DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: BUILDING STRENGTH AND CAPABILITY

Annual report 2019–2020

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability' is a three-year project commissioned by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, which commenced in July 2017 and has just completed its third year of exploration. It has been a challenging year in terms of delivery, and the project has had to adjust its research plan to accommodate the unprecedented bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have impacted the university and the stakeholder organisations. As a result, the project will now deliver the final outputs for the project in the second half of 2020.

During the third phase, we have focused our activities around consolidating key findings in the organisational stream and testing these in another industry to look for commonalities and points of divergence. New needs that emerged from the second year review highlight the necessity for further indepth review in relation to the economic and community areas. Activities have continued with a case study approach and three reports have been completed.

Key areas of focus for this phase have been as follows:

- Undertaking two economic and community case studies

- Testing and refining the framework concepts and processes

- Collation of case studies to highlight key areas of research for delivery for the final documents that focus on management and measurement

- Collation of measurement sources.

Key findings from this phase of the research are as follows:

- Investment in D&I varies considerably between different programs. How well they can be assessed relies heavily on the data available and the current economic tools that can be used for assessment.

- Measurement in relation to diversity has increased over the last three years in organisations, but aspects such as culture/spirituality and gender identity remain indicative as they are optional and can only be assessed at a community level through the census data.

- Measurement for inclusion is still in its infancy in terms of measurements used in organisations. In terms of measurement of inclusion within their communities, there were no specific tools found to support this type of measurement being used in the sector.

- Awareness as to how to manage diversity within organisations inclusively is growing, but there is still considerable work to do in relation to the development of capability and support tools.

- In terms of capability, organisations have pockets of skills and capabilities, but there is a need to strategically plan for and build capability, particularly in relation to the management of human and social risk.

- There is need for organisations to value and formally reward those who invest in the development of D&I skills and capability.

Stakeholder engagement has been limited during this phase, as it was put on hold between November 2019 and April 2020. Where possible, we have maintained contact through individual interactions. We have also had a reduced level of outreach such as presentations due to the cancellation of a number of conferences, however the project team was involved in three presentations at the 2019 AFAC conference.

END-USER PROJECT IMPACT STATEMENT

Quinn Cramer, *President, Women and Firefighting Australasia*

The combined WAFA-BNHCRC report is a valuable report to use along side the conference outcomes statement for WAFA. While the outcomes statement provides insights to current and best practices, the workshop report has allowed us to gather data from a wide range of members that not only backs up the findings in the outcomes statement, but moving forward, allows us to measure change around the qualities, traits and behaviours observed by our members within their organisations. The ability to partner with BNHCRC to create the report ensured that the methodology used to analyse the data was the best method to ensure that the data was summarised in a manner that allowed for future comparisons and ensured that undue bias wasn't conferred on the results.

INTRODUCTION

The Emergency Management Sector (EMS) is a diverse and complex sector whose key purpose is the protection of life and property by implementing 'a range of measures to manage risks to communities and environments' (Emergency Management Australia, 1998, p39). Their scope of activities spans the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) spectrum, and requires a range of activities that contribute to the wellbeing of communities.

The context in which many of these organisations operate is changing due to:

- The increasing intensity and frequency of events due to climate change, and the increasing costs associated with these events

- Changing demographics (particularly in relation to the increasingly diverse community to be served)

- New technologies (particularly digital technology)

- Resource constraints and decreasing volunteer numbers

- The need to build resilience in organisations and their communities to reduce future costs and impacts of future events.

As these drivers are dynamic and systemic, they are changing the focus of EMS activities from shorter-term tactical approaches across the PPRR spectrum, to longer-term strategic approaches that focus on future outcomes. These drivers are also driving the need to innovate across the EMS, and develop new services that aim to increase resilience of the organisations themselves and the community. This is fundamentally changing the nature of the relationship EMS has with the community, from delivering a service **to** them, to working **with** them (Young et al., 2018a, p8). There is also a recognition that emergency services need to better reflect the communities they work to serve (NEMC, 2011) to achieve this outcome. Effective D&I is central to this agenda.

Currently, there are 'unacceptably low levels of diversity' in the EMS (AFAC, 2016). There is, however, a growing awareness that there are a number of benefits that can result from increasing diversity in organisations. Effective implementation, however, is complex due to:

- The need for significant cultural change in the face of entrenched cultural attitudes at organisational and community levels about what emergency services are, how they should operate, and who should be developing, implementing and managing these processes.

- Lack of clarity as to what diversity is and means, the value of the benefits diversity offers, and how to best place and integrate diverse people into current operational activities.

- There is a current lack of understanding of what is effective and how to measure this.

If EMS organisations are to capitalise on the emerging opportunities and fulfil their future potential in this area, they will need to develop new ways of thinking and working. Diversity is not new to EMS organisations and there are existing strengths and knowledge that can be built upon. Understanding what is effective, and why and how this agenda can be progressed, is critical to achieving future outcomes.

BACKGROUND

The project aims to assist the understanding and practice of D&I in the EMS through the identification of current measurement, strengths, barriers, needs and opportunities in emergency management organisations (EMOs) and the community.

The key need identified in the scoping phase of this project was to understand what effective D&I is, and what this means for EMOs in terms of practice and measurement. This has become the project's primary focus. We have developed a definition of effective diversity to guide the project, which is:

> The result of interactions between organisations and individuals that leverage, value and build upon characteristics and attributes within and beyond their organisations to increase diversity and inclusion, resulting in benefits that support joint personal and organisational objectives and goals, over a sustained period of time (Young et al., 2018a, p19).

The project is examining D&I systemically through a values, narratives and decision making context across organisational, community and economic themes, using case studies. Aspects of diversity being examined are: culture and ethnicity, gender, demographic status (age and education), and disability (physical). These will be considered through the key drivers outlined in the following section on context, which are currently shaping current and future EMOs and their communities.

This project has three phases:

1. Understanding the context in which D&I exists in EMOs and the community

2. Development of a D&I framework suitable for the EMS

3. Testing and utilisation of the framework.

The aim of this research is to develop a practical framework tailored to the EMO context that builds upon and leverages current strengths and expertise within the EMS. This is being developed collaboratively with our end user group as part of our research process. Its purpose is to support better management and measurement of D&I by providing a basis for more effective evidence-based decision making.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Our team at Victoria University specialises in end user-based research using systemic analysis that integrates research into decision making as part of the research process. This process co-designs and develops the research and its outputs with the end users to ensure that research products are fit-for-purpose. Key phases of this process are shown in Figure 1.
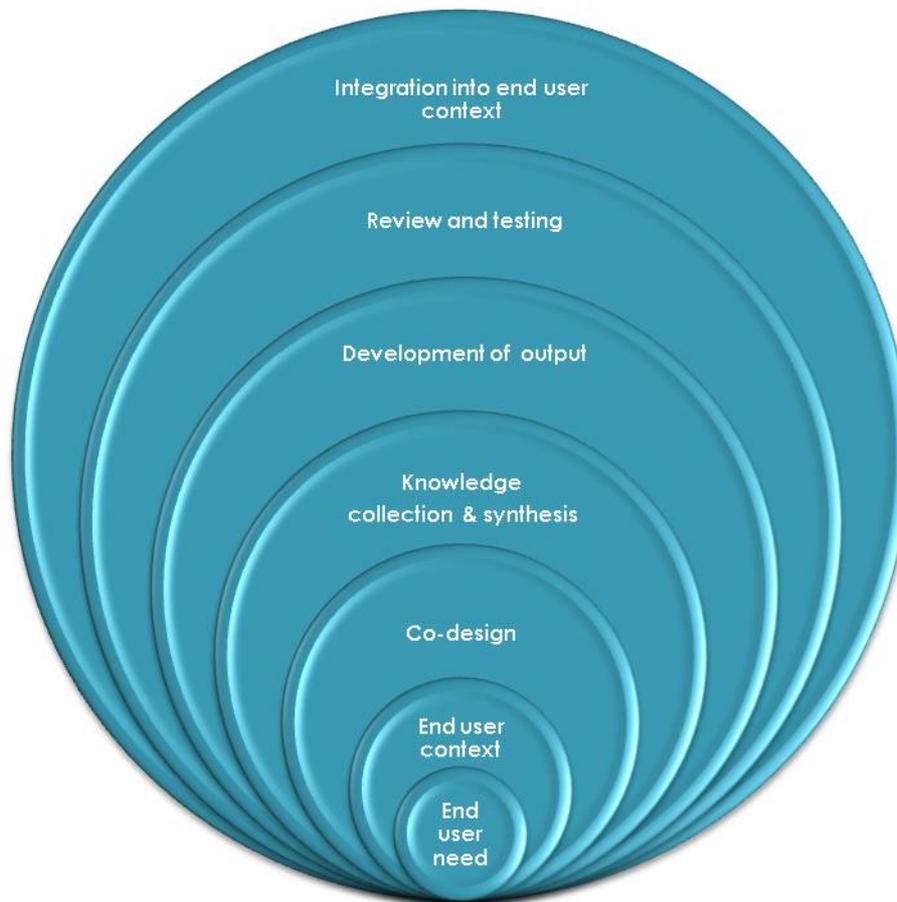
FIGURE 1: IMPLEMENTATION PHASES OF END USER-BASED RESEARCH (YOUNG, 2016)

The project uses a transdisciplinary approach, which combines different academic methodologies with end user knowledge. Outputs are tailored towards the decision making context of our end users, and the collation and integration of end user knowledge is a key part of our research.

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KEY MILESTONES

Due to disruption experienced by the project, there have been a number of adjustments to the delivery schedule detailed below. All adjusted items are scheduled for delivery by 30 September 2020.

Milestone	Deliverable	Status
2.4.2	Research review Phase 2	Completed
2.4.3	Quarterly reporting, annual report, self-assessment matrix	Completed
3.1.1	Poster for BNHCRC conference	Completed
3.1.2	Quarterly reporting	Completed
3.2.1	Complete testing components of framework, adjust and amend framework document	Completed
3.2.2	Quarterly reporting	Completed
3.3.1	Deliver final framework	Completed
3.3.2	Deliver policy brief	Completed
3.3.3	Deliver draft research report (to contain a summary of synergies between volunteer and diversity project)	Adjusted
3.3.4	Quarterly reporting	Adjusted
3.4.2	Deliver final research report (to contain a summary of synergies between volunteer and diversity project)	Adjusted
3.3.5	Quarterly reporting, annual report, self-assessment matrix	Completed
3.4.1	Deliver professional development workshops	Adjusted
3.4.3	Quarterly reporting, final report, self-assessment matrix	Adjusted

TABLE 1: DELIVERABLES SCHEDULE

UTILISATION AND IMPACT

SUMMARY: KEY ACTIVITIES FOR THE PERIOD (PROJECT LEADER)

Due to the disruption experienced in the last 12 months, the project has not undertaken the usual outreach programs to support utilisation. However, reads of the project's research collateral have continued to increase on Researchgate and the BNHCRC YouTube channel (Table 2). The literature review (Young et al., 2018a) is particularly notable with 2,461 reads, and the organisational report 'The long road' (Young et al., 2018b) had 583 reads.

As the project has evolved, we have multiple outputs that have a cumulative impact. In relation to utilisation and impacts, we have also provided evidence of the project as whole, to show the cumulative effects of previous outputs, as well as use and impact of the outputs developed in the third phase of the project.

Use in relation to presentations to EMOs has been limited to pre-bushfire and pre-COVID-19 presentations.

IMPACTS FOR PHASE THREE OUTPUTS

OUTPUT 1

***Risky business: why diversity and inclusion matter. Into the future: building skills and capabilities for a diverse and inclusive workforce, workshop synthesis and key research findings* (Young and Jones, 2019)**

Output description

This report summarises findings from a workshop entitled 'Into the future: building capabilities and skills for inclusive and diverse organisations' held on 5 December 2018 at Victoria University. It introduces and describes D&I-related risks as they apply to EMOs, and links attributes, capabilities and skills to the management of these risks and day-to-day activities. It also examines how these might change in the future, and how they relate to current tasks at the service delivery level. The report provides some of the groundwork for understanding what these risks are and how they manifest in an organisational context. Its aim is to provide a starting point for EMOs to think about how to incorporate D&I risk more formally into their operational frameworks.

Extent of use

- Cumbria Fire and Rescue examined the mapping of D&I risk and capability into the risk process in a document for applicability

- Inclusion assessment criteria applied to work undertaken for the public transport sector

- The criteria for capability was applied to the community report.

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Utilisation potential

- To apply the mapping exercise more broadly to integrate social and human risk identification and capability planning into organisational and risk planning activities.

- Development of indicators for measuring D&I capability across the PPRR spectrum.

Utilisation impact

- The role of inclusion in managing human and social risk from the report have been reported as useful and useable by our stakeholders and some of them are reporting using this within their organisations.

- An internal document for AFAC Male Champions of Change has been produced, which integrates key aspects of the report's key findings into the AFAC framework.

- Use of scenarios documented in the report used by EMV to support discussions.

Utilisation and impact evidence

- Useful and useable for risk framing and scenario use documented in end of Phase 2 assessment and recorded in meeting notes.

- Other aspects used in another industry study and AFAC presentations shown in the project utilisation and impact evidence.

- It has been used in the AFAC presentation and an AJEM monograph publication.

- End users have report concepts being discussed and used in their own organisations.

OUTPUT 2

Economic case benefits of the Indigenous Fire and Rescue Employment Strategy (IFARES) program: Fire and Rescue New South Wales. (Rasmussen and Maharah, 2019)

Output description

This study details the costs and benefits (tangible and intangible) of the IFARES program. It estimates these by modelling different cost and benefit components. It finds the total benefits of the program to be around $8 million and estimates a benefit-cost ratio of 20, meaning that for every dollar invested in the program, the benefits to the community are approximately 20 times the amount invested. The intangible benefits are gleaned from multiple sources, such as interviews with people involved with the program and media reports. The estimates of costs are largely based on data provided by Fire and Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW).

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Extent of use

- The report has been used by FRNSW to support further development of the program.

- It was used in an AFAC presentation and an AJEM monograph publication.

Utilisation potential

- This report provides a basis for the development of economic indicators and assessments to support business cases and decision makers.

Utilisation impact

- It is difficult to determine this at this stage as outlined above.

OUTPUT 3

Building resilience: understanding the capabilities of diverse communities. (MacDonald, 2020)

Output description

This report is from a community perspective of the role the community could play, its capabilities and readiness to work with the EMS to build resilience and be prepared for potential natural disasters. It focuses on two diverse communities – an immigrant community and young people aged between 18–25.

Extent of use

- The report was published on the BNHCRC website in February 2020, so it is difficult to determine the extent of its use at this stage.

Utilisation potential

- As the sample contained in this study is small, it is indicative only. However, these findings provide a basis for further development of work in this area, in particular indicators for measuring community D&I capability across the PPRR spectrum and also the need for further exploration across this sector.

Utilisation impact

- It is difficult to determine this at this stage as outlined above.

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AGGREGATED PROJECT UTILISATION AND IMPACT EVIDENCE

The use and impact of all project outputs to date are detailed in Table 1.

Platform	Content	Impact
BNHCRC YouTube	**Practitioner videos**	
	Steve OMalley (MFB)	151 views
	Colin Thomson (MFB)	98 views
	Janine Taylor (QFES)	118 views
	Malcolm Connellan (Ex NSWFR)	41 views
	Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capacity research update	141 views
Podcasts	The story of UK's first female firefighter – failure wasn't an option for this trailblazer	124 listens
ResearchGate	Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability literature review, report	2,461 reads
	The long road: building effective diversity and inclusion in emergency management, report	583 reads
	Effective diversity in emergency management organisations: the long road, AJEM article	118 reads
	Shaping the new norm: WAFA Conference 2018 Evaluation and QFES Workshop Synthesis, WAFA	84 reads
	Risky business: why diversity and inclusion matter – into the future building skills and capabilities for diverse and inclusive workforce, report	82 reads
	Transforming through diversity and inclusion capability – the pathway to achieving diversity benefits, AJEM monograph series 2020	63 reads
Linkedin	Transforming through diversity and inclusion capability – the pathway to achieving diversity benefits, AJEM monograph series 2020	229 views of post
	Building resilience: understanding the capabilities of diverse communities, report	656 views of post
	Risky business: why diversity and inclusion matter – into the future building skills and capabilities for diverse and inclusive workforce, report	561 views of post
	Shaping the new norm: WAFA Conference 2018 Evaluation and QFES Workshop Synthesis, WAFA	645 views of post

TABLE 2: SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT FOR BNHCRC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PROJECT

In terms of use of other evidence:

- An internal document for AFAC Male Champions of Change has been produced which integrates key aspects of the research into the AFAC framework.

- The VU research unit was awarded a contract based on the VU methodology and the quality of work in the draft framework developed. Aspects of the framework and the assessment criteria were included in one area of the new study, and were found to be transferable and useful for policy impact assessment.

- Some of the VU team have been awarded an internal Planetary Health Grant by VU and also received additional funding from the BNHCRC to undertake a short study to examine capabilities in relation to recovery of diverse communities in Gippsland following the recent bushfires in that region.

- Presentations that have used the work are as follows:

  – Young C. Transforming through diversity and inclusion capability: the pathway to achieving diversity benefits. Presentation to AFAC19, Melbourne, 27–30 August 2019.

  – Taylor J, O'Malley S, Young C. Diversity more than the eye can see: challenging the way we look at diversity. Presentation to AFAC19, Melbourne, 27–30 August 2019.

  – Taylor J, O'Malley S, Young C. Diversity and inclusion: innovation stage. Presentation to AFAC19, Melbourne, 27–30 August 2019.

  – The strategic process of change developed for the draft framework contained in 'The Long Road' report (Young et al., 2018b) was included in presentations for Victoria's Lead Scientist, and industry stakeholders and government as part of a workshop.

- Cumulative outputs applied to work in a state government study:

  – Young C and Parry N (2020) *Reimagining the workforce: organisational context assessment of inclusion and innovation in the Victorian rolling stock sector*. With contributions from Heenetigala K. Rail Manufacturing Cooperative Research Centre, Melbourne.

  – Young C, Jones R N, Heenetigala K, Ooi D, Lung S and Parry N (2020) Reimagining the workforce: the Victorian rolling stock context – literature review. Rail Manufacturing Cooperative Research Centre, Melbourne.

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NEXT STEPS

We are in the process of finalising a number of practitioner documents to support the framework to be delivered in the coming months, along with the final deliverables for the project. We are also exploring the possibility of an online forum with the BNHCRC team.

We will also work with our end users to determine what they would consider the most useful utilisation activity required. We will be applying for funding in relation to this with the BNHCRC to support further adoption throughout 2021.

NEXT STEPS

PUBLICATIONS LIST

PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES
Paper submitted to AJEM currently responding to reviews.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
1   Young C. Transforming through diversity and inclusion capability: the pathway to achieving diversity benefits, AFAC19, Melbourne, 27–30 August 2019. AJEM monograph series 2020

TECHNICAL REPORTS

2   Young C and Jones R (2019) *Risky business: why diversity and inclusion matter. Into the future: building skills and capabilities for a diverse and inclusive workforce, workshop synthesis and key findings*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.
3   Rasmussen B and Maharaj N (2019) *The economic benefits of the Indigenous Fire and Rescue Employment Strategy (IFARES) program: Fire and Rescue New South Wales*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.
4   MacDonald F (2020) Building resilience: understanding the capabilities of diverse communities, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.

TEAM MEMBERS

RESEARCH TEAM

- Professor Bruce Rasmussen, Victoria University
- Celeste Young, Victoria University
- Dr Fiona MacDonald, Victoria University
- Professor Roger Jones, Victoria University
- Dr Craig Cormick, Thinkoutsideofthebox

Participating end user team members and organisations

Representative	Organisation
Heather Stuart	New South Wales State Emergency Service
Peter Button	South Australia Metropolitan Fire Service
Dermot Barry	South Australia State Emergency Service
Heather Lakin	Inspector-General of Emergency Management, Victoria
Janine Taylor	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Steve O'Malley	Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
Wayne Phillips	Fire and Rescue New South Wales
Louise Anderson	Country Fire Authority, Victoria
Mark Spain	Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service
Gemma Gray	Emergency Management Victoria
Neil Cooper	ACT Parks and Conservation Service
John Beard	Gloucestershire, Fire and Rescue Service
Faye Morten	Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, South Australia
Ian Lockley	Northern Territory Fire Rescue and Emergency Services
Kristine Wendtman	Rural Fire Service New South Wales
Hamish Webb	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria
Christian Jung	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria
Malcolm Connellan	Retired Assistant Commissioner Fire and Rescue New South Wales
Paul Salter	Tasmania Fire Service
Colin Thomas	Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, Melbourne
Faisal Atcha	Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service

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EXTERNAL CONTRIBUTOR END-USER ORGANISATIONS

- Emergency Management Australia

- Yosemite National Park, USA

- Fitting in, UK

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REFERENCES

1   Emergency Management Australia (1998) *Manual 3: Emergency management glossary*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

2   National Emergency Management Committee (NEMC) (2011) *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
    https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/2153/nationalstrategyfordisasterresilience.pdf

3   Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) (2016) *Diversity and inclusion within AFAC*. Discussion Paper, AFAC, Melbourne.

4   Young C, Pyke J, Maharaj N, Rasmussen B and Jones R N (2018a) *Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability literature review*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.

5   Young C (July 2016) Working from the inside out: implementation based research poster, Climate Adaptation Conference, Change Challenge Opportunity, Adelaide.

6   Young C, Jones R N and Kumnick M (2018b) *The long road: building effective diversity and inclusion in emergency management organisations. Case study synthesis and draft framework*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.

7   Young C and Jones R N (2019) *Risky business: why diversity and inclusion matter – into the future: building skills and capabilities for a diverse and inclusive workforce, workshop synthesis and key research findings*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.

8   Rasmussen B and Maharaj N (2019) *Economic case benefits of the Indigenous Fire and Rescue Employment Strategy (IFARES) program: Fire and Rescue New South Wales*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.

9   MacDonald F (2020) *Building resilience: understanding the capabilities of diverse communities: case studies of two communities*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Melbourne.