



**Leadership, wisdom and the post-disaster recovery process.**

**A report submitted to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and New Zealand Red Cross**

Elizabeth McNaughton

2013



## acknowledgments

I would like to thank The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Board - the opportunity to travel, learn and create a global network has been so valuable. I would like to thank New Zealand Red Cross for its support and encouragement; in particular I would like to thank John Ware, Andrew McKie, Ross Cameron, Corinne Ambler, Kelsi Doscher and Rochelle Berry – you have taught me so much – thank you.

I would like to thank the ‘awesome foursome’ a group of New Zealand Red Cross recovery volunteers who have inspired the best in my leadership. Thank you Sir John Hansen, Kerei Ruru, Stephen Guyatt and Jerry Talbot.

My very special thanks to Jane Booth for her assistance in preparing research questions, unique insights and her stoic support when there just weren’t enough hours in the day.

I would like to thank Australian Red Cross. Kate Brady, the trailblazer, thank you for encouraging me to apply for the fellowship and sharing your knowledge and experiences every step of the way.

I would also like to thank James McNaughton and Eldred Gilbert who support my endeavours in so many ways.

It was a privilege to meet so many accomplished and talented people on my journey – I thank you for being so generous with your time and open about your experiences. In particular I would like to thank: Andrew Coghlan, John Richardson, Laura Olson, and the staff and volunteers at Italian Red Cross.

The photos used in this report are photos I took of Roberto Gillo’s photos hanging on damaged buildings in L’Aquila. Please see his website to see more of his amazing photos. <http://www.robetogrillo.it/la-fotografia/26-l-039-aquila.html>



## **Contents**

Executive Summary.....	4
Methods.....	8
Section One - wisdom .....	10
Reflection 1: articulating the vision .....	11
Reflection 2: crisis as a leadership crucible .....	14
Reflection 3: leave your cape at home and broaden your leadership model .....	16
Reflection 4: listen to the right people at the right time.....	18
Case Study – the Broadmoor project.....	21
Reflection 5: recovery leadership a fine balancing act. ....	23
Reflection 6: the importance of two-way communication.....	24
Case Study – recovery communications New Zealand Red Cross .....	26
Section 2: recovery leadership resilience and the wellbeing of communities .....	28
Reflection 7: making a difference .....	29
Reflection 8: stress, burnout and sharing the load.....	30
Reflection 9: the ‘use by’ date .....	34
Reflection 10: what does ‘strong’ mean? .....	36
Key learnings.....	38
Bibliography .....	41
Appendices.....	43
Appendix 1: recovery leadership and challenges survey.....	43
Appendix 2: interview respondents.....	46
Appendix 3: blog excerpt - meeting with Professor Willie Pietersen, Columbia University Business School.....	48
Appendix 4: impact of fellowship .....	50
Biography .....	51



This Winston Churchill fellowship focuses on post-disaster recovery leadership. The purpose of this study is to seek the wisdom of recovery leaders, in the US, Australia and Italy, to add value to the recovery of earthquake ravaged Christchurch, New Zealand.

There were four elements that inspired my focus on recovery leadership:

1. Reviews of post-disaster recovery programmes generally focus on three key areas for improvement - leadership, coordination and communication. In many ways the quality of the leadership in turn determines the effectiveness of the coordination and communication aspects of the recovery process.
2. As a result of the violent and destructive earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand, many people have had their lives literally shaken from under them. At times the outlook and public discussions seem unrelentingly gloomy. On a bleak Canterbury winter day it can be hard to see anything but the glass half empty. It will take outstanding leadership at all levels to lift morale and raise people's thoughts and spirits above their immediate struggles to see that there are extraordinary possibilities and opportunities for growth and development.
3. My concern for many recovery leaders in Christchurch enduring constant and unmanageable stress that affects health, relationships and performance - noting the impact this has on community wellbeing.
4. To re-build in a way that is prosperous for some and prosperous for now is relatively straightforward, good housekeeping and strong project management will get you there. Greater prosperity and opportunity for all and for generations to come takes outstanding thinking, courage and leadership.

This study combined both an online survey and semi-structured interviews. A total of 34 interviews with recovery leaders were conducted with an additional 9 responding by online survey only.

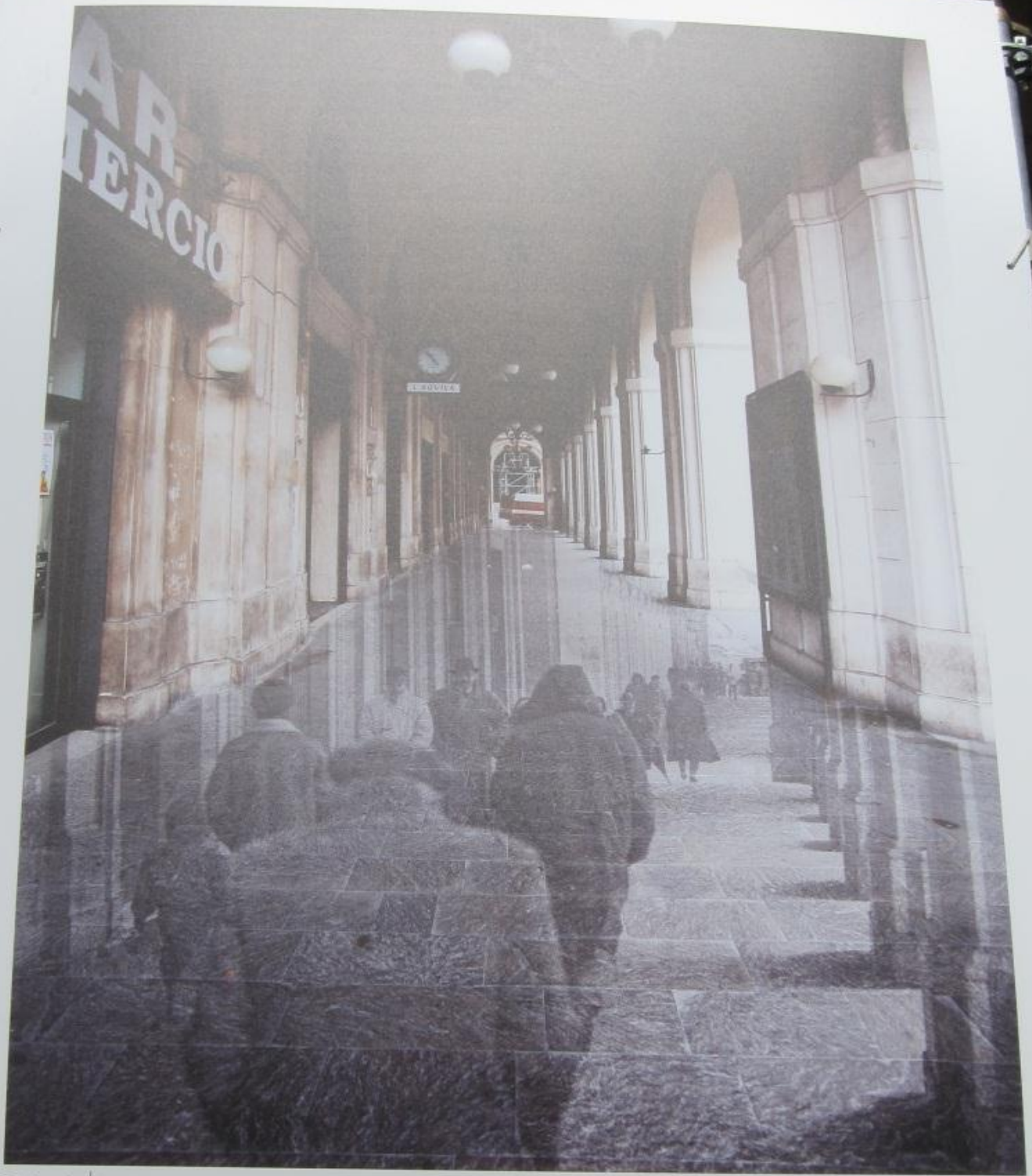
There is no one recipe for recovery leadership; it is more of an art that draws on many disciplines rooted in the time and place that it takes place. This report is comprised of 10 key reflections and 14 recommendations. It is my hope that the reflections outlined in this report are helpful in shaping approaches to recovery leadership.

## Recommendations for recovery leaders:

- Ensure sufficient encouragement, training and space for 'emergent leaders' to demonstrate leadership, particularly at the community level.
- Recovery leaders must constantly confront and confirm the way they think. Establish regular access to people who are global leaders and visionaries in their field and listen to them.
- Allow space for imagining the kind of city and society that people want for their grandchildren, push the boundaries of what is possible and take a long-term view.
- Develop a broad recovery leadership model as a means to effective leadership but also to increase resilience.
- Hire good people and let them make decisions, let them show creativity, a degree of risk taking, and support them to grow in their leadership.
- Schedule time to listen to a balanced representation of interest groups, including regular meetings with affected communities. Seek out those who are not well represented, or whose voices are not amplified through money or position.
- Traditional communications approaches and attitudes alone will fall short. Develop an innovative, creative, strategic and 'out of the box' two-way communications strategy.
- Aim towards getting the balance 'right' for the people, the context and the future, as often as possible.
- Reflect and understand your vulnerabilities and prepare for peaks and troughs in performance through scheduling, delegating and mentoring a team of 'understudies'.
- Connect globally person-to-person and organisation-to-organisation. Find and meet regularly with a mentor (someone who experienced similar stresses in terms of post-disaster recovery); think of them as a professional 'off load' or 'help' button.
- Two years marks the spot – recovery leaders need to stop assess and make a plan. Consider arranging a secondment, taking a long break (6-8 weeks), revising your role or changing jobs.
- Demonstrate stability, emotional intelligence, genuine empathy and develop a 'culture of calm'.

- **Support neighbourhood leadership training (including youth leadership training) on topics such as: “Building Effective Partnerships: Increasing community-level resources and impact through cross-sector alliances”, “Best Practices in Neighbourhood Revitalization” and “Data Collection and Recovery Management Information Systems for Neighbourhood Leaders”**
- **Develop a ‘Contribute to Recovery’ guideline outlining broadly the top ten priority actions that communities, individuals and business can take to contribute to the broader recovery effort.**





FANTASMI 13

grillo

GRILLO VATT'A REPONNE



DIVIETO DI AFFESSIONE

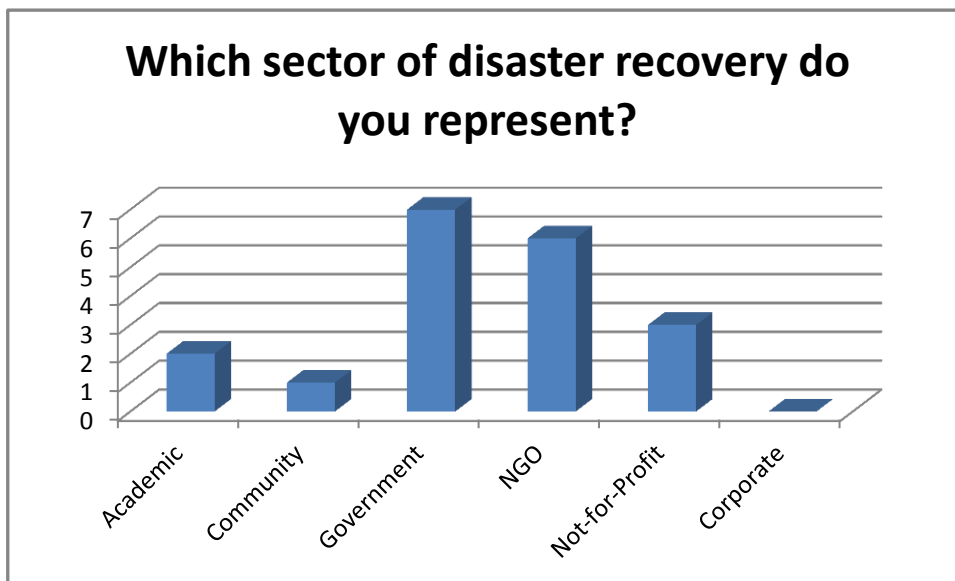


DIVIETO DI AFFESSIONE



Literature focused within the area of disaster leadership is light and disaggregated.<sup>1</sup> To inform this report evidence has been taken from the study of crisis management, building community resilience, emergency management, corporate/organisation and humanitarian leadership.

This research combined both an online survey and interviews based on guided conversations. A total of 34 interviews with recovery leaders were conducted with an additional 9 responding by online survey only. Of the 34 interviewed 14 respondents also completed the online survey. This resulted in a total of 23 completed online surveys. Interviews were held in San Francisco, New Orleans, Washington, New York, Geneva, L'Aquila, Italy and Victoria, Australia. See appendix 2 for a list of those interviewed. The survey (appendix 1) was completed by 23 respondents from a range of sectors outlined below:



---

<sup>1</sup> Beckett, J., Wilkinson, S. & Potangaroa, R. (2010, September). Post-disaster recovery: Multi-agency leadership and co-ordination. Paper presented at the 2010 Construction, Building and Real Estate Research Conference of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Paris.



The definition of 'recovery leader' has been applied loosely given that recovery is a coming together of leaders from all levels and sectors representing a broad range of interests.

The principles of leadership I have used to define 'a leader' are based on the United Nations leadership competencies and are as follows:

- Serves as a role model that other people want to follow
- Empowers others to translate vision into results
- Is proactive in developing strategies to accomplish objectives
- Establishes and maintains relationships with a broad range of people to understand needs and gain support
- Anticipates and resolves conflicts by pursuing mutually agreeable solutions
- Drives for change and improvement; does not accept the status quo
- Shows the courage to take unpopular stands

In this report I have used qualitative analysis, quotes and anecdotes to support key themes. Should readers wish to read more about my experiences, meetings and reflections, please see my blog: [recoverymatters1.wordpress.com](http://recoverymatters1.wordpress.com) (given those working on recovery are always time poor and generally have a stack of reading next to the bed each blog piece can be read 'in the time it takes to drink a cup of coffee').



Wisdom is becoming an old fashioned word in our fast paced world driven by the sound bite, immediate news and instant gratification. It is not an easy concept to describe but most know it when they encounter it. The owl is a popular representation of wisdom, because it can see in darkness when others cannot.

Nicholas Maxwell, a contemporary philosopher in the United Kingdom, defines wisdom as the capacity to realise what is of value in life, for oneself and others. Whereas in many indigenous cultures wisdom can be seen in balancing ecological and social needs - a common-sense approach to protecting and conserving natural resources.

Psychologists pretty much agree that wisdom “involves an integration of knowledge, experience, and deep understanding that incorporates tolerance for the uncertainties of life as well as its ups and downs. There's an awareness of how things play out over time, and it confers a sense of balance. Wise people generally share optimism that life's problems can be solved and experience a certain amount of calm in facing difficult decisions. Intelligence—if only anyone could figure out exactly what it is—may be necessary for wisdom, but it definitely isn't sufficient; an ability to see the big picture, a sense of proportion, and considerable introspection also contribute to its development.”<sup>2</sup>

What I know is that many of these things are necessary in recovery; articulating the vision that others cannot see, the capacity to realise what is of value to others, maintaining social and ecological balance and an integration of knowledge, experience, deep understanding, tolerance, optimism and calm.

Confucius is of the opinion that there are three ways we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection- which is the noblest; second, by imitation- which is the easiest; and third by experience-which is the bitterest. Roughly based on these three ideas I asked recovery leaders interviewed during the fellowship the following questions:

- If you could step into a time machine and go back and give your 'pre-disaster recovery self', advice, what would it be? (Reflection)
- Reflecting on your disaster recovery experiences what are your 'if only' moments? (Experience)
- What do you consider the most typical mistake leaders make in the post-disaster recovery space? (what we don't want to imitate).

*“I hope our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us, that the less we use our power the greater it will be.” Thomas Jefferson*

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/wisdom>

## Reflection 1: articulating the vision

*“Local leaders must define a vision of the future, provide the direction to get there, and establish the priorities to make it happen. They must develop and create a will that is infectious among community politicians and constituents alike. Disaster recovery managers must juxtapose short-term and long-term community needs against the quick and easy fix or the perceived rights of select property owners. They must protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community from the desires, power, and influence of those who promote short-sighted solutions. They need to foster personal and community responsibility for recovery decisions that will affect their community for years to come.”<sup>3</sup>*

Gerry Brownlee, Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery, outlined his vision as: *“Out of the tragedy comes the opportunity to create the best small city in the world, and there are extraordinary opportunities for anyone who wants to be part of it.”*<sup>4</sup>

How we come to consensus on what is ‘best’ is a negotiation and debate in every post-disaster recovery. Bill Clinton’s catch phrase “build back better” (as became popular after the Asian Tsunami) raised the same debate. So, what does better/best mean and for whom? Leading this negotiation, building consensus and knowing when to consult and when direct action might be required is a test of great leadership.

Greatness does not come from ticking off the easy stuff, which in many ways is the tangible, the infrastructure. We know how to lay pipes, knock things down and how to re-build them. To re-build in a way that is prosperous for some and prosperous for now is relatively straightforward, good housekeeping and strong project management will get you there. Greater prosperity and opportunity for all and for generations to come takes outstanding thinking, courage and leadership. To build the ‘best city’ is in fact nation building on a smaller scale, swinging the lantern to demonstrate to the rest of New Zealand and the world the kind of city and society we can create, given that a city and its society are intrinsically bound.

In New Zealand we have underlying challenges. Domestically we face alarming rates of child poverty and we are world leaders in abusing our children, a lot of our housing stock is cold and damp and makes us sick and we have an increasing disparity between high and low income families. Globally we face challenges such as energy constraints, climate change, political instability, increasing occurrence of natural disasters, and population growth – we need to strengthen our communities and our infrastructure to meet both these realities.

---

<sup>3</sup> Holistic Disaster Recovery – Ideas for Building Local Sustainability after a Natural Disaster, Natural Hazards Centre, Boulder Colorado, 2005, p21.

<sup>4</sup> State of Canterbury Earthquake Recovery, Hon. Gerry Brownlee, Minister for Canterbury Earthquake Recovery, “State of Recovery” 8.00am, Friday 31 August 2012, Ibis Hotel, Christchurch

The challenge for leaders, from the household level to the highest positions in our society, is how to weave our domestic and global challenges into our planning and thinking for what could be New Zealand's greatest showcase of economic and social innovation. An opportunity to create the best place for people to live both now and in the future.

New Zealand was the first country to give women the vote, to establish a national minimum wage and a world leader in anti-nuclear legislation. The question for us all is - what can we collectively achieve in the Christchurch recovery that is remarkable?

A common reflection across respondents was around the strength of vision – a leader's ability to harness energy and diverse ideas to create a common platform, to build consensus and trust – that this is what brings people into the recovery fold. The way a society recalibrates after an event is always different and people have strong ideas about what recovery means. A Red Cross volunteer in L'Aquila knew exactly what recovery meant to her and expressed it this way, "The market in our town square was our city's living room, it left with the people, when we have our 'living room' back I will know that our city is back".

It is a natural reaction to want to 'put things back' to race towards the 'new normal'. It takes courage, imagination and steadfast determination to go the next step and create a shared vision that meets the needs of now and the next generation. Moana Jackson, a constitutional lawyer, spoke recently on the Treaty of Waitangi saying, "I want my mokupuna<sup>5</sup> to grow up in a differently imagined place", that "reality is always a human construct" and that the "process of imagining, of dreaming something different takes time to come to fruition".<sup>6</sup> A city is a home for its people and there is great value in recovery leaders encouraging this type of visioning process, allowing the space for imagining the kind of city and society that people want for their grandchildren, of pushing the boundaries of what is possible and taking a long-term view.

Governments often try to use disasters as an opportunity for major change and there is a need to balance reform versus speed and to negotiate priorities. Mara Bún, in her article, *The Path to Resilience*, summarises the speed dilemma well. "*Spending slowly, building a shared vision, and investing a little more upfront to save later makes sense over the long term. But the approach can clash with fast, short-term delivery goals, and the punishing, and politically potent, reality of the suffering endured by those who have lost so much. The momentum following a disaster tends towards fast, low-cost or 'value for money' recovery. Governments are judged by the speed of returning to business as usual. Short-term political and media cycles fuel this tendency, and reinforce the message that a quick recovery best addresses the needs of disaster victims.*"<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Grandchildren

<sup>6</sup> Treaty Debate 1 (2013): Finding a Place for the Treaty, Lawyers Matthew Palmer and Moana Jackson discuss the topic: What place does the treaty have in New Zealand's constitutional arrangements? Recorded at Te Papa, January 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Mara Bún, *The Path to Resilience*, *Griffith Review*, Edition 35: *Surviving*, April 2012.

And yet, as I saw in New Orleans in the Ninth Ward, a long-term sustainable approach is being taken in some places. The high profile homes built by Brad Pitt's foundation are just one of many initiatives that are taking a sustainable approach. Utilising principles whereby affordable homes are designed to produce more energy than they consume and have a positive impact on the environment. They employ water stewardship strategies like pervious concrete and all homes and buildings are solar-powered. They collaborate with communities to design buildings that meet their needs and respect the dignity of the residents.<sup>8</sup> These are healthy homes that save people money. These will save low income homeowners on power and medical bills for years to come.

New Zealanders have a 'put a jersey on' mentality – a culture that lends itself towards the cheap and practical, as is evident in much of our housing stock. We must guard against our recovery vision leaning towards our pioneering history rather than looking ahead and preparing homes for a new generation.

**Recommendation: allow space for imagining the kind of city and society that people want for their grandchildren, push the boundaries of what is possible and take a long-term view.**

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://makeitright.org/c2c/>

## Reflection 2: crisis as a leadership crucible

*"We give people the opportunity to be leaders – there is something for everyone – a lot of people are just looking for a way to plug in." – Denise Thornton, founder, Beacon of Hope, New Orleans.*

The vision serves as the inspiration for others, but alone it is not sufficient. Many levels of leadership are required to translate the vision into implementation. A key reflection amongst respondents was the importance of giving enough encouragement, training and space for 'emergent leaders' to demonstrate leadership, particularly at the community level.

Through adverse conditions, the strength of personality and natural leadership tendencies, leaders will emerge to fill a gap. Crisis can be viewed as a 'leadership crucible' where individuals are forced to consider "what" really matters, an opportunity for meaning and learning and personal growth that occurs and may provide a new or altered sense of identity.<sup>9</sup>

These leaders can see the priority areas for action in the immediate response to a disaster. However, in the more complex recovery stage they need guidance, encouragement and tools to 'plug in' to the broader effort. Recovery leadership is a little like doing a jig-saw puzzle, identifying the right pieces and guiding them to the right spot within the bigger picture.

These local leaders play a crucial role in mobilising resources and reflecting the values, hopes and priorities of communities. They can lift people out of the 'world of me' and harness their energy to move recovery forward. Anne Leadbeater, the Strategic Project Manager - Advancing Country Towns for the Murrindindi Shire Council in Victoria, reflected on her work on bushfire recovery:

*"Innovation happens when people are asked to solve problems - you don't have to do everything - gaps open opportunity for others to contribute. Connect with what matters and give sign posts to the future. Allow time and space to think."*

The World Bank team identified the 'non-structural' elements as a key challenge. They talked about the need for the institutional set up to be right to keep people busy and give them meaningful purpose and that strong connections between government, civil society and communities help to bring everyone into the fold.<sup>10</sup> They note that a good reconstruction

---

<sup>9</sup> Demetrius J. Porche, Emergent Leadership During a Natural Disaster: A Narrative Analysis of an Acute Health Care Organisation's Leadership. A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfilment Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy, Capella University, October 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Meeting with the World Bank, Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery team – Washington, May 2012.

strategy engages communities and helps people work together to rebuild their housing, their lives, and their livelihoods.<sup>11</sup>

We know activity brings people out of trauma and we know we require a tremendous amount of joint effort to drive recovery forward. Shackleton was a leader who understood the importance of keeping his men active and giving them purpose. He was ever concerned about his men's morale. He understood that idleness quickly begets depression, and so he kept the men as active as possible, sending them out for vigorous games of football and hockey while the Endurance was trapped in ice. This is also why he chose to attempt the marches across the ice once the ship sank, wisely observing that:

*"It would be, I considered, so much better for the men to feel that they were progressing—even if the progress was slow—towards land and safety, than simply to sit down and wait for the tardy north-westerly drift to take us from the cruel waste of ice."*<sup>12</sup>

**Recommendation: Develop a 'Contribute to Recovery' guideline outlining broadly the 10 expectations/priority actions that communities, individuals and business can take to contribute to the recovery effort. Include lists of organisations/advisors who can help 'plug them in' to different areas of action.**

---

<sup>11</sup> World Bank (2010), Safer Homes, Stronger Communities: A Handbook for Reconstructing after Natural Disasters, page 183, Washington.

<sup>12</sup> Leadership Lessons from Ernest Shackleton, by Brett & Kate McKay on August 2, 2011. <http://artofmanliness.com/2011/08/02/leadership-lessons-from-ernest-shackleton/>



### Reflection 3: leave your cape at home and broaden your leadership model



*“People come in to 'save' people - this is not what recovery is about. It is about helping people in a disaster to have the confidence again to make decisions about their lives. It is our mind-set that makes recovery - it is about the empowerment factor. Recovery is different for different people; we need to look holistically at the bigger picture, at a sophisticated level. It is not about projects, it is about influencing the healing of a large number of people - projects are just a mechanism to do this.”* Simon Eccleshall, Disaster Services Department (DSD) International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

When Gotham City or Metropolis is under threat we expect Batman or Superman to be responsible for saving the city or even the world within two hours. Of course we all like the idea that someone can sweep in and ‘save the city’ but unfortunately disaster recovery leadership does not work well this way.

A recent ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action) study emphasises that the idea of a super leader – the leader as some kind of super hero – really does not work and the most effective leaders are those that play the roles of host, facilitator and convener. The report raises the question of whether we have been thinking of leadership the wrong way for some time in that leadership is not something that individuals do but rather something that teams do.<sup>13</sup> This point was also reflected in another study, the business of NGO leadership, which highlighted “a leader must engender a strong team rather than be a ‘heroic figure’ and should develop a ‘followership’. There is no point in having a cohort of strong leaders who are unwilling to follow the plan and build the followership.”<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> "Leadership in Action: Leading effectively in humanitarian operations" by Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4LoIBqYRL8>

<sup>14</sup> *The Business of NGO Leadership, Reflections on Leadership from NGO CEOs, Oxford Brookes University, 2012.*

A strong reflection amongst respondents to the fellowship study was to hire good people and let them make decisions, let them show creativity, a degree of risk taking and support them to grow in their leadership. A culture of compliance might make a leader feel like a superhero but it breeds mediocrity and lowers morale.

A number of respondents spoke of the importance of ‘middle-out’ leadership, the notion that “the middle is exactly where you should be leading recovery from.” Subsequent reading of Zolli & Healy’s *Resilience Why Things Bounce Back* gave some clarity on this reflection.

*“Some characters don’t conform to typical notions of what a leader looks like: They weren’t strong-jawed, visionary CEOs or coiffed elected officials, boldly directing from the top, nor were they bottom-up street-level organisers. Instead, they represented a neglected third form of “middle-out” leadership, seamlessly working up and down and across various organisational hierarchies, connecting with groups who might otherwise be excluded, and translating between constituencies. The authority of these translational leaders was not rooted solely in their formal status but in their informal authority and cultural standing. When disruption strikes, the presence - or absence – of such a leader can have a profound impact.”<sup>15</sup>*

It is these types of leaders that support a ‘unity of effort’ as they have the ability to diplomatically work through the power plays, differing philosophies, perceptions and the worst of the egos. This type of leader is generally in the background, acknowledged but not applauded, weaving different systems together. As one respondent said, “Recovery leaders need to be good at sowing seeds”. The importance of this type of leader in translating the recovery vision into action needs to be recognised and supported.

The importance of a broad recovery leadership model was a key theme both as a means to effective leadership but also to increase resilience. The idea that community leaders wear a bigger hat and in turn collect all the problems – on Saturday morning at the kid’s sports game, then at the supermarket, then the hairdresser and at home when people call at all hours. Leaders can become anxious, stressed, depressed and feel there is nowhere to go – it is a poor leadership model that focuses on one person. Broad leadership means people can say “I just need to focus on my family now” and it doesn’t have an impact.

**Recommendation: Develop a broad leadership model that supports middle-out leadership. Hire good people and let them make decisions, let them show creativity, a degree of risk taking and support them to grow in their leadership.**

---

<sup>15</sup> Zolli, A. and Healy A, *Resilience Why Things Bounce Back*, Headline Publishing Group, 2012.

## Reflection 4: listen to the right people at the right time

Although it sounds simple, active listening can be the hardest thing to do well when faced with so many overwhelming issues and day to day responsibilities. Listening to a wide range of stakeholders and seeking out those who are not well represented, or whose voices are not amplified through money or position, will help a recovery leader develop the balanced approach needed for a successful recovery. Overwhelmingly, respondents' 'if only' moments and mistakes came back to one common but simple theme – listening.

The following quotes provide a selection of reflections from respondents to the question – “what is the most common mistake leaders make in post-disaster recovery?”

- *“If only I had done what the people clearly wanted and needed, and not been persuaded by superiors who did not understand the community.”*
- *“I did not consider ALL who may be affected by my decision-making. It didn't have to happen more than once for me to learn a lesson.”*
- *“Be prepared for the worst, have patience, know that you are not alone, reach out for answers, and never stop moving ahead.”*
- *“To not consult means we are absolutely confident – we give a cast-iron guarantee we know everything.”*
- *“Leaders' typical mistake is to think they know what communities want and don't put the effort in to find out.”*
- *“Putting ego above the needs of people and not listening - thinking they know the answers already.”*
- *“Act too quickly, do not explain what they are doing; treat the affected community as mugs, rather than people with an interest in their own community.”*
- *“Thinking that they can do it all – their way.”*
- *“They don't always tap into knowledge or ask the right questions.”*
- *“Not being willing to listen – to take on the wisdom of other people.”*
- *“You must constantly confront and confirm the way you think.”*
- *“Listen to your instincts and common sense, and don't be bullied by those who don't understand the field realities.”*
- *“You do the best you can, so it is hard to even think about it – hell, I did the best that I could do and that's all that you can ask of people”.*
- *“It is so important for people to feel acknowledged and heard - this is not a normal reaction from a government department especially one focused on service delivery”.*

- *“Imperative to listen and engage local communities and actors. It is a challenge for national government to do this - they get stuck on the 'how'. Important to ensure community participation in the usage of recovery funds through voting and choice.”*
- *“You have to debate things – there is no manual, recovery is a social science, a dialogue between partners and affected people. You also need to challenge affected people – ask questions.”*
- *“Recovery is 95% about relationships – the more you can listen to a wide range of ideas and points of view the more effective you will be in building bridges and moving forward.”*
- *“Listen to people you don’t like. Naturally, if you get on with someone, if you view the world in similar ways, it is easy to agree with them and move forward. Conversely, if you don’t like them you have to work extra hard to not automatically think they are wrong. Debates and negotiation are of critical importance to recovery but not listening and arguing just saps energy and stalls progress. A strong evidence base can help take the emotion out of the argument. I hold on to the fact that overwhelmingly the majority of people doing this work have good intentions.”*

Hillary Clinton understood the value of public listening when she undertook her state-wide ‘listening tour’ in her successful run for U.S. Senate in New York. She began her campaign by stating: *“I think I have some real work to do to get out and listen and learn from the people of New York.”* Perhaps regular and authentic ‘listening tours’ for decision-makers in disaster recovery is a way to connect them in an authentic way to affected people. The process of genuinely listening to affected communities may cause leaders to pale and wince at times, especially as emotions run high in recovery. They hear things that are inconvenient, upsetting and confronting but are also inspired, motivated and informed and this inevitably strengthens decision-making, generates ideas and creates partnerships.

Christine Nixon, Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority and former Chief Commissioner of Police met with all 33 communities devastated by the Black Saturday Bushfires multiple times. She spoke of the importance of listening.

*“Get everyone in a room together - the smartest people in business, government, NGO, non-profit and affected people and facilitate a discussion. You need smart, bright researchers and to know what is best practice. The community is at the heart and you need to keep them at the heart. Have an external advisory group and meet weekly initially.”<sup>16</sup>*

---

<sup>16</sup> Meeting September 2012.

Reflecting on her leadership style, Margareta Wahlstrom, United Nations Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction highlighted the importance of listening.

*“You need to listen, you need to engage, you need to be quite curious, sort of drill down sometimes to the very lowest levels of knowledge. But you also need to be very ready to assume responsibility and take decisions, but do that on a very informed basis of what you understand your partners, your constituencies, your memberships, whatever it is, really can bear.”<sup>17</sup>*

Gregory L. Rynders, Battalion Chief, of the Sandy Fire Department in Utah concludes this topic well with the following insight.

*“We believe that talk is power; when we have “the floor” we are in control. Ironically, the reverse is the truth. True power is in listening. When we truly listen to others, they tell us how to best approach them in meeting their needs.”*

**Recommendation: Recovery leaders must constantly confront and confirm the way they think. Establish regular access to people who are global leaders and visionaries in their field and listen to them.**

**Recommendation: Schedule time to listen to a balanced representation of interest groups, including regular meetings with affected communities. Seek out those who are not well represented, or whose voices are not amplified through money or position.**

---

<sup>17</sup> Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy, Executive Director Ky Luu interviews Margareta Wahlström, the UN Assistant Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction

## Case Study – the Broadmoor project

Amongst the leaders I met from neighbourhood associations in New Orleans I found a culture of social entrepreneurship, a dogged determination to get the city not just back on its feet but thriving. A commitment to people (to build them up, to support them to 'get whole', give them opportunities to be leaders, to support them through what is a loss-change- grief process) that was inspiring. There was a sense that if they didn't come together and do it themselves no one was going to do it for them.

Since 2005's Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures, the Broadmoor Improvement Association (BIA) has become a grassroots powerhouse. It has leveraged more than \$48 million in outside investments and brought in more than 13,000 volunteers. It collaborated with Harvard University in 2006 when Kennedy School students travelled to the New Orleans neighbourhood of Broadmoor in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to assist residents in designing a strategy for neighbourhood recovery. Since then, dozens of Harvard students, staff and faculty have worked alongside residents who have personified the vitality of their neighbourhood by continuing to define its future. The community went from blighted (slated for redevelopment as a green space) to a model for citizen-led recovery efforts.

The Harvard Kennedy School facilitated a series of Neighbourhood Leadership Forums (the series was funded by the Shell Oil Company). Topics included: "Building Effective Partnerships: Increasing community-level resources and impact through cross-sector alliances", and "Best Practices in Neighbourhood Revitalization" and "Data Collection and Recovery Management Information Systems for Neighbourhood Leaders"

Doug Ahlers, New Orleans resident and senior fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs said of the sessions: *"These forums aren't meant to be dialogues or discussion. These are hands-on sessions where people who need the information leave with ideas, skills, and resources they can use to implement real initiatives in their neighborhoods."*<sup>18</sup>

I met with La Toya Cantrell the President of the Broadmoor Improvement Association and asked her the reflective question: If you could step into a time machine and go back and give your 'pre-disaster recovery self' advice, what would it be? She identified the need for vision, focus and persistence.

---

<sup>18</sup> "Continued Leadership Development in New Orleans." Press Release, Harvard University, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, April 4, 2008

*“I would say hold on because the community will eventually speak for us. You know before the storm the community wasn’t speaking for us, and that means everybody, and that means caring about those people living in poverty and doing what it takes to improve the lives of all people. I would say one day the community will speak for us and having that horrible opportunity (Katrina) created that day when the community spoke for us, for everybody. The community said, we were not going to be a drainage park and we were not going to be this green dot, that we were going to come back and we were going to be better. I don’t know what it would have taken pre-storm to get everyone focused on a real vision for this community.”* LaToya Cantrell, President of Broadmoor Improvement Association

This case study demonstrates that with strong leadership and partnerships, communities can draw economic investment and high level support. It also highlights the need for leadership support, tools and training.



## Reflection 5: recovery leadership a fine balancing act.

The most common word used by respondents was balance. Balance can be defined as a state in which opposing forces harmonise - find equilibrium. Recovery is a melting pot of agendas, a fine balancing act between speed and quality, dreams and realities, economics and emotions. This in turn requires leaders to perform a great balancing act between timely concrete actions and value for money, and building meaningfully and safely for future generations in ways that benefit all citizens. It is a mixture of local and centralised decision- making that must lean towards the local. This requires great vision and patience and the belief that if you work hard enough there is generally an ‘elegant solution’ somewhere to most issues.

Successful recovery leadership is dependent on getting the balance ‘right’ for the people, the context and the future, as often as possible. Listening, seeking advice, being in touch with the ‘zeitgeist’ and deep quick learning all assist achieving balanced decisions. It is by all accounts a tough job. The table below summarises the key elements that recovery leaders need to balance when making decisions.



Fast moving environment, difficult to slow down	Need for reflection and constant conversation
Communicating hope	Communicating reality to maintain credibility
Encouraging investment and business	Protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the community from the desires, power, and influence of those who promote short-sighted solutions.
Timely concrete actions and value for money	Building meaningfully and safely for future generations
Local decision making	Centralised decision making
Reform	Speed
Investing a little more upfront to save later	Fiscal constraints
Short-term political and media cycles	Long-term strategic planning
Assume responsibility and take decisions	Listen and engage and be truly informed
Needs of community/city	Health and personal life of leader
Accountability	Creativity, innovation and risk-taking
Technical management attributes	Emotional intelligence and empathy
Achieving milestones	Ensuring self-care and health of team
Engaging with interest groups	Being captured by interest groups
A fast recovery	A good recovery
Decisive action	Recognise the need for consultation
National agenda	Community context

**Recommendation: Aim towards getting the balance ‘right’ for the people, the context and the future, as often as possible.**

## Reflection 6: the importance of two-way communication

*“Even if you don't have the right leader you need to have the right communication strategy.”*

(Meeting with World Bank Team)

In L’Aquila I saw hundreds of sets of keys (to the damaged homes and buildings in L’Aquila) hanging on a fence, the beautiful knitted blankets draped around town (old saying, putting a cloth on it helps you move on) and the post-it notes forming a memory wall. I was reminded of the importance of giving people hope and the space to express their feelings, ideas, and recovery needs and to be heard by those in decision-making roles. A strong two-way communication process can determine how success is perceived more than the number of buildings deconstructed or consents issued. You could think of it like a health episode, people remember how they were treated more than the treatment itself.

The importance of communication was a key theme identified by respondents. The team at the World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery talked about the power of communications in creating an environment for effective leadership, and the disaster management master class I attended in Milan had a session on building trust and managing expectations and community leaders I met spoke passionately of its importance.

The following World Bank guiding principles for communication in recovery summarise many of the comments made by respondents:

- Effective communication in a reconstruction project is not about what governments and project managers “say,” but what beneficiaries “hear”.
- Two-way information flow builds trust, consensus, and active participation - key factors for positive outcomes in development programs - and limits the potential for setbacks and misunderstandings.
- An understanding of people’s perceptions is crucial to designing a communications strategy since these perceptions can dominate behavior, whether or not it seems rational to an outsider.
- The cultural and social context affects communications. Inadequate or improper understanding of this context can create risks to project implementation.
- The largest benefits from communication are realised when it is made an integral part of a development or reconstruction project from the first day.
- Communication experts should be at the table when decisions about reconstruction are made, giving them access to the information they will need to develop the external messages that support the desired outcomes.

- The communication campaign is always a work in progress that will need to be adapted as additional input is received from stakeholders and results on the ground are monitored and evaluated.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to these principles a number of respondents reflected on the importance of honesty, and the balance between hope and reality, noting that over time, affected people come to respect leaders who have the courage to speak honestly on the issues.

Anne Leadbeater, the Strategic Project Manager - Advancing Country Towns for the Murrindindi Shire Council in Victoria, told fire- affected communities:

*"I will never tell you something I know not to be true - I will tell you straight, everyone we bring in to speak has to follow the same line."*

LaToya Cantrell, President of Broadmoor Improvement Association said:

*"We are being true to what we say: that people matter! If we are going to be real about it will show in our actions as well as our words".*

The challenge in getting the balance right between hope and reality is summarised well by Scott Cowen, the president of Tulane University.

*"The second thing that I've found in a disaster, and I've been watching President Obama for this, during a crisis a leader has to be a great communicator and find a fine line between dispensing hope and dispensing reality. If you give people too much reality, you could destroy any sense of hope. But, if you give people them too much hope, void of reality, you lose credibility. So how do you balance that when you're in the midst of it and say this is our situation, and you try to be as open and candid as you can while at the same time saying, but there is hope here and this is the pathway to hope?"<sup>20</sup>*

---

<sup>19</sup> Safer Homes, Stronger Communities: A Handbook for Reconstructing after Natural Disasters, published by the World Bank in January 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy Co-Director Charles Figley Interviews Scott Cowen, president of Tulane University. <http://www.drlatulane.org/leadership-corner/interviews/scott-cowen-interview>.

## Case Study – recovery communications New Zealand Red Cross

Recovery requires innovative, creative, strategic and ‘out of the box’ two-way communications – traditional communications approaches and attitudes alone will fall short. The right communications team and strategy is invaluable to recovery leaders. The New Zealand Red Cross communications team has been recognised for its recovery communications programme and was awarded first place in the 2012 International Association of Emergency Managers - Oceania Public Awareness Award.

Members of the team understand the nature of two-way communication, they make recovery information accessible and it can be found in taxis, supermarkets, cafes, hairdressers – anywhere affected people might visit on a day to day basis. They engage in discussion with people on Facebook and meet regularly with volunteers and affected people. They engage focus groups and worked with professionals to design a website to communicate with young people and to meet their recovery needs [www.addressthestress.co.nz](http://www.addressthestress.co.nz).

They based the New Zealand Red Cross Communications Framework on community feedback and the broader organisational recovery vision and objectives. They are highly strategic, have vast networks and are technically exceptional but most importantly they have a sense of the zeitgeist, they understand what makes people’s hearts soar but also the ‘die in a ditch’ issues – people’s deal-breakers and this makes them highly attuned to risks and opportunities.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies believes communities need and deserve to have information that affects their future, both before and after a disaster and have produced a cartoon on you tube emphasising the importance of communications in both response and recovery  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJwWJ2QzGec&feature=share>.

Australian Red Cross also has a strong focus on post-disaster recovery communication and has produced both a publication and training workshop to support effective communication  
[www.redcross.org.au/communicating-in-recovery.aspx](http://www.redcross.org.au/communicating-in-recovery.aspx)

**Recommendation: traditional communications approaches and attitudes alone will fall short. Develop an innovative, creative, strategic and ‘out of the box’ two-way communications strategy.**





Grillo



I had the privilege of working with Ms. Jane Booth at New Zealand Red Cross. Jane has many strings to her bow: a former principal dancer at the Royal New Zealand Ballet, entrepreneur, business analyst and now the Australian Red Cross, Quality and Assurance Manager for South Australia. Jane encouraged me to look at leadership strengths, inspiration and burnout on my fellowship although she put it this way:

*“So leaders in recovery - when your tutu falls off you need to be sure your frilly knickers are enough. We need to plan for times when we are not at our peak, because no one can be at peak performance all the time. So, what are your plan B’s? How prepared are your understudies? And what are your resilience building strategies? Can you access the wisdom; yours and that of others?”*

Consequently, we developed the following questions to ask recovery leaders on the fellowship:

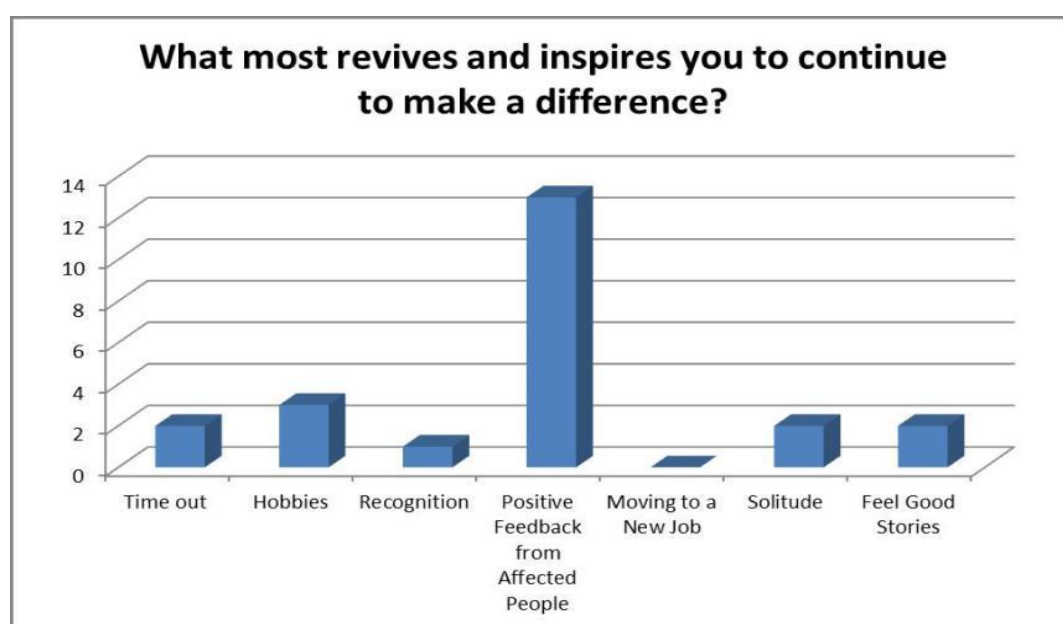
- Recovery leaders are people too - what most revives and inspires you to continue to make a difference?
- What do you consider the optimal contractual period for employees working on post-disaster recovery?
- In what ways do you think leadership burn-out impacts on the recovery of the community itself?
- What do you consider the most important personal strength you bring to disaster recovery?

## Reflection 7: making a difference

There is no doubt that disaster recovery leadership is tough and carries a heavy burden of responsibility. As the following quotes illustrate many recovery leaders are driven to make a positive difference:

- *“What did I do when I was there? Did I make a difference? Did I leave the city better than when I found it? And if the answer is yes, we can be satisfied, if the answer is no that is a terrible thing to live with.”* Art Agnos, former Mayor of San Francisco
- *“We need to feel we are making a difference, if you step out and look back you can see change.”* – Simon Eccleshall, Disaster Services Department (DSD) International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).
- *“Well I don’t know I just manage it through, being able to show results is what keeps me going. And just really believing in what I do – I believe in a community that works, in a community that cares about its people, I believe in that and because of that belief I really want to do all that I can do to make it better for people .”* Latoya Cantrell, Director of Broadmoor Community Project, New Orleans.

This commitment was reflected in the survey results where the majority of respondents identified ‘positive feedback from affected people’ as what inspired and them to continue to make a difference. The downside of this level of commitment and feeling of responsibility is that leaders can put the needs of people or the city before their own needs.





It can be difficult for recovery leaders to identify when they are burnt out, especially as adrenaline shuts down pain receptors and they do not realise how tired they are until they completely relax.

Recovery takes a high toll on life balance and relationships. The intangible long-term impacts of a disaster can be more devastating than the tangible physical losses. We know that long-term consequences include relationship break ups and mental and physical health issues to name a few. For recovery leaders they can face burn out at the same time the needs of the community are at their peak. This can be particularly difficult for those working in social service industries.

## **Reflection 8: stress, burnout and sharing the load**

*“The New Orleans recovery process has been described as ‘death by a thousand cuts’ You too can become traumatised from day in and day out listening to the stories of others, it can make you so tired – the mind can’t handle it. My message to you is to ‘hang in there’, take care of yourself, take care of the person next to you – you need to do this before you can care for and give your hearts to others.” Kay Wilkins, CEO New Orleans Chapter of American Red Cross.*

We know that constant and unmanageable stress adversely affects health, relationships and performance. It can be seen in a lot of recovery leaders. So many people working on the recovery following the Christchurch earthquakes talk of ‘quake weight’ or ‘the girthquake’ as many people have put on weight since the earthquake as a result of stress. You will find leaders who used to make jokes to boost morale do not do so anymore; they look older, drawn and do not debate the issues in the same way. They generally feel guilty/worried about at least one important relationship and do not register their increasing levels of cynicism.

Leaders can become confronted by their inability to keep giving – recovery can become a quest, a vocation. Leaders have to keep going out into the community to absorb emotion and they get tired, people get angry with them because they cannot do this anymore. Becoming overwhelmed, tired and stressed and no longer able to perform is inconvenient to others, it is therefore unlikely that subtle hints that you need to take time out, or that you are no longer able to perform the same role will be picked up. It is important for leaders to actively create the space for their own well-being as ‘crashing and unplanned exiting’ is detrimental to the individual, the organisation and the recovery mission. No one can be ‘strong’ all the time, understanding our vulnerabilities is a strength, especially if this is reflected in work plans, and the leaders prepare for peaks and troughs in performance through scheduling, delegating and mentoring a team of ‘understudies’.

An overwhelming key message amongst respondents was *“the better you care for yourself and your team along the way the longer you can keep making a positive contribution.”*

It is important for leaders to have a ‘self-care’ plan that outlines routines and activities that support health, relationships and allots times for pleasure and leisure. It is helpful to have someone the leader trusts who will monitor how well the plan is maintained and adhered to. Leaders must remember that they act as the role model that determines the culture of the whole team. If they act as a healthy role model they are likely to have a healthy team.

Respondents identified ‘burnout’ as a major issue and noted how difficult it is to see your own trauma noting that you are working in a raw and emotional environment. They identified the following signs of leadership burn-out:

- Starting to resent the community, or taking on the worries of the community and not being able to see clearly.
- A lack of enthusiasm, drive and energy starts to makes things so much harder to achieve.
- Developing an overly irrational perception of ‘the system’ or becoming overly involved with clients and narrow in focus.
- May start to encourage poor or uncooperative behaviour to spite 'systems'. It's not helpful and it alienates them and the community they are trying to help.
- Becoming bitter and cynical and cranky.
- Becoming overwhelmed by how big the job is, and so becomes defensive about what a community should expect from them, usually say things like 'needing to avoid dependency' and take a bit of a 'beggars can't be choosers' type approach.
- Becoming irrationally caught up in the community’s problems and while being totally 'on board for the cause' they are no longer strategic or a good advisor.
- They don't continue to evolve with need and say ‘this is how we do it’!
- Over time becoming too invested to the point they want to keep ‘recovery’ alive rather than devolve back to normal community structures.

In terms of leadership burnout and the impact on the community the effects are quite clear. If leaders are too tired to coordinate and organise, action does not happen – as with any organisation leaders are essential to success. Respondents noted the importance of managing a ‘shifting of the guard’ so communities don't feel like they are losing a lifeline. A key reflection was the need to better support community leadership through leadership, development and stress management training.

Respondents spoke of the importance of ‘two deep’ leadership. Of having a support person, someone you can hand off responsibility, to be connected at the hip with, and someone you already trust. Meeting with executives across sectors, can in a sense, create a support group. Bringing in other leaders to talk about their experiences can be validating and encouraging.

“The world doesn't stop with me - others can share the load.”

Leaders who are working alone are most likely working below their capacity. In the world of recovery it is important to find people who have done what you are doing and to learn and grow beside them:

- Connect globally person-to-person and organisation-to-organisation. Find and meet regularly with a mentor (someone who has ‘been there done that’ in terms of post-disaster recovery), think of them as your professional ‘off load’ or ‘help’ button.
- Connect with an organisation (similar in terms of mandate, which is experienced in post-disaster work) and think of them in terms of your ‘share button’.
- Convene reference groups of leading thinkers and innovators to advise on recovery plans and ideas.

On a positive note a number of leaders also spoke of how the recovery experience (if wellbeing is maintained) can ultimately be a period of personal and professional growth. The following quote is helpful to keep in mind:

*“What you are doing now prepares you for something that will be worse – it will make you stronger, you will go on to be bigger and better with every experience.”* Al Panico, Head of Operations International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies IFRC Asia Pacific Zone

**A must watch.....**

Dr Rob Gordon is an Australian clinical psychologist, who is a specialist in the effects on communities that have suffered disasters. Extracts from Dr. Rob Gordon's community forum *"Understanding the stresses of recovery in the second and third years; protecting health, lifestyle and relationships"* Forum held in New Brighton, Christchurch. Can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwOIPv1RplM>

**Recommendation: as a leader reflect and understand your vulnerabilities and prepare for peaks and troughs in performance through scheduling, delegating and mentoring a team of 'understudies'.**

**Recommendation: connect globally person-to-person and organisation-to-organisation. Find and meet regularly with a mentor (someone who has 'been there done that' in terms of post-disaster recovery,) think of them as your professional 'off load' or 'help' button.**

## Reflection 9: the 'use by' date

It takes great personal insight to understand when you are no longer performing at your best and to make an advanced exit plan. I have often been asked at the beginning of a recovery about the length of contracts for those working on recovery.

So, I asked the question – how long should the contractual period for an employee working on post-disaster recovery be? The answer was overwhelmingly that by the two year mark recovery leaders need to stop, assess and make a plan. This might include:

- Arranging a secondment
- Taking a long break (6-8 weeks)
- Revising your role
- Changing jobs
- Updating your self-care plan
- Listening carefully to those who you trust and who know you best



Respondents noted that it is also a good time for leaders to think about their strengths and where they add greatest value:

- an innovator/planner/designer (phase 1)
- a monitor/implementer (phase 2)
- a closer/evaluator (phase 3)

People invest heavily in relationships and feel trust is lost when leaders leave – a planned handover is essential. Not having a transition is to the detriment of the community. If recovery leaders leave their recovery role when they still have some 'gas in the tank' they can stay on as a mentor and continue to support the community/team in small but crucial ways.

The worst scenario is burning out and leaving without a contingency plan. This leaves the community/team without key support mechanisms. Losing key people with no planning has negative impacts on access to support, funding, coordination and advocacy. It is important for leaders to have an exit strategy including a succession plan, plenty of notice and adjustment time and some key initiatives planned and ready to launch to give the new leadership confidence.

A note regarding funding – when applying for funding following an emergency (the easiest time to access funding), if at all possible seek funding for 5 year roles– as it is the roles you are seeking funding for not specific people).

**Recommendation: two years marks the spot – stop, assess and make a plan. This might include: arranging a secondment, taking a long break (6-8 weeks), revising your role or changing jobs.**

## Reflection 10: what does 'strong' mean?

*"You do not lead by hitting people over the head—that's assault, not leadership."* Eisenhower

Throughout the fellowship two types of recovery leaders started to emerge. There are some leaders who oxygenate a room, where they encourage leadership in others and involve them in the visioning process and as a result inspire many hours of community and professional service. There are others who 'suck oxygen out', often inadvertently through believing 'they can do it all', or 'nobody can do it as well' or the 'fear of losing control'. A key indicator to the type of leadership is how leaders respond to an idea that is 'out of the box' or contrary to the leader's view. If there is a culture of ridicule or shutting ideas down you will not only de-energise one person, but every other who might be mustering the courage to put their thinking forward and the effect on morale and innovation is devastating.

I asked recovery leaders, what important strengths do you bring to recovery? Many of the answers are reflected in the conclusions of one of the rare studies I found on recovery leadership that identified that the necessary leadership traits are all focused towards achieving the right actions in a timely manner. This disaster leadership combines softer attributes with technical management ability. These softer leadership characteristics include: true empathy from a high degree of emotional intelligence; the ability to engender confidence and motivate followers; a strong ethical framework; and the encouragement of community participation by regular, transparent, two-way communication. The technical aspects of leadership centre on appropriate competence, pragmatism, problem-solving and an ability to utilise existing connections to call up the right resources and expertise (Beckett, J., Wilkinson, S. & Potangaroa, R. 2010).

In addition to these traits maintaining a sense of calm and the ability to 'work in the grey' were identified by respondents as key strengths in recovery leadership.

*"A sense of calm is very important as is personal resilience as it is tough stuff"* – Christine Nixon, Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority and former Chief Commissioner of Police

A sense of calm is a pre-requisite to clear thinking, to negotiating and navigating the way forward. We know that leaders who are greatly stressed stress those around them. When leadership can maintain calm it gives the team/community a feeling that 'we can get through anything'.

Recovery should be messy, it should be up and down – if it is tidy then it is time to start worrying about the process. When things are messy leaders need to relax and accept that it is

part of the process. There is very little that is black and white. Embracing working 'in the grey' is helpful because recovery is an organic process, it has a rhythm and lifespan all of its own. It would seem that in these messy/chaotic situations people are attracted to leaders who exhibit calm and self-control.

Respondents emphasised the importance of emotional intelligence and the ability to demonstrate genuine empathy. Genuine empathy requires connection and energy. It requires a balance between becoming overly involved and invested (to the point where the recovery leader loses the bigger picture) and not being involved enough (demonstrating too little empathy and losing the people along the way). Leadership 'from the ivory tower' will not be respected. The following excerpt on Eisenhower's leadership is insightful for recovery leaders and summarises many of the points made by respondents.

"The genuine tenderness Eisenhower felt for his men, and his acknowledgement of the very real, individual repercussions his decisions would cause, greatly increased his anxiety and the burden of his responsibilities. But while it wearied him, it also fuelled the excellence of his leadership and the success of his command. He saw the whole undertaking as a team effort in which each person, from the lowly private to the Prime Minister, had a vital and indispensable role to play. His job was simply to fit the many disparate parts into one effective whole."

**Recommendation: Demonstrate stability, emotional intelligence, genuine empathy and develop a 'culture of calm'.**





- A city is a home for its people and there is great value in recovery leaders encouraging a visioning process, that allows space for imagining the kind of city and society that people want for their grandchildren, of pushing the boundaries of what is possible and taking a long-term view.
- The vision serves as the inspiration for others, but alone is not sufficient. Many levels of leadership are required to translate the vision into implementation. A key reflection amongst respondents was the importance of giving enough encouragement, training and space for 'emergent leaders' to demonstrate leadership, particularly at the community level.
- A strong reflection amongst respondents to the fellowship study was to hire good people and let them make decisions, let them show creativity, a degree of risk taking and support them to grow in their leadership. A culture of compliance might make a leader feel like a superhero but it breeds mediocrity and lowers morale.
- The importance of a broad recovery leadership model was a key theme both as a means to effective leadership but also to increase resilience. The idea that community leaders wear a bigger hat and in turn collect all the problems – on Saturday morning at the kid's sports game, then at the supermarket, then the hairdresser and at home when people call at all hours. Leaders can become anxious, stressed, depressed and feel there is nowhere to go – it is a poor leadership model that focuses on one person. Broad leadership means people can say "I just need to focus on my family now", and it doesn't have an impact.
- Although it sounds simple, active listening can be the hardest thing to do well when faced with so many overwhelming issues and day to day responsibilities. Listening to a wide range of stakeholders and seeking out those who are not well represented, or whose voices are not amplified through money or position, will help a recovery leader develop the balanced approach needed for a successful recovery. Overwhelmingly, respondents' 'if only' moments and mistakes came back to one common but simple theme – listening.

- The Broadmoor Project case study demonstrated that with strong vision, leadership and partnerships, communities can draw serious economic investment and high level support. As this case highlights, leadership support, tools and training are a key element.
- Emergent leaders can see the priority areas for action in the immediate response to a disaster however, in the more complex recovery stage they need guidance, encouragement and tools to 'plug in' to the broader effort. These local leaders play a crucial role in mobilising resources and reflecting the values, hopes and priorities of communities. They can lift people out of the 'world of me' and harness their energy to move recovery forward.
- Successful recovery leadership is dependent on the getting the balance 'right' for the people, the context and the future, as often as possible. Listening, seeking advice, being in touch with the 'zeitgeist' and deep quick learning all assist achieving balanced decisions.
- A strong two-way communication process can determine how success is perceived, more than the number of buildings deconstructed or consents issued. You could think of it like a health episode, people remember how they were treated more than the treatment itself.
- Recovery takes a high toll on life balance and relationships. The intangible long term impacts of a disaster can be more devastating than the tangible physical losses. We know that long-term consequences include relationship break ups and mental and physical health issues to name a few. For recovery leaders they can face burn out at the same time the needs of the community are at their peak. This can be particularly difficult for those working in social service industries.
- No one can be 'strong' all the time, understanding our vulnerabilities is strength, especially if this is reflected in work plans, and the leaders prepare for peaks and troughs in performance through scheduling, delegating and mentoring a team of 'understudies'.
- In terms of leadership burnout and the impact on the community, the effects are quite clear. If leaders are too tired to coordinate and organise, action does not happen – as with any organisation leaders are essential to success. Respondents noted the importance of managing a 'shifting of the guard' so communities don't feel like they are losing a lifeline. A key reflection was the need to better support community leadership through leadership, development and stress management training.

- Leaders who are working alone are most likely working below their capacity. In the world of recovery it is important to find people who have done what you are doing and to learn and grow beside them.
- People invest heavily in relationships and feel trust is lost when leaders leave – a planned handover is essential. Not having a transition is to the detriment of the community. If recovery leaders leave their recovery role when they still have some ‘gas in the tank’ they can stay on as a mentor and continue to support the community/team in small but crucial ways.
- Respondents emphasised the importance of emotional intelligence and the ability to demonstrate genuine empathy. Genuine empathy requires connection and energy. It requires a balance between becoming overly involved and invested (to the point where the recovery leader loses the bigger picture) and not being involved enough (demonstrating too little empathy and losing the people along the way). Leadership ‘from the ivory tower’ will not be well respected.
- Recovery should be messy, it should be up and down – if it is tidy then it is time to start worrying about the process. When things are messy leaders need to relax and accept that it is part of the process. There is very little that is black and white. Embracing working ‘in the grey’ is helpful because recovery is an organic process, it has a rhythm and lifespan all of its own. It would seem that in these messy/chaotic situations people are attracted to leaders who exhibit calm and self-control.



Beckett, J., Wilkinson, S. & Potangaroa, R. (2010, September). Post-disaster recovery: Multi-agency leadership and co-ordination. Paper presented at the 2010 Construction, Building and Real Estate Research Conference of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Paris.

Buchanan-Smith, M. Scriven, K. (2011). Leadership in Action: Leading effectively in humanitarian operations ALNAP/Overseas Development Institute, London.

Demetrius J. Porche, Emergent Leadership During a Natural Disaster: (October, 2009). A Narrative Analysis of an Acute Health Care Organisation's Leadership. A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy, Capella University.

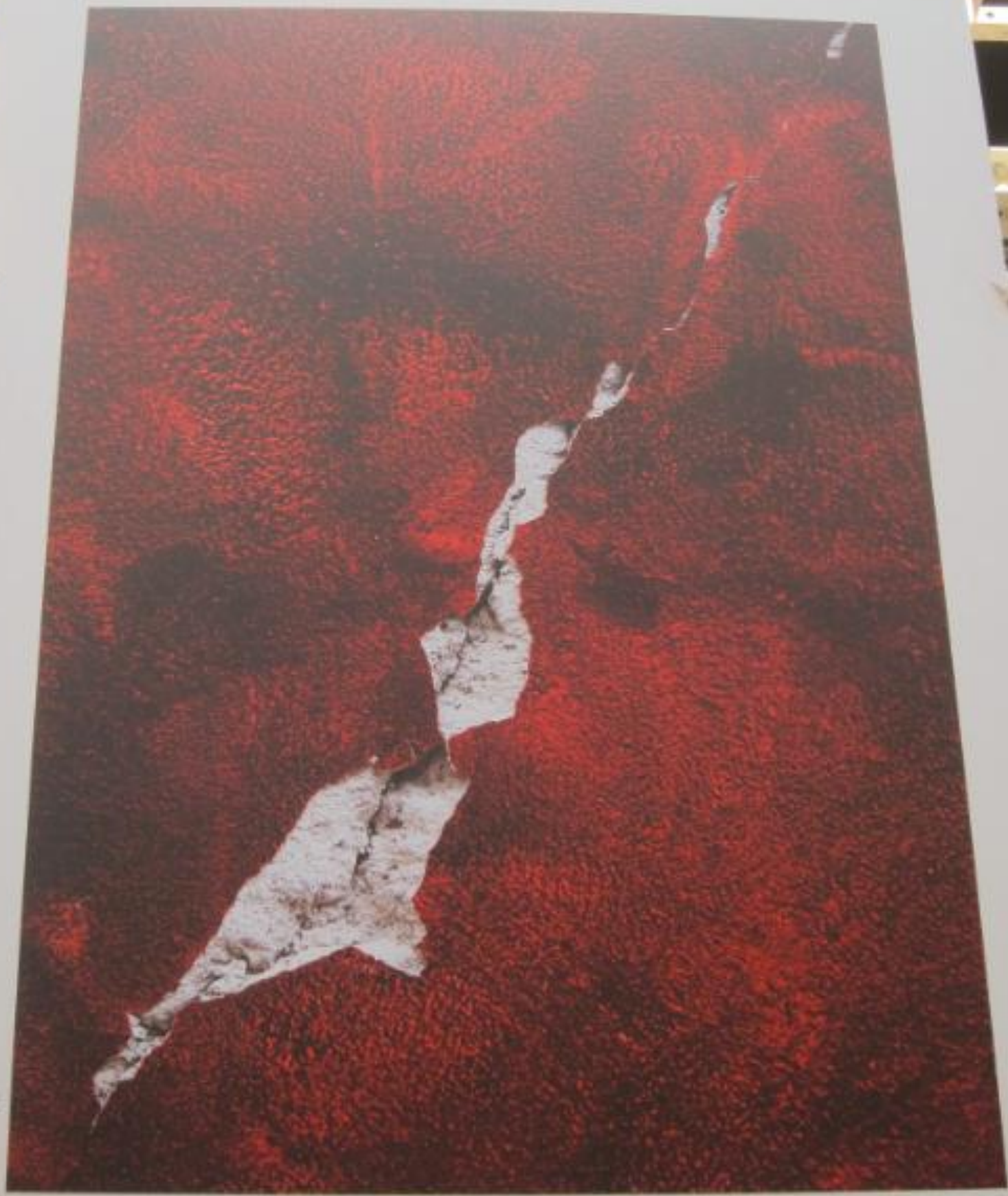
Holistic Disaster Recovery – Ideas for Building Local Sustainability after a Natural Disaster, Natural Hazards Centre, Boulder Colorado, 2005.

Mara Bún, The Path to Resilience, *Griffith Review, Edition 35: Surviving*, April 2012.

Safer Homes, Stronger Communities: A Handbook for Reconstructing after Natural Disasters, published by the World Bank in January 2010.

Zolly, A. and Healy A, *Resilience* (2012). *Why Things Bounce Back*, Headline Publishing Group.

The Business of NGO Leadership, Reflections on Leadership from NGO CEOs, Oxford Brookes University, 2012.



1/10



## Appendix 1: recovery leadership and challenges survey

### Q1

1. What sector of disaster recovery do you best represent?

- Academic
- Community
- Government
- Non-Governmental Organisation
- Not for Profit
- Corporate

Other (please specify)

### Q2

2. If you could step into a time machine and go back and give your 'pre-disaster self', advice, what would it be?

### Q3

3. Reflecting on your disaster recovery experiences what are your 'if only' moments?

An 'if only' moment is when you reflect on your actions and regret a course of action – this leads you to think 'if only I had.....'

**Q4**

**4. Recovery leaders are people too - what most revives and inspires you to continue to make a difference?**

- time out
- hobbies
- recognition
- positive feedback from affected people
- moving to a new job
- solitude
- feel good stories

Other (please specify)

**Q5**

**5. What do you consider the most important personal strength you bring to disaster recovery?**

**Q6**

**6. What do you consider the most typical mistake that leaders make in the post-disaster recovery space?**

**Q7**

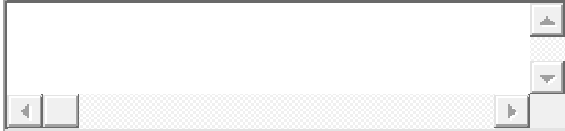
**7. What do you consider the optimal contractual period for employees working on post-disaster recovery?**

- post 6 months
- 12 months
- 18 months

- 24 months
- 2-5 years
- indefinitely

**Q8**

**8. In what ways do you think leadership burn-out impacts on the recovery of the community itself?**

A text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains a scroll bar on the right side and a small square button with a right-pointing arrow at the bottom right corner.

**Q9**

**9. Can you share some unintended consequences (positive or negative) of decisions you have made in disaster recovery planning or implementation?**

A text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains a scroll bar on the right side and a small square button with a right-pointing arrow at the bottom right corner.

**Q10**

**10. We welcome your thoughts arising out of this survey, your comments and wisdom on post-disaster recovery, and your feedback on this survey.**

A text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains a scroll bar on the right side and a small square button with a right-pointing arrow at the bottom right corner.



## Appendix 2: interview respondents

Andrew Coghlan	National Manager, Emergency Services, Australian Red Cross
Christine Nixon	Former head of VBRRRA (Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority) and Former Police Commissioner
Ronnie Faggotter	Director, State Recovery Office, South Australian State Government
Ross Pagram	Principal Project Manager – Disaster Recovery at Communities & Social Inclusion, South Australia State Government
Anne Leadbeater	Strategic Project Manager - Advancing Country Towns Murrindindi Shire Council
Greg Ireton	Principal Recovery Adviser at Department of Human Services, Victoria, Australia
Dr Rob Gordon	Clinical psychologist specialising in recovery from disasters
John Richardson	National Coordinator-Strategic Development Emergency Services
Kate Brady	National Recovery Coordinator, Australian Red Cross
Kamal Kishore	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery United Nations Development Programme
Jordan Ryan	Director, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery - UNDP
Art Agnos	Former Mayor of San Francisco
Anne Milling	Founder Women of the Storm, New Orleans
Alicia Johnson	Resilience and Recovery Manager City and County of San Francisco
Harold W. Brooks	Chief Executive Officer American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter
Madelyn E. Mackie	External Relations Officer American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter
Daniel Homsey	Director of GSA Strategic Initiatives at San Francisco City Administrator's Office
Sofia Curdumi Pendley	Program Manager Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy at Tulane University
Shannon Strother	Humanitarian Aid Evaluator Tulane University Disaster Resilience Leadership

	Academy
Bruce G. Cuber	Director, Community Outreach Department, Southeast Louisiana Chapter
Kay Wilkins	CEO, Southeast Louisiana Chapter, American Red Cross
La Toya Cantrell	President of the Broadmoor Improvement Association New Orleans
Raja Rehan Arshad	Team Leader Sustainable Recovery Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery - The World Bank
Laura Olson	Consultant, UNDP Senior Research Scientist The George Washington University Institute for Crisis, Disaster, and Risk Management
Denise Thornton	Founder Beacon of Hope
Tina Marquardt	Executive Director – Beacon of Hope New Orleans
Paul Timmons	American Red Cross Special Representative FEMA Region III
William G. Pietersen	Professor, The Practice of Management Columbia Business School
Simon Eccleshall	Head, Disaster Services Department (DSD) International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).
Al Panico	Acting Director / Head of Operations International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies IFRC Asia Pacific zone
Bob McKerrow	Head of Delegation, Sri Lanka International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Bekele Geleta	Secretary General International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Appendix 3: blog excerpt - meeting with Professor Willie Pietersen, Columbia University Business School

### Building a Cathedral



I am going up and up and up 31, 32, 33 bing... I get out of the lift and am struck by the stunning views of Central Park and the New York skyline. I have arrived at the offices of Willie Pietersen, Professor at Columbia University Business School.

The night before I picked up his book ***Strategic Learning*** and it fell open on page 161, in bold type was the heading **Building a Cathedral**, well doesn't that sounds like us? So, it goes like this...

*A man walking along the sidewalk comes across three workers toiling away at a construction site. He stops, and asks the first worker, "What are you doing? The worker answers, I'm digging a hole." He poses the same question to the second worker, who replies, "I'm laying bricks." Finally, he turns to the third worker, "And what are you doing?" The third worker answers, "I'm building a cathedral."*

This gives meaning to everyone's role, no matter how humble. It enables the leader to say to the first worker, "you're not just digging a hole. You are helping to create strong foundations for this cathedral, so it will stand for a thousand years." And to the second worker, "You are not just laying bricks. You are helping to create a beautiful façade for this cathedral, so it will be admired by all who see it". According to Professor Pietersen, an essential task of a leader is to be able to describe "the cathedral" – the goal to be achieved.

Many of us are 'building the cathedral'. For some this will be incredibly hard as they are faced with the day to day recovery struggle (I have heard it referred to as 'death by a thousand cuts'), so it falls to those of us not so burdened to rally and support the effort.

Howard Gardner describes a leader this way: "A leader is someone who is able, through persuasion and personal example, to change the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of those whom he (sic) seeks to lead" (*Howard Gardner, Five Minds for the Future, p.7 Boston: Harvard*

*Business School Publishing, 2006*). Therefore, I would suggest that in our Canterbury recovery we can't look solely to a few identifiable leaders to be our 'recovery leaders'. I would argue that we all have a role to play in helping each other, the rest of New Zealand and the world to 'see the cathedral'. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and to lose sight of the fact that each and every one of us has some influence to change thoughts, feelings and behaviour that will set us in the right direction – we all have a role.

Professor Pietersen and I spoke for over an hour on many issues, one of which being the importance of morale. This starts me thinking... Simple things such as ringing your aunt and uncle in Christchurch more often, getting on a plane and popping buy, buying goods that support Christchurch businesses, lending an empathetic ear, sending a winter wellness package to friends or family, joining our Red Cross outreach volunteers - a million small messages of encouragement will go a long way to strengthen morale this winter.

It is time to leave. Professor Pietersen, stands up and I realise he is a tall man, much taller than most and I leave with the distinct impression that people who meet him find themselves looking up to him in more ways than one.

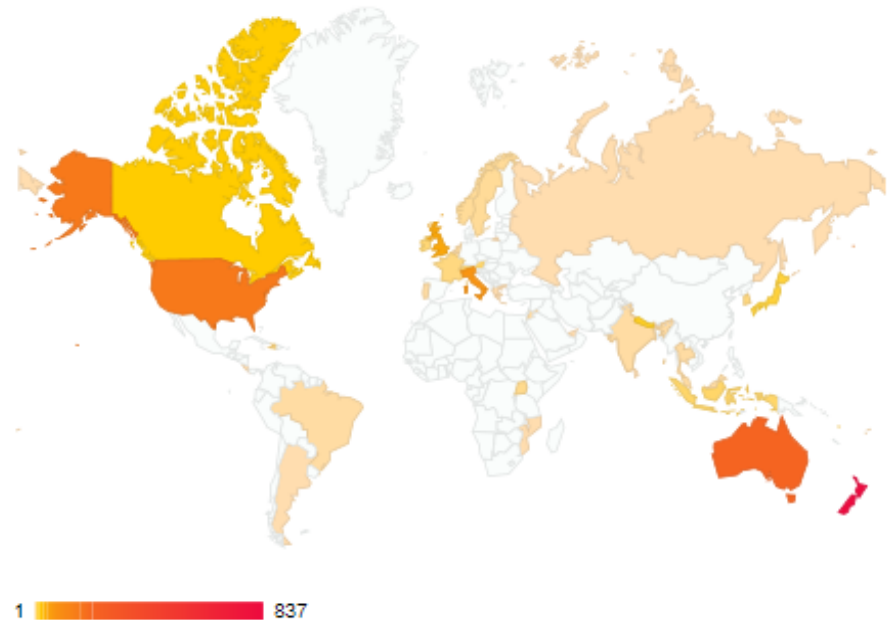
I am out on the hot footpath walking down Madison Avenue (having just missed Madonna on a shopping trip I later find out in the tabloids); I notice a shop with security guards and a locked entrance. A curious looking place so I investigate. I find that it is an historical letters and documents boutique.

In the centre of the window, flanked by Charles Darwin, Sitting Bull, Ghandi and Chekhov is our Sir Edmund Hillary – signed, selling for a pretty penny and staring out at me. There was a quote from him saying he considered himself an 'ordinary man with ordinary qualities'. I found this symbolic, we too have a mountain to climb, and we too will get there through our 'ordinary people' stepping up and doing extraordinary things.

## Appendix 4: impact of fellowship

At the date of writing the [www.recoverymatters1.wordpress.com](http://www.recoverymatters1.wordpress.com) blog had received 1500 views from readers in 39 countries. I have presented the finding at the New Zealand 2013 Emergency Management, “Moving towards Recovery and Resilience” conference and at the Emergency Management Australia (EMA) Recovery Managers course. I plan to disseminate the report widely through networks both nationally and internationally.

Country	Views
 New Zealand	837
 Australia	212
 United States	165
 Italy	73
 United Kingdom	45
 Vanuatu	33
 Canada	16
 Nepal	13
 Japan	11
 Indonesia	7
 Austria	7
 Ireland	6
 Switzerland	6
 Haiti	5
 Republic of Korea	5
 France	5
 Uganda	4
 Sweden	3
 Norway	3
 Jordan	2
 Belgium	2
 Portugal	2
 Brazil	2
 Thailand	2
 Samoa	2
 Malaysia	2
 Netherlands	2
 Qatar	2
 India	2
 Greece	1
 Argentina	1
 United Arab Emirates	1
 Hong Kong	1
 Russian Federation	1
 Singapore	1
 Costa Rica	1
 Mozambique	1
 Sri Lanka	1
 Fiji	1



## Biography



Elizabeth McNaughton's career has been a series of disasters. She is experienced in emergency management, risk reduction and recovery and was the National Recovery Manager at New Zealand Red Cross.

She has worked with the New Zealand Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management, where she was seconded for six months to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Recovery Policy Team in the wake of the Canterbury earthquakes. She has also worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the Pacific regional programme.

Her international experience includes working for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in South Asia where her role was to improve the quality and accountability of recovery operations in the region.

Elizabeth enjoys writing and has written a book: *A Practical Guide to Advocacy and for Disaster Risk Reduction*.

Elizabeth is now an independent Disaster Management policy and research advisor and continues to provide services across a number of sectors to various agencies including Red Cross.

[www.recoverymatters1.wordpress.com](http://www.recoverymatters1.wordpress.com)

[elizabeth.mcnaughton007@gmail.com](mailto:elizabeth.mcnaughton007@gmail.com)





FAMIGLIA VITTORINI

Grillo