were north of Tamworth.

I was fortunate.

If I had been an Interpreter not familiar with the geography of the state it would be hard to interpret.

You probably think don't you just interpret the words, it is more to it than that.

The interpreters have to understand the tone, what the reasons behind the message that is being delivered is, there is all this other information that interpreters need to know to successfully interpret what is being said.

For me, going into that environment was an incredible experience.

I learned a lot, I understood that the media team were a very very busy team and like I had already said, it would have been great if we could have been part of the training leading up to the season.

We would have been better prepared.

Mind you, last year's bushfires was a great turning point for media outlets to use sign language interpreters for the pandemic.

It was like they had the training wheels on for the RFS bushfires ready for the pandemic coming into 2020 which was nice to see.

What I would like for you to really think about, when you are organising the season coming up and you are talking about communication, if you think of accessibility as being the key component first instead of last, you will benefit and everyone in the community will benefit.

Generally what happens is with media teams they often do think about Auslan interpreters but it is generally a last thing they do.

They usually organise everything else then think about the Auslan Interpreter.

That happens because somebody prompted them or somebody raised a point saying you know should we get interpreters.

This is something that should be done at the start and if you get anything from this presentation today, it is that you need to think at the start before the bushfire season and prepare your communication with the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Everyone benefits.

My experience with the RFS at Homebush for those three weeks during the summer of 19/20 was a very incredible - I was actually blown away by the professionalism and the understanding of bushfires and the detail that was shared during those three weeks.

I felt I was a little intimidated by everybody because I felt I wasn't prepared enough.

I just wanted to make sure that going forward that this, well, hopefully it won't happen again, hopefully the media teams out there will be able to talk to the agencies that they have the relationship with and set up good Auslan teams ready to go forward.

My main message here for everybody out there in the emergency services; accessibility.

Accessibility needs to be thought of first and then work on the rest of it.

Because, if you get that right, if you get the community with the biggest barriers right, therefore everybody in the community knows what is going on.

I just want to make sure that you all understand that accessibility is for everybody.

We just need to make sure that we all have equal footings on the communication that happens out there and this way people are safe.

People feel safe.

They feel they are educated and getting the same information as their family members and everybody else in the community.

We need to make sure that going forward this happens frequently and not infrequently.

I just want to say thank you for Phil for inviting me here today to do this short presentation.

I want to say that all the emergencies out there, all the emergency services out there do a fantastic job and I just want to say thank you and remember accessibility is the key here and do it at the start and not at the end.

Thank you.

-- Thank you Sean.

Sean, thanks very much for your presentation, access is vital for all of us in terms of being able to engage with the deaf community.

It's also vital, of course, that we do that training as you said before and that we engage better ahead of emergencies and don't wait until the emergency before we work with the deaf community that is a great idea of yours around using a liaison officer, somebody that we can have that we can have an ongoing dialogue with so that when the emergency happens we are in the best possible position to look after the deaf and hard of hearing communities as emergency service members.

Thank you Sean for your insights and we will have some time at the end of the presentation for some questions for Sean.

We already heard the bio for Leyla and I would like to invite her now to undertake her presentation.

Thank you Leyla.

-- Good morning, hello.

My name is Leyla Craig.

I would like to say thank you to EMPA and it's committee and also to Sean for asking me to co-present at this webinar today.

This presentation is Getting It Right tailoring communications and engagement between disability groups and emergency management.

The deaf community still has issues in terms of access to emergency information and messaging.

If we go to the next slide thank you.

I would like to give you a brief background on my experiences in Korea with the Disability Inclusion Disaster Risk Reduction D ID RR.

My experiences of working in the field internationally and locally on project that focus on the deaf community and emergency services and trying to look at risk reduction.

One of the projects I have been involved in in the past is about increasing the resilience of the deaf communities - increasing the resilience for New South Wales hazards for the deaf community.

I realised at that time that deaf people and hard of hearing people, their experiences not only in Australia but

also across the world is very very limited.

There is such limited research on deaf people's experiences when it comes to emergencies.

So I actually accepted a volunteer opportunity in the Philippines under the Australian Red Cross to work with the deaf community for a year and that was looking as part of the DRR, the risk reduction for disaster.

The thing that hit me was the limited resources and capacity of the deaf community over there.

I know they are not the only community.

This is very much a worldwide global problem for deaf communities.

So the research about deaf communities and emergencies is still very very limited.

There is some research on people with disability so the wider disability groups and their experiences with emergencies.

But there is not - it doesn't actually show which groups that research is specifically about, whether people that are blind or deaf or people with a physical disability.

It doesn't talk about the specific needs of the disability groups, whether it is the need for Auslan interpreters, guides, support workers, it doesn't go to that type of detail.

So with my experiences, certainly in Australia and overseas it led me to study a PhD we really focuses on the deaf community and organisations and how they can respond and support these communities in terms of emergency management.

I am also very excited to work in the disability inclusion with fire And Rescue New South Wales.

They are very much committed to focusing on strengthening community engagement with different disability groups including the deaf and hard of hearing group as well.

Slide three please.

People with disability have a higher risk of being affected by emergencies and disasters.

UN ES CA P in 2017 reported that people with disabilities compared to those without disabilities are four times more likely to die in disaster situations.

This is important.

This is critical.

What does the research say about this? Let's have a look at the next slide please.

As I have said before, there is research about disabilities and emergencies and it shows that there are three things to be aware of.

Firstly, very much some disaster management practices are largely top down and exclusionary which means that people in management in these emergency services may think they know what these organisations or communities need but they haven't consulted with them.

If we consider deaf or hard of hearing people they are quite often excluded from the planning process when it comes to emergency services.

No.2, there is a disconnect between disability groups and emergency management and services.

Where both groups actually lack the skills and knowledge about each other.

The third point is there is a need to change from a charity welfare model and that needs to become a social human rights model.

This is where some people feel people with disabilities need to be cured or fixed where there is not the case.

People with disabilities don't need to be fixed, what they need to do is have barriers broken down in order

for them to participate in either emergency training, the planning process, so they can become more aware and become more prepared in terms of disasters.

Then they are on a path with the communities of people without disability.

In terms of disasters, we have a look at the wider disability group, this relates or runs in parallel with people that are deaf and hard of hearing.

If we focus on deaf communities and disasters the research is growing.

The first documented research was in 2003 from America.

Those findings really showed that deaf people and hard of hearing people had fear of being unprepared.

There was poor dissemination of information and there was a lack of education in terms of emergency preparedness.

2003 that was, 18 years later we still see these problems exist amongst deaf communities whether locally here in Australia or across the globe.

We have to ask the question why.

On to the next slide please.

There was one project I was involved with called increasing the resilience in the deaf community in New South Wales to natural hazards and disasters.

This was led by the Deaf Society, the university of New South Wales and the state emergency agency wherein they collected data from the deaf community and its members in terms of emergency services and trying to identify what the deaf community's needs were, trying to - talking about their past experiences with disasters, what access they would like it to see in terms of future planning and emergency information and messaging.

There were three key findings.

Next slide please.

The first finding is about education.

The world Federation of the Deaf actually has a quote there that only 20 per cent of deaf people around the world have access to education.

Meaning 80 per cent receive no education at all.

In Australia there is access to education certainly for deaf people and hard of hearing people however sometimes that education is very much limited and there may be no support in Auslan for deaf children in schools which means that people feel isolated and excluded and it can affect their educational outcomes.

Next slide please.

If education has failed some deaf and hard of hearing people then certainly they may have some issues around disaster literacy, understanding terminologies that might be used by emergency services.

Disaster literacy is an individual's capacity to read, understand, use information and make informed decisions following instructions in mitigating, preparing, responding and recovering from a disaster.

We have had recent disasters in Australia and around the world and so there is a need to consider adopting and measuring the concept of disaster literacy, this begins really with communication.

The most important thing is communication.

Research from America has shown that communication scholars and practitioners actually recommend that communications for disaster related materials for deaf and hard of hearing is most effective when presented in their native sign language and also in a plain language.

Using the maximum of a year for educational level.

There are also sign languages that have established signs or formal signs for disaster terminologies which means deaf people don't understand the words they are seeing in terms of terminology.

For deaf and hard of hearing to become disaster literate it means understanding emergency concepts and accurate signs for disaster terminologies.

That needs to happen before you go on to any type of disaster risk reduction training.

Next slide please.

The second point is the common communication barriers.

So through the project with the deaf community in New South Wales there were discussions that were to be had in six different regions that brought challenges in terms of access.

Accessing information in the health, education, social and mental health services is an issue.

Support on getting training on emergency preparedness and response.

Challenges in being involved in local and state emergency response planning.

And challenges with disaster information in terms of maybe not being in plain English.

The key recommendations have really found there is a need to increase inclusion for deaf and hard of hearing people, deaf organisations, service providers, Auslan interpreters in all emergency and disaster planning processes.

That really avoids the chance of anybody being excluded.

Next slide thank you.

The third and last key finding was really about the disconnect between the deaf community and emergency services.

This is about a situation where both groups do not have knowledge and skills about each other.

There are some emergency services that do acknowledge deaf and hard of hearing people but they don't always know the best way to approach them and this may also apply to other disabilities as well.

On the other hand there are some deaf and hard of hearing people who assume that maybe emergency services don't want to help them or don't really have any interest in learning how to help them.

Deaf and hard of hearing people certainly have a lived experience of hearing loss which means they know the kind of help they need from emergency services but at the same time they may not have the confidence to approach these emergency services which leads those emergency services to think that everything is okay for those communities because there is no communication.

These are huge gaps and it shows that there is a need for cultural and awareness training for both groups in learning how to work together, how to share knowledge, how to exchange ideas and skills and how everybody can work together in these emergency situations.

There is also a need for communication and messaging that is really designed in this way.

The deaf community need to know how to prepare and how to respond and become confident in themselves in case of any type of emergency.

Auslan interpreters is our second point.

What information do they need? What knowledge do they need to be aware of interpreting successfully in a live interpreting situation on TV? How can they deliver the message successfully between the emergency services and making sure the deaf community gets that message? .

The third point is deaf organisations and office providers, what plans do they need in place as an organisation

to support near staff, volunteers and clients that may be affected during emergency crises? Next slide thank you.

Let's talk about our current practices.

As many of you would already be aware, you have seen Auslan interpreters and the inclusion of those interpreters and live captioning on TV during emergency broadcasts and now it is becoming more common practice there is this type of access.

Which is fantastic, it is great.

It real heightens the awareness of making sure that access is provided for everyone.

But there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to improve this area.

Most people may assume that captioning is suffice and good enough for deaf and hard of hearing people to access and that may be true for some people but not for all.

The communication needs and preferences amongst deaf and hard of hearing people various and is quite diverse.

Some people rely on captioning, others prefer to get their information in Auslan and there are others that may use both types of information gathering.

For Auslan interpreters the consistency and timing of providing interpreters on TV and the social media is an area that needs to be improved.

Sometimes this access is not made available until a few days later, it doesn't happen straightaway.

When it happens one or two days later it means the deaf community has missed out on important information.

It is critical to consider everybody's access needs to make sure that this information, emergency information, emergency messaging can get out to as many people as possible in a timely manner.

As I said before, Auslan interpreting and captioning is fantastic but it certainly is not enough.

There still needs to be a way to empower deaf and hard of hearing communities with the skills they need to prepare, respond and to recover from disasters.

We have some deaf and hard of hearing people that volunteer in different emergency services in Australia and there was a project that was led by the Deaf Society of New South Wales called the Get Ready Project.

It trained deaf and hard of hearing people with the skills and knowledge on emergency preparedness and how they could become bridges, communication bridges between the deaf community and emergency services.

However, sustaining a project and initiative like this remains a challenge and shows that there needs to be more support for this to become practice and to generate interest for the deaf and hard of hearing people who wish to work as volunteers in emergency services.

One New South Wales emergency agency has taken the initiative to work in making disability inclusion an example of best practice within their organisation.

That's Fire and Rescue New South Wales.

Next PowerPoint please.

Fire and Rescue New South Wales are currently working on disability inclusion where it is about strengthening community engagement between different groups.

This involves reaching out to disability organisations, having conversations with them, identifying specific needs because everybody does have a different need.

This helps Fire and Rescue New South Wales to develop and deliver fire safety education and messaging to

different disability groups in a way that fits their needs.

For example, using Auslan or captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

One of the activities of Fire and Rescue is working on is developing a facts sheet for fire fighters.

What that means is that when they consult with disability groups they get information from them and they develop a fact sheet that gives general information about access needs for that particular group especially during a time of an emergency.

For example, a fact sheet on deaf and hard of hearing people for fire fighters will include a general information about definitions or different types of deafness and hearing loss, people that use sign language or maybe use speech, those that become deaf later in life, resources that can be used to contact emergency services such as SMS, sign language relay services, TTYs, mobile phones, computers.

They are also developing some internal training for fire fighters on safety visits to ensure they meet the needs of people with specific disability.

So a safety visit would mean that Fire and Rescue New South Wales can be visiting homes, checking on smoke alarms in the homes and with permission those fire fighters will also check around the home and property to provide information around safety and advice.

It could be around the kitchen, heaters, fires, electricity.

They will also provide advice on a fire safety evacuation plan in case a fire happens when the home and also how to call the emergency services if needed.

For fire fighters that go to the homes of deaf and hard of hearing people they become more aware of what those needs are, of how to communicate with people.

That gives them more awareness and a little more confidence to either communicate themselves or get services of an Auslan Interpreter.

Fire and Safety New South Wales are already working on an education program for children with disabilities.

That involves fire fighters going out to schools to educate children with disability on fire safety by showing them a child friendly video that is accessible for all people to watch.

It may have captioning, it will have Auslan interpreters, plain English, audio so it is easily accessible for everybody.

Next slide please.

So there is still more work to be done to improve access within emergency public spaces.

This means that it includes understanding and interpreting disaster terminology, providing emergency preparedness training, making sure that there is access in emergency evacuation centres and shelters, training deaf and hard of hearing people who want to work and volunteer in the emergency services and establishing a communication and support system in place to accommodate deaf and hard of hearing people who may be affected by emergencies.

All this can be achieved if deaf and hard of hearing people have inclusion, Auslan interpreters, organisations and service providers that serve deaf and hard of hearing people need to be included in local and state emergency planning.

Next slide thank you.

I would like to thank you very much.

-- Thank you Leyla for your excellent presentation today.

Also for your research.

Clearly with the morbidity being so much higher with people with disability it is so vital that people like you are doing this research.

It's concerning of course that there has been this lack of consultation in the past between people who are deaf and hard of hearing with the emergency services and so good to hear that some of these barriers are now being broken down through your research with Fire and Rescue New South Wales and other emergency services.

Clearly there is a need, as you said, for greater cultural awareness training and appropriate communication. We need to do, as Sean said more work with interpreters to make sure they are well prepared as well.

We need to do more than just assume that if we have an Interpreter and captions that the job is done.

We need to make sure as emergency service communicators that the engagement is continual and we are including planning for the inclusion of deaf communities and people who are hard of hearing in all that we are doing and not just adding this in as an afterthought.

Thank you again for your research.

We now have some time for some questions.

The first question comes from Elizabeth gardener.

Elizabeth has asked Leyla; is there any organisation in Australia using deaf interpreters in the media yet that we can learn off.

Perhaps Sean this might also be one for you as well.

-- At the moment I know that we do have some deaf interpreters working in Australia but I don't think the training is there yet.

I'm not sure if they had enough media training.

I think there have been some more projects, small projects down within the emergency services but certainly there is just need for more.

I am not sure, Sean, if you can add any more information about that.

-- Sorry guys, I forgot to unmute.

Look, deaf interpreters we do have them.

I saw some come on to the TV from Melbourne.

We have a couple of trained deaf interpreters in Melbourne.

One of the organisations Auslan Services in Melbourne they provided a deaf Interpreter.

We have a deaf Interpreter on our books.

Generally other organisations have deaf interpreters as well.

Once again, I would like to reiterate the fact we need to train and provide training for interpreters whether they are hearing or whether they are deaf to be able to stand in front of the TV.

That is something that we definitely need to work on.

-- Thank you.

The next is from Andrew Nicholas, I think it is more a comment but you may both like to say something as well.

He says; accessibility means all people need to be included.

We also need to think about deaf blind with varying levels of deafness and blindness.

One important thing I would like to see is transcripts be available immediately afterwards as part of video broadcasts.

Sean or Leyla, do you have anything to add to that?

-- I agree with that, yes I agree with that statement very much.

I think it is worth thinking about what we should be doing certainly in terms of transcripts.

-- The next question -

-- More services too when it comes to deaf blind people, you know, and I think they need access to information as well.

We need to be committed to being able to engage with that particular group as well to find out what their specific needs are.

-- I would also like to support what Leyla said.

The deaf blind community is a sub group within the deaf and hard of hearing community.

This is a group that generally left out and something we could work towards working with the agencies throughout Australia to provide information for that particular sub group which generally gets left in the dark.

-- The next question comes from Rebecca Hogan.

She asks; which communications form would be a priority? Would it be captioning, Auslan or a mix of both and this is in terms of rapidly changing information or breaking news.

Sean, do you want to start with that one.

-- Okay, look the best option is a mix of both of course.

That is the way to go.

I know sometimes things happen last minute.

As long as we are striving and trying to achieve the best outcome something is better than nothing. The ultimate goal is to have both.

-- Leyla, do you wish to add to that?

-- Yes, I agree with everything Sean said there.

For deaf and hard of hearing communities it is a very diverse community.

Everybody has a preference in terms of their communication needs.

Some people prefer an Auslan Interpreter, some people prefer captioning and others like both.

It is hard to answer.

I think a mix of both is the optimum way to go which covers all of the community's needs.

-- Thank you.

Next question is from Gianni from ABC emergency; we often rely on radio as our communication source of last resource when NBN and power fails.

Is this completely inaccessible to some deaf and hard of hearing people or is there other technology or services that can share warnings that have originally been broadcast on radio? Leyla, are you aware of anything in this regard?

-- That is a great question.

There have been discussions about this area actually.

There is no easy answer to that.

If the power does go out how are you accessing your information, what happens for a deaf person? Maybe it is a case of deaf people asking people who can hear around them to let them know what is happening on the radio.

It is the old fashioned way of doing things but seems to be what would happen in that kind of situation.

-- I would add to that as well.

Definitely deaf people have been always the last people to learn of what has been happening around them.

My dad used to say I am always the last person knowing what is going on because he never got information until he read the paper the next day.

Whereas the wider community has the benefit of listening to the radio.

In the case of NBN failing or electricity dropping out hopefully people have batteries charged on iPads and tablets.

We are fortunate in today's world with technology the way it is.

I rely heavily on the radio because I am fortunate that I can hear.

For deaf people they rely heavily on the internet on the instant access to the NBN.

Look, you are right Leyla, it is going back to the old ways and that is talking to your friends and neighbours, making sure your relationships with people and can pass on the information to you.

-- The next question comes from Elizabeth gardener again, thank you Elizabeth.

She asks; have you found it easier to navigate representation from the deaf community than the hard of hearing community? There seems to be many more organisations and community groups representing the deaf community than the hard of hearing community.

Sean, I might get you to start first this time.

-- Look, there are many organisations but the deaf community as a whole works together.

They strive for the ultimate outcome of good communication.

With my family I want them to have full access to communication.

Is it hard to navigate, I don't think it is.

People are generally open minded to coming together and working together.

You will find the organisations will do that.

Also, you have the deaf community, the hard of hearing community, the community as a whole we have groups within the community.

When you talk about somebody hard of hearing you are talking about somebody generally who is a little older, been around industrial equipment information all their lives and lost their hearing.

You get the seniors who lost hearing as well.

We cover that aspect of the community as well.

There is, you know, when people think deaf and hard of hearing it is actually a big population of people that need access to all these brand new technologies available.

This is something that is why the community strives to work together.

-- Leyla, did you wish to add to that?

-- Yes, agreeing with Sean, it can be difficult at the same time too especially for hard of hearing or deaf people, are we a group of Auslan users who are a smaller group compared to people who have a hearing loss.

I think connection with the hard of hearing community can be easy for some people to work with the hard of hearing community because of communication.

I think deaf people have Auslan interpreters but I think for hard of hearing people sometimes they don't feel they fit into the deaf community so we really need to try to work together and come together in these times.

I think it can be difficult to work together in some times.

I think we should welcome everybody with hearing loss and work together especially in terms of emergency services and what we can do in times of disaster.

I think it is the same aim, as Sean said, about access.

Preferences, there is preferences about access.

It is about sharing the same goal which is about communication for all.

I think it is important that we keep our eye on that goal so we can work together as a wider community.

-- The next question comes from Rebecca Hogan.

She says; has social media been a good way to disseminate emergency information for the deaf and hard of

hearing communities.

That is following on from Gianni's question.

We might get you to start this time Leyla.

-- Yes, I think mostly deaf and hard of hearing people rely very heavily on social media for information, emergency messaging and there are also challenges attached to that as well.

You may have an Interpreter on TV, Facebook may not show the Interpreter.

There is a challenge.

If you are accessing information on associate media the captioning might not be there.

It is an area that needs to be improved to make sure those accessibility functions are available everywhere.

-- I wanted to remind everybody not everyone has access to social media.

It is a fantastic platform to get information.

We have seen how well it works as a community.

The deaf community rely heavily on it.

There is also part of the deaf community that don't use social media.

My own father who relies heavily on the TV for information.

He lives on the south coast during those horrible bushfires last year and he doesn't - he can't even - doesn't know how to press the space bar on a keyboard.

For people like that in the community they rely heavily on the TV.

Yes, the answer to your question is the social media platform is a fantastic way to get the message out.

-- Question from Kate tea, are there initiatives for deaf blind people and deaf with additional disabilities.

I will get to you start this time Sean.

-- I can't answer that question to be honest.

We do have organisations out there that look after the deaf blind community and deaf people with additional disabilities, they would be better off to speak to than myself.

I can't speak on their behalf.

There is one thing I know, if we can cater for the deaf blind community and people with extra disabilities it would generally work for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

It is a discussion that needs to be had.

-- Thank you.

Leyla, did you wish to add to that?

-- Yes, it is a great question that was brought up there.

I think with everybody emergency organisation they really have to have strong community connections and look at those specific needs with the - in those communities, the deaf blind people, ask what their needs are. What do they require.

What do they need from emergency services if an emergency situation should happen.

It is about talking to those people and finding out what their needs are and you need to let them tell you what their needs are.

I think it is a worthwhile exercise to consult with the different groups about their needs.

-- A couple of last questions, Linda Williams has asked can we have access to the references you mentioned in your presentation to help us identify particular challenges in an emergency we can use to help us support our desire to assist through local government?

-- Yes, so I can share that with EMPA and they will be able to disseminate that information through the website or however they want to do that or you can contact me directly on my email address which is at the end of the slides.

I am happy to pass on references and share those.

-- One final question, also for you Leyla, this is from Rebecca again; that statistic you mentioned in the slide that people with disability are four times more likely to die in an emergency or disaster has that statistic been improving over time.

-- Great question, hard to say because the data around the world is not in to actually find.

I think the risk is still very high, especially for some countries that don't have emergency training or preparedness training in place and nothing is set up for people with disability.

It might be higher there than other countries.

It would be very different around the world.

Even if we can see that it is high, even if it has improved I think there is still room for improvement obviously.

-- Thank you everyone for your questions today and for attending our webinar.

We have been delighted to have you join us today and a reminder that this webinar has been recorded and we will make that available and let you as participants know.

A reminder too that it is just 33 days until the EMPA conference in Sydney on 2-4 June.

We hope that you will join us at that conference.

We have got an ethical strategy workshop with Mark Croweller on 2 June follow by the key notes Dr Norman swan and Jo Bofone from Emergency Management Australia and wonderful speakers.

Thank you to Sean Sweeney and Leyla Craig for their wonderful work in presenting to us.

We are grateful to you for your time and grateful also to our two interpreters today and also to our person doing the captioning.

We really are grateful to all of you for the wonderful work you do and we hope that this will lead to greater engagement between the deaf and hard of hearing community and the emergency services.

Thank you everyone.