

## National Resilience Institute

### GAP/IIER-A/Gravity iLabs Proposal

**In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia needs to properly prepare for future economic, strategic and environmental threats – a task which should begin with an in-depth, comprehensive and apolitical risk assessment. This vital task will best be undertaken by an independent National Resilience Institute, jointly funded by philanthropy, federal and state governments, and industry.**

After a summer of bushfires, growing geopolitical tensions and the incipient pandemic highlighted Australia's vulnerability and general lack of preparation for a range of disasters, in February 2020 Global Access Partners (GAP), the International Institute for Economic Research Australia (IIER-A) and Gravity iLabs formed a National Resilience Taskforce. IIER-A also established 12 working groups to address specific issues, including health, sovereign industry, education and research, and energy security.

This unprecedented, politically independent philanthropic effort now involves more than 150 eminent participants from all sectors, including retired Federal and State politicians and the heads of major peak bodies. Early reports from the GAP Taskforce and IIER-A working groups are being well received at Ministerial and Departmental levels and by industrial leaders.

Against the backdrop of proposed or existing response agencies with an understandable focus on 'response', Taskforce and working group participants have called for an independent institute to research and plan national 'preparedness' for the future. Working with the Department of Home Affairs and state-based agencies, such an institute would support and advise response agencies through a broad range of integrated national and international specialist inputs.

Given the strong performance of the Australian states in the current crisis, the opportunity exists for one of the forward-thinking state governments to lead and be the founding sponsor of the proposed institute.

The latest report from the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) – '*A World in Disorder*' – estimates that the current costs of COVID-19 would have paid for 500 years of global disaster preparation. Australia cannot afford to forget the lessons from recent environmental and health disasters, not ignore the growing international threats to its economy and security. A National Resilience Institute would be ideally placed to build the long-term, bipartisan consensus required to ensure the nation is well-prepared to meet current challenges, and threats yet to come.

## The use case for the National Resilience Institute

The Institute would draw on a broad range of technical knowledge, domestic experience and international expertise to become a ‘lighthouse’ for best practice in preparing for threats, minimising their impact and reducing their costs.

- The Institute would produce **a national best-practice framework and set of guidelines** to build national resilience, safeguard social cohesion and protect community and individual wellbeing.
- It would holistically address the issues associated with managing multiple threats, as witness over the last 12 months with droughts, bushfires and COVID-19, and offer **a public source of trusted information and advice** on resilience, mental health, wellbeing and recovery.
- It would build **a profile of psychosocial<sup>1</sup> risk and resilience capabilities** across individuals, communities and organisations, including the Australian Defence Force and first responders, to optimise use of existing resources. Curating the wealth of data generated by multiple disaster events across Australia, it would ensure their lessons are clearly articulated to guide future policy making.
- In addition to **monitoring** current international and domestic threats to the nation’s security, economy and sustainability, the Institute would also take account of individual, community and regional threats to resilience, including mental health issues, social inequality and economic dislocation.
- The Institute would help **build local capacity and capability** to ensure adequate and flexible responses and services. This would include working with communities after damaging events as well as those at risk in the future, and implementing protective measures at individual, organisational and community levels.
- The new body would conduct **interdisciplinary, translational research** into evidence-based approaches to improve resilience and disaster response, and inform policy, regulation and service delivery.
- This would establish **a pool of national multimodal resources** which could be called upon if required, replacing the current ad hoc arrangements. The Institute would continually evaluate the effectiveness of these measures in the light of experience and evolving challenges.
- The Institute would be supported by **a digital platform charting the ‘national ecosystem’ of resilience**. The platform, co-designed by its users, would map the plethora of public and private initiatives underway in Australia to offer a cohesive overview and create a national register of stakeholders to improve collaboration.

<sup>1</sup> Relating to the interrelation of social factors and individual thought and behaviour