

# Emergency Sheltering in Australia: considerations beyond the four walls and a roof

## The context

Australian communities will face more and worse disasters in the future (Whittaker, 2011).

Society is changing in a variety of ways that is complicating the preparation for and provision of emergency sheltering support.



**1** Non-traditional household compositions are increasing



**2** Changes in age distribution



**3** Changes in demographics

“ Emergency Sheltering – a safe, supportive and caring environment for members of the community requiring short-term shelter as a result of an emergency. ”



## Human needs in emergencies

### Basic human needs



### Secondary needs

- the maintenance of dignity and autonomy
- privacy
- a sense of order and belonging
- access to information
- orientation and identity (Babister and Kelman, 2002)
- a place for collecting family and belongings (Davis, 1978)
- a staging point to reorganise lives and begin the recovery process (Davis, 1978).

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## Emergency Sheltering is a Process

Emergency sheltering is a process which occurs in phases

### Planning and Preparedness

Effective emergency sheltering operations is contingent on pre-emergency planning

- Targeted assessment of community needs, facilities and resources
- A multi-agency process
- Support for ALL groups of affected people

### Immediate Sheltering Up to 18 hours



- people may shelter before a hazard or immediately after impact
- basic human needs should be met

#### Examples include:

- public cyclone shelters
- places of refuge
- neighbourhood safer places

#### Spontaneous Sheltering:

#### Self-sheltering:

### Temporary Sheltering 18 hours to 3 weeks



- basic and secondary human needs should be met
- includes provision of bedding, psychosocial support, child-friendly spaces, transport

#### Examples include:

- evacuation centres
- relief centres
- temporary accommodation

Occurs when the community establishes self-settled shelters without formal approval or coordination with authorities. Spontaneous shelters are primarily established through community members' self-initiative.

People with more social and financial resources usually undertake self-sheltering options. These include sheltering-in-place, staying with family/friends and staying at hotels/motels.

### Temporary Housing Months or years



- involves the re-establishment of household routines before permanent quarters are obtained (Quarantelli, 1982)
- empowers people to re-establish routine and household responsibilities
- goal is to transition from sheltering to housing as soon as possible

