



'What is normal?'

Learning to do risk management together

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THE RESEARCH PROJECT

We are investigating the existing and emerging engagements between the natural hazards sector and diverse Aboriginal peoples across southern Australia (2017-2020). This is an intercultural project for our intercultural society.

- Our focus is on understanding the worldviews and priorities of all involved.
- Our method is to conduct collaborative research with Aboriginal peoples and sector practitioners.
- We distill our findings to support these collaborations, and to inform risk and resilience agendas more broadly.

Our BNHCRC project name is 'Hazards, Culture and Indigenous Communities'.



Setting out the discussions at a 2018 fire forum

A policy and practice exchange between southern WA and the ACT

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"Yes it's hard, that's why you need to start at the beginning."

Adam Leavesley
ACT Parks and Conservation



(photo: Neale 2019)

In May 2019, the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy was launched. This policy document was created through a partnership between the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations and DELWP.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The natural hazard sector is well positioned to provide leadership on public sector collaborations with Aboriginal peoples

- The collegial and placed-based work establishes a community of practice which supports learning/doing together. The life and death context prioritises social equity matters that might be intractable or neglected in other policy contexts.

Intercultural collaborations are not well supported by existing sector policy

- Collaborations are often not the product of formal sector policy frameworks, but are dependent on interpersonal dynamics between individuals, who take on additional responsibilities. Thus, these collaborations are vulnerable to changes in staffing and funding.

Aboriginal people remain underrepresented in natural hazard management sector

- According to the evidence available, Aboriginal people are disproportionately under-represented in state agencies responsible for land and hazard management. There is a need for agencies to collect more consistent and detailed data on employment in order to support their accountability to Indigenous peoples and their communities.

Challenging 'what is normal?' is central to this work

- Culture and learning/doing go hand in hand. Thus, it is necessary to consider the 'how', 'why', 'what', 'when', 'where' and 'who' of risk mitigation in relation to similar and different cultures, and the consequences that flow from that, e.g. funding, duty statements, etc

These findings are arising out of our practitioner survey and case study fieldwork.