emergency services

HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN – AND DO – UTILISE RESEARCH

Christine Owen

University of Tasmania
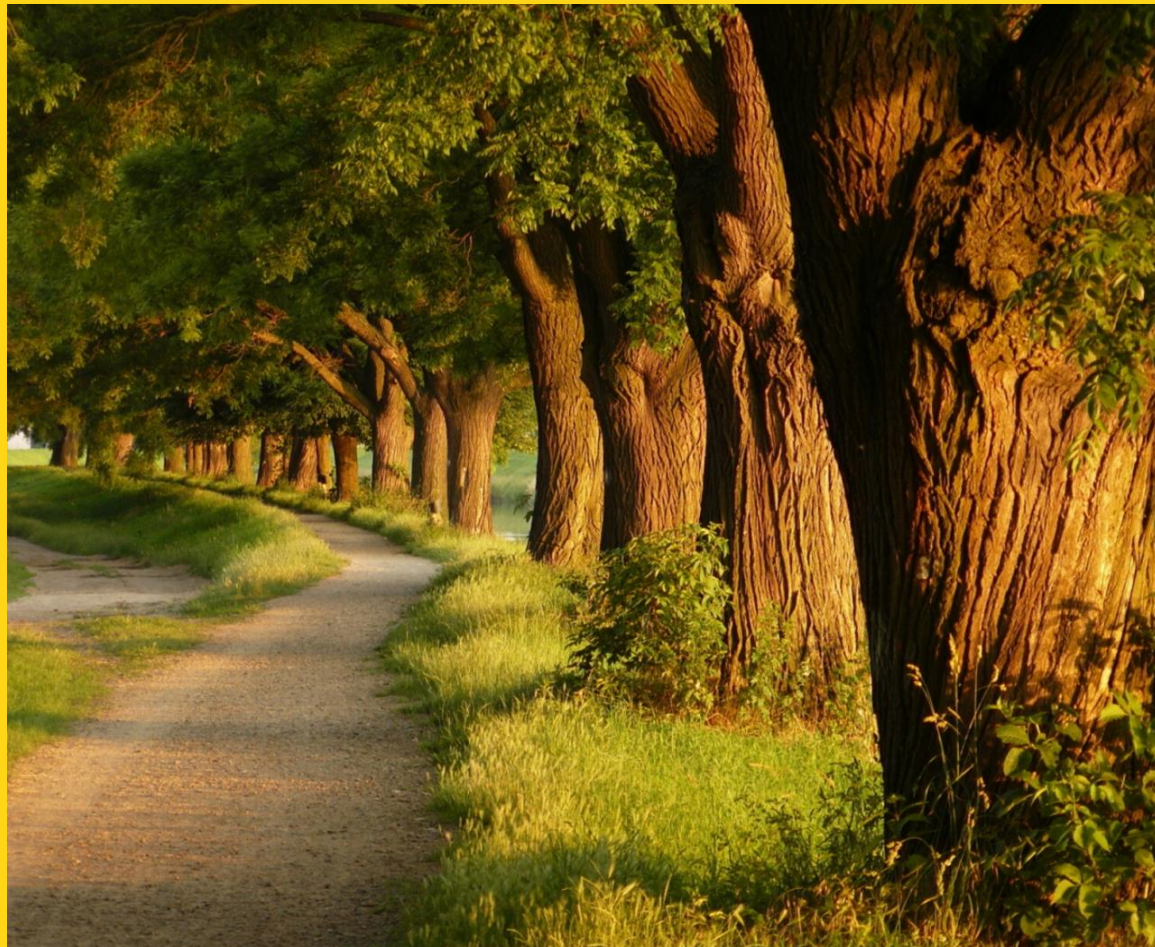Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, Australia
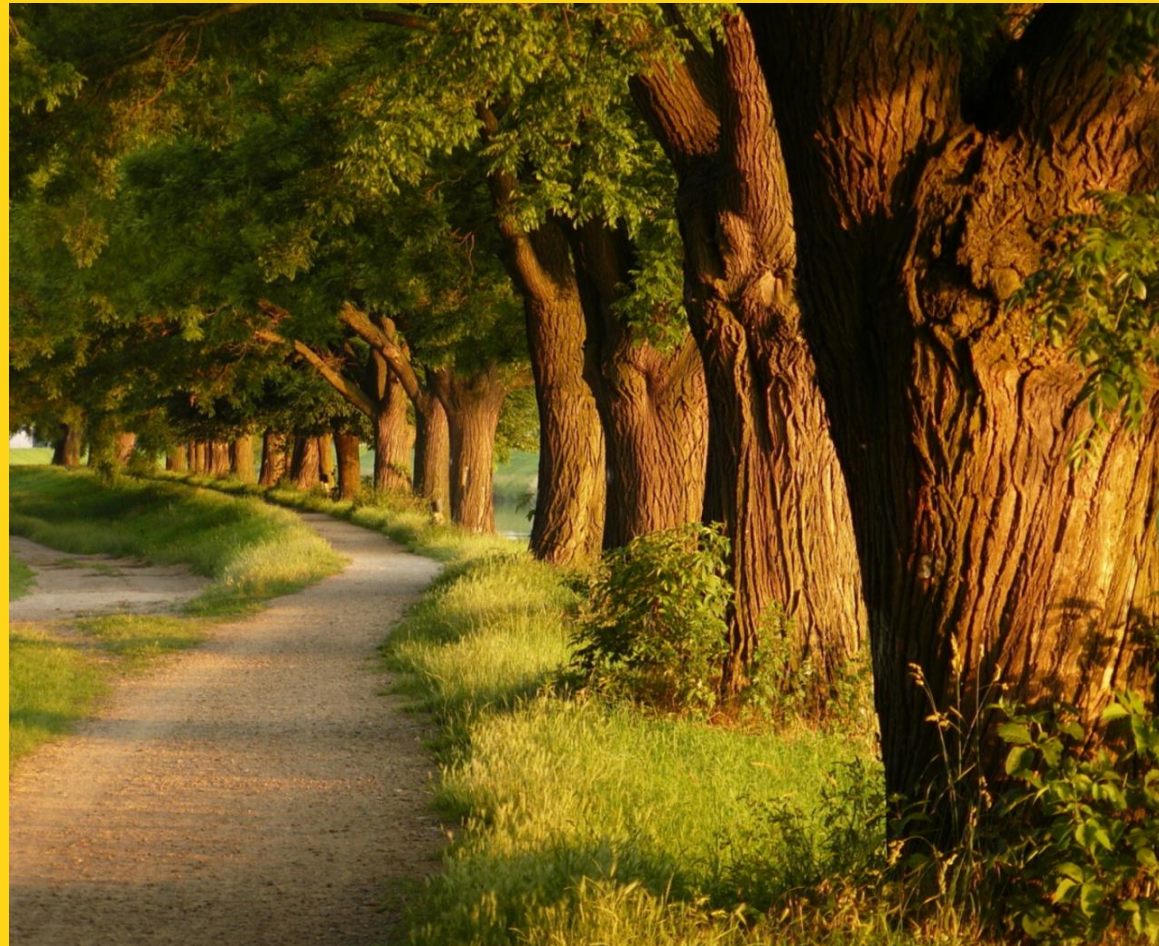
Lessons Management literature review :

The Creation myth – I had an insight therefore I (must have learned)..and everyone else too

"Build it and they will come"– build the infrastructure systems and learning will come

**Ground-hog day** – Why do we keep repeating the same mistakes?

LESSONS MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH UTILISATION.. INSIGHTS FROM OTHERS

– "we need to better understand and improve how organisations learn"

– "*… fixing the weak links in the lessons learning cycle requires that agencies have a deeper understanding of how to learn.*"

Donahue, A., & Tuohy, R. (2006). Lessons we don't learn: A study of the lessons of disasters, why we repeat them, and how we can learn them. *Homeland Security Affairs*, 2(2).s

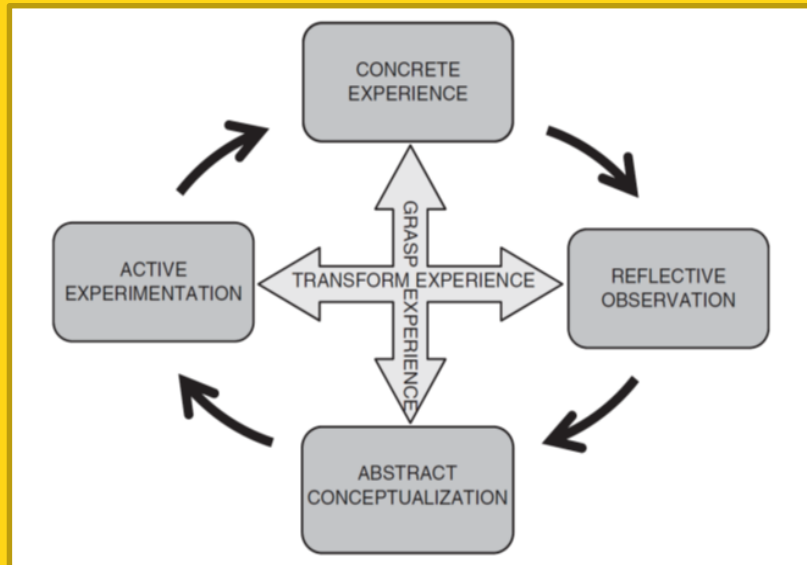# An experiential learning framework
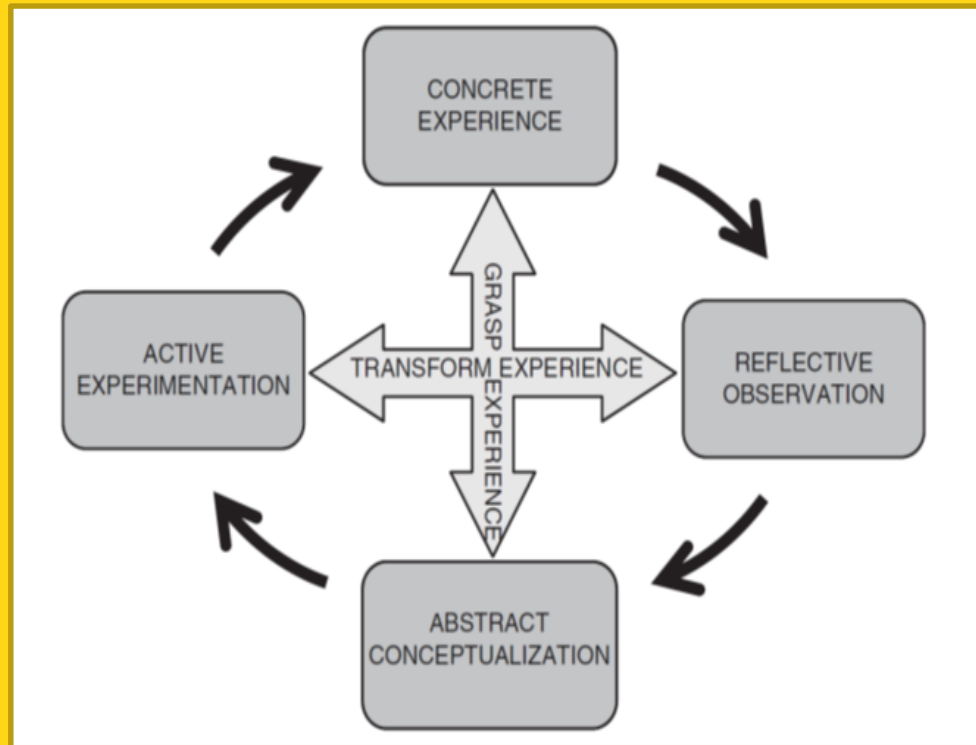
Challenges for emergency management agencies

Practice gets short-changed

Political scrutiny = ADHD

Short time horizons - hard to sustain commitment long enough
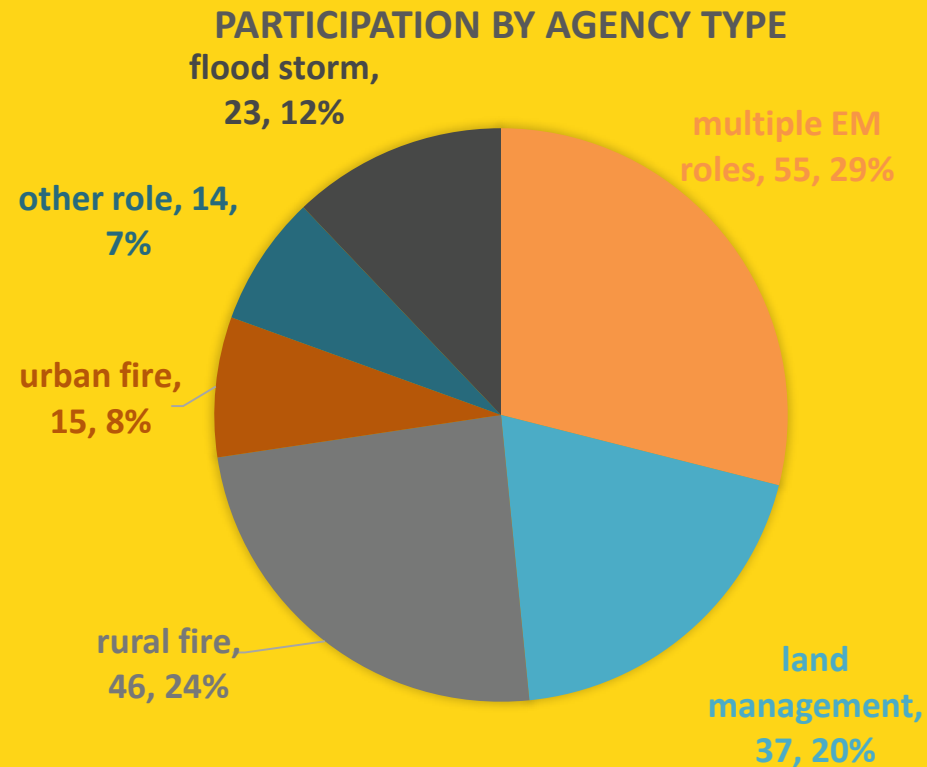

Too Busy-

lessons perishable

can DO culture-reactive

- near-sightedness

Pattern or aberration? Is the problem the worker or the work?

Concerns for retribution

RESEARCH UTILISATION SURVEY -- SOME DEMOGRAPHICS

Year	N	Agencies responded	Agencies invited
2010	148	15 (60%)	25
2012	95	18 (64%)	28
2014	180	21 (68%)	31
2016	266	29 (58%)	50
2018	190	29 (63%)	46
total	879		

PARTICIPATION BY AGENCY TYPE

- flood storm, 23, 12%
- multiple EM roles, 55, 29%
- other role, 14, 7%
- urban fire, 15, 8%
- rural fire, 46, 24%
- land management, 37, 20%

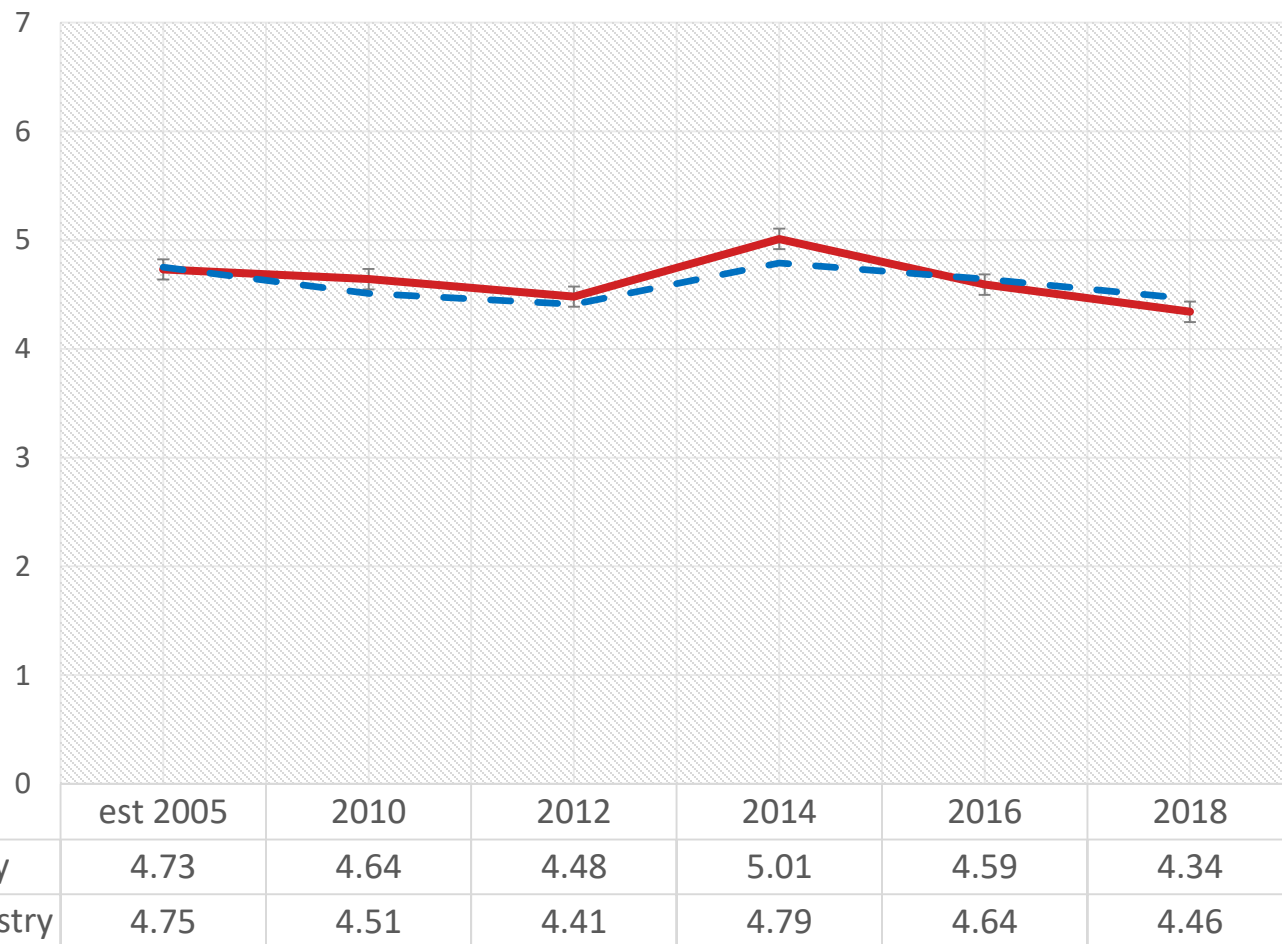Median years in the industry = 19
Median years in the agency = 12

Stratified sample – senior, middle management and front line who know (or should) about the link between research and agency business

Perceptions of learning-research utilisation survey

Example

"My home agency exemplifies a learning organisation (i.e. one that learns by experience of its own members or the experience of others)"
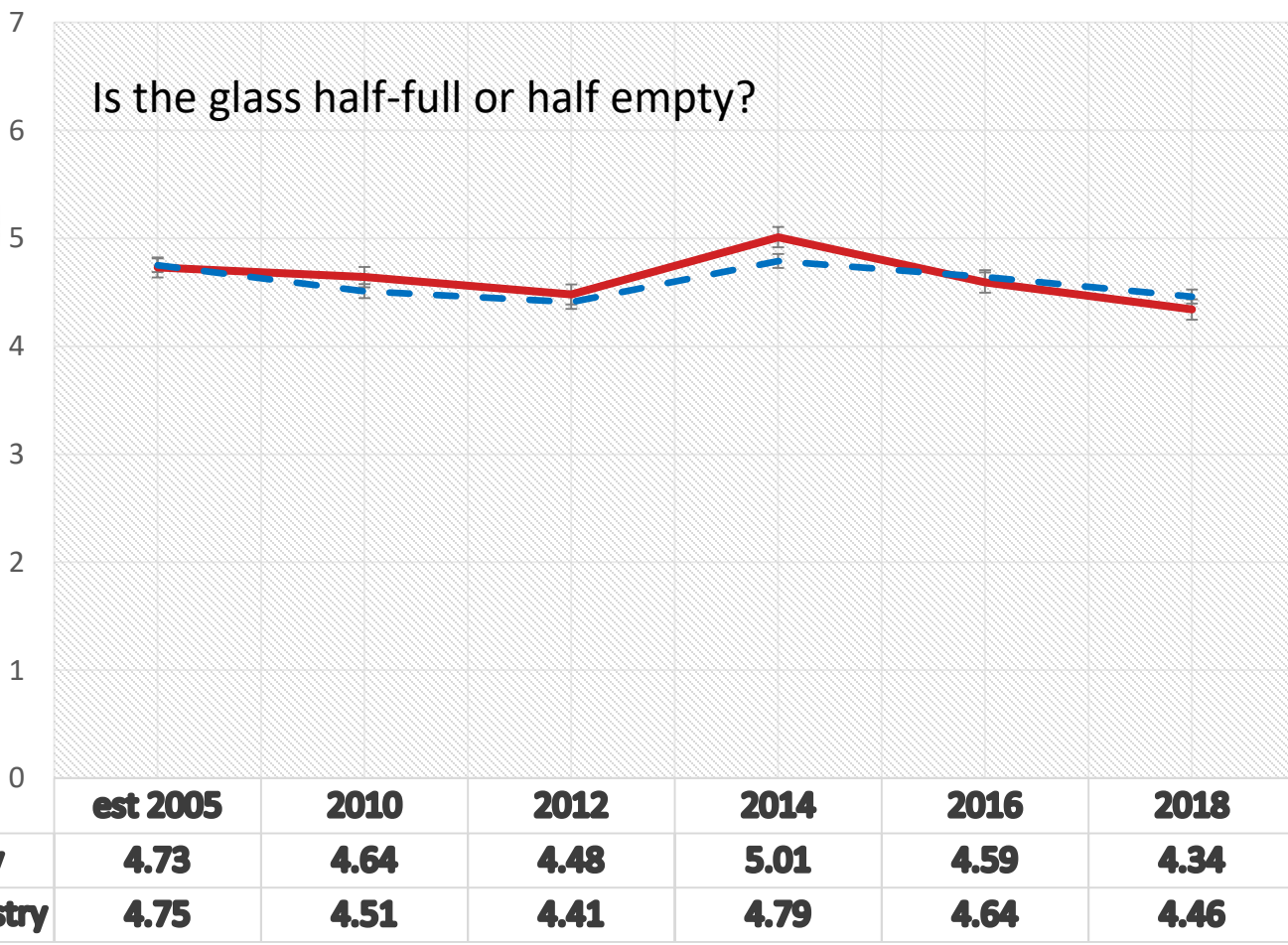
	est 2005	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
My agency as a learning agency	4.73	4.64	4.48	5.01	4.59	4.34
The industry as a learning industry	4.75	4.51	4.41	4.79	4.64	4.46

My agency as a learning agency   The industry as a learning industry

* = people who had been in the industry in 2010 and for more than 5 years, to reflect on where they thought the agency/industry was five years earlier

Perceptions of learning-research utilisation survey

Is the glass half-full or half empty?

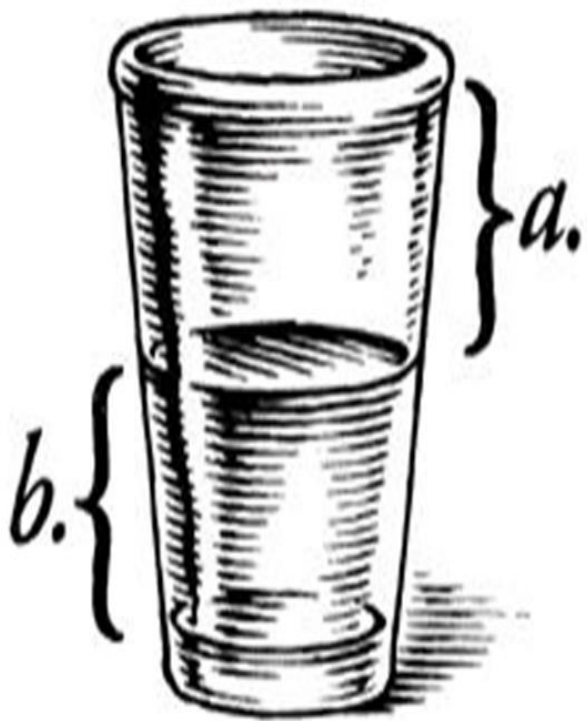|	est 2005	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
My agency as a learning agency	4.73	4.64	4.48	5.01	4.59	4.34
The industry as a learning industry	4.75	4.51	4.41	4.79	4.64	4.46

My agency as a learning agency   The industry as a learning industry

* = people who had been in the industry in 2010 and for more than 5 years, to reflect on where they thought the agency/industry was five years earlier

QUALITATIVE RESPONSES -- RESEARCH UTILISATION

- "Do you have strategies to keep up to date with research?" "What are they?"

Survey year	participants	Comments coded	%
2016	266	160	60%
2018	190	130	68%

Examples

4. Embedded

3. Some systems

- *"a process of ensuring results are read by key … staff …are interpreted and analysed for their implications ..then used to inform decision making and strategy through numerous internal fora"*

2. Some processes:- experience

- *"Developed a Research Committee"; job roles*

1. Individual effort

- *"Lots of material is distributed via our portal and email to keep staff and volunteers informed."*

- *"the onus for keeping up to date is largely upon individuals maintaining an interest, or subscribing to emails"*

4. Leading. Proactive– sense-making and experimentation- in job roles and organisational processes (n = 41 14%)

3. Established. Responsive- Active sense-making, part of job roles/processes (n = 75 26%)
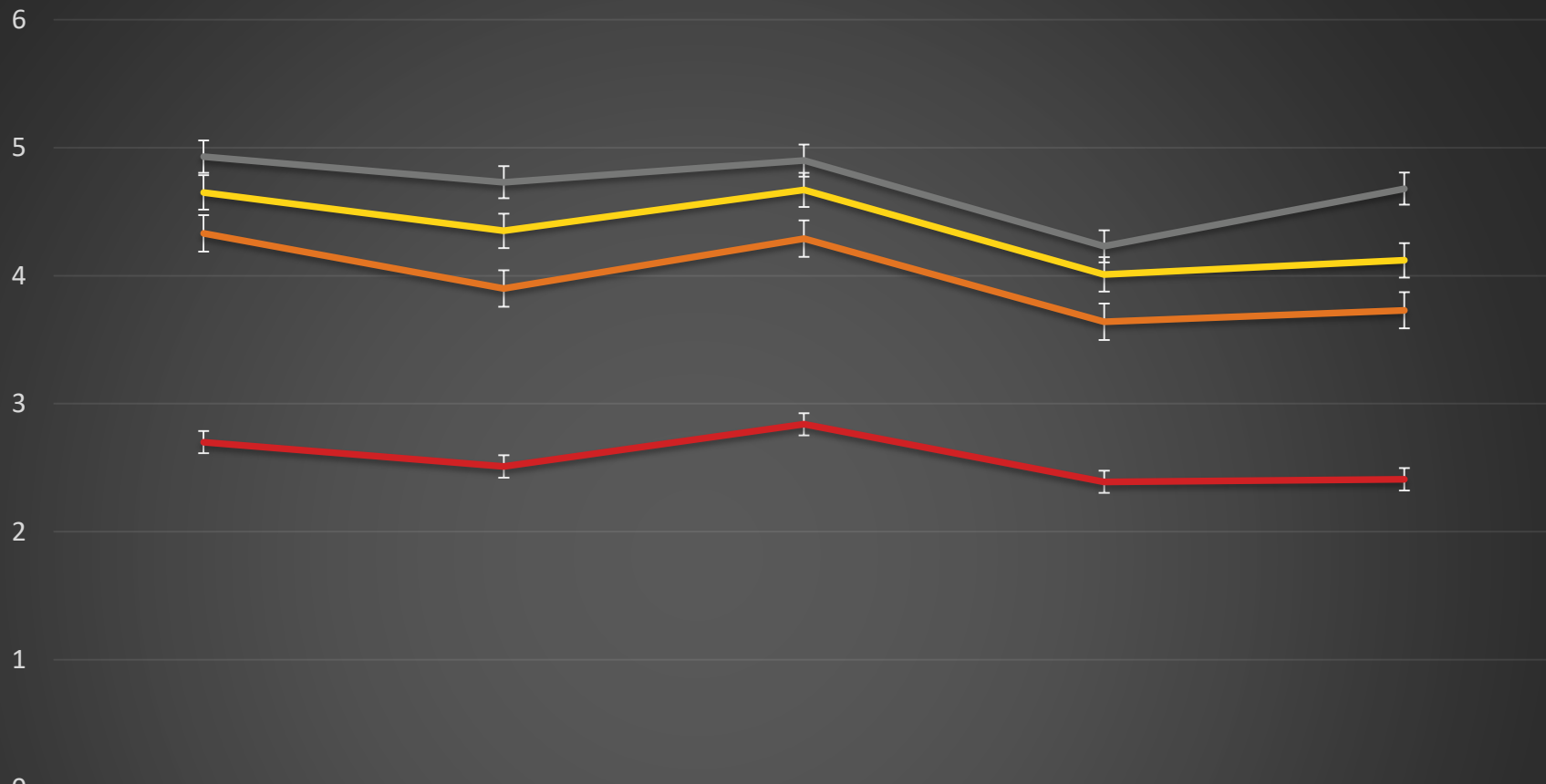
2. Developing Reactive Some processes:- pushing it out (dissemination); limited evidence of analysis (n = 102, 35%)

1. Basic Ad hoc- Individual effort – not systems/processes (n= 76 26%)

Leading

Established
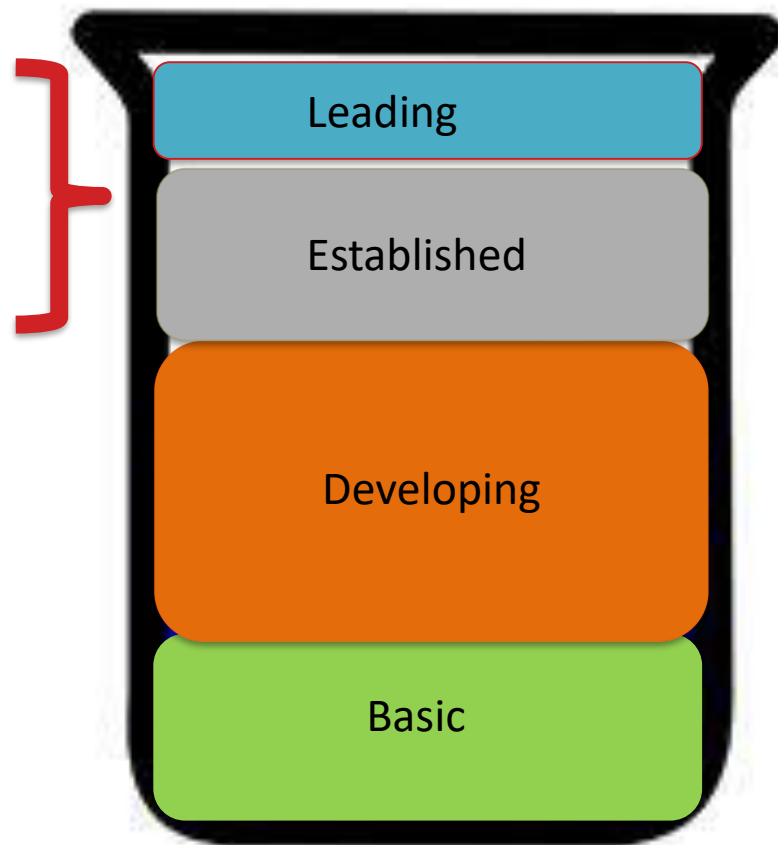
Developing

Basic

COMPARISON OF UTILISATION ACTIVITIES, 2016 +2018 DATA

	Disseminating	Assessing impact	Implementing changes	Monitoring and evaluating	making the most of changes
Basic	2.7	2.51	2.84	2.39	2.41
Developing	4.33	3.9	4.29	3.64	3.73
Established	4.65	4.35	4.67	4.01	4.12
Leading	4.93	4.73	4.9	4.23	4.68

2018	Levels of RU maturity	basic	developing	established	leading
	mean	3.03	4.46	4.93	5
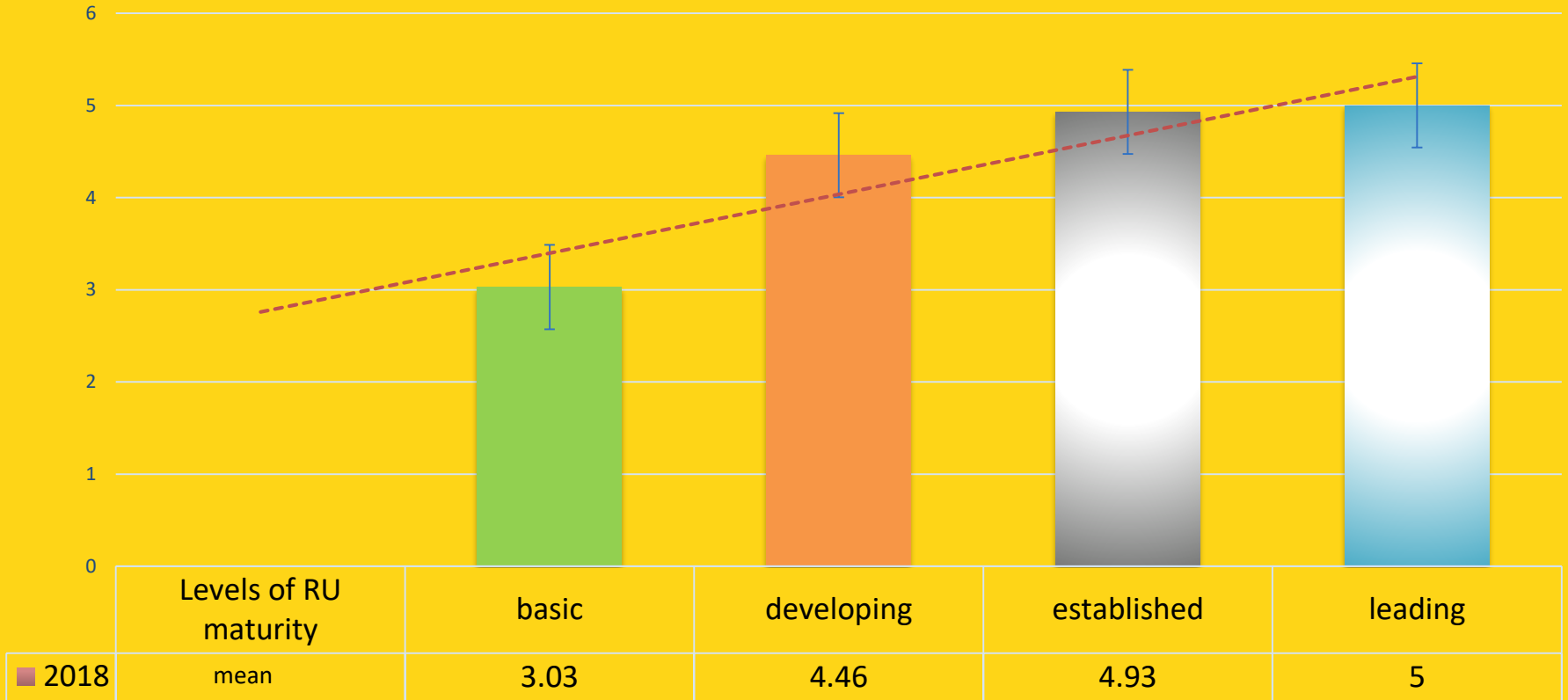
Barriers statement	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
The impacts of the research for the agency need to be better articulated	1st	1st	1st	2nd	1st
As an agency we don't have an effective process for translating the research for our personnel	3rd	5th	3rd	4th	2nd
Most people in this agency don't know about the research	4th	3rd		1st	3rd
The agency hasn't developed the appropriate assessment strategies to consider implications of the research		3rd	5th		4th
We need cooperation from other stakeholders in the industry for successful implementation			2nd	3rd	Eq 5th
We need a change advocate within the agency to take the implications forward		2nd	4th	5th	Eq 5th
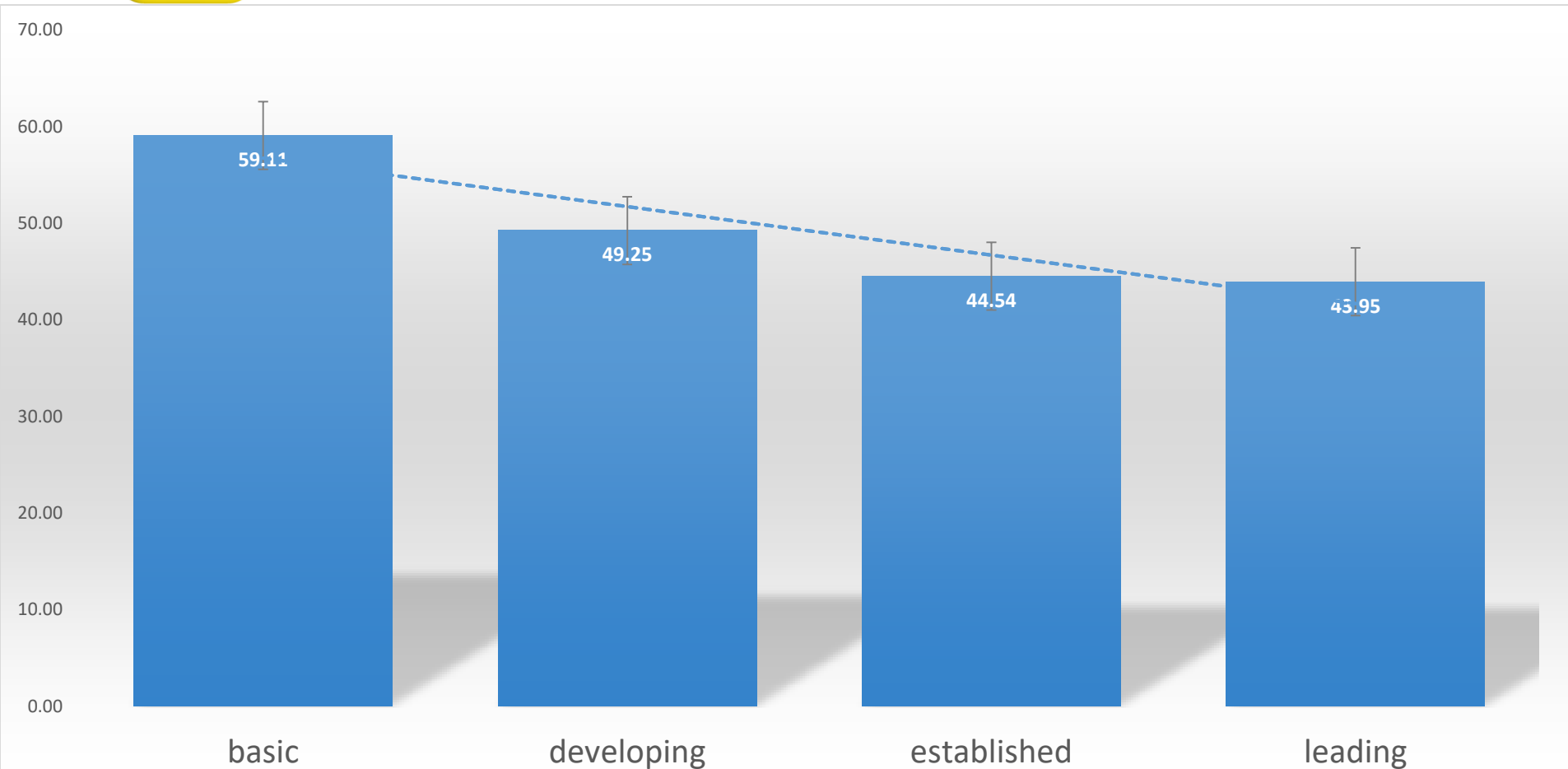
- The agency hasn't developed the appropriate assessment strategies to consider the implications of the research
- As an agency we don't have an effective process for translating the research for our personnel
- It is not clear who is dealing with what Bushfire CRC research in our agency

- Established **governance processes** (utilisation committee; research framework);

- Expectations part of **job responsibilities** and supported in skills development

- Proactively '**test**" and develop ideas allowing for safe fails

- Engage in agency and industry **communities of practice** to communicate and innovate

- A **culture** that values insights from research and other sources

1. What is being learned? If we emphasise looking to existing problems are we focussing only on the familiar?

2. Who is doing the learning? Are all insights learned the same way? In drawing from the "thought leaders" – those in the agency for 10+ years, are they enculturated into established ways of seeing the world? How do others (newcomers; marginalised) experience disruptions from which we want to learn?

3. Why is what has to be learned repeated? Why are some ways of being more impervious to change? Why are similar aspects ones where learning is stifled?
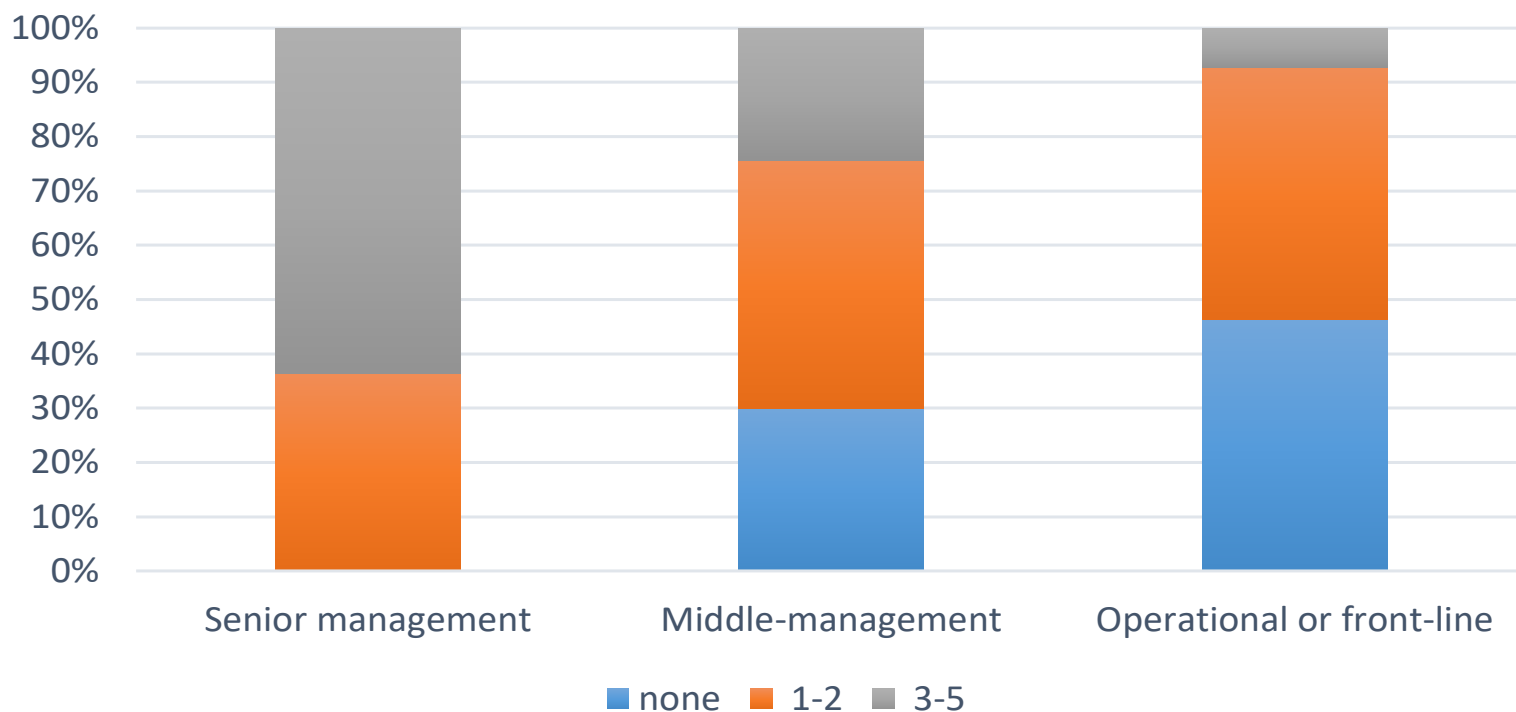
HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN – AND DO– UTILISE RESEARCH

It is what it is,

and what it is;

Is more than it seems.

THANK YOU!