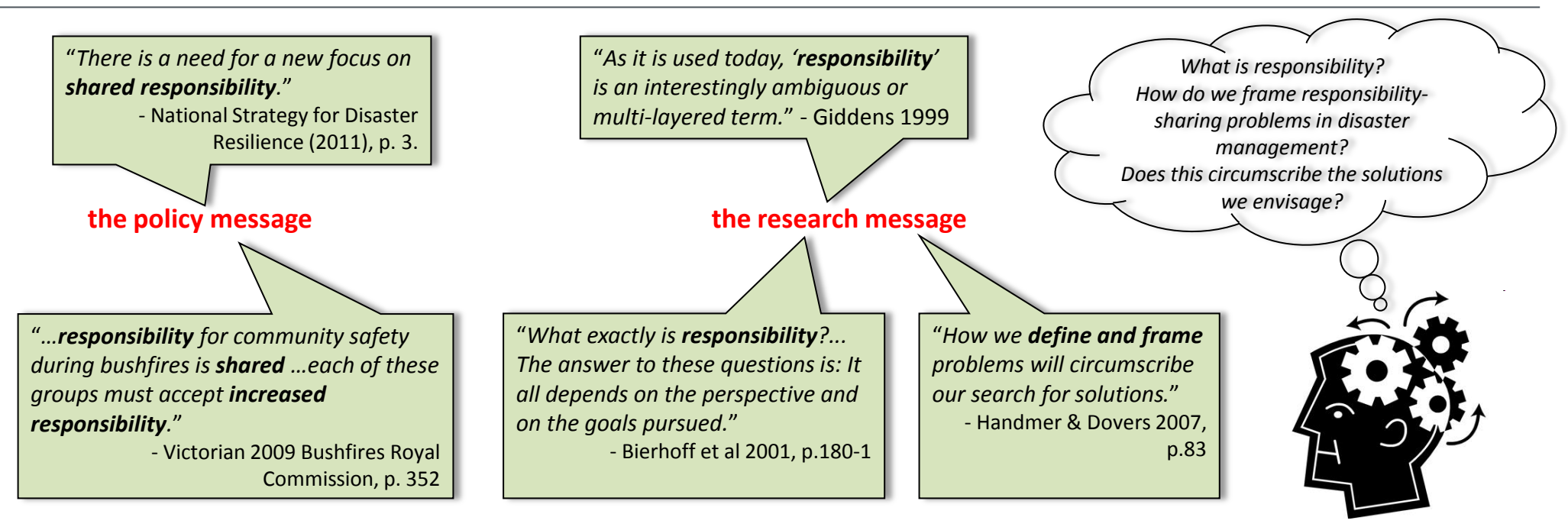**bushfire** CRC

WHAT IS SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AND HOW DO WE DO IT?

Blythe McLennan[1] and John Handmer[1]

[1] Centre for Risk and Community Safety, RMIT University, Victoria

*"There is a need for a new focus on **shared responsibility**."*
- National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (2011), p. 3.

the policy message

*"…**responsibility** for community safety during bushfires is **shared** …each of these groups must accept **increased responsibility**."*
- Victorian 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission, p. 352

*"As it is used today, **'responsibility'** is an interestingly ambiguous or multi-layered term."* - Giddens 1999

the research message

*"What exactly is **responsibility**?… The answer to these questions is: It all depends on the perspective and on the goals pursued."*
- Bierhoff et al 2001, p.180-1

*"How we **define and frame** problems will circumscribe our search for solutions."*
- Handmer & Dovers 2007, p.83

What is responsibility? How do we frame responsibility-sharing problems in disaster management? Does this circumscribe the solutions we envisage?

The *Sharing Responsibility* project

The *Sharing Responsibility* project began in mid 2010 and is coming to a close. **It examined the meaning and significance of the idea of Shared Responsibility for Australian disaster management.** It used a staged approach to examine:

1) The framing of responsibility-sharing in a) risk research and b) Australian disaster policy

2) Mechanisms used to shape responsibility-sharing in risk management internationally

3) Responsibility-sharing challenges reflected in public submissions to the Victorian 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission

4) Stakeholder perspectives on the meaning and implications of Shared Responsibility

The two fundamental questions that end users are most likely to seek answers for from this project are: **1) What is Shared Responsibility?** and **2) How do we do it?**

More complete answers to these questions are given in the just-released final project report.

So what is Shared Responsibility?

A particular causal story about "what is wrong and what needs fixing": Policy discourse tells a particular causal story about what the problem of Shared Responsibility "really is". *There is more than one causal story to tell about this complex problem but many stories are not being told (or heard).*

A partially articulated social contract: A social contract is a metaphor for the balance of rights and responsibilities between citizens and the State. Australian disaster management has a discourse about citizen responsibilities but not about their rights. *Rights legitimate responsibilities but that part of the contract is not being negotiated nor articulated.*

An emergent property: Shared Responsibility is an emergent property that arises out of a network of many interactions within a complex disaster management system. These properties are not easily predicted. *Predictive position statements made by individual government and other stakeholder groups about what Shared Responsibility should look like are unlikely to be accurate. No one stakeholder group knows or controls all the interactions this emergent property arises from.*

And how do we do it?

• Articulate and specify our causal stories more clearly **at all levels**

• **Hear the stories** that others tell

• **Talk about rights** with responsibilities

• **Move past** individual, predictive **position statements** about best outcomes & solutions…

• … Engage in **collaborative governance processes** to devise collective solutions

"No single authority can command compliance among all actors that participate in [disaster] governance systems; such systems rely instead on the development and diffusion of various types of norms; both state regulation and self-regulation; market mechanisms; and other processes, such as negotiation, participation, and engagement, which facilitate collective decision making and action."
- Tierney, K. 2012. Disaster governance: Social, political, and economic dimensions. *Annu Rev Environ Resour*, 37(1), 342 [open access]

For project outputs go to: www.bushfirecrc.com
(Follow links to: *Our Research > Understanding Risk > Community Expectations > Shared Responsibility*)
Or contact us directly at:
Blythe McLennan blythe.mclennan@rmit.edu.au
John Handmer john.handmer@rmit.edu.au

Lead end user statement
"The outcomes of this project will substantially aid emergency service agencies in developing better working relationships with the community and ultimately aim to provide the community with a clear understanding of the need to share responsibility for managing fire and emergency risk so that the entire community is engaged in the process, effectively replacing "paternalistic" policy."
– Mick Ayre, State Rural Fire Hazard Planner SA Country Fire Service

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RMIT University