HEALTHY & RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

LORD MAYOR'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation recognises the importance of strengthening community resilience to major social and health challenges, especially in the context of climate change.

Melbourne's urban-fringe communities are among the most vulnerable in the world to bushfire hazards.	**Heat-related health issues across Victoria during the 2014 heatwave were five times greater than expected.**	**Discrimination against Indigenous people is considered one of the most prevalent forms of discrimination in Australia.**

The Foundation acknowledges the critical importance of focusing on health equity – where everyone has an equal opportunity to attain their full health potential – and challenging discriminatory structures and practices to strengthen community resilience and cohesion.

The Foundation is working towards achieving the following outcomes

OUTCOME 1
Increased cross-sector collaborations, strengthening community resilience to extreme weather and disasters.

OUTCOME 2
Increased capacity of health organisations to respond to the health impacts of climate change.

OUTCOME 3
Reduced discrimination and inequality that undermine resilience.

Does your organisation's work align with the outcomes of this Impact Area?

Learn about our grants at lmcf.org.au/grants

Speak to Dr Karyn Bosomworth, Program Manager – Healthy & Resilient Communities.

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OUTCOME 1

LORD MAYOR'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Increased cross-sector collaborations, strengthening community resilience to extreme weather and disasters.

Communities in Greater Melbourne are among the most vulnerable in the world to bushfire and heatwaves.

Resilient communities that can respond to and recover from extreme weather events, natural disasters or other major emergencies are often characterised by high levels of community connection, social cohesion, an understanding of their strengths and vulnerabilities and equitable access to resources and systems.

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation supports the development of community resilience through cross-sector collaborations, which focus on those who may be disproportionately affected by extreme weather and disasters, especially those facing financial disadvantage or social exclusion.

The Foundation supports both disaster preparedness and disaster recovery.

- Broad community and cross-sector engagement to increase knowledge of the key determinants of community resilience.

- Strengthening and defining the important role of community-based and social service organisations in building community resilience.

- Cross-sector collaborations to plan for and respond to extreme weather and disasters, with a focus on vulnerable communities and individuals most at risk.

Challenge

The changing climate has increased the frequency of extreme weather and natural disasters.

As climate change makes weather patterns more extreme and unpredictable, Australia has experienced an increase in frequency and intensity of large-scale natural disasters including catastrophic bushfires, wide-spread flooding, severe storms and devastating droughts.[1] Melbourne's urban-fringe communities are among the most vulnerable in the world to bushfire hazards.[2] Melbourne is one of Australia's most dangerous cities to live in during heatwaves, with 1,283 people dying due to heat related illnesses between 2001 and 2015.[3] Victoria has experienced two-thirds of civilian deaths and half of the economic losses caused by disasters.[4]

All levels of government are focused on building community resilience to extreme weather and natural disasters:

- The Australian Government is signatory to the United Nations' Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 which outlines the principles and actions for reducing disaster risk and increasing resilience.[5] The Sendai Framework is synergised with United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.[6]

- In late 2017, The Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs established the National Resilience Taskforce focused on natural disasters.

- The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2011) was developed by the National Emergency Management Committee (NEMC) and adopted by Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

- Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) has developed the Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management providing the foundation for the emergency management sector to work with communities to plan for, respond to and recover from chronic stresses and acute shocks.[7]

- Victoria's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Community Services Climate Resilience Program seeks to build the capacity of funded organisations to understand natural disaster and climate change risks and plan to effectively address them.

- Melbourne was one of the first cities around the world to join the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities Network.[8] Resilient Melbourne is a partnership between local governments across Greater Melbourne to support the city to withstand and adapt to chronic stresses and acute shocks.[9]

Community resilience is tested in instances of extreme weather and natural disasters.

This government effort acknowledges that the increase in extreme weather and natural disasters brought about by climate change will continue to test the capabilities of communities to respond to and withstand these events. Factors determining how people are impacted by disasters include gender, socio-economic status, mobility, age, disability, location and English language skills.[10] Extreme weather and disasters can heighten inequalities, exacerbate poverty and risk factors. It is therefore critical that community resilience is addressed using a health equity approach. The changing nature of work, loss of local social networks and the challenge of ensuring the sustainability of volunteer groups are additional factors that increase a community's vulnerability to disaster.[11]

Resilient communities are considered those that understand their strengths and vulnerabilities and invest time and resources into building strong local-level networks, information-sharing and community connections.[12] This work requires community-based and social service organisations to be key actors in building resilience to extreme weather and natural disasters. It is these organisations that work with and have trusted relationships with people who experience disadvantage or marginalisation who are also disproportionately affected by extreme weather and disasters.[13]

Our Response

Through sustained engagement with government and the not-for-profit sector, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has identified a gap in resourcing community-based and social service organisation to collaborate with government, emergency services and health organisations to implement community-based initiatives that plan for respond to and support recovery from extreme weather and natural disasters.

The Foundation's support is focused on:

- **Broad community and cross-sector engagement to increase knowledge of the key determinants of community resilience.**

- **Strengthening and defining the important role of community-based and social service organisations in building community resilience.**

- **Cross-sector collaborations to plan for and respond to extreme weather and disasters, with a focus on vulnerable communities and individuals most at risk.**

OUTCOME 2

Increased capacity of health organisations to respond to the health impacts of climate change.

Climate change is described by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the 'greatest challenge to human health globally', affecting critical social and environmental determinants including clear air, drinking water, food security and housing.

Given the health impacts of climate change disproportionately affect communities with higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage and greater prevalence of preventable health issues, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation supports a health-equity response to climate change by all parts of our health sector.

The Foundation's support is focused on:

- Increasing the capacity of health organisations to understand and respond to the health impacts of climate change.

- Building community awareness and capabilities regarding climate and health to prevent and alleviate adverse health outcomes.

- Research that leads to improved policy, focusing on the population health benefits of climate change action and responding to the existing health risks of climate change.

- Innovative collaborations between health and environmental organisations responding proactively to the population health effects of climate change.

Challenge

The changing climate is affecting health.

The World Health Organisation describes climate change as the greatest challenge to human health globally.[1] The most pervasive health impacts are due to high levels of pollution, primarily caused by fossil fuel combustion, more frequent extreme weather events and disasters, threats to safe drinking water and food security, an increased spread of mosquito-borne diseases and the increasing negative impact on mental health.[2] The Paris Agreement stipulates that climate change undermines the social and environmental determinants of health and exacerbates health inequities.[3] Climate change mitigation is the most critical intervention to prevent these health impacts.[4] Additionally, investment in adaptation work that creates informed and resilient health systems that can respond to the human health impacts of climate change is vital.[5]

Certain groups of people are disproportionately affected by these health impacts.

In a local context, Victoria is particularly vulnerable to health impacts of climate change and our health sector is already responding to the health issues that are exacerbated by or resulting from this issue. Heatwaves in Victoria have resulted in hundreds of deaths - more than any other extreme weather event.[6] Disasters such as bushfires, floods and drought contribute to acute and chronic health issues for the communities affected.

Other health risks include the increase in cases of Ross River virus and unpredictable weather events such as the 2016 thunderstorm asthma emergency.[7] As with other population health issues, the health impacts of climate change are disproportionately affecting communities with higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage and higher rates of non-communicable diseases.[8] The intersection of these issues reinforces the need for climate change must be responded to as a health equity issue.

The Victorian Government's Climate Change Framework (a long-term plan to 2050) includes the development of an Adaptation Action Plan for the health and human services sector to reduce vulnerability to climate change health risks, as well as to build knowledge of these risks.

The Framework applies an equity lens to addressing the health and wellbeing impacts of climate change and acknowledges the challenge that more frequent and intense extreme weather will have likely downstream effects upon the social determinants of health and wellbeing such as housing, urban liveability, food security and employment.[9] Sustainability Victoria has recently focused their communications on the health impacts associated with climate change to signal the personal relevance of climate change and therefore greater respect for the urgency of mitigating climate change.[10]

Increasing awareness and understanding of the health impacts of climate change remains an area that requires significant effort from all levels of government, health organisations and professional bodies, and the broader community. Health professionals and organisations are at the 'front-line' of witnessing the health impacts of climate change and consequent exacerbation of health inequities[11] and are therefore critical actors in driving climate change mitigation and adaptation within the community.[12]

Our Response

Understanding and addressing the health impacts of climate change is an emerging focus for Victoria's health sector. Addressing the inequitable health impacts of climate change requires the concerted effort of all levels of government and collaborative cross-sector effort across health and environmental sectors.

The Foundation's support is focused on:

- **Increasing the capacity of health organisations to understand and respond to the health impacts of climate change.**

- **Building community awareness and capabilities regarding climate and health to prevent and alleviate adverse health outcomes.**

- **Research that leads to improved policy, focusing on the population health benefits of climate change action and responding to the existing health risks of climate change.**

- **Innovative collaborations between health and environmental organisations responding proactively to the population health effects of climate change.**

OUTCOME 3

Reduced discrimination and inequality that undermine resilience.

Discrimination based on race, culture and religion contributes to social disadvantage and exclusion, makes communities less socially cohesive, and undermines a community's collective ability to build resilience.

Additionally, there a strong relationship between an individual's experience of discrimination or disadvantage, and poor health and wellbeing - particularly mental health.

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation encourages the development of socially cohesive communities, where people are safe from discrimination, feel a sense of belonging and trust and there is mutual respect, awareness and an understanding of diversity.

The Foundation's support is focused on:

- Work that addresses discrimination towards and exclusion of racial, cultural or religious minority groups on a systems or structural level.

- Community-based initiatives that reduce discrimination and increase understanding and respect for racial, cultural or religious minority groups.

- Interventions that counteract widespread discriminatory views towards racial, cultural or religious minority groups.

Challenge

Discrimination can both cause and exacerbate health inequities.

Discrimination based on race, culture and religion contributes towards social disadvantage and exclusion,[1] makes communities less socially cohesive,[2] and undermines the collective ability to build resilience. There is a large body of research that has identified the strong relationship between people's experience of discrimination, disadvantage and poor health and wellbeing, particularly mental health.

The existence of pervasive and structural racial discrimination can both cause and exacerbate health inequities.[3] The Scanlon Foundation has reported increased rates of discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin or religion over the last three years.[4] The 2018 survey reported that 27 per cent of young people, 25 per cent of people with non-English speaking backgrounds, 34 per cent of people on very low incomes, 39 per cent of Muslims and 36 per cent of Hindu's experience discrimination in the last year.[5] Anti-Semitic incidents are also increasing, with a 39 per cent increase in threats in 2018.[6]

Discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is considered one of the most prevalent forms of discrimination in Australia.[7] Scanlon Foundation's 2017 Australians Today survey found that 59 per cent of Indigenous respondents experienced racial discrimination that year.[8]

In 2015-16, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 54 per cent of complaints received by the Australian Human Rights Commission under the Racial Discrimination Act despite only constituting 3 per cent of the overall population.[9] This level of racial discrimination towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people directly impacts on their mental health,[10] and contributes to the extremely high rates of self-harm and suicide in Indigenous communities.[11]

While there is legislation and statutory bodies such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission exist to address discrimination and subsequent disadvantage, reducing discrimination that exists informally in the community is a challenge for everyone. There is an ongoing need to increase community knowledge and practice of respecting the inherent value of every person and everyone's universal human rights to be treated with dignity, equality and respect, particularly when people from minority racial, cultural or religious groups are the target of discriminatory views, behaviour and practices.

Our Response

Community resilience is largely dependent on the degree to which communities are social cohesive. High levels of social cohesion are demonstrated when people are safe from discrimination, feel a sense of belonging and trust in the community and there is mutual respect, awareness and understanding of diversity. In acknowledging that discrimination is a determinant of poor mental health and exacerbator of disadvantage, there are significant co-benefits to be gained by addressing discrimination on a structural and systems level.

The Foundation's support is focused on:

- **Work that addresses discrimination towards and exclusion of racial, cultural or religious minority groups on a systems or structural level.**

- **Community-based initiatives that reduce discrimination and increase understanding and respect for racial, cultural or religious minority groups.**

- **Interventions that counteract widespread discriminatory views towards racial, cultural or religious minority groups.**

OUTCOME 1

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Learn more about the issues affecting our community

Our Greater Melbourne Vital Signs Report provides a snapshot of the health, wellbeing and vitality of Greater Melbourne.