

COMMISSIONED RESEARCH

- Key Topics:
- communication [1]
 - communities [2]
 - fire [3]

Risk communications in Victoria [4]
This project was commissioned and funded entirely by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria.

Project: detail Notabs

Research team

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Description

This project was commissioned and funded entirely by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria.
The objectives of this project were:

1. To improve the way DEWLP communicates the science of bushfire risk modelling and associated content, as well as some of the key relativistic concepts that underpin this notion – such as likelihood, consequence, major and reduction; to the community; and
2. Incorporate behaviour change notions within its communications methods and products so the community is better able to act on DEWLP’s information.

The background to this project is that:

- A. The advent of the Strategic Bushfire Management Reform (SBMR) program represents a significant new science communication context for DEWLP. The SBMR program changes the way DEWLP conceives of bushfire management and the measurement of success in bushfire management. DEWLP has always understood its success in terms of the number of hectares that have been treated by planned burning – this will continue to be so. However, in addition DEWLP will also measure its success according to the new metric “reduction in the number of major bushfires.” This statement is made-up of a number of concepts that DEWLP now needs to work with such as risk, likelihood and consequence. These concepts are underpinned by a significant amount of probabilistic modelling work, climate, forest and fire science.
- B. At the centre of DEWLP reform program are data and modelling that describe the probability of severe bushfires occurring in particular locations, over 40 year time horizons, and the effectiveness of management actions over similarly long time horizons. The program and therefore the challenge of communicating consequence, for example, is not focused on immediate crisis communication, such as a health scare or an unfolding disaster. Rather the subject matter is more akin to communication about significant, chronic, long-term hazards such as climate change or obesity.
- C. A feature of this type of science communication is that information is technical, complex, based on modelled scenarios and tends to have long time horizons. Information and analysis is inherently uncertain, counter-intuitive or counter to lived-experience and tends to be expressed in probabilistic terms that can be difficult for lay people to interpret and understand. It can also be easily dismissed if the ‘risk narrative’ doesn’t suit the world-view of the audience.

D. Even when communities do comprehend the facts they may not change their behaviour because of the tendency to under-estimate the chance of worst case events occurring, difficulty visualising how bad major events can be; assume that if they do occur, they will more likely impact others; defer the costs of undertaking actions to reduce risks relating to events that may happen sometime in the future in favour of more immediate aims.

Publications

Year	Type	Citation
2018	Journal Article	Young, C. [7] Valuing recovery through risk ownership [10]. <i>Australian Journal of Emergency Management</i> 33 , (2018). Google Scholar [11] BibTeX [12] EndNote XML [13]

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Links

[1] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/research/topics/community> [2] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/research/topics/communities> [3] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/research/topics/fire> [4] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/research/resilience-hazards/1771> [5] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/people/rjones> [6] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/organisations/vu> [7] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/people/cyung8> [8] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/people/little> [9] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/organisations/delpw> [10] <https://www.bnhrcr.com.au/publications/biblio/bnh-4433> [11] https://scholar.google.com/scholar?btnG=Search%2BScholar&as_q=%22Valuing%2Brecrovery%2Bthrough%2Brisk%2Bownership%22&as_s_authors=Young&as_occt=any&as_eq=&as_oq=&as_eq=&as_publication=&as_vlo=&hl=en