



# Building community resilience

## Summary for the time challenged

August 2016

*This Summary Report has been prepared by SOLGM to accompany Dr Roger Blakely's "Building Community Resilience" report. The page references included refer to Dr Blakeley's report which was commissioned by SOLGM and can be found in the Sector Resources menu at [SOLGM.org.nz](http://SOLGM.org.nz)*

## Why should councils discuss community resilience?

**Local government today faces continuous pressures from the outside world. We live in an ever-changing environment influenced by (often unpredictable) economic, environmental, social and cultural factors.**

Recent events, such as the Canterbury earthquakes and Global Recession, along with the effects of climate change, have challenged how councils react in the face of rapid change. Resilience has become the cornerstone for councils looking to ensure their communities thrive despite current and future challenges.

As part of continuous effort to build the capability of the local government sector in New Zealand, SOLGM approached local government expert Roger Blakeley to produce the Building Community Resilience reference paper. This paper is part of a series of outward-looking projects from SOLGM's Sector Futures Working Party supporting local government efforts to address some of the issues faced nationwide, from managing retreat, mitigating climate change, to adapting to changing technology. The aim of this reference paper is to allow councils within New Zealand that may not be familiar with the concept of resilience, to take practical first steps, and begin a conversation with their community.

Building Community Resilience introduces some of the key concepts [p4] that support resilience, along with providing stories of communities that have come together alongside their council to help entrench resilience into culture and daily life from around New Zealand. This document highlights some of the key aspects of the reference paper, and provides some background information to resilience in a local government context. The paper has a consultative aspect with recommendations to both SOLGM and LGNZ, and the wider local government sector regarding future work on resilience.

### Definition

In addressing resilience in a local government context, it is important to have a working definition. The definition applied within the context of this research refers to adaptive capacity rather than preparedness and recovery. A multitude of descriptions are available for resilience, however one of the most predominantly used is from the Rockefeller Foundation, considering resilience as:

*What enables people to survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of shocks and chronic stresses. [p3]*

Similarly, the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office builds on this definition by looking at what is required for a **resilient community**.

*Community resilience is the capability to anticipate risk, limit impact, and bounce back rapidly through survival, adaptability, evolution, and growth in the face of turbulent change. [p3]*

Further definitions have been provided within the Building Community Resilience reference paper [p3]

### Origins

Resilience may appear to be a recently coined term, however it is more than just a buzz-word. The term first appeared in Sweden during the 1970s through the works of ecologist Carl Folke “in considering how populations of predators and prey maintained their functions and relationships in the face of sudden shocks and disturbances across time and space” [p4]. Over the past 40 years disciplines from ecology to engineering have used resilience thinking to shape their understanding towards future well-being.

### The local government context

Risk management and resilience are integral parts of creating sustainability within cities and regions. In New Zealand, one approach to community resilience is to consider the implications of the concept through the lens of the so-called local government sustainable development approach, which looks at the environment, future generations, and the social, economic and cultural interests of people and communities.<sup>1</sup>

By applying the sustainable development approach, councils can build on existing policy frameworks and strategies, and consider how to build community resilience into the fabric of service delivery.

<sup>1</sup> Section 14h of the Local Government Act 2002

Similarly, a collaborative approach to resilience is vital. Changes in 2014 to the *Local Government Act* requiring service delivery reviews have encouraged councils to work together.<sup>2</sup> There remains an opportunity for councils to learn from one another in building resilience.

Creating a resilient community requires partners from every sector, from local government creating policies, plans and infrastructure, and businesses ensuring functioning economic systems, to communities with flexible, responsive and robust civic institutions, and individuals having the skills to cope, adapt and thrive. Resilience is a shared responsibility, an iterative concept [p14].

The framework on the following page illustrates the multifaceted nature of community resilience, and roles various stakeholders may have. It is important to remember when considering resilience that it is a ‘shared responsibility’ [p14].

The framework was developed by the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office in collaboration with Ministry of Civil Defence Emergency Management, namely Jo Horrocks. It recognises that resilience is primarily led at a community level, through ‘prepared households and businesses’ along with ‘connected communities.’

The framework includes a ‘bottom-up’ community-driven resilience, coupled with ‘top-down’ local authority risk management, showing where and how the two intersect. Additionally, it incorporates the governance of risk and resilience, and risk-informed management.

The centre, yellow diamond, represents the partnership between CDEM and empowered, resourced and strong communities, where councils’ roles lie in empowered communities and supporting CDEM. Similarly the grey sides show the required collaborative action needed between sectors and agencies, from central

<sup>2</sup> Section 17 of the Local Government Act 2002

government agencies to the science and research sector.

### Infrastructure resilience

For councils, the focus of resilience may lie within infrastructure management. Infrastructural resilience has come to the forefront of the policy agenda, with the concept

of resilience underpinning work proposed by the Local Authority Risk Agency. The so-called 60/40 review of arrangements for disaster recovery will place additional fiscal risks on councils. This review recognised some of the impacts of the Canterbury earthquakes on both the insurance market and the co-funding of disaster recovery arrangements (particularly Crown involvement).

Figure 1: Roles of local authorities in resilience [p4, 5]



Councils may consider how to create resilient infrastructure through their 30-year infrastructure strategy, financial strategy, and overall long-term plan. A range of questions could be asked in considering resilience, such as whether infrastructure will meet the community's current and future demand, be compliant and reliable. Through their financial strategies, councils could consider whether infrastructure is affordable, and any current and future funding considerations. Similarly, through long-term planning, any risks to service delivery may be analysed.

### Risk and resilience

One aspect of creating a resilient community is to understand where the risks lie. By understanding all of the known factors, long-term risks to service delivery can be mitigated. For councils it is important to firstly understand where the risks lie (in essence having an effective and regularly reviewed risk management framework), strengthening governance and management of risk (having strong leadership), investing in risk reduction (putting resources towards risk management), and enhancing initiatives responding to risk. These aspects can begin with a conversation with the community and elected members about priorities in mitigating risk.

### Current initiatives

Councils nationwide have begun understanding the importance of building community resilience. Christchurch is among the first 33 cities selected from more than 400 city applications to join the 100 Resilient Cities network, an initiative by the Rockefeller Foundation. Similarly, in early 2016 the Auckland Civil Defence and Emergency Management Office looked at the importance of resilience through the vision of their draft plan on resilience, 'Working together to build a resilient Auckland'. These initiatives move towards ensuring the future of service delivery. Nonetheless, steps need to be taken by other

councils in understanding the importance of resilience for their communities [p27].

### Where to?

The *Building Community Resilience* reference paper is the start of a conversation with councils on how to ensure that service delivery integrates risk, impact and change analysis. SOLGM will continue to support the local government sector nationwide in building community resilience through its guidance, leading practice forums, and thought leadership. It is important to firstly understand the importance of community resilience in the local government context, and how it should be applied within current policy frameworks. The reference paper provides a basic understanding of these aspects. However, as with all aspects of local government, change, risk management and resilience need to begin locally.

Within the paper, the author makes a series of recommendations regarding the roles of councils in creating resilience. He highlights particularly the crucial links councils provide in achieving resilient neighbourhoods, communities, districts, cities, regions, and ultimately nation. Similarly, he notes initiatives by likeminded organisations, such as LGNZ's support for the Local Government Risk Management Agency, to help create resilience.

Councils can take practical steps to create resilience.

**Firstly** they may prepare a comprehensive enterprise risk management plan encompassing various elements from understanding, reducing and minimising risk, to strengthening resilience and working alongside partners.

**Secondly**, councils should become champions of resilience within their communities – an advocate of a collaborative approach.

**Thirdly**, councils could implement resilience using the Roles of Local Authorities in Resilience Framework.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

By Roger Blakeley from *Building Community Resilience*

1. SOLGM and LGNZ discuss how to ensure this work on resilience and the work on the LGRA is seamlessly integrated and mutually reinforcing.
2. Subject to the earlier recommendation, below are further recommendations on future work:

This report is circulated to all councils and local authority chief executives, with an invitation to comment on the report, and in particular the Roles of Local Authorities in Resilience Framework,

The feedback on the report from councils is discussed between SOLGM and LGNZ, and the follow-up action on the report is agreed between SOLGM and LGNZ.

The proposed Roles of Local Authorities in Resilience Framework, as it may be amended following feedback from councils, is then jointly discussed with LGNZ, SOLGM and MCDEM to seek agreement on how this is presented in the National Disaster Resilience Strategy.

SOLGM and LGNZ convene a meeting with other sector representatives, including government (MCDEM, National Infrastructure Unit, Treasury), business and infrastructure providers (Resilient New Zealand, New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development), community and civil society (Red Cross), iwi, social sector (MSD, DHB), science/research (GNS Science), to talk about the opportunity for better integration of the contribution that each sector could make to resilience.

Further work is done, using case studies showing how the concepts of resilience have been operationalised, as a useful practical guide to local authorities on implementing resilience.

### Feedback

SOLGM would appreciate any feedback regarding work on community resilience (please email [info@solgm.org.nz](mailto:info@solgm.org.nz)).