Gauging Community Resilience
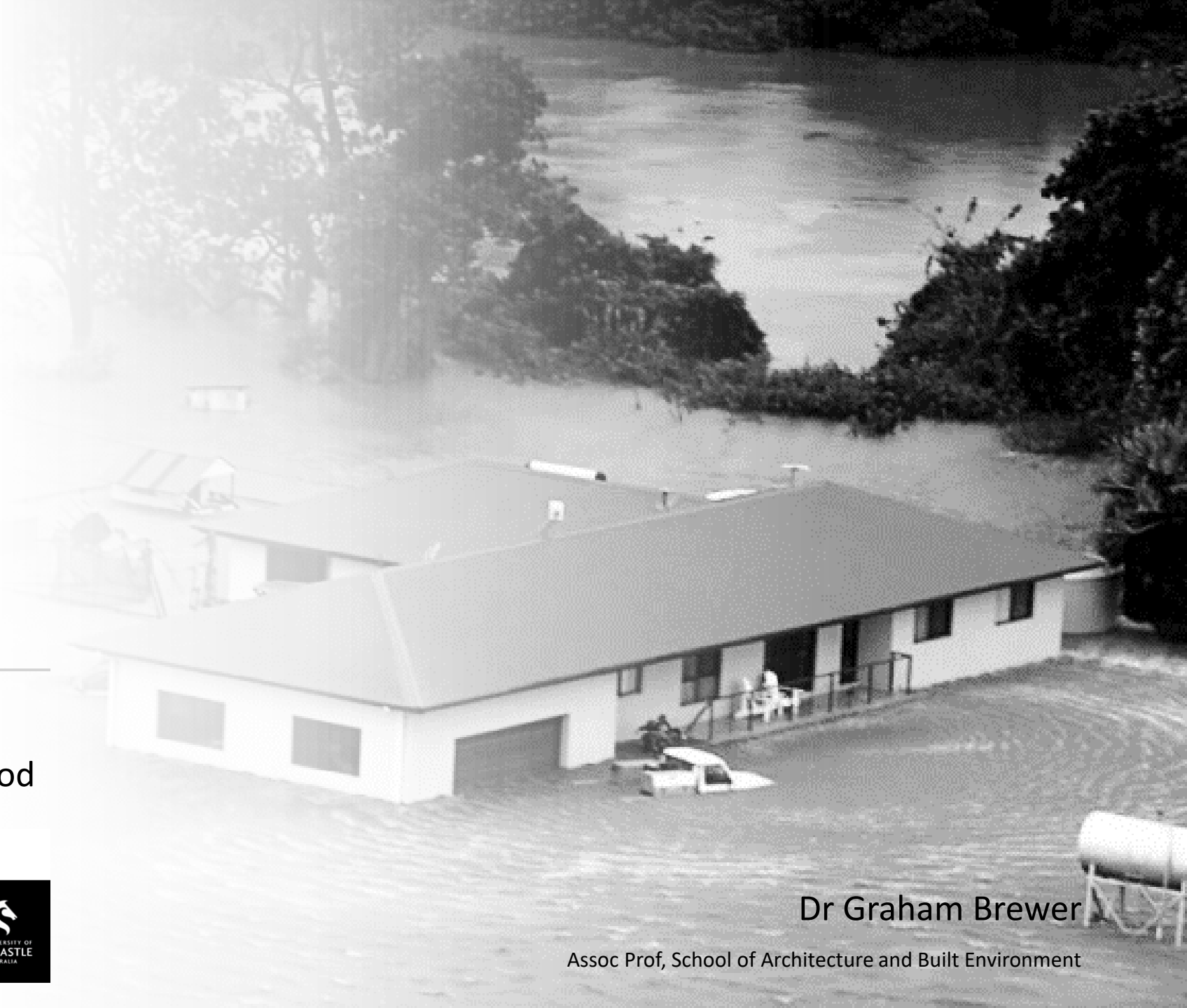
Understanding lived experience in the November 2021 Gunnedah flood event

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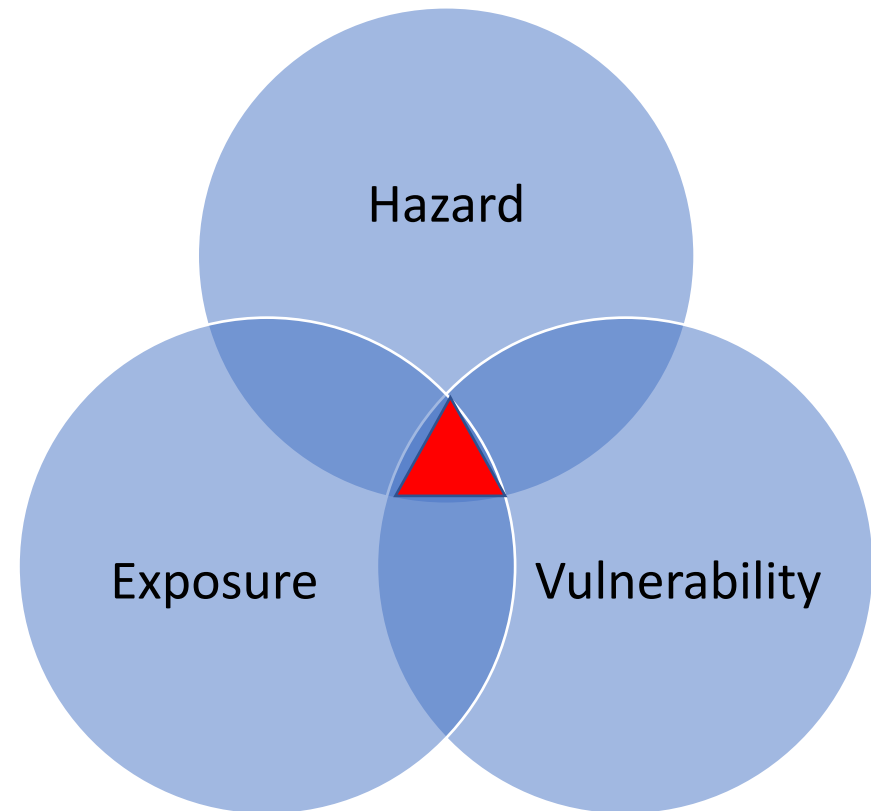# Disaster 101

- A disaster is…
  - Extreme event or series of events that…
  - Overwhelms local capacity to cope (can extend down to individuals)
  - **Is *always* human in origin (lack of foresight/planning/capacity, etc)**
  - Experienced at multiple scales (from individual upwards)
  - Over different timescales

Disaster Risk 101

Disaster Risk = Hazard x Exposure x Vulnerability
Capacity

- Different people/assets/environments may be impacted unequally by same hazardous event
- Societal capacities mitigate disaster risks: these are **adaptive, coping**, and **participatory** in nature
- Capacities offset vulnerabilities, and may include resilient people/assets/environments

Disaster Risk Reduction 101

- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)…
  - Prevents creation of new disaster risk
  - Removes some existing disaster risks
  - Manages remaining disaster risks
- If the likelihood of future disaster is not reduced by an action, it isn't DRR
- Communities that have high coping capacities are generally considered 'resilient'; the same is true for individuals, organisations, and enterprises
- Resilience is usually a product of DRR (formal or informal)

UNDRR
UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Community resilience 101

Occurs when individuals within the community...

- Feel in personal **control** of their own situation (able to cope, make informed decisions, in the expectation of external aid)
- Are able to experience **coherence** in their lives by re-establishing structure and order, whilst reducing ambiguity and uncertainty.
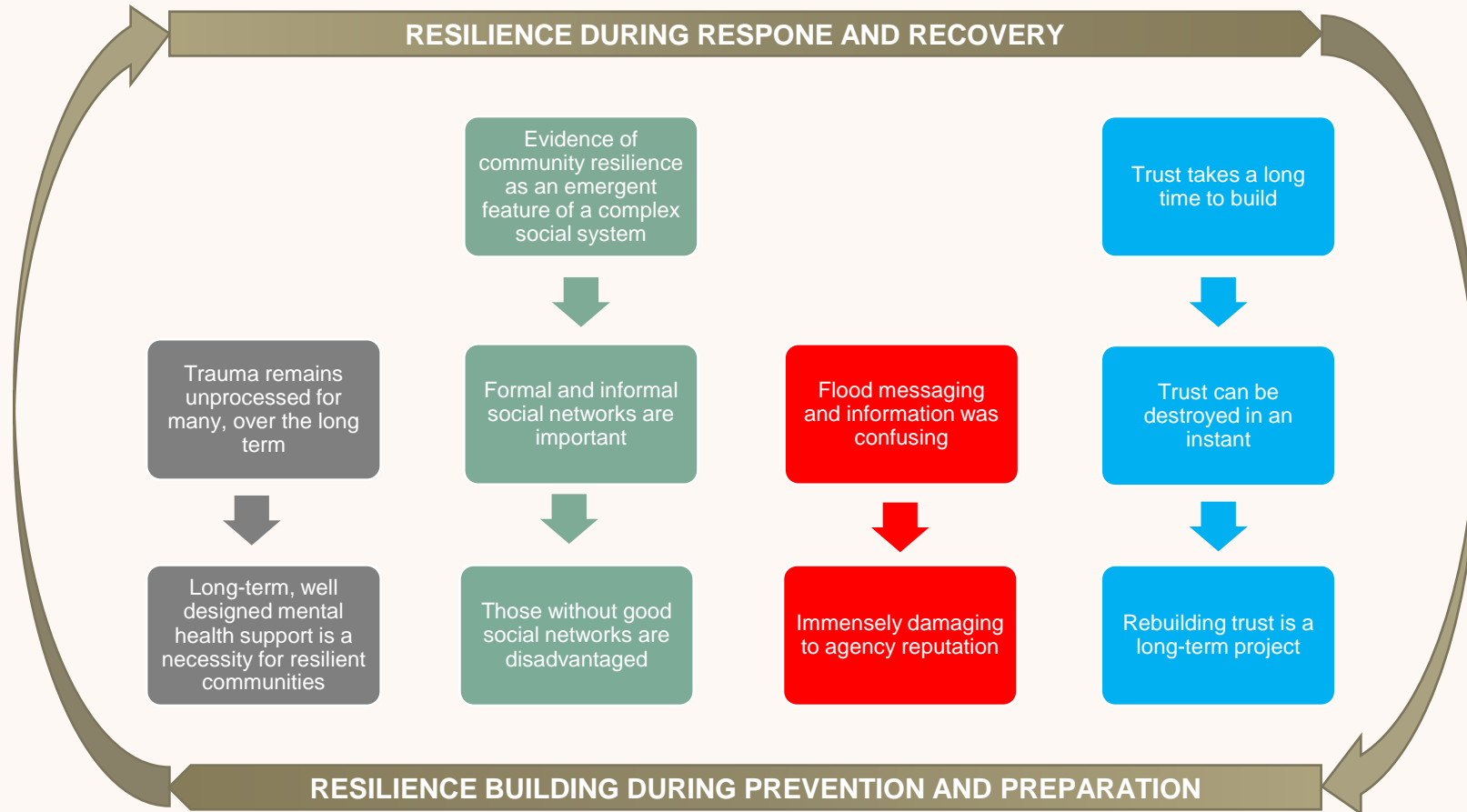- Experience heightened social **connectedness** in their times of need.

Occurs within a "halo of trust"

- Power imbalance between trustor and trustee creates need for trust
- Trustor accepts position of vulnerability, in expectation of competence, integrity and benevolence from trustee

Community resilience is a complex and dynamic phenomenon!

- Everyone is an influence, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively
- Community resilience is a cumulative reflection of these influences

Survey outcomes

RESILIENCE DURING RESPONE AND RECOVERY

Evidence of community resilience as an emergent feature of a complex social system

Trauma remains unprocessed for many, over the long term

Formal and informal social networks are important

Flood messaging and information was confusing

Trust takes a long time to build

Long-term, well designed mental health support is a necessity for resilient communities

Those without good social networks are disadvantaged

Immensely damaging to agency reputation

Trust can be destroyed in an instant

Rebuilding trust is a long-term project

RESILIENCE BUILDING DURING PREVENTION AND PREPARATION

So what?
DRR for practices…

Issue

- Mental health (care) is likely to be a long term consideration

- What does my practice look like when it is overwhelmed?

- What can I do in 'peacetime' to reduce demand during extreme events?

Solution

- Consider mitigation and proactive management strategies

- Consider pre-planning surge management procedures (e.g. triage/referral to non-standard providers)

- Think outside the box; build community resilience

So what?
DRR for practices…

- Adapt to cope; include patients as participants in preparation
  - Mental health first aid
  - Appropriate personal stockpile of essential medicines
  - Encourage emergency plan development for vulnerable minorities
- Cope by triage and referral to other competent services (NFP/NGO)
- Pre-plan for business continuity, during and after any event
  - Safeguarding IT services/records
  - Workforce planning
    - Disaster-affected personnel
    - Isolation of the practice

Thank you

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