

Resilient or
Reactive?

The Future of Australia's Transport Network

Transportation
Conference 2026



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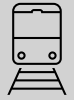
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- Australia's new reality: constant disruption
- The structural challenge in coordination
- Working towards transport resilience - Australian case studies and examples
- Persistent challenges we must accept
- Actions that we can take

Australian Resilience Risks



Extreme weather



Asset ageing



Supply chain fragility



Decarbonisation transition



Rising insurance costs



Australian Resilience Reality

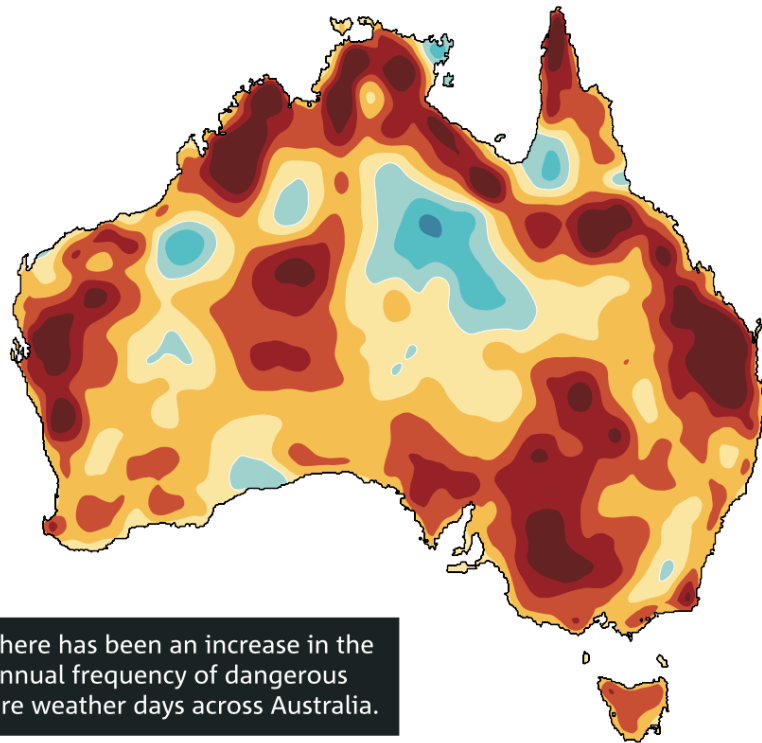
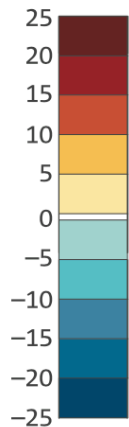
Across Australia, natural disasters are now affecting most local government areas

- **Australia wide - more than 60%** of LGAs declared natural disaster areas since 2024
- Queensland: **95% of LGAs** (73 of 77) were disaster-declared following severe weather and flooding in 2025
- NSW weather **events isolated 48,000 residents in 2025** - triggering disaster recovery assistance
- Victoria: a state of disaster was declared for bushfires across 18 LGAs in Summer 2026



Extreme weather here to stay

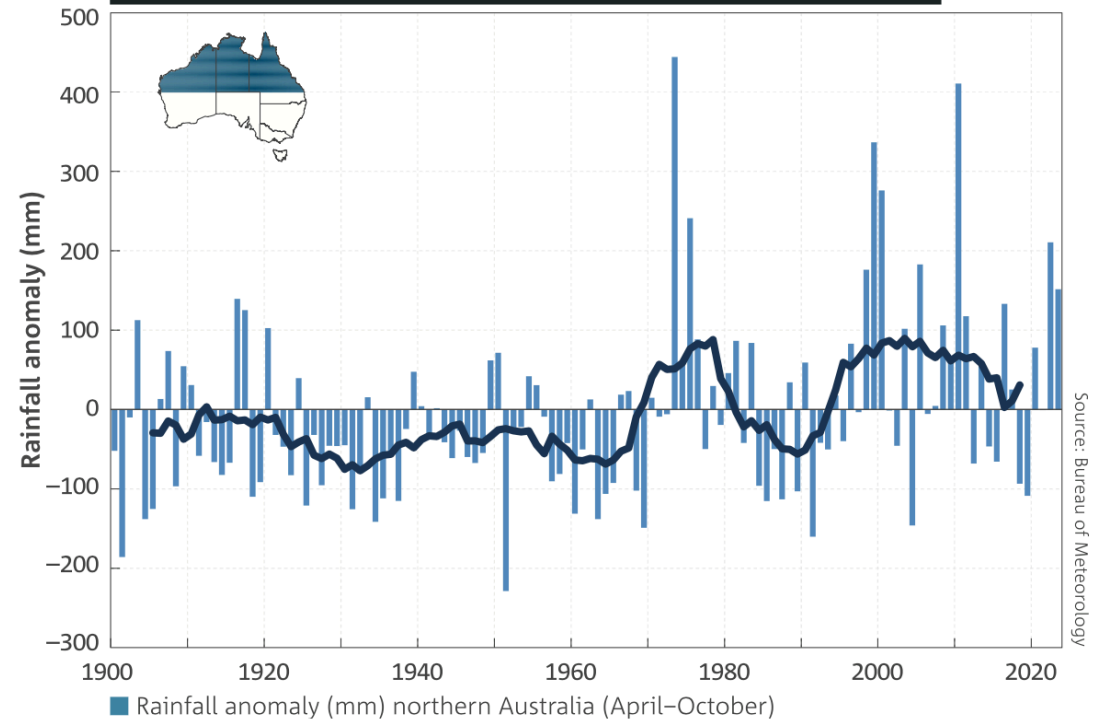
Change in number of dangerous fire weather days



There has been an increase in the annual frequency of dangerous fire weather days across Australia.

Source: Bureau of Meteorology

Rainfall during the northern wet season varies from year to year. Wetter than average years have been more common in recent decades.



Source: Bureau of Meteorology

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There is no shortage of ambition

There are many strategies and plans to tackle the problem...



Climate strategies



Net zero commitments



Infrastructure plans



Resilience frameworks



Consensus on system-wide approach



**Infrastructure
Australia**

“Achieving resilience requires a shift in focus from the resilience of the asset itself, to the contribution of assets to the resilience of the overall societal system – what we call *infrastructure for resilience*.”



“To embed resilience within transport systems, it is essential for agencies to consider resilience at the scale of the **network rather than at asset-scale** early and regularly in planning and operating practices.”



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

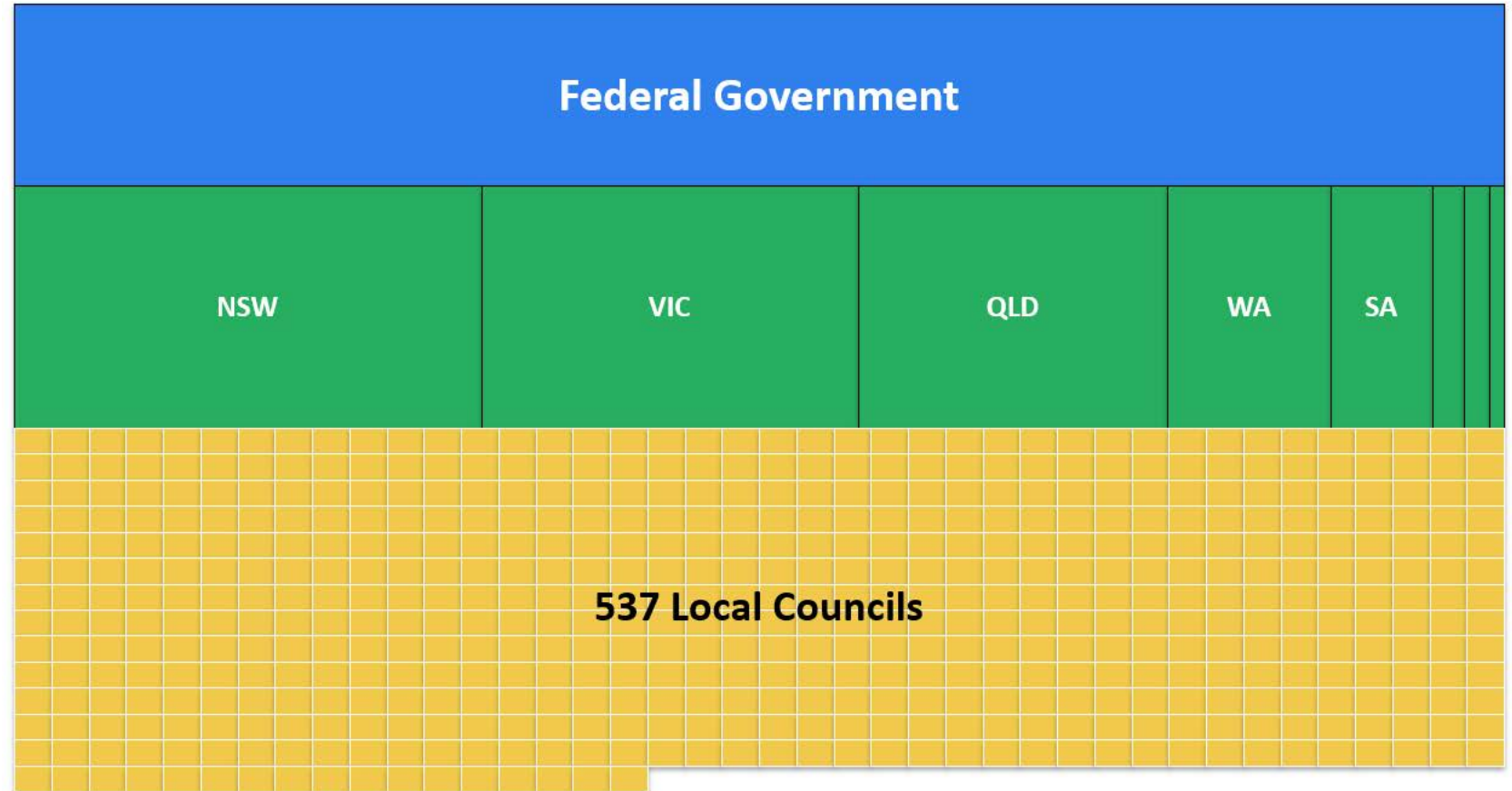
“Effective disaster risk reduction requires coordinated action across governments, business, communities and individuals.”

“In government, the scarcest commodity is not ideas - it's coordination.”

Russell Baker, New York Times columnist

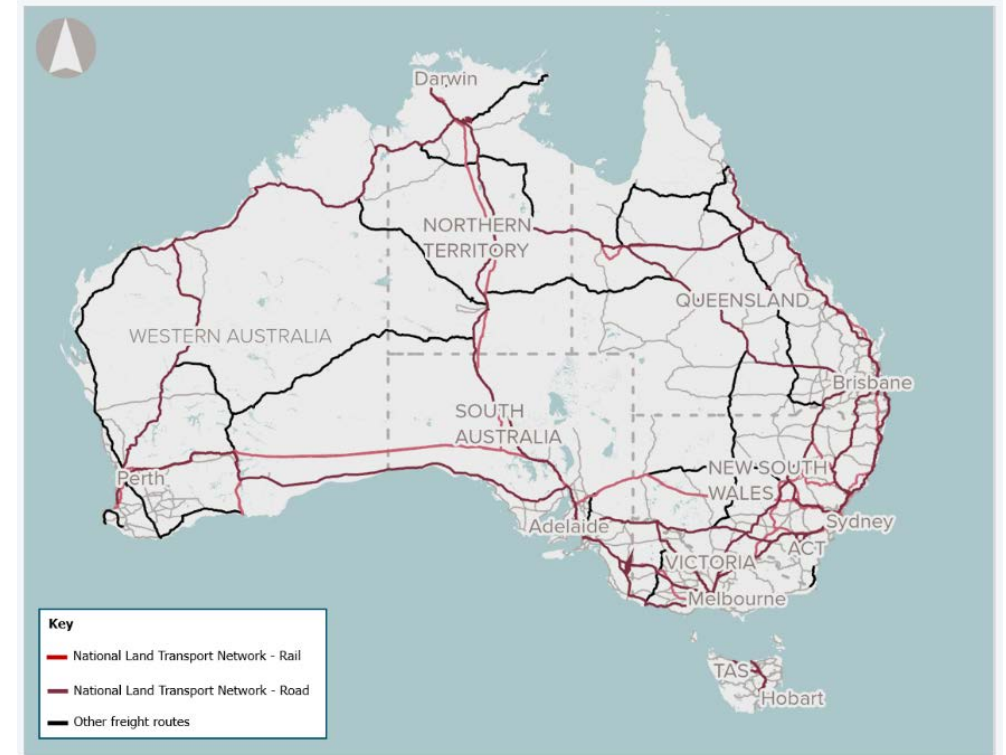
Australia's coordination challenge

- Infrastructure vs political lifecycle
- c.17 election cycles every four years
- 537 significantly diverse communities needs, environments
- Distributed accountability



Federal Government role

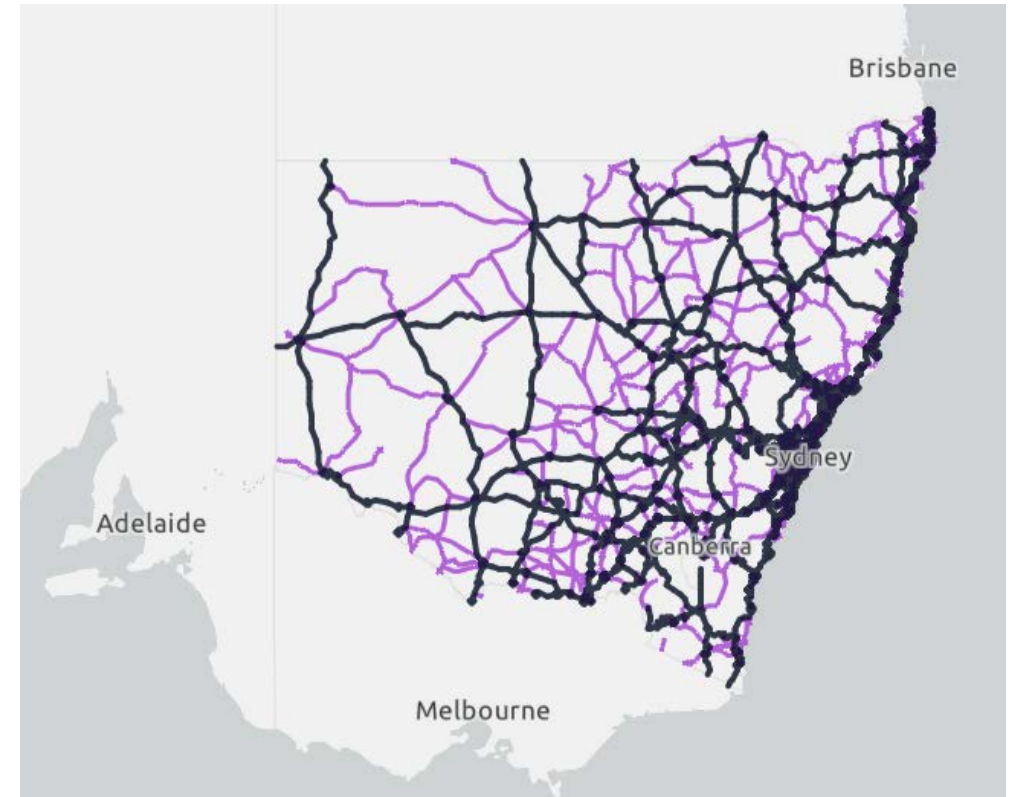
- Setting national transport and resilience policy
- Funding major infrastructure and national freight routes
- Coordinating cross-jurisdiction infrastructure
- Supporting disaster recovery and resilience funding



Infrastructure Australia - Regional road and rail freight corridor resilience

State and Territories role

- Primary owners and operators of major transport networks
- Build, Plan and Manage
- Managing rail networks and public transport
- Managing ports and freight systems
- Maintain and restore (disaster recovery)

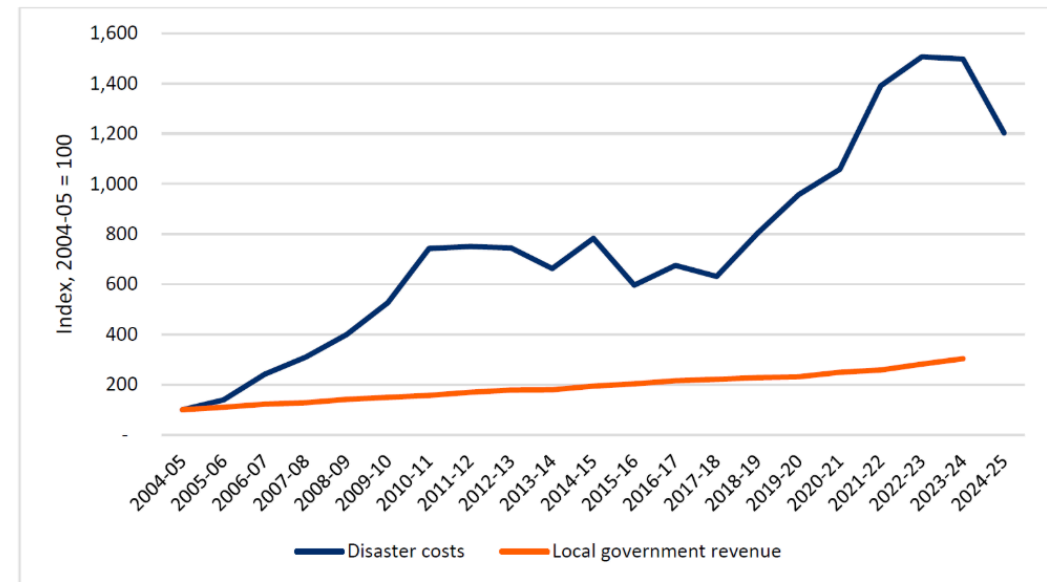


TfNSW - 35,000 km of State and Regional roads (<20%)

Local Governments role

- Ownership and maintenance of local roads and community transport infrastructure (75% of Australian network)
- Local transport planning integration
- Front line for community needs... and issues

Figure 1: Disaster costs vs local government revenue, 2004-05 to 2024-25, total



Source: Insurance Council of Australia (2025) ICA Historical Catastrophe List; Australian Bureau

Structural challenge to transport resilience

Fragmentation	Capacity Constraints	Outcome
Governance, responsibilities and funding are split across federal, state and local governments	Councils manage large infrastructure networks but have limited funding and resources	Infrastructure is managed asset-by-asset rather than as a coordinated transport system

“The Commonwealth has the money, the States have the power... and local councils have the problems.”

Source: Possibly Rob Stokes, Former NSW Planning Minister

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Resilience funding is improving

The Roads to Recovery (RTR) Program

Commonwealth Government initiative providing \$4.4 billion from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2029 to local councils for maintaining and upgrading local road infrastructure. **Untied, non-competitive funding for councils**

Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) Introduced in 2023. Provisions \$1 billion over 5 years for disaster resilience and mitigation (multi-sector)

Regional Transport Resilience Fund (RTRF)

Projects must relate to **transport infrastructure resilience**. Focuses on freight routes and regional access roads

NSW Regional Roads and Transport Recovery Package / Regional Transport Resilience Fund (RTRF)

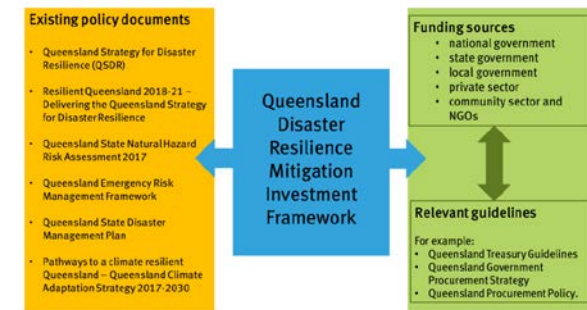
– launched in 2024 co-funded by Fed and States. Specifically supports ‘betterment’ projects

QLD Natural Disaster Resilience Program

(betterment projects) Projects meeting certain funding criteria are joint funded (50:50) by the Australian and Queensland governments

Maturing planning and investment

- Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) - Queensland:
 - **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2017):** introducing risk informed planning into DTMR project assessments
 - **Queensland Disaster Resilience and Mitigation Investment Framework:** guiding investment decision making and prioritisation for resilience and mitigation
 - **Queensland Transport Investment Program (QTRIP):** supporting investment in resilience and betterment projects in coordination with the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA)
 - **Local Resilience Action Plans (LRAPs):** led by QRA and required for councils to identify, prioritise and fund resilience projects



A decade of QRA Betterment Program

Gayndah Mundubbera Road
North Burnett Regional Council



Villis Bridge Scenic Rim
Regional Council



Inverdon Bridge Whitsunday
Regional Council



QRA established in 2011,
Betterment program
commenced in 2013
and funds of \$500m +

Projects exposed to 44
extreme weather events –
79% suffering no or only
minor damage

QRA estimate A\$244
million spent has
generated A\$988 million
in avoided
reconstruction costs

Source: QRA

Coordinated planning for community

NSW Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPS):

- Released in 2025 by NSW Reconstruction Authority
- Aligns with NSW Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- Regional, multi-hazard, and community focused designed to reduce the vulnerability of communities, infrastructure, and the environment to disasters.
- They identify specific, actionable projects to reduce risk, such as
 - building mitigation infrastructure,
 - changing land-use planning controls, upgrading evacuation routes,
 - investing in nature-based solutions like mangrove restoration.



Local government initiatives



Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO)

- 11 councils in New South Wales
- Resilience Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R)
- Developed a step-by-step pathway its councils can follow to integrate resilience into strategy, programs and operations.



Moreton Bay LRAP

- identifying local, high-priority resilience projects to mitigate future risks
- aligns local disaster recovery with state-level strategies and funding (QRA)
- supports evidence-based funding applications

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Systemic changes you can't change

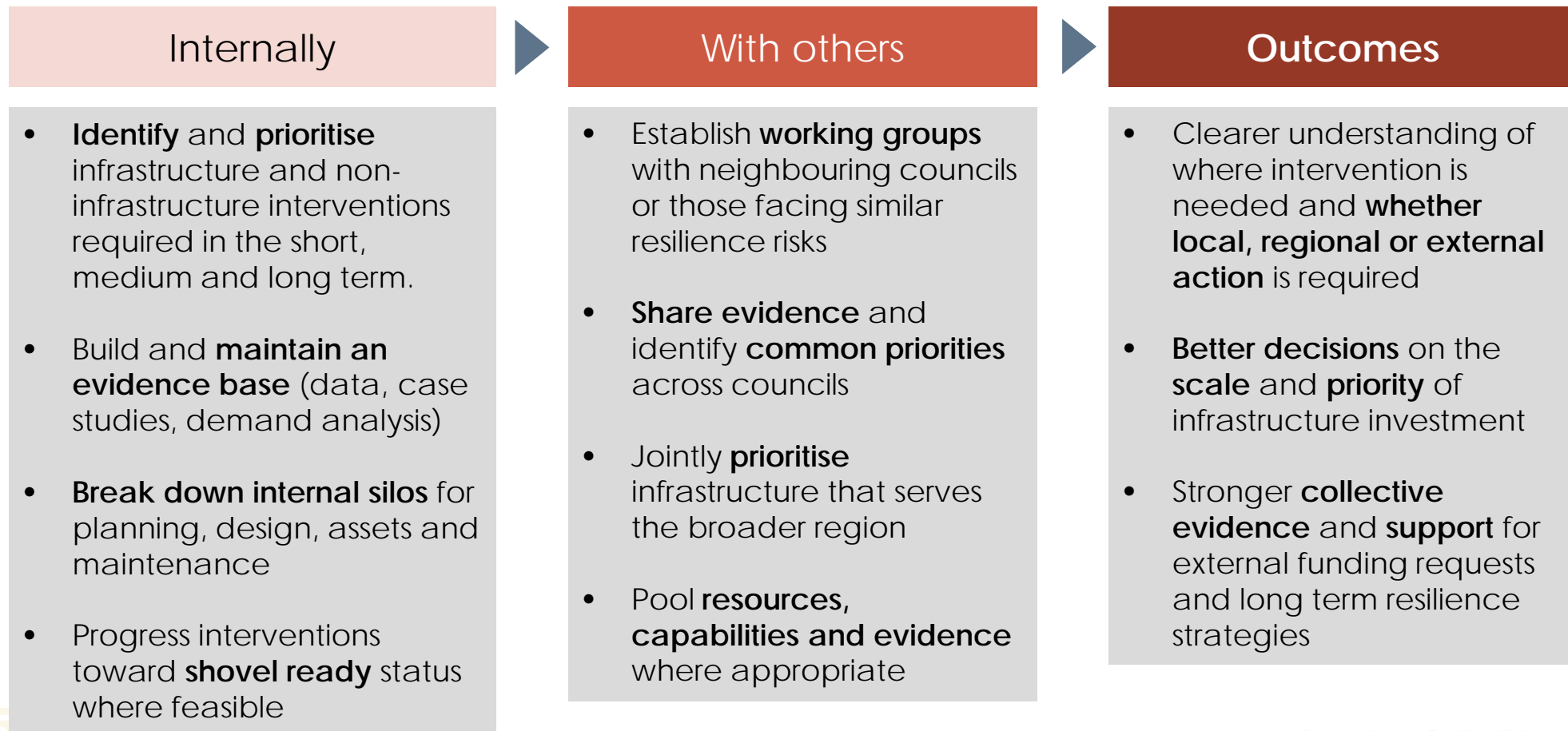
- Political challenge – Fed/State/Local will not be resolved
- Funding need will always exceed funding supply – prioritisation is essential, but complex
- Disaster recovery will always get more than mitigation
- Lack of data and consistency for decision making
- Community resistance – once the disaster has passed their support for mitigation reduces
- Council level capabilities and resources gap

Local council resources and skills

- 537 local governments can't all have the expertise and resources to tackle transport resilience
- Huge divergence between council resources and revenue
- Deloitte survey of local councils highlights extent of challenge
 - internal resourcing (70%),
 - funding (67%),
 - complexity and not knowing how to respond (53%),
 - and limited technical expertise and capacity (48%)

What can local authorities do now

A proactive approach to addressing these issues now, while building the evidence base and stakeholder support needed to advocate for larger scale investments:



Thank you



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