

# Creating a National Social Capital + Social Infrastructure Measurement Framework to benefit every Australian

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## Early findings for input – May 2025

Developed by:

- Renae Hanvin
- Vianne Reyes
- Professor Daniel Aldrich



We welcome your input to this project.  
Complete this [survey](#) by 5pm on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.



Australian Government

This Creating a Social Capital + Social Infrastructure Measurement Framework to benefit every Australian project received funding from the Australian Government.

# Table of Contents

<b>Action required .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
About this project .....	4
About Resilient Ready .....	4
About Professor Daniel Aldrich .....	4
<b>Project Context.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Problem .....	5
Solution.....	6
Deliverables .....	7
Benefits.....	8
Frequently Asked Questions.....	9
<b>Discovery Research.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Social Capital.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Research summary .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Is social capital a form of capital? .....	11
When is social capital most valuable, and why?.....	11
What is social capital in the context of disaster resilience? .....	12
How is social capital currently being used in the Australian disaster resilience context?.....	13
What is the difference between social capital and social infrastructure? .....	14
What is the difference between social capital and social cohesion? .....	14
What are the benefits of measuring social capital? .....	14
<b>Recommended descriptors .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Social Infrastructure.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Research summary .....</b>	<b>17</b>
What is social infrastructure? .....	17
Where does social infrastructure fit into traditional infrastructure?.....	17
What is social infrastructure in the context of disaster resilience? .....	17
When is social infrastructure valuable, and why?.....	18
How is social infrastructure currently being used in the Australian disaster context?.....	18
What are the different categories of social infrastructure?.....	19
What are the benefits of measuring social infrastructure in communities?.....	19
<b>Recommended descriptors .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>22</b>

## Action required

This document aligns with visits across all states and territories in May and June 2025 by Resilient Ready (Renae Hanvin and Vianne Reyes) and Professor Daniel Aldrich to:

1. Gain feedback on proposed social capital and social infrastructure descriptors leading to the development of the national Social Capital + Social Infrastructure Measurement Framework; and
2. Gain input into data collection categories and methods as we bring Professor Daniel Aldrich's social capital and social infrastructure mapping to Australia with the long-term intent for national scale-up.

We request all participants of the national advisory group and other key stakeholders to review this document and complete this [survey](#) by 5pm on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

Scan the below QR code to complete the survey, and access links to survey questions and this document.



The survey will ask for your feedback on:

- social capital and social infrastructure key term descriptors
- social infrastructure types relevant to data mapping
- your priority inclusions in the national framework
- the top five ways you would like to use the data mapping tool.

We welcome survey feedback on behalf of individuals, organisations and communities.

If you have any questions, please contact:

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# Introduction

## About this project

The 'Creating a Social Capital + Social Infrastructure Measurement Framework to benefit every Australian' project will expand on the South Australian "snapshot" project delivered by Resilient Ready in 2024.

It will include input from all Australian states and territories to create a national definition and measurement criteria about people connections and places where people connect; and pilot Professor Daniel Aldrich's social capital and social infrastructure heatmapping data sets in South Australia.

Resilient Ready would like to recognise the thought-leadership from SAFECOM in taking a lead approach to support this nationally relevant project.

## About Resilient Ready

Resilient Ready is a certified social enterprise driving a new ecosystem in business and community risk reduction and resilience.

We are a global collective of experts building everyday capabilities in organisations and communities of any shape, size, location and structure – to get ahead of future disasters.

Founded by Renae Hanvin, our focus is to build connections and capabilities that save lives and livelihoods, strengthen community networks and global wellbeing.

We deliver strategic solutions for building disaster resilience to benefit micro, small to medium businesses, corporates, governments, councils, industry associations and not-for-profits.

Find out more about our award-winning solutions at [www.resilientready.org](http://www.resilientready.org)

## About Professor Daniel Aldrich

Professor Daniel Aldrich is an award-winning author who has published five books, written more than 110 peer-reviewed articles, and written op-eds for The New York Times, CNN, and Sashi Shinbun, along with appearing on popular media outlets such, as CNBC, MSNBC, NPR, and HuffPost.

Daniel has spent more than five years carrying out fieldwork in Africa and Asia and the Middle East. His research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Rassmussen Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, and the Abe Foundation.

He has been collaborating with Renae Hanvin and Resilient Ready since 2019.

# Project Context

## Problem

We can't currently correlate communities at risk of disaster with their level of social capital, or quantity and quality of social infrastructure.

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Across Australia, we currently do not have definitions or measurements of social capital or social infrastructure as part of the disaster resilience ecosystem.

In the Second National Action Plan it articulates the need to “strengthen risk-informed decision-making across all systems to address disaster risk and deliver co-benefits” (national action 7).

We must define what social capital and social infrastructure are to all Australians and enable relevant data to be embedded into the systemic risk approach.

Research on social capital and social infrastructure has demonstrated their power in building resilience to shocks and disasters.

Without systemic data on the levels of these communal assets or vulnerabilities across Australia, decision makers cannot effectively position resources before a flood, fire, or other event to ensure that less connected communities have the support and investment they need.

Additionally, without data on existing levels of these resources, it is impossible to claim that programs have increased social capital or social infrastructure as there is no baseline measurements of these important assets.

During delivery of our Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) funded snapshot project in South Australia in 2024, it was recognised that a missing piece of the disaster resilience ecosystem is our inability to effectively define, measure and invest in social capital and social infrastructure.

Recommendations are included in the Stronger Communities, Brighter Futures findings report.

The absence of clear definitions and tangible data on social capital and social infrastructure leaves a gap in emergency management planning and ultimately, undermines the ability for communities to lead their own resilience.

## Solution

Putting focus on the “missing piece” of the disaster resilience ecosystem.

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Social capital (the ties between people) and social infrastructure (the places and spaces where we build those ties) serve as critical elements of resilience.

Deeper reservoirs of social capital help people get critical information, work collectively, and draw on informal insurance during disasters. Those social ties keep people from harm's way, helping them trust governmental authorities issuing evacuation orders and their neighbours as well.

This saves lives before and during shocks and accelerates recovery after them. Research shows that communities with deeper bonds and more trust have fewer fatalities during crises and recover more quickly.

Furthermore, these connections help people maintain their mental health during and after shocks, as anxiety and PTSD can be regular consequences of going through a catastrophe.

Social capital can be built and maintained through places and spaces that connect us, namely social infrastructure.

Community places such as neighbourhood centres, libraries and schools; open spaces such as public gardens, dog parks and sports clubs; cultural and faith-based places such as cultural heritage sites, cultural places and churches; and social businesses such as pubs, bowling clubs and caravan parks help people build the trust that they need to work together during disasters and disruptions.

This project will help to reduce the recovery burdens for governments and vulnerable and/or affected communities. It will increase the resilience, adaptive capacity and/or preparedness of governments, community service organisations and communities to minimise the potential impact of natural hazards and avert disasters.

## Deliverables

Creating a social capital and social infrastructure measurement framework to benefit every Australian and piloting Professor Aldrich's data mapping.

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This project will result in two key deliverables:

1. National Social Capital + Social Infrastructure Measurement Framework document which will articulate what social capital and social infrastructure mean to Australians in the context of systemic disaster risk reduction; and
2. Data tool that combines Professor Daniel Aldrich's social capital heatmapping (bonding, bridging, and linking ties) with innovative social infrastructure mapping across three pilot communities in South Australia - Adelaide City, Kangaroo Island, and Whyalla.

The Framework will address the current lack of definitions and create a unified descriptor for social capital and social infrastructure relevant to all Australians, and the data tool will provide a pilot outcome on the benefits of measurement.

## Benefits

The community resources of social capital and social infrastructure help mitigate the impact of natural hazards in a variety of ways.

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Evidence-based data and investment in strengthening social capital and social infrastructure can bring short and long-term benefits including:

- Improved risk identification – governments and agencies can pinpoint communities with low social capital and low density of social infrastructure, enabling earlier and more targeted disaster preparedness efforts.
- Data-informed investment – public and private sectors can direct funding to areas where strengthened social infrastructure will have the greatest equity and impact.
- Better policy design – policymakers gain access to reliable, place-based data to shape interventions aligned with national priorities like the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, Second National Action Plan and Closing the Gap.
- Enduring community resilience – communities experience lasting improvements in cohesion, civic participation, and self-reliance reducing recovery times post disaster while enhancing everyday economic and social wellbeing.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why is Resilient Ready delivering this project?

Resilient Ready was awarded funding by the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund to deliver a project to create a national social capital and social infrastructure measurement framework and bring Professor Daniel Aldrich's social capital and social infrastructure research to Australia.

Disaster resilience expert and Resilient Ready CEO Renae Harvin has been collaborating with Professor Aldrich since 2019 leading projects that focus on multi-stakeholder networks and communities.

### 2. Will Professor Daniel Aldrich's approach to social capital and social infrastructure mapping work for Australia?

Yes, Professor Aldrich's research on social capital and social infrastructure is highly relevant to Australia. His work demonstrates that strong social ties – bonding, bridging, and linking – are critical predictors of how communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

These insights align with Australia's need to strengthen community-led resilience, especially in disaster-prone and socially diverse areas. Adapting Professor Aldrich's internationally recognised framework to the Australian context will provide a valuable, evidence-based foundation for measuring social connectedness and prioritising investment in the people and places that support resilience.

### 3. Why is this pilot project being delivered with a focus on South Australia?

South Australia is the lead state for this project, reflecting its leadership in identifying and addressing a critical gap in Australia's disaster resilience approach – the absence of consistent definitions and measurement for social capital and social infrastructure.

Through their 2024 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) program, SAFECOM funded Resilient Ready to deliver a ['snapshot' project](#) that explored cross-sector sentiments and laid the groundwork for future investment in this space.

### 4. Why were Adelaide City, Kangaroo Island and Whyalla selected as the pilot communities?

Adelaide City, Kangaroo Island and Whyalla were selected as pilot communities due to their diverse geographic, social, and disaster risk profiles. Adelaide City represents an urban centre with complex networks and infrastructure systems; Kangaroo Island offers a regional, bushfire-impacted community with strong local identity and recovery experience; and Whyalla provides a remote, industrial setting facing socio-economic challenges and climate-related risks.

Together, these three communities offer a unique opportunity to test and refine measurement tools across varied contexts, ensuring the social capital and social infrastructure pilot mapping is adaptable, inclusive, and nationally relevant.

## Discovery Research

The first stage of the project focuses on discovery – examining the current landscape of social capital and social infrastructure in the context of disaster resilience across Australia.

The purpose of this research is to collate key information and insights so they can be applied to Professor Daniel's research as we adapt it to the Australian context – helping us to reframe how social capital and social infrastructure are understood and used to strengthen community resilience.

Between March and May 2025, the Resilient Ready team in collaboration with academic researchers, reviewed over 250 resources. These resources included strategies and frameworks from national, state and territory governments, as well as non-government organisations, extending to global literature.

Our review uncovered a wide range of material dating back to 2003, including early work by the Productivity Commission on social capital and its policy implications. It reiterated the absence of a shared definition or consistent measurement approach limiting a coordinated process or investment.

This discovery research highlights the need for a consistent, practical, and inclusive framework to serve as the foundation for future measurement approaches.

It is important to note the content in this early findings report is not final – we welcome feedback until 5pm on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 via this [survey](#) to shape a national framework that reflects the diverse needs of all stakeholders across all Australian states and territories.

If there are any resources that are not listed below and you wish to be included, please email: [vianne.reyes@resilientready.org](mailto:vianne.reyes@resilientready.org) or call 0402 932 027.

# Social Capital

## Research summary

### Is social capital a form of capital?

Social capital is one of several key forms of capital that help individuals, organisations, and communities thrive. Each form of capital offers different types of value, and together they create a fuller picture of what supports wellbeing, resilience, and development (Putnam, 2000).

Social capital is the glue that connects people, helping all other forms of capital – like human skills, financial resources, physical infrastructure, natural assets and cultural traditions – work better together to support resilient, thriving communities (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990).

While essential, social capital alone isn't enough; communities also need investment in systems, services, and infrastructure to meet their full potential and withstand future challenges (Aldrich 2012; Kawachi et al., 1999)

### When is social capital most valuable, and why?

Social capital is a versatile and cross-cutting concept used in many fields to understand how our connections and networks help us in everyday life and during tough times.

When people are connected – through family, friends, neighbours, or community groups – they can share support, build trust and work together. This can lead to better outcomes for individuals, families, and entire communities (Putnam, 2000; Aldrich 2012).

Social capital has been linked to many positive outcomes, including better health (Kawachi et al., 1999), stronger disaster recovery (Aldrich, 2012), improved education and job opportunities (Granovetter, 1973) and safer, more engaged communities (Sampson et al., 1997).

Some contexts where social capital is commonly applied include:

- Disaster resilience and emergency management – helping communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

For example, strong neighbourhood ties can lead to faster evacuations, more effective resource sharing, and quicker recovery after events like bushfires and floods.

- Social cohesion and community building – fostering trust, shared values, and a sense of belonging, strengthening the social fabric of communities.

For example, programs that connect people across cultural or socioeconomic lines build bridging capital and reduce polarisation or conflict.

- Health and wellbeing – social relationships and community engagement are linked to better physical and mental outcomes.

For example, people with strong social support networks experience lower rates of

depression, faster recovery from illness, and longer life expectancy.

- Education and youth development – students with access to supportive networks within families, schools and communities tend to perform better and remain engaged in learning.

For example, mentorship programs and family-school partnerships build bonding and bridging social capital that supports student success.

- Employment and economic participation – social capital affects access to job opportunities, entrepreneurial success, and career mobility.

For example, informal networks often lead to job referrals or business collaborations, especially in small or marginalised communities.

- Civil participation and democracy – social capital underpins active citizenship, volunteering, and trust in institutions.

For example, high levels of civic engagement – like voting, community organising, and participating in local decision making are linked to strong social networks and trust.

- Crime prevention and public safety – communities with high social capital tend to have lower crime rates due to collective efficacy and informal social control.

For example, neighbourhood watch programs and community policing rely on local trust and collaboration.

- Aging and longevity – for older adults, social capital supports independence, reduces isolation, and improves quality of life.

For example, seniors with strong community connections are more likely to age in place so they can continue living in their own homes and access needed support services.

- Urban and regional planning – social capital and social infrastructure should be a key focus of planners when designing inclusive, liveable communities.

For example, creating spaces that encourage social interaction like parks, libraries, and community centres to enhance social cohesion and resilience.

- Migration and integration – social capital is vital for new migrants in building networks that support settlement, employment and belonging.

For example, community hubs and language support groups help migrants build bonding and bridging social capital.

## What is social capital in the context of disaster resilience?

Social capital has many different definitions and interpretations, but most focus on the value of connections and networks between people that lead to positive social outcomes.

While social capital does not have a single, universally accepted definition, it is widely understood as the networks, relationships and trust that exist within communities and how these connections can facilitate collective action in times of need (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001).

In the context of disaster resilience, social capital refers to the connections between people or social ties that link individuals and groups, helping to build trust, encourage cooperation, and enable mutual support (Aldrich, 2019; Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004).

These ties can take many forms, from close connections with family and neighbours, to connections between colleagues or between businesses and customers, to broader relationships across diverse communities and institutions.

Scholars commonly identify three types of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking.

- **Bonding social capital or ties** refers to strong ties within close-knit groups, such as families or cultural communities.
- **Bridging social capital or ties** connects people across different social or demographic groups, helping to build broader social connection, trust, and mutual understanding.
- **Linking social capital or ties** refers to vertical connections with institutions and people in positions of power, such as government or service providers.

Together, these forms of social capital shape how individuals and communities access resources, share information, and respond to challenges – including during disasters or in times of crisis (Aldrich, 2019).

Disaster resilience is enhanced by strong social capital because it allows communities to adapt, recover, and thrive despite the challenges posed by the disaster (Adger, 2003).

### How is social capital currently being used in the Australian disaster resilience context?

In the Australian disaster resilience context, social capital is widely acknowledged as a vital component although it is often referred to by different names in state, territory and federal strategies. Terms such as community connections, community connectedness, community networks, social connections are frequently used to describe its role in strengthening local preparedness and recovery.

Although the terminology differs, all states and territories share a commitment to leveraging community connections as a foundation for disaster resilience.

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2011) identifies strong social networks and partnerships between communities, emergency services, and governments as central to effective disaster response and recovery. This approach positions social capital as an essential resource that supports communities to work together, draw on local knowledge, and respond collectively in times of crisis.

Across Australia, all states and territories are increasingly acknowledging the role of social capital in building resilience, though their approaches vary in emphasis and maturity.

Victoria and New South Wales incorporate social capital through local government resilience frameworks and community-led initiatives that promote neighbour-to-neighbour support. Queensland recognises social capital as a pillar of its Communities 2032 strategy, highlighting the importance of connected communities in disaster preparedness.

South Australia, through SAFECOM and its Stronger Together strategy, supports the notion

of social capital by emphasising the importance of strong, connected communities where relationships, inclusion, and shared responsibility form the foundation for resilience and wellbeing – the state also funded Resilient Ready’s ‘snapshot’ project which confirmed social capital and social infrastructure definition, and measurement is the missing piece of the resilience ecosystem.

In the Northern Territory, the Social Capital Index developed by Charles Sturt University demonstrates a commitment to understanding how social networks contribute to resilience, particularly in remote and Indigenous communities.

Western Australia and Tasmania emphasise the role of trusted partnerships and local knowledge in community recovery, particularly through community hubs and regional planning. Meanwhile, the Australian Capital Territory integrates local connections in its resilience and wellbeing planning, recognising the value of social capital in managing both natural and human-made disruptions.

This national spread of activity underscores growing momentum toward a more people-centred, socially connected approach to disaster resilience across Australia.

Overall, social capital remains a core yet inconsistently defined and measured element of disaster resilience in Australia. While the language and approaches differ across regions, there is a consistent understanding that strong community connections and local leadership are critical for effective disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

### What is the difference between social capital and social infrastructure?

Social capital and social infrastructure are closely related but distinct concepts.

Social capital refers to the networks, relationships and trust that exist within and between individuals and communities. It is the value created by the connections people have, which enables cooperation, mutual support, and collective action, especially in times of need (Putnam, 2000; Aldrich, 2012).

In contrast, social infrastructure within the context of this project refers to the physical places and spaces that support social interactions and community life, such as community centres, schools, libraries, pubs, parks and places of cultural heritage (Klinenberg, 2018).

While social capital is about the strength and quality of relationships, social infrastructure refers to the physical places and spaces that foster these connections.

### What is the difference between social capital and social cohesion?

Social capital and social cohesion are both important aspects of community strength, but they focus on different elements of social life.

In short, social capital is about the strength and breadth of relationships and networks, while social cohesion is about the sense of unity, inclusivity, and common purpose that arises from those connections.

Social capital can contribute to social cohesion by fostering trust and cooperation, but social cohesion is more about the overall solidarity and integration of society as a whole.

### What are the benefits of measuring social capital?

Measuring social capital in the Australian disaster resilience context offers key benefits by providing insights into community networks, trust, and cooperation during crises. It helps identify gaps in local support structures, enabling targeted interventions to strengthen community resilience.

It also allows for the evaluation of social infrastructure investments, ensuring that resources are directed towards communities with the greatest need for support to build resilience – helping in both the good times and challenging times.

Additionally, measuring social capital enables policymakers to track changes over time, assess the effectiveness of resilience programs, and enhance disaster response strategies.

Strong social networks, as indicated by these metrics, are linked to faster recovery, reduced reliance on government aid, and better mental health outcomes post-disaster. Thus, social capital measurement not only supports communities in day-to-day life but also in times of disaster.

## Recommended descriptors

Our intent is to develop short descriptors for each key term to become the common language relevant to all Australian stakeholders.

We invite you to review and provide comments by completing this [survey](#) by 5pm on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

<b>Social capital:</b>	<p>is the trust you get from your connections with other people. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>refers to the connections and trust between people, communities and institutions that help them work together and support each other in everyday life and during disasters.</p>
<b>Social ties:</b>	<p>are your relationships with other people. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>are the relationships people have with others from close family, friends and neighbours to community organisations, businesses and government services.</p>

<p>Bonding ties:</p>	<p>are connections with people who are similar you. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>are connections with people who are similar to you, where there are high levels of trust, similar norms and close networks.</p> <p>For example, family and close friends.</p> <p>Bonding ties are horizontal where all people are equal.</p>
<p>Bridging ties:</p>	<p>are connections with people who are different to you. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>are connections with people who are different to you, requiring more effort to build trust due to differing norms, yet they offer access to broader networks that can bring significant benefits.</p> <p>For example, community leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds and small business owners connecting with customers and suppliers.</p> <p>Bridging ties are horizontal where all people are equal.</p>
<p>Linking ties:</p>	<p>are connections with people in positions of power or authority. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>are connections with people or organisations in positions of power or authority.</p> <p>For example, an individual or community group and emergency services or government officials.</p> <p>Linking ties are vertical where all people are <u>not</u> equal because of different levels of legitimacy, authority and power.</p>



# Social Infrastructure

## Research summary

### What is social infrastructure?

Social infrastructure refers to the physical and virtual places, facilities, services, and networks that enable individuals and communities to connect, access support, and thrive.

It includes a wide range of assets such as schools, libraries, health centres, parks, community halls, sporting facilities, cafes, regional pubs, caravan parks, and cultural venues.

These spaces and places form the fabric of our communities and are essential for liveability, wellbeing, inclusion, and economic participation.

Social infrastructure involves both physical facilities (e.g., buildings and spaces) and virtual meeting places, and is increasingly recognised as a core component of planning, sustainability, and resilience in Australia.

For this project, our focus is to measure physical infrastructure facilities relevant to disaster resilience which may not include social infrastructure that is focused on health and wellbeing, such as GPs.

### Where does social infrastructure fit into traditional infrastructure?

Social infrastructure is one part of the bigger infrastructure system that helps communities live well and stay strong.

While traditional infrastructure includes roads, power lines, and water pipes that keep services running, social infrastructure includes the places and spaces where people connect – like schools, libraries, sports centres, and community halls.

It fits into the infrastructure ecosystem by focusing on the people. It helps us stay healthy, learn and grow, build friendships and work together in times of need, like during a disaster.

Without social infrastructure, a community might still function, but it won't feel like a connected, safe, or supportive community. For this reason, social infrastructure is just as important as transport or buildings – it helps people feel like they belong and can rely on each other.

### What is social infrastructure in the context of disaster resilience?

Professor Daniel Aldrich's research highlights that "third places" are critical components of social infrastructure because they create the setting for bonding, bridging, and linking social ties.

Places and spaces such as schools, libraries, parks, community halls, sporting and emergency services facilities, cafes, regional pubs, caravan parks, and cultural venues are vital for cultivating the social ties that support mutual aid, information sharing and recovery.

They foster everyday social interaction and help build the trust, reciprocity, and cooperation that enable individuals and communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

Categories and types of social infrastructure are listed below.

### When is social infrastructure valuable, and why?

Social infrastructure is valuable anytime it enables people to access services, build relationships, and engage in shared experiences that improve quality of life. It supports education, health, culture, recreation, and connection – all of which contribute to individual and community wellbeing and resilience.

In disaster contexts, its value intensifies where social infrastructure becomes a platform for community coordination, service delivery, and psychological support.

During crises, well-connected, inclusive spaces facilitate trust, reduce isolation, and enhance collective response and recovery efforts.

### How is social infrastructure currently being used in the Australian disaster context?

Social infrastructure is increasingly recognised by Australian governments and local councils as a vital part of building community resilience. Our research recognised across numerous strategies and frameworks, social infrastructure is acknowledged as critical to supporting health, wellbeing, social cohesion, and disaster preparedness.

For example, the Queensland State Infrastructure Strategy highlights that “communities with strong connections to social infrastructure are better prepared and able to respond to the challenges of severe weather events or other emergencies,” underscoring its role in both everyday life and times of crisis.

Likewise, national bodies such as Infrastructure Australia and the Queensland Reconstruction Authority have also reinforced the value of social infrastructure in formal policy. Infrastructure Australia’s 2021 Infrastructure Plan calls for a consistent national framework to value and measure the benefits of social infrastructure, linking it directly to improved liveability, economic participation, and resilience.

Similarly, the Burdekin and Charters Towers Multi-Hazard Resilience Strategy recommends targeted investment in social infrastructure to reduce risk and strengthen local capacity to withstand future disruptions.

At the local level, councils such as the City of Greater Geelong, City of Playford and Town of Victoria Park, have developed comprehensive social infrastructure plans that emphasise the role of shared spaces in fostering community connection, inclusion and adaptability.

These places often call for co-located, flexible and inclusive facilities that respond to changing community needs and support intergenerational connection – especially during recovery and rebuilding phases after disasters.

The City of Playford’s Social Plan notes that social infrastructure acts as a “third place” where people can gather, support each other, and build trust, which is essential for strong community networks before and after shocks.

In NSW, the [Greater Sydney's Social Capital report](#) and assessments for precincts like [Pyrmont](#) and [Bays West](#) show how social infrastructure strengthens resilience by enhancing community connectedness, reducing isolation, and supporting equitable access to services.

These examples reflect a growing consensus that building strong, connected communities requires more than just hard infrastructure – it needs inclusive, accessible places where people come together, form relationships, and support one another.

### What are the different categories of social infrastructure?

Led by Professor Aldrich's global research social infrastructure is grouped into four categories:

1. **Community places**

Accessible, shared environments like libraries, neighbourhood centres, community halls, schools, bowls and other sports or social clubs and emergency services facilities are central to strong social infrastructure. They support bonding within groups, bridging across different groups, and linking communities to institutions such as governments and emergency services.

2. **Open spaces**

Public outdoor areas such as parks, ovals, dog parks and walking trails play a vital role in fostering informal social connections. They encourage interaction across diverse groups and help to build bridging ties.

3. **Social businesses**

Local businesses including cafes, regional pubs, chemists, hairdressers, caravan parks, shopping centres, co-working hubs, cinemas and sport stadiums are key places of social connection to build bridging ties. Behind every social business are people who connect with their employees, customers, supplier and the wider community almost daily.

4. **Cultural and faith-based places**

Places of ritual, tradition and shared values are at the core of building bonding ties. In Australia these are primarily churches and cultural heritage sites, including mosques, synagogues, temples and shrines.

### What are the benefits of measuring social infrastructure in communities?

Measuring social infrastructure helps identify gaps, prioritise investment, and ensure equitable access to the physical and digital spaces and places that sustain community wellbeing and build resilience.

It enables evidence-based planning, supports resource allocation, and informs risk reduction strategies.

From a resilience perspective, measuring social infrastructure also helps to understand which communities are more vulnerable due to underinvestment in shared spaces – allowing targeted action to improve preparedness and recovery.

Mapping social infrastructure alongside social capital supports the interconnected systems that keep communities strong before, during, and after disasters.

## Recommended descriptors

Our intent is to develop short descriptors for each key term to become the common language relevant to all Australian stakeholders.

In addition, we seek your comments on the types of social infrastructure to be included under each category, in the pilot data mapping.

We invite you to review and provide comments by completing this [survey](#) by 5pm on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

<b>Social infrastructure:</b>	<p>includes the physical and digital places and spaces where people connect and build relationships. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>refers to the shared physical and digital places and spaces that provide opportunity to build social connections, categorised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community places</li> <li>• open spaces</li> <li>• social businesses; and</li> <li>• cultural and faith-based places.</li> </ul>
<b>Community places:</b>	<p>are local areas where people connect and build relationships. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>Types of community places to include in pilot mapping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• kindergartens &amp; pre-schools, schools &amp; universities</li> <li>• libraries</li> <li>• markets &amp; festivals</li> <li>• community halls</li> <li>• neighbourhood houses &amp; community centres</li> <li>• men's sheds</li> <li>• food banks, soup kitchens &amp; DV shelters</li> <li>• sports clubs such as bowls clubs, tennis clubs</li> <li>• stadiums &amp; swimming pools</li> <li>• public transport</li> <li>• emergency services facilities</li> <li>• emergency recovery hubs</li> </ul>

<p>Open spaces:</p>	<p>are public outdoor areas where people connect and build relationships. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>Types of open spaces to include in pilot mapping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parks: suburban</li> <li>• parks: state</li> <li>• sports grounds</li> <li>• playgrounds</li> <li>• skate ramps</li> <li>• beaches</li> <li>• coasts</li> <li>• jetties</li> </ul>
<p>Social businesses:</p>	<p>are local commercial venues where people connect and build relationships. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>Types of social businesses to include in pilot mapping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pubs &amp; RSLs</li> <li>• shopping centres</li> <li>• cafes including internet cafes</li> <li>• restaurants</li> <li>• hairdressers &amp; chemists</li> <li>• caravan parks</li> <li>• accommodation &amp; hotels</li> <li>• tourism attractions, conferences and exhibition venues</li> <li>• wineries, galleries, theatres, cinemas, visitor centres</li> <li>• co-working hubs</li> <li>• business groups &amp; chamber hubs</li> </ul>
<p>Cultural and faith-based places:</p>	<p>are settings where people connect, share traditions, and build relationships. (short)</p> <p>**</p> <p>Types of cultural and faith-based places to include in pilot mapping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cultural heritage sites</li> <li>• cultural activity hubs</li> <li>• churches</li> <li>• mosques</li> <li>• temples</li> <li>• synagogues</li> <li>• shrines</li> </ul>

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