

What is the problem with sharing responsibility?

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"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." 1

the theory message

Does this circumscribe the solutions we envisage?

What is responsibility?

How do we frame responsibility-

sharing problems in emergency

management?

"What exactly is responsibility?... The answer to these questions is: It all depends on the perspective and on the goals pursued." ²

"How we **define and frame** problems will circumscribe our search for solutions." ³



Framing 'wicked' problems

Frames are the "underlying structures of belief, perception, and appreciation" that shape how we 'see' problems. However, "a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing." 5

'Wicked' problems are problems that do not have easy, straightforward, win-win solutions.⁶ Framing wicked problems too narrowly can restrict what solutions we envisage, and it may lead to disputes over goals.

Reflecting on the different ways we frame the 'wicked' problem of sharing responsibility for emergency management can help us to see alternative solutions. It may even help us to move past some intractable disputes.

Stage 1 of the Sharing Responsibility project identified 11 key ways that the problem of sharing responsibility *between government and non-government sectors* is framed in risk research (see Fig 1). Importantly, each frame emphasizes some facets of responsibility more than others. The next stages of the project explore alternative solutions.

The Sharing Responsibility project

For more information about this project and a copy of the Stage 1 report, go to the Bushfire CRC website at www.bushfirecrc.com

(Follow links to: Our Research > Understanding Risk > Community Expectations > Shared Responsibility)

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1) Inappropriate, Figure 1: Responsibility (11) Emergent -sharing & social standards (2) Overcoming (o, a, r) free-riding" in frames collective action complex, dynamic (fc, r) systems (ca, r) (10) Devisir structures & (3) Making rational processes to work collective decisions (fc) (r, t) with sharing (9) Removing esponsibilit inequality & vulnerability (fc, cp) & constructing risk & responsibility variably (o, r (7) Styles & (6) Building social capacity & biases in attributing (a, ca) (cp, t) Facets of responsibility: obligation (o), accountability (a), causality (ca), freedom & constraint (fc),



- 1. Giddens, A., 1999. Risk and responsibility. The Modern Law Review, 62(1), 1-10, pp.8.
- 2. Bierhoff, H. W., Auhagen, A., & Bierhoff, H. (2001). Responsibility. The many faces of a social phenomenon: Routledge London, pp. 180-1.

relationships (r), capacity (cp), trustworthiness (t)

- 3. Handmer, J., & Dovers, S., 2007. The handbook of disaster and emergency policies and institutions. London; Sterling, VA: Earthscan, pp.83.
 4. Schön, D. A., & Rein, M., 1994. Frame reflection: toward the resolution of intractable policy controversies. New York: BasicBooks, pp.23.
- 5. Burke, 1935, cited in Klein, J. T., 1990. Interdisciplinarity: history, theory, and practice. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp.182.
- 6. Australian Public Service Commission, 2007. Tackling wicked problems: a public policy perspective. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

