



**Australia Needs a Disaster Resilience  
Commission (Cyber, Pandemic, Fires)**  
Submission to Senate Committee on Covid-19

Three senior researchers have recommended creation of a National Resilience Advisory Commission (NRAC) to prepare better the economy for the next disaster. The proposal is part of their [submission to the Senate Select Committee](#) on Covid-19. The submission, released late Friday by the Committee, compares Australia slower and more costly response with that of Taiwan.

One author of the submission is Professor Glenn Withers AO, immediate Past President of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. "A new Commission could bring together peak bodies from business, worker organisations, social welfare advocacy, and conservation. It would replace present ad hoc approaches, especially for broader planning and for when response moves into recovery and renewal.", noted Professor Glenn Withers, Distinguished Professor of Economics at ANU. "We need to be able to be ahead of disasters in social, economic and environmental planning, as well as in core emergency prevention and response."

Professor Greg Austin called out the need for full mobilization of economic policy talent on a more urgent basis. "The Covid-19 response in Australia followed a two step model, health issues first and thinking about the economy later", Austin said. "That seems sensible at one level, but the economic response has been dictated largely by the government, after the fact, and operating in shock mode. It will not be the optimal approach for a cyber disaster".

Adam P. Henry, another of the co-authors, recalled the government's advice that while Australia has been lucky to avoid major cyber attacks, a cyber catastrophe may be just around the corner. Henry observed that "Australia has not yet published an accessible national cyber incident response plan for that sort of dire emergency. We will need a plan that is coordinated with industry and operators of critical infrastructure, and that takes into account the social dimensions of the problem and impacts".

Withers has been a leader of national economic reform policy over several decades. Austin recently published *National Cyber Emergencies* (Routledge 2020) and has led projects on resilience for the New York-based East-West Institute, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the University of New South Wales. Austin leads the cyber programme of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Henry is a prominent advocate of cyber resilience, including through his role as a Director for Education and Research for FifthDomain.

Information on the Social Cyber Institute (SCI) is available at <https://www.socialcyber.co/social-cyber-institute>. It is an independent start-up that emerged from UNSW Canberra. SCI offers a pioneering [Executive Certificate in Resilience Planning](#).

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