



Australian Disaster Resilience
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**Taking preparedness
action to scale**



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connection · empowerment · respect · wisdom

CASE STUDY:

TAKING PREPAREDNESS ACTION TO SCALE

Abstract

We all know that getting someone to think about, place value in and then take action to prepare themselves for an outcome that is often not immediate or guaranteed, is hard. How about getting three million people across Australia to think about, place value in and then take action to prepare themselves for an emergency, within a five year timeframe? That's the challenge that has faced Red Cross since 2015 when an organisational strategy reset delivered a new outcome to its domestic emergency services program: 3 million Australians are equipped to prepare for and recover from a disaster by 2020.

Over the past four years the organisation has reviewed its existing disaster preparedness activities and has collaborated internally and externally to explore alternative activities, tools, processes and outcomes in order to better understand what works and what doesn't work in terms of scaling preparedness action. We've experimented with different types of technology and ways of working by applying agile and human-centred design principles. We've discovered some great learnings that we'd love to share.

We've learned:

- That we need to understand humans – their behaviours, attitudes and beliefs
- That we need to understand what motivates people to take sustained action - the moments that matter to them. And that these will be very different depending upon the person, their situation and circumstances, because context is everything.
- That people are more likely to react than to plan for an event that may never happen.
- That we need to work differently and better develop our capacity to rapidly experiment and test hypotheses and gather evidence to help us define where we go next.
- The importance of partnership and collaboration.
- That even if we design great solutions, it is equally important to be able to motivate people to use them.

But mostly we've learned that it's complicated.

Australian Red Cross has been working to encourage individuals and households to prepare for an emergency since 2007 when it launched its flagship preparedness program Emergency Rediplan. Based on research and the preparedness programs delivered internationally by American and Canadian Red Cross Societies, Emergency Rediplan was launched as a non-hazard specific four-step program that encouraged individuals and households to better understand their hazard risks, to make a plan, pack an emergency kit and to take steps to know their neighbours. Deliberately designed to complement, rather than compete with, the multiple hazard-based, property-focussed preparedness programs in existence at the time, the ultimate aim of the program was and continues to be to build the efficacy of individuals to manage the human impacts of emergencies; including health (both physical and emotional), financial and material consequences.

In February 2015 the Red Cross Board endorsed Strategy 2020. Deemed a roadmap for the future that would guide the organisation to respond to rapidly changing humanitarian needs in its second century of service to the Australian community, Strategy 2020 consists of six key goals for the organisation. Unlike previous Red Cross strategies, each of these goals includes a number of measurable outcomes, or targets, designed to scale up certain activities in order to achieve efficiency and maximum impact across the organisation's programs.

For the domestic emergency services program, Strategy 2020 places emphasis through three outcomes on:

1. Influencing government and corporate spending on disaster prevention and risk reduction activities
2. Improving organisational capability and capacity to respond to an increasing incidence of emergencies and other significant events, and
3. Equipping more people than ever to prepare for and recover from an emergency.

Specifically, three million Australians equipped to prepare for and recover from a disaster by the year 2020.

The challenge

The new strategy presented the Red Cross Emergency Services program with an immediate challenge. Equipping 3 million people to prepare for and recover from an emergency was a significant increase for the program in terms of its outputs and outcomes over previous years, as shown at the time by a fairly limited data set.

Shifting how we work

2016 for the most part was spent working through what the new strategy meant for the organisation. This process involved multiple workshops designed to gain input from a diverse group of attendees from across and outside of the organisation, as well as crowd-sourcing input and ideas for achieving the strategy via a web platform.

A review across the emergency services program of preparedness, response and recovery activities was also conducted. The review outcomes, combined with insights taken from consultation activities, informed the development of a framework consisting of three key focus areas for the program over the coming years:

- **Influencing** activities that will drive the policy and legislative environment.

- Formally **connecting** and working through groups, communities and agencies to achieve impact and scale.
- **Delivering** ES services, resources, knowledge and advice that we know will achieve maximum impact.

The framework also highlighted the importance of establishing and sustaining an enabling practice environment and culture within which people are supported, resourced and encouraged to develop the skills and expertise that they need to deliver best practice services.

This framework marked a shift away from our time-based model of preparedness, response and recovery towards cross-cutting activities that are relevant to communities before, during and after emergencies.

Specifically related to the 3 million outcome Red Cross:

- Determined it would continue direct delivery of services such as the Pillowcase Program, but to ensure the delivery of our services in areas most at risk to hazards. A key project currently underway is to identify, access and represent data sources relating to hazard risk, community resilience indicators, and our own Red Cross footprint across the country and to use these sources to better inform where we deliver our services.
- Determined it would identify opportunities to scale activities through existing networks, including the promotion of our content and resources through third-parties or training third-parties to facilitate preparedness action across their networks.
- Committed to exploring solutions designed specifically to motivate and enable preparedness action at scale, with an emphasis on technology solutions and broad-scale campaigning.

Striving for scale

Over the past three years we have undertaken a number of projects that fall into the latter category of activity listed above. These have included:

Development of the Get Prepared app

A collaborative project undertaken by Red Cross and IAG as part of a shared value partnership. The project has been running for three years over three phases – audience research, the design, build and launch of a minimum viable product (MVP), and ongoing iteration. Insights taken from in-depth interviews with people across Australia through the audience research phase heavily informed the project, as did co-designing prototypes with community members and user testing of concepts prior to development of the MVP. We have and continue to use data and insights taken from app analytics and an impact study conducted by IAG to inform iterative development of the product. To date the app has seen 15,972 downloads without any major promotion. Marketing activities to promote the app have recently commenced across both organisations.

Promotion of preparedness action through networks

Red Cross identified and engaged with a number of networks for targeted promotion of preparedness action. Activities have included the development of an MoU with Airbnb, and promotion of the Get Prepared app through a pilot with the Blood Service in WA, the Uber app, the Resilient Sydney initiative, the QLD Carer network, and promotion, with financial incentive, via the national Carer Network. The most successful promotion has been through the Uber app, with more than 30,000 people clicking through to the Red Cross app page in a one-month period.

Experimenting with tech through hackathons

Red Cross partnered with design agency Versa for a day-long hackathon that resulted in the development of five low-fidelity prototypes including app wireframes, a podcast and a chatbot. The agency closed its doors for the day and set its mind to designing tech solutions that enable preparedness action. Red Cross provided the teams with the problem, user insights and personas, and Red Cross/Versa teams identified and prototyped solutions across tech platforms including artificial intelligence, digital execution, the Internet of Things, immersive, and voice.

Red Cross also partnered with IBM and CFA for a Melbourne-based hackathon aimed at exploring solutions, using IBM technology, for supporting communities before, during and after emergencies. The event was run as part of IBM's global Call for Code initiative. In the lead up to the event, the IBM Design Garage team facilitated a two-day workshop, hosted by Red Cross, that brought together people with lived experience of the Tathra and District bushfires and various Queensland floods, to explore the problems they faced before, during and after the disaster. Red Cross then presented insights from the workshop, in particular the pain points identified by participants, to hackathon participants. The winning idea from the hackathon combined facial recognition software, data sharing and protection software and the Get Prepared app, to allow people to easily access and prove their identity during and after disasters and reduce the need to fill out multiple forms.

Experimentation and rapid prototyping through agile teams: Project Equipped

Red Cross ran two eight-week initiatives designed to rapidly experiment on ideas that could help the organisation reach scale while at the same time experimenting with collaborative and agile principles. Ten people from four program areas across three states were taken offline at various times over the course of the two sprints to form a core team dedicated to experimentation. At any one time the team comprised agile and design experience, digital and communications skills, emergency management expertise, digital concept development and testing, behavioural insights, and marketing expertise. The team undertook more than 20 experiments over the course of the 16 weeks. Experiments included:

- testing existing prototypes sitting on the virtual shelf as a result of hackathons and early prototyping from the Get Prepared app development with potential users to determine opportunities for future development
- experimenting with various channels, messages and activities to optimise the promotion and download of the Get Prepared app
- exploration of personas, conducting surveys and exploring the numerous insights that came up as a result of these surveys and user testing insights, such as:
 - should we even be talking about emergencies when promoting preparedness action
 - does the type of emergency matter
 - would a different type of ask work
 - does fear compel action, and what might that look like
 - are people already prepared through other means?

Applying learnings through the Red Cross Disaster Preparedness Week Campaign

Each year since 2012 Red Cross has run a Disaster Preparedness Campaign over a one-week period in September. The campaign predominantly involves promotion of preparedness actions through Red Cross's extensive national channels to audiences including donors, members, volunteers,

partners and the general public. We have used the campaign over the past four years to test target groups, channels, messages and calls to action and continue to tweak activities on the basis of the results we see. This year's September campaign will further test a persona group that emerged through market research and was validated through the development of the Get Prepared app, as well as insights into messages and channels gained through Project Equipped experiments.

What we've learnt

Preparedness is a hard sell

Insights generated through these projects overwhelmingly show that motivating people to prepare for something that may or may not happen in their lifetime, is not easy because:

- People aren't thinking about emergencies unless one is imminent or they are experiencing one.
- Everything we are asking people to do outside of that moment of experiencing an emergency is happening alongside the busy-ness of life.
- Understanding a person's context is critical to motivating preparedness action. If a message and action does not reflect a person's context and doesn't provide an immediate opportunity or address a perceived immediate threat, it's unlikely to prompt action.
- Even if people were thinking about an emergency and place value in taking preparedness action (which 80% of the population do), they are unlikely to take an action. Reasons for this include our optimism bias, (it won't happen to me), and the fact that we don't like to plan.

However, motivating preparedness action is not impossible, and there are a number of factors identified through insight that influence a person's likelihood to take preparedness action. These include:

- lived experience of an emergency
- perception that there is an imminent and proximate risk
- a health scare
- witnessing a family or friend experience an emergency
- having a responsibility for others
- gender (middle-aged women are more likely to take preparedness action)
- having a condition that is likely to be exacerbated by an emergency.

Key impediments to preparedness action, as identified through insights, included:

- Lack of time
- Perception that there is not a proximate risk
- Inability to take action (real or perceived)
- Having other, more pressing priorities
- Perception that one is already prepared.

Activities people identified as most likely to take to prepare themselves for an emergency are:

- Storing important documents
- Identifying people to reach out to
- Purchasing/updating insurance.

We need to better understand the whole human experience of emergencies end-to-end

To successfully 'equip' individuals to prepare for and recover from emergencies we need to understand the emergency experience as an end-to-end journey and be really clear about what the challenges are from the perspective of those travelling the path.

While we have invested in learning more about people's context before an event and the moments that matter or triggers for motivating action, we need to do the same for the period of time an emergency unfolds, and the days, weeks and years after an emergency has occurred. Understanding the challenges that people faced help us to ensure that the actions we are encouraging people to take beforehand will address the common pain points that people experience afterwards, but also allow us to work with communities to design solutions that address these pain points.

Action can't be forced from the top down.

Putting people at the centre of what we do is critical if we are to succeed in motivating action. The most scalable solutions are those that most effectively solve a critical problem or offer an attractive opportunity/experience specific to an individual and their context. One size does not and will not fit all. So we need to understand our users and continue to design solutions specific to their context and needs.

For Red Cross and our partners this has involved undertaking audience and market research and better applying insights to inform what it is we are trying to achieve, working alongside community members to design the steps we need to take to get there, and testing products and ideas as they evolve with the people most likely to use them.

Drawing upon user insights to inform programing and service delivery is not a new concept for Red Cross. In addition to academic research, Emergency Rediplan is based on the stories and experiences of impacted individuals shared and observed through our recovery work. The organisation has been investing in market research and using insights to inform its campaign activities over the past decade and we regularly undertake evaluations and reviews of programs and resources to ensure that they are relevant and making improvements where necessary.

However, the introduction to and application of human-centred design thinking, as experienced through the work we have completed with the likes of IAG, IBM and design agencies, has given us tangible and easily applicable processes and tools, such as persona development, empathy mapping, customer journey mapping and rapid prototyping techniques, that have helped us to further draw out, clarify and apply key user insights to our work. Applying design thinking techniques allows us to be clearer about who we are designing for and then directly engaging those community members in defining pain points, determining priorities and designing useful and usable solutions.

Applying agile and principles helps

Applying agile principles to our work helped us to get things done faster. The principles and tools helped the teams to focus and to much more clearly articulate priority actions and achievements within the team and with external stakeholders.

The work needs to be made a priority

Successful collaborations and agile principles are only useful when the project is made a priority for all involved and scaling anything means making it a priority in order to thoroughly explore, test, learn and commit to growth.

Using evidence to inform decision-making is critical

Having measures for success in place so that we were clear on exactly what we were trying to achieve and how we were tracking at any given time was critical. These insights informed where we went next and when we needed to move on from a concept because we weren't seeing the interest or uptake that we had hoped for.

Working with people who think and do things differently inspires great things

Red Cross will not scale preparedness action alone. All of the progress achieved to date has been significantly influenced by the input and actions of collaborators. What works, what doesn't and what we might test next that will inspire further development and progress has been informed by many people who bring different perspectives, questions, tools, experiences and ideas to the table. This has been the case both internally within Red Cross, and through partnerships and discussions with other individuals from organisations across every sector.

Where are we now and where to from here?

A key ongoing challenge for us at Red Cross is how we define 'equipped' and how we measure when 'equipping' has been achieved - a critical requirement of having a measurable target. Preparedness is not a finite state, it's subjective; what is appropriate for one individual may not be appropriate for another, and we often ask people to do things or people take actions that are not easily quantifiable. Balancing the need to fulfil a numerical target with ensuring that we continue to develop solutions that are most appropriate to the needs of communities and that will be impactful continues to be a challenge, however one that has forced us to think deeply about how we work and what our activities are achieving. It has also consolidated our understanding of the complexity inherent in motivating people to take action for something they most probably aren't thinking about and developed our ability to better engage and work alongside community to develop solutions.

Based on current data, Red Cross has significantly increased the reach of its messages and activities beyond eight million people (just over one million in the last financial year) and we equipped close to 250,000 people in the past financial year, a marked improvement on our activities prior to 2015. A key activity currently underway is to further develop our measurement framework, which is currently capturing reach, signal for action and action, so that it also captures indirect contribution and ultimately impact.

We remain committed to working with our partners to further develop concepts and products, including the Get Prepared app, and will continue to explore existing opportunities and networks to leverage the preparedness message.

We will also continue to draw on and use evidence and insights to identify and narrow in on the opportunities and moments that are most conducive to motivating preparedness action. Our ever-changing list of questions for consideration currently include:

- How might we better address the key pain points identified by people with lived experience of emergencies?
- How might we support people with lived experience to take action to prepare?
- How might we enable people with lived experience to champion preparedness?
- How might we better use triggers such as disaster warnings, a health scare or the experience of or responsibility of another to motivate preparedness action?

Conclusion

While the task clearly has proved challenging, having a measurable, numerical goal for our preparedness work has sharpened our focus, brought significant advancement in our thinking and, most importantly, helped us to support a greater number of community members in preparing for emergencies than would otherwise have been the case.

Given the seemingly inevitable impact of climate change, increased population densities and exposure to risk, the Red Cross experience provides a salient message for all organisations involved in preparedness programs; namely, the importance of putting the human at the centre of all we do and working collaboratively, not only within, but also external to, the emergency management sector. In doing so, we most effectively maximise the impact of our investment and collective effort to contribute to a better prepared Australian community.