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Reflecting on MCG responses to emergencies

Looking back over the last couple of years I have been reflecting on our responses to emergencies and what it means for our future. I have been thinking particularly about the impacts of floods and drought during 2022 and 2023.

Until mid-2023, we experienced a particularly wet period when almost the entire MCG site was water-logged. It became difficult to access, even on foot, and productivity of our low-slung communal growing plots suffered. The base layer of clay in the ground became fully hydrated and ceased to provide a firm foundation for almost anything, including human feet.

In response we applied for, and received, a grant to raise communal growing spacers to a minimum of 400mm high. This work was completed at about the same time as the rain stopped.

We were then flung into a particularly dry period from late May 2023. The water level in the ANU dam fell significantly and level 1 water restrictions were implemented. The threat of a complete water shut-off hung in the air.

In response, we applied for a grant to increase our water storage capacity. The grant application went in at about the same time as the rain began to fall again.

You might begin to see a pattern here — emergency → our response → emergency averted before our response is complete. On the surface, it may look like we are chasing our tail and wasting efforts. In my opinion, this is far from correct.