

## An Australia Wide Learning Network

# Grappling with complexity to sustain a responsive community recovery

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# THE POSSIBILITY LAB

1. Why was this important? What was the need?
2. Who came and how did we reach them?
3. What did it feel like to participate? To be welcomed? To belong?
4. What did design and facilitation traditions bring to this?
5. What was the value of the network to participants?
6. Further benefits and opportunities and what next?

1. Why?

2. Who came?

3. The experience

4. Design, facilitation

5. Value to Participants

6. What next?



# Possibility Lab

A space for community recovery practitioners

Australian Institute for  
Disaster Resilience



Social Recovery  
Reference Group  
AUSTRALIA

a space to learn together, workshop issues and challenges and form a supportive network with peers for those working in community recovery

# WHY WAS THIS NETWORK IMPORTANT? THE NEED

What it's like to step into this kind of role as a new recovery officer

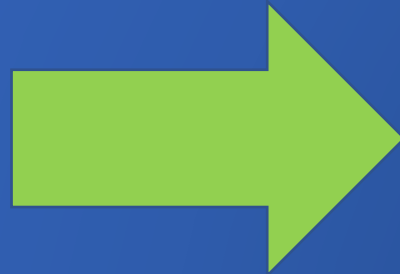
The environment

The impact on the new worker

The potential for harm



# MEET SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS



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# WHO REGISTERED AND ATTENDED?

- Attendance was based on a 'come if you are able to' model
- Attendee numbers peaked in the first session before stabilising at around 20 people on average.
- Most people attended multiple sessions; a smaller minority were 'one-time attendees' based on particular guest speakers or topics of interest



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# WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO PARTICIPATE?

Culture and values

Safe Space

Rich learning

Challenged

Supported not judged

Listening to others



# DESIGN AND FACILITATION

What did design and facilitation traditions bring to this?

- Courage & Renewal Circle's of Trust AND Art of Hosting Dialogue Practices

What other design principles did we apply?

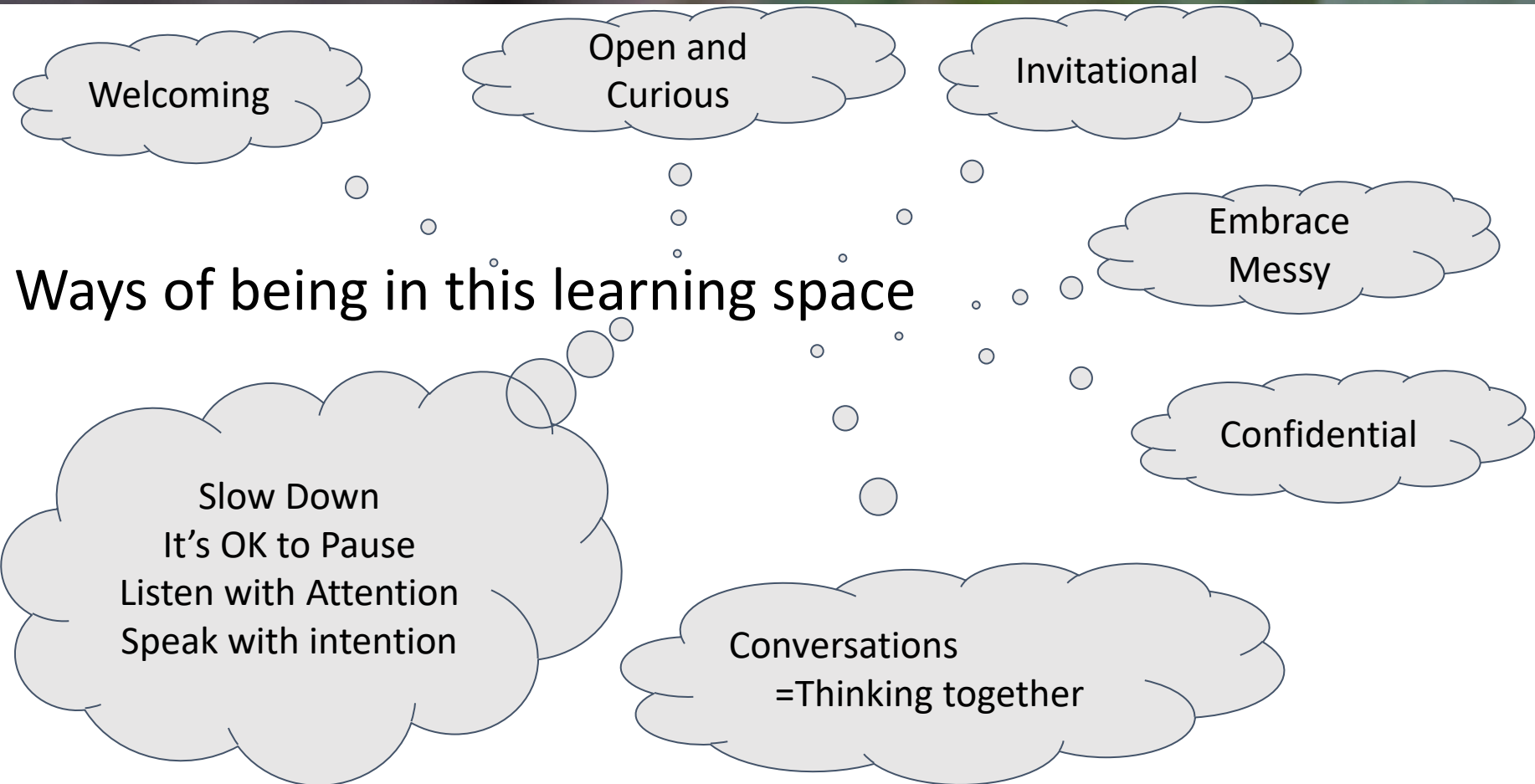
- Learning through hearing yourself into speech
- Making time for conversation and smaller breakout groups in each session (NOT a 'fill the empty bucket educational philosophy)
- Design of check in and check out and open questions to frame the sessions
- 'Charged' and 'Safe' space created for learning



# PRINCIPLES FOR HOW WE WILL BE TOGETHER (CULTURE AND ATMOSPHERE)

- Acknowledge one another as equals and give and receive welcome
- When the going gets rough turn to wonder and curiosity (setting aside judgement and defensiveness to listen to yourself and others).
- Offer what you can and ask for what you need, the space is invitational.
- We slow down so we have time to think and reflect, speak with intention, listen with attention, gift your presence to people.
- We remember that conversation is the natural way that humans think together
- We expect it to be messy at times
- We observe and maintain confidentiality

# HOW MIGHT WE HOLD THIS SPACE TOGETHER?



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# OPEN QUESTIONS – BUILDING CONNECTIONS

- What drew you to do recovery work?
- What drew you to be part of this group?
- What would you like to learn from this series?
- What's the weather like in your part of the world? (metaphor)
- How would you rate your energy levels and why?
- How are you leaving?
- What are you learning?

# THE VALUE TO PARTICIPANTS?

- Not alone
- Connecting to others in similar positions
- Check in outside sessions, trouble shoot
- Efficient 'on the job' knowledge sharing and application
- Structural enablers for this work in other jurisdictions
- Connected to further PD opportunities
- Circuit breaker



# THE VALUE TO PARTICIPANTS? KNOWLEDGE & LEARNING

*Lots of lessons get forgotten when people are in the same situation [short-term contracts]. (Survey respondent)*

*Access to timely and relevant information for our role, particularly special guests. (Survey respondent)*

# THE VALUE TO PARTICIPANTS? NETWORKING

*I found it useful to network with other people who are in my similar role, and it provided an opportunity to share our learnings and experiences and for us to learn from other professionals who have been in recovery work longer. (Survey respondent)*

# THE VALUE TO PARTICIPANTS? COLLEGIATE SUPPORT

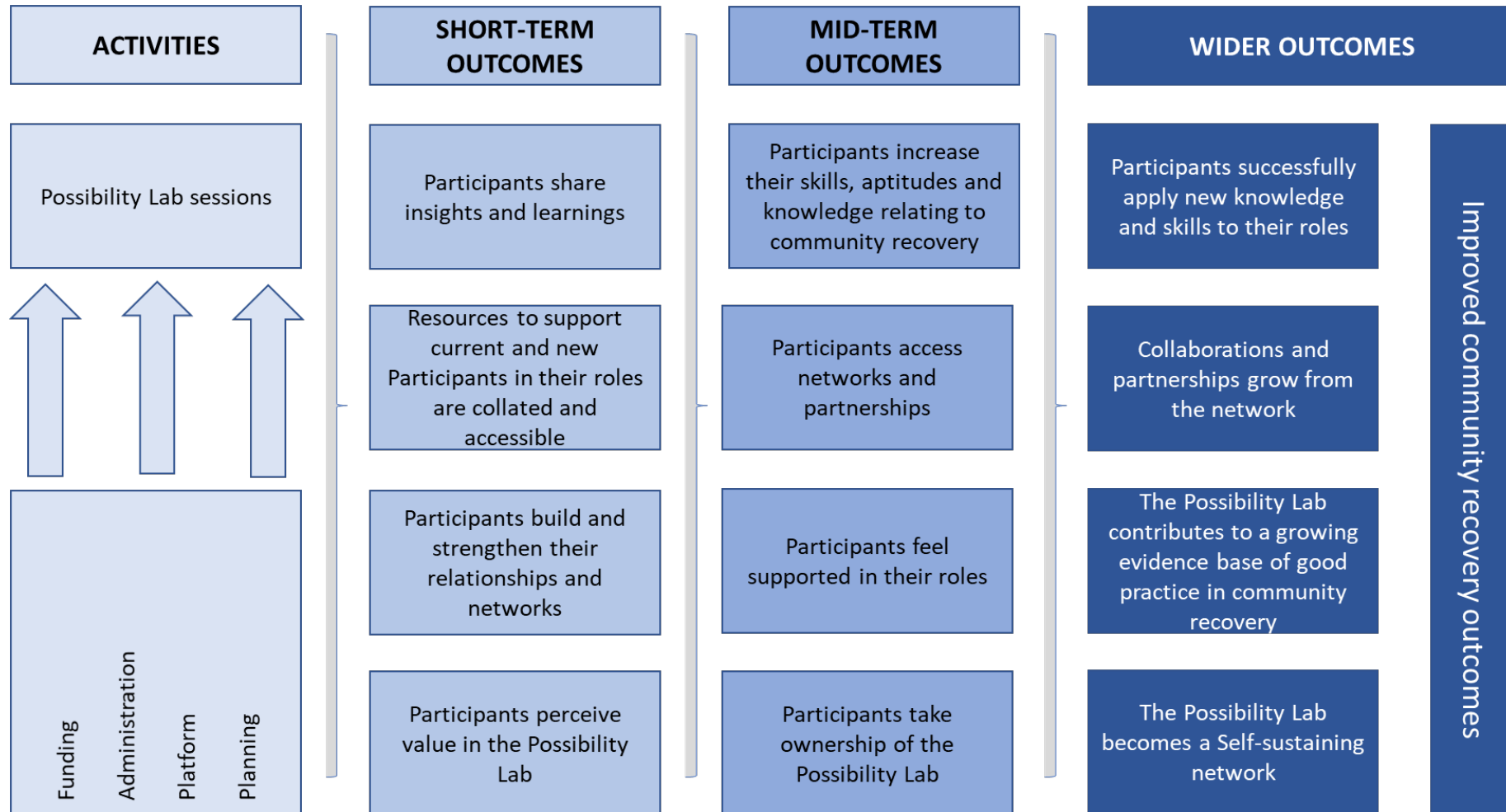
*I really like that this has such a caring approach, at the beginning of sessions we almost go through a meditation...we get traumatised by other people's trauma, this caring approach enables us to open up which can be hard sometimes in your local team, it can do no damage professionally or politically to open up in the Possibility Lab, it's a safe space.  
(Survey respondent)*

# INTANGIBLES

- There were so many current examples of how people have been making a difference in the system
- Enabled a sharpening of insights through a carefully designed conversation without exposing individuals in their workplace
- There was 'comfort' in hearing others' stories, and stories from so many geographically dispersed areas
- Great power and value in hearing participants perspectives on how some communities experienced the interventions



# PROGRAM LOGIC



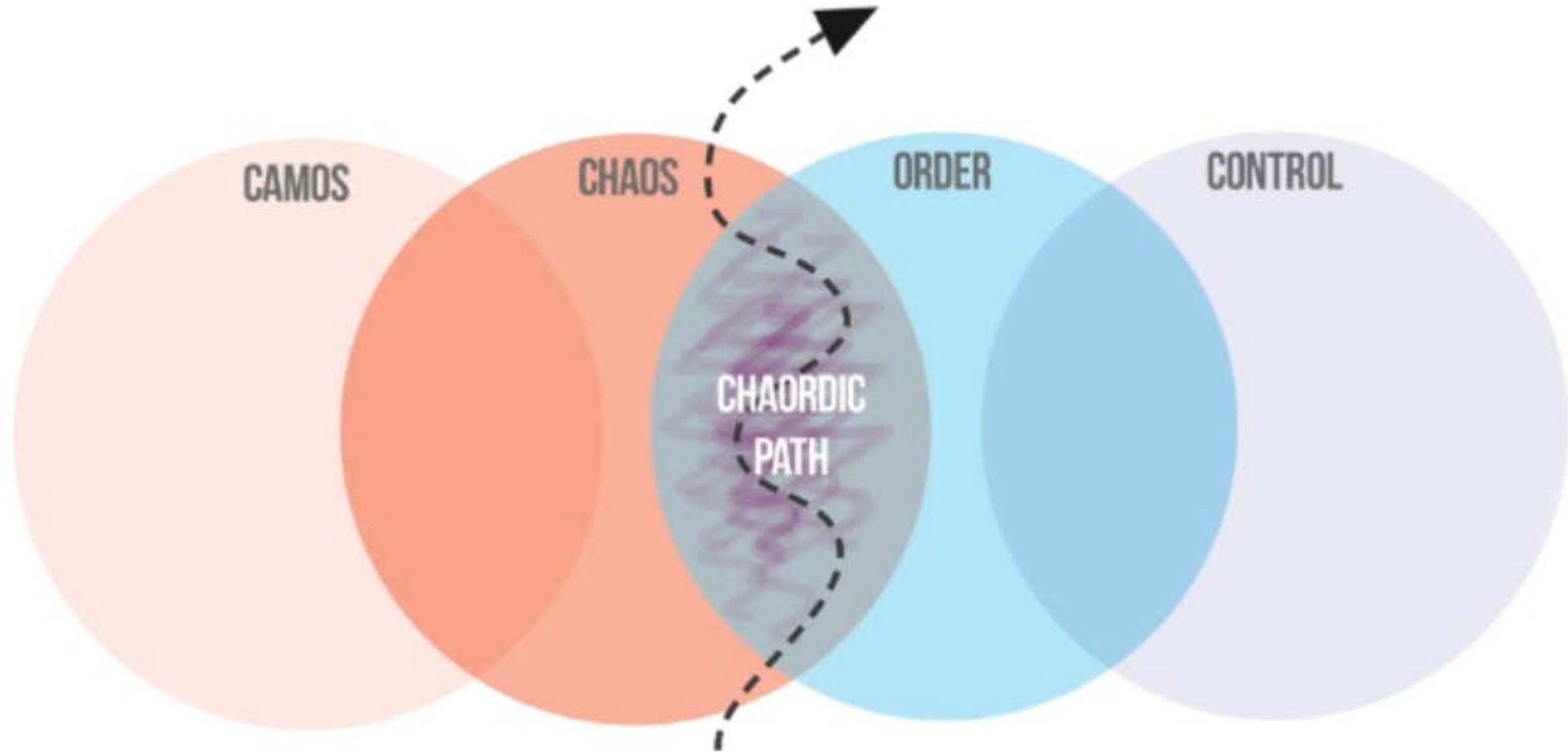
Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Indicators	Existing evidence and data sources	Required evidence and data sources
<b>Outcomes and effectiveness</b>				
<p><b>1. To what extent were intended program outcomes achieved?</b></p> <p><b>2. Were there any unintended outcomes?</b></p>	<p>a) To what extent have participants increased their knowledge, skills, aptitudes through participation in the Possibility Lab?</p> <p>b) To what extent has the Possibility Lab increased access to useful resources to support participants?</p> <p>c) To what extent has the Possibility Lab provided a space for participants to learn from others and share their knowledge and experience?</p> <p>d) To what extent have participants built networks and relationships through participation?</p> <p>e) To what extent do participants feel supported in their roles?</p> <p>f) How have participants changed their approach or used knowledge gained through the Possibility Lab?</p> <p>g) To what extent do participants perceive value in the Possibility Lab?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessed change in knowledge, skills and aptitude</li> <li>• Increased access to useful resources</li> <li>• Participant perspectives of learning and sharing with others</li> <li>• New relationships and connections formed</li> <li>• Examples of how participants have put learning into action</li> <li>• Participant perspectives on the value of the Possibility Lab</li> <li>• Frequency of participant attendance</li> <li>• Exploration of any other unintended outcomes (positive or negative)</li> </ul>	<p>Shared documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative evidence of participant self-assessed change in knowledge, skills and aptitudes</li> <li>• Evidence of resource sharing via google doc</li> <li>• Qualitative evidence of participants learning and sharing with others</li> <li>• Some qualitative examples of participants gaining new relationships, networks and partnerships</li> <li>• Limited qualitative examples of how participants have put learning into action</li> <li>• Qualitative evidence of participants perceived value of the Possibility Lab</li> </ul>	<p>Shared documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative data on participant attendance via updated spreadsheet</li> <li>• Network analysis (based on availability data)</li> </ul> <p>Participant survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived usefulness and accessibility of resources</li> <li>• Examples of how participants have applied new knowledge/skills</li> <li>• Evidence of building and accessing new connections</li> </ul>

# WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Continue the lab with a clear and expanded audience and purpose, carefully designing to create a beneficial learning space.

- **Purpose:** To connect together, across Australia, to enable a living knowledge network, and share and sustain recovery workers in community and disaster work
- **Focus:** Community development for disaster recovery and resilience
- **Quality:** Learning conversation: Trusted space enabled between all attending, focussed purpose each session

THANK YOU



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the courageous Community Recovery Officers, Community Development Officers and Recovery workers who engage in the practice of working in complexity with communities and co-workers.

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