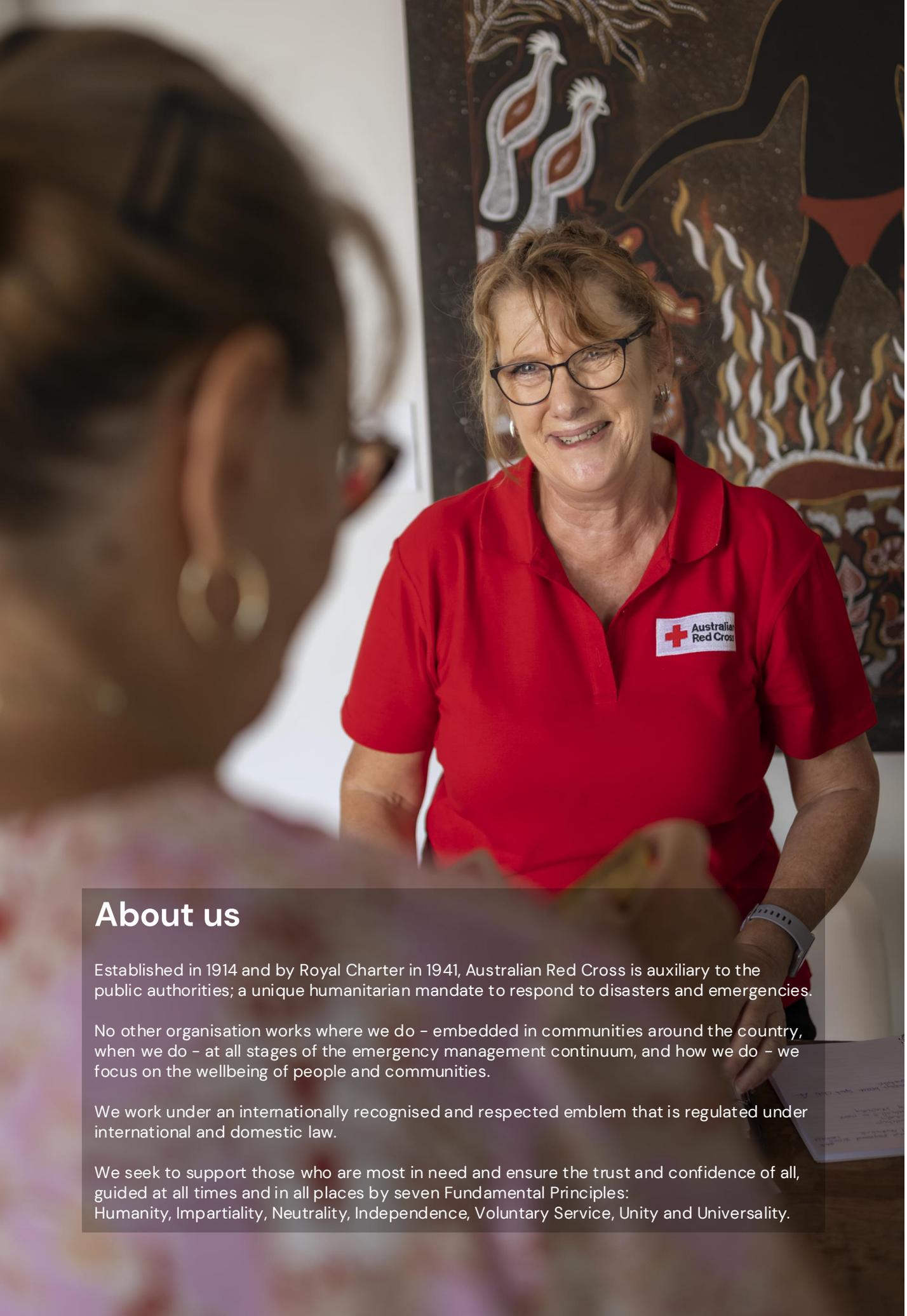




Response in Action: Disaster and Collective Trauma Events

Australian Red Cross Queensland Emergency Response
October 2023 - April 2024



About us

Established in 1914 and by Royal Charter in 1941, Australian Red Cross is auxiliary to the public authorities; a unique humanitarian mandate to respond to disasters and emergencies.

No other organisation works where we do – embedded in communities around the country, when we do – at all stages of the emergency management continuum, and how we do – we focus on the wellbeing of people and communities.

We work under an internationally recognised and respected emblem that is regulated under international and domestic law.

We seek to support those who are most in need and ensure the trust and confidence of all, guided at all times and in all places by seven Fundamental Principles: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.

Message from the Deputy Chief Executive Officer

I am immensely proud of how Australian Red Cross pulled together to support Queensland during these difficult and tragic times.

Overseeing the organisation during this period, I was impressed with how quickly and effectively our volunteers, members and staff mobilised and deployed across the state.

This report shows what we do best; being an effective auxiliary partner to public authorities in the humanitarian field, preventing and alleviating human suffering.



Penny Harrison
Deputy CEO
Australian Red Cross



Disasters tested Queensland communities across the state. We remember those who tragically lost their lives.

Flames scarred swathes of land in the Western and Southern Downs. Homes, sheds, livestock—fire does not discriminate.

The December festive season and new year offered no reprieve. Tropical Cyclone Jasper brought floodwaters that engulfed entire communities. With our volunteers providing support, Australian Defence Force Chinooks evacuated Wujal Wujal residents to locations across the Far North. Across the state, severe weather disrupted and displaced Queenslanders, impacting their jobs, homes and livelihood.

As Tropical Cyclone Jasper's floodwaters rose and Tropical Cyclone Kirrily crossed the Townsville coast, the people of Ipswich were shocked by a violent attack on one of their own at Redbank Plains Shopping Centre.

Australian Red Cross supported government, emergency services personnel and communities to respond to these simultaneous events. Drawing on the experience of the Global Movement, we called on our volunteers, emergency management specialists and corporate partners to complement efforts to support Queenslanders.

Volunteers put their holiday plans on hold and deployed across the state. From evacuation centres to cyclone shelters, our trained volunteers and staff provided 36,000 Queenslanders with psychological first aid and support. Harnessing internationally-recognised best practice guidelines, this support helps people feel safe and connected to others, calm and hopeful, and have the belief in themselves to accomplish tasks.

Register.Find.Reunite. was activated to help Queenslanders impacted or separated by these events. After police rescued a woman from her flooding home in Cairns, she was taken to an evacuation centre managed by Australian Red Cross, with nothing but the clothes on her back. Using Register.Find.Reunite., we helped her connect with her distressed family.

Embedded in government taskforces, our leaders represented the voice of community. Drawing on information from a vast network of deployed personnel, we helped Queensland policymakers understand the disasters' impacts at the grassroots.



10 Queensland Emergency Response activations



375 Australian Red Cross personnel activated



137 days of activation



30,363 hours of support provided to Queenslanders



35,670 Queenslanders given access to psychological first aid



87 individual Queensland locations supported



I thank our volunteers for supporting the fabric of impacted Queensland communities and for putting Humanity first.



Garry Page
Queensland Director
Australian Red Cross

Australian Red Cross activations across Queensland: Cyclones, storms and bushfires

State, District and Local authorities activated Australian Red Cross six times for severe weather events. Australian Red Cross helped every time, providing trained volunteers who delivered psychological first aid to affected Queenslanders.

① Queensland Bushfires

18 Oct–25 Nov

- Activated by Department of Treaty, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (DTATSIPCA) & five Local Government Areas (LGA)
- 3x Evacuation centres managed
- 7x Recovery centres supported
- 2,492 people provided access to psychological first aid
- 71 Australian Red Cross personnel contributed
- Outreach in Tablelands LGA
- Register.Find.Reunite. used

② Tropical Cyclone Jasper

10 Dec–19 Feb

- Activated by DTATSIPCA and Cairns and Tablelands Regional Councils
- 3x Evacuation centres managed
- 25x Recovery centres supported
- 2x Cyclone shelters supported
- 12,313 people provided access to psychological first aid
- 138 Australian Red Cross personnel contributed
- Outreach to 119 households in Mossman, Daintree, Rossville, Bloomfield, Trinity Beach, Kewarra Beach and Hopevale
- Register.Find.Reunite. used

③ SEQ Storms

29 Dec–2 Jan

- Activated by DTATSIPCA
- 2x Evacuation centres supported
- 16 Recovery centres supported
- 13,159 people provided access to psychological first aid
- 165 Australian Red Cross personnel contributed
- Outreach to 207 households in gympie and Gold Coast

④ Tropical Cyclone Kirrily

22 Jan–23 Feb

- Activated by DTATSIPCA and Townsville Council
- 1x Evacuation centre supported
- 10x Recovery centres supported
- 2x Cyclone shelters supported
- 1,500 practical support kits dispersed
- 5,810 people provided access to psychological first aid
- 79 Australian Red Cross personnel contributed
- Outreach in Townsville, including a retirement village and 2 households
- Register.Find.Reunite. used

⑤ Moreton Bay – Severe Weather

30 Jan

- Activated by DTATSIPCA and Moreton Bay Council
- 5x Evacuation kits dispersed
- 436 people provided access to psychological first aid
- 42 Australian Red Cross personnel contributed
- Outreach to 330 households in Caboolture and Moreton Bay

⑥ Tropical Cyclone Lincoln

16–27 Feb

- Activated by DTATSIPCA
- 60x Personal kits dispersed
- 181 people provided access to psychological first aid
- 7 Australian Red Cross personnel contributed

Our responses for each activation

Area indicated on map not to scale

- ①  x3  x3  x7 
- ②  x3  x3  x25  x2 
- ③  x2  x2  x16 
- ④  x1  x1  x10  x2 
- ⑤  x5  x5
- ⑥  x6  x60



Register.Find.Reunite. used



Outreach to communities



Practical support kits dispersed



Evacuation centre support



Recovery centre support



Cyclone shelter support

How we helped Queenslanders during activations



Psychological first aid and support:

A humane and caring approach to helping people affected by an emergency, disaster or traumatic event. Reduce initial distress and foster adaptive functioning. Draws on the expertise of the global Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

Outreach:

Support for people who may not otherwise have to access services and supports. Includes visiting people in their homes, businesses and places of temporary residence. Can be delivered alongside other agencies.

Evacuation centre management:

We apply internationally recognised best practice to manage evacuation centres, including water supply, sanitation, waste management, space management, food and sleeping arrangements.

Cyclone shelters support:

Provides immediate support and essential services to individuals and families affected by cyclones, including emotional and psychological support, information and resources

Recovery centre support:

We contribute to a centralised "one stop shop" which provides support and services for recovering communities.

Practical support kits:

In collaboration with Amazon, Pine O'Clean and Unilever ANZ, we distribute hygiene packs, cleanup kits and dignity packs, to support affected communities recover from disaster.

Queensland government coordination:

Alongside State government agencies, we are a key partner in the: State Disaster Coordination Group; State, District and Local Human Social Recovery Groups; and Disaster Management Committees.

Register. Find. Reunite.:

Management of the registration and reunification system on behalf of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. It supports the reunification of family, friends and loved ones during and after an emergency and can provide details about people to approved authorities, supporting emergency response and recovery.

Memorial management:

We provide physical support and expertise regarding establishment of temporary memorials and tribute sites. We help manage memorials, following the 'Psychosocial guidelines for temporary memorial management'.

Nadine and Sam's experience with Tropical Cyclone Jasper

Nadine and Sam's story, a Kuku Yalanji woman and a Kaurareg man living in Cairns, shows how Tropical Cyclone Jasper impacted communities in Far North Queensland.

As winds battered Cairns, Sam took refuge with their children in their home. Power and communication to their house went out. As a youth worker, Nadine, had traveled to work to care for her clients. With chaos outside, Nadine found herself separated from her family. She bunkered down and looked after her clients.

At the Mossman Shire Hall Recovery Centre, Nadine was one of 12,289 Queenslanders who received psychological first aid from Australian Red Cross. Despite her own personal hardship, Nadine was supporting her family in Mossman. We connected Nadine to available government grants and Australian Red Cross resources to help her manage with the disaster.

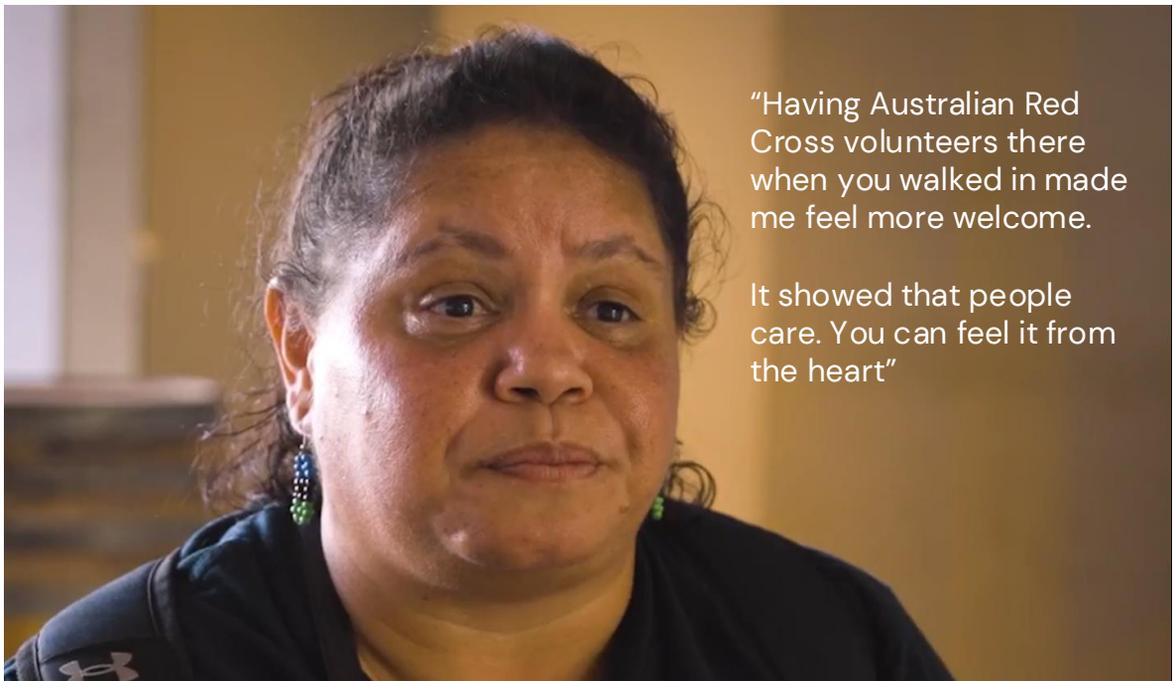
At evacuation centres, recovery centres and cyclone shelters across the region, Australian Red Cross volunteers provided psychological first aid and support to distressed Queenslanders.

Our personnel conducted outreach to remote communities, including via boat to reach people in isolated areas, like Douglas. With Register.Find.Reunite. activated, we helped people to connect with family members, stressed about the whereabouts of loved ones.

Our teams collated thousands of experiences like Nadine's from across the region and conveyed them to Australian Red Cross's leadership members embedded in the Queensland State Disaster Coordination Group. This communication enabled State authorities to adapt their response efforts.

For example, Australian Red Cross successfully advocated for a specialist to provide culturally appropriate support to community members displaced from Wujal Wujal. We also advocated in support of those needing housing who were not eligible for housing relocation support.

After the cyclone passed, Australian Red Cross facilitated an in-person yarning circle, where Brisbane-based officials sat face-to-face with Sam and Nadine, to hear their story and understand how policy is implemented on the ground.



"Having Australian Red Cross volunteers there when you walked in made me feel more welcome.

It showed that people care. You can feel it from the heart"

Australian Red Cross activations across Queensland: Collective Trauma Events (CTE)

Authorities activated Australian Red Cross four times to provide psychological first aid and support following collective trauma events.



Kallangur – Domestic Violence

13 December. Activated by City Moreton Bay

Woman critically injured and died, following domestic violence incident at her home.

Our response:

- Outreach to 20 homes
- Memorial management

Gympie – Storm Drain accident

29 December. Activated by Gympie Council

Two women swept to their deaths in a well-known stormwater drain.

Our response:

- Outreach to homes in vicinity of incident
- Memorial management

Redbank Plains – Fatal attack

4–23 February. Activated by QLD government

An elderly woman was fatally attacked at Redbank Plains Shopping Centre.

Our response:

- Physical presence at shopping centre
- 1,213 people had access to psychological first aid and support
- Inbound telephone support
- Memorial management

Burpengary – Retirement village fire

16–23 March. Activated by QLD government

An elderly man was killed during a fire at the Burpengary Pines Independent Living Village in Moreton Bay.

Our response:

- Psychological first aid and support and outreach throughout the retirement village
- Drop-in hub to provide support

How Australian Red Cross supported the Ipswich community

The Ipswich community was shocked by the fatal attack of a 70-year-old woman at Redbank Plains Shopping Centre, witnessed by her six-year-old granddaughter. The sentiment that followed was a shattering of the belief in community safety.

The Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General activated Australian Red Cross to provide psychological first aid and support, which resulted in Australian Red Cross simultaneously working in Ipswich and for Tropical Cyclones Jasper and Kirrily.

With shifts starting at 7am, 30 Australian Red Cross personnel worked alongside the Queensland Police to rebuild a sense of collective safety.

Volunteers met with community members, providing support to those affected, including centre workers worried about their safety and families with distressed children who were fearful of going to school or entering shops. Reflecting the collective nature of these tragic events, Australians travelled to visit Ipswich to grieve. People with complex needs were referred to Lifeline.

As per the wishes of the deceased's family, we took great care to collect and package flowers, messages and treasured items, and delivered them to the family at regular intervals.

Over 20 days, drawing on the expertise from the global Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, we distributed:

- *Trauma Teddies* to comfort those in need
- *Helping Kids* booklets
- *After the Emergency Kids* booklets
- *Wellbeing Toolkits*
- *Parents Coping with Crisis* booklets

Australian Red Cross stood alongside the families of the deceased and community members to promote unity amid racial tension. Consistent with our Fundamental Principles, we engaged with the school of the alleged perpetrator to promote unity.



Memorial at Redbank Plains Shopping Centre
Courtesy of Guardian News & Media Ltd

The work continues



These 10 events tested Queensland, Australian Red Cross and communities. We have conducted an After-Action Review to assess our performance. Improving fatigue management is a priority.

Thankfully, through our auxiliary role to state authorities, our relationships were already forged at all levels of government, which enabled us to respond when we needed to. Alongside uniformed personnel, the trusted symbol of Australian Red Cross provided reassurance and peace of mind to those impacted.

The Road to Recovery

As the headlines fade away, Australian Red Cross will walk with communities on the long road to recovery, drawing on the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience as well as our own domestic and international experience.

With generous donations from the Queensland Government and corporate partners, we are designing and implementing programs that meet the needs of communities.

The Wujal Wujal community remains highly impacted, grappling with the tragic loss of community members, and the anguish of separation and loss of cultural connection. With patience, dedication and working with community, our programs will assist.

With Queensland's Inspector-General of Emergency Management's *2023-2024 Severe Weather Events Review* underway, our volunteers will provide psychological first aid and support during community outreach sessions, to help people as they relive potentially traumatic experiences.

We are leveraging corporate partnerships to maximise the benefits for communities. With Amazon, Pine O'Clean and Unilever ANZ, we are distributing practical support kits across Far North Queensland. Working with the Queensland Department of Health and others, we are assisting the needs of First Nation communities, in Doomadgee and Yarrabah, for example.

Towards a Stronger Australian Red Cross

Moving forward, sustainable annual funding would enable us to maintain our trained volunteer workforce, ready for the disasters over the horizon. A strong Australian Red Cross makes Queensland communities more resilient.

This Impact Report should leave no one in doubt about the herculean effort of our volunteers, of whom we are immensely proud. Thank you for showing up when Queensland needed help.

For more information:

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