



Centre for Risk and Community Safety

Annual Report

The first year of the Sharing Responsibility project

July 2011

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1 Highlights

Date	Description
July 2010	◆ Project began
July 2010	◆ Initial planning and set-up meetings conducted with the Community Expectation research group and lead end user
Sept 2010	◆ Key milestones and outputs agreed with CRC and lead end user
Sept 2010	◆ Poster presented at AFAC Conference 2010
Nov 2010	◆ Manuscript submitted to journal, titled ' <i>Re-framing responsibility-sharing for bushfire risk management in Australia after Black Saturday</i> '
Nov 2010	◆ Project leader attended coordination meeting of Community Expectation research group
March 2011	◆ Research scope and approach agreed with lead end user
March 2011	◆ Discussion paper distributed, titled ' <i>Reviewing research for policy-making and practice: a discussion paper for the Australian fire and emergency management industry</i> '
March - April 2011	◆ Presentations and feedback sessions conducted with AFAC community education subgroup and community safety group
May 2011	◆ Draft Stage 1 (policy review) report circulated for peer review
July 2011	◆ Draft Stage 3 (policy review) report circulated for peer review

2 Lead end user report

The Lead End User has had regular engagement with the Project Leader and Research Fellow throughout the year and has been provided with excellent feedback about the progression of the research project.

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.

The elements of the research project have been discussed with the Lead End User and tailored to ensure that risks are appropriately framed and relevant research is undertaken to assist in evaluating and developing new policy direction.

- Mick Ayre
Acting Director Development and Strategy
Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service

3 Project overview

The *Sharing Responsibility* project is a component of the 'Understanding Risk' research program of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC). It falls within the Bushfire CRC's 'Community Expectations (*Mainstreaming fire and emergency management across policy sectors*)' research group (see <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/category/projectgroup/1-community-expectations>).

Key research personnel on the project are Prof John Handmer (Project Leader) and Dr Blythe McLennan (Research Fellow) from the Centre for Risk and Community Safety in the School of Mathematical and Geospatial Sciences at RMIT University. The Lead End User for the project is Mick Ayre of the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

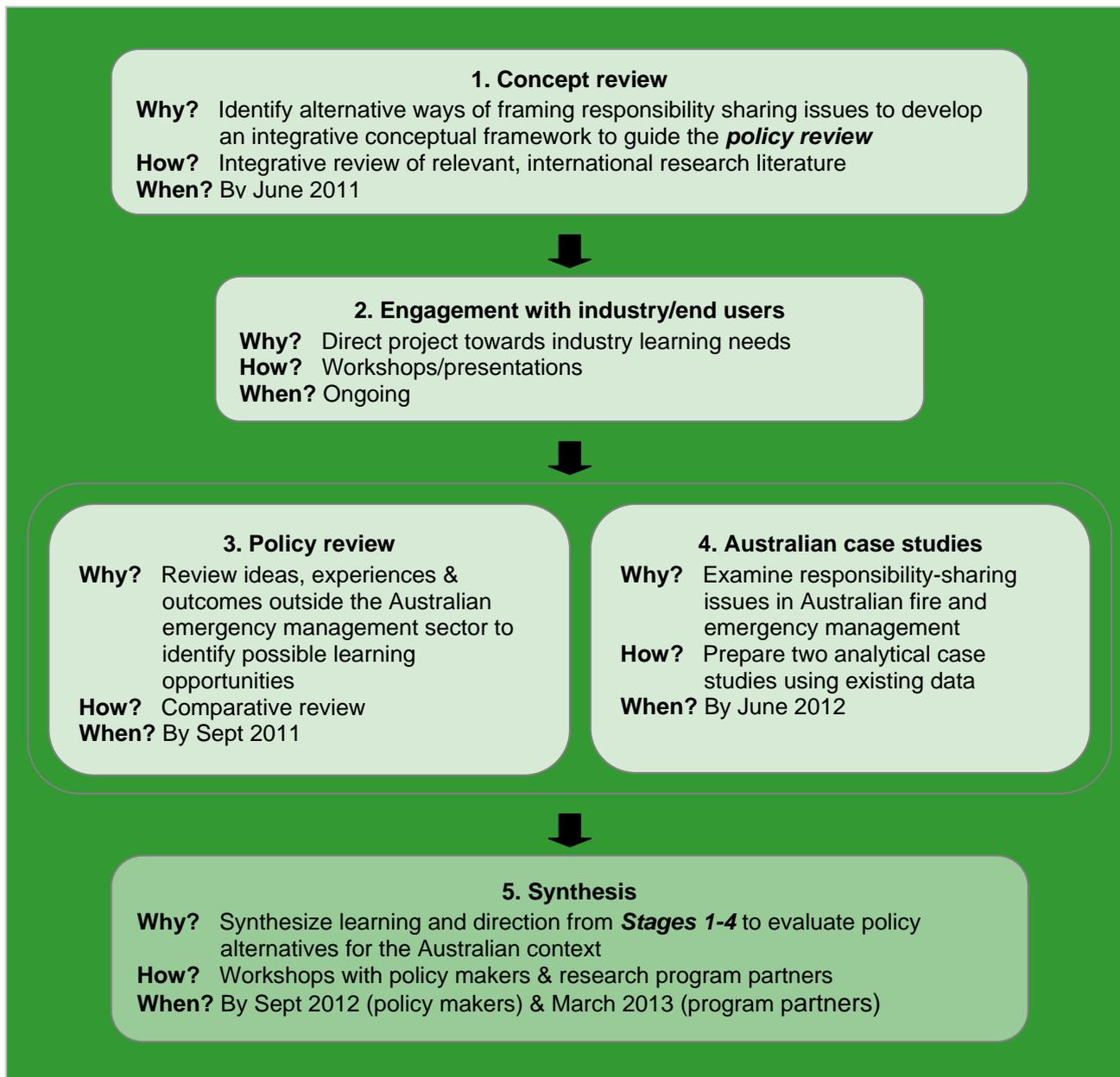
The overarching goal of the *Sharing Responsibility* project is to support the Australian fire and emergency management sector to make decisions about sharing responsibility to manage risk and community safety. A principle of shared responsibility has guided Australian fire and emergency management practice since the late 1990s. Yet sharing responsibility effectively in practice remains a significant challenge today, and issues of responsibility-sharing underpin many controversies and conflicts in Australian fire and emergency management.

A key reason for this situation is the complex nature of risk management, and challenges for sharing responsibility are encountered across a range of sectors involved in risk management worldwide. Risk management is influenced by a wide range of social, economic, political and environmental factors that lie beyond the traditional purview of emergency management. It also involves a wide range of parties that include those who are responsible for managing residual risk, those who are at risk, and those who influence the level and distribution of risks in society. Managing risks effectively requires ongoing coordination between these groups. However, in practice this is complicated by the fact that responsibilities can be overlapping, interdependent, ambiguous and often conflicting. Determining how responsibilities can be shared in order that communities are as safe and resilient as possible is therefore an important undertaking for Australian fire and emergency management. This was reiterated recently in the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, which emphasized "a need for a new focus on shared responsibility" (p. 2)

The *Sharing Responsibility* project will contribute to this undertaking by identifying alternative ways of framing responsibility sharing issues in both research and practice, and evaluating strengths and weaknesses of alternative approaches to address these issues. Framing refers to the way that individuals or groups may 'see' an issue in a particular way, for example by highlighting some aspects more prominently than others. Framing the issues that complicate responsibility-sharing too narrowly can overly restrict what problems and solutions we envisage, and what learning we are able to take away from past experiences. It may also exacerbate social conflict over the goals and practice of risk management when multiple ways of framing the same issue exist in society at the same time. This project therefore seeks to open up new ways to 'see' responsibility-sharing issues in order to identify a wider range of potential alternative solutions to address them. In the Australian context, surprisingly little attention has been given to unpacking the ideas and assumptions that underlie the central principle of shared responsibility. Hence the project also seeks to generate opportunities for researchers and decision makers to reflect on and evaluate the ideas and practice of responsibility-sharing in the Australian context.

The project has five key stages summarised in Figure 3.1, over page. It is unfolding in a progressive and cumulative way, with the results of each stage informing the design and approach of following stages, culminating in a synthesis of the learning from across the project in the final stage. Major outputs from the project are being produced and distributed in each of the five stages.

Figure 3.1: Overview of the *Sharing Responsibility* project

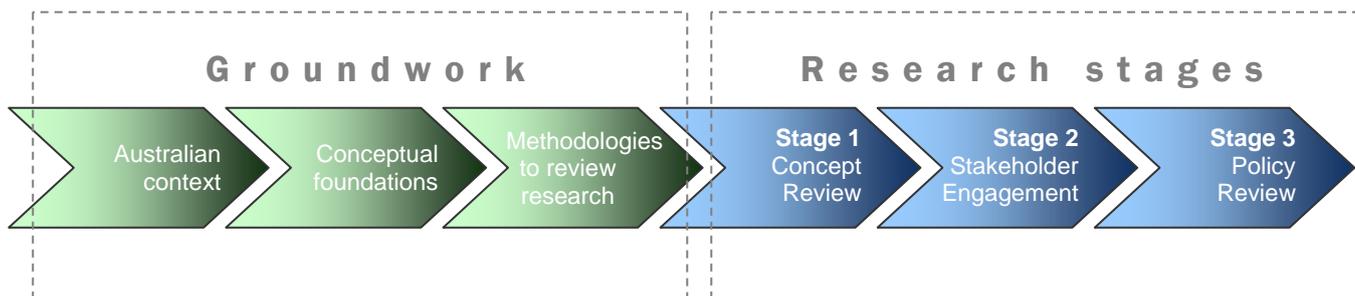


4 Key activities

Six key activities were undertaken in the first year of the project, shown in Figure 4.1. They fell into two general categories: laying the groundwork for the project, and progressing the first three stages of the research.

Each of these activities is outlined below.

Figure 4.1: Key activities undertaken in 2010/2011



4.1 Laying the groundwork

4.1.1 Australian context

An initial important activity was exploring the general context for sharing responsibility in Australian fire and emergency management. A key focus within this activity was on analysing an important development that occurred in the early days of the project: the release of the final report of the Victorian 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission. Released on July 31st, 2010, the report indicated a fundamental rethink about the principle of shared responsibility in Australian fire and emergency management (see Figure 4.2). It therefore spoke strongly to the key themes underlying the project.

An analysis was conducted of the way the Commission had re-framed the principle of shared responsibility compared to the 'Prepare, Stay and Defend or Leave Early' approach that was in place at the time of the tragic bushfires in February 2009.

The outcomes of this analysis were reported in a manuscript that has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Environmental Hazards*. Publication is scheduled for December 2011.



Figure 4.2: Shared responsibility in the final report of the Victorian 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission

4.1.2 Conceptual foundations

Many of the core concepts underpinning this project are complex and do not have clear, universal definitions. In particular, the foundational concepts of *Risk* and *Responsibility* are both widely recognised in research literature as inherently complex and multifaceted in nature. They are therefore prone to being interpreted in different ways within the various research disciplines, substantive fields and situational contexts reviewed in this project.

An important early research activity was therefore to unpack these and other core concepts. This facilitated comparison of the different ways the concepts are understood and used across the disciplines, fields and contexts in which risk management takes place.

The results of this activity form an important part of the analysis and content of each of the final reports and manuscripts that will be produced during the lifetime of the project.

4.1.3 Methodologies to review research

Two of the first major research undertakings (Stage 1 and Stage 3, outlined below) involved reviews of existing research studies. However, explicit methodologies for reviewing research are traditionally underdeveloped and underspecified.

The final key activity to laying the groundwork for the project was therefore an evaluation of alternative methodologies for reviewing research. This enabled clear, well-formulated and rigorous methodologies to be developed for these stages. This evaluation included components such as search and retrieval strategies, criteria for selecting and evaluating studies to include in the reviews, and ways to refine matrices to analyse studies.

A discussion paper on reviewing research for policy making was also produced from this activity, targeted to the Australian fire and emergency management industry.

4.2 Progressing the research

4.2.1 Stage 1 concept review

Stage 1 of the project explored the *idea* of sharing responsibility in risk management generally as a precursor to analysing it in *practice* in following stages. It identified 11 ways that the underlying challenges for sharing responsibility are framed conceptually in research studies from across a range of disciplines. The 11 frames were identified by analysing the results of an interdisciplinary, integrative review of published research.

A draft report of the review was circulated for peer review in May 2011. The final report will be made available on the Bushfire CRC web site in July 2011. The report does not advocate for a particular 'best' way of framing responsibility-sharing in Australian fire and emergency management. Rather, it advocates for the use of multiple frames to understand the foundations for different perspectives of responsibility-sharing challenges within society, and to reveal a wider range of potential solutions.

4.2.2 Stage 2 engagement

Engagement with industry end users and the research community is an important ongoing component of the project. This ensures that the project remains relevant to industry learning needs and priorities. It also ensures that the project contributes to the objectives of the Bushfire CRC's research program.

Four key partnerships for engagement actively pursued by the researchers are with:

- ◆ The lead end user
- ◆ Research colleagues in the 'Community expectations' research group
- ◆ AFAC (Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council) industry groups
- ◆ The fire and emergency management research community, primarily through the Bushfire CRC

Key events and activities in this stage that were undertaken in the first year of the project are summarised below in Table 4.1. In addition, numerous face-to-face or telephone meetings have been undertaken throughout the year with AFAC representatives, and with researchers and students involved in related Bushfire CRC projects.

Table 4.1: Key engagement events and activities undertaken in the first year

Event/ activity	Partnerships
◆ Bushfire CRC - Community projects research workshop. Adelaide, SA. 29th-30th July 2010	Lead end user, research group, research community
◆ Bushfire CRC Research Advisory Forum. Adelaide, SA. 25 th November, 2010	Lead end user, industry groups, research group, research community
◆ 'Community Expectations' research group coordination meeting. November 2010	Research group
◆ AFAC/Bushfire CRC conference. Darwin, NT. 2-3 September 2010	Lead end user, industry groups, research group, research community
◆ AFAC Community education subgroup meeting. Melbourne, VIC. 17th March 2011	Industry groups
◆ Project team meeting, 21 st March 2011	Lead end user
◆ AFAC Community safety group meeting. Launceston, TAS. 14 th April 2011	Industry groups
◆ Bushfire social researcher's network (ongoing)	Research community
◆ Bushfire ECR group (ongoing)	Research community

4.2.3 Stage 3 policy review

In Stage 3, the project examined mechanisms that have been used to share responsibility amongst multiple parties in a range of risk management and community safety contexts. For the purposes of this project, 'mechanisms' were defined as any process used to establish or alter institutions for responsibility-sharing amongst parties engaged in collective action to manage risks. Examples were drawn from cases examined in the research literature that was reviewed in Stage 1, and from cases suggested by end users in Stage 2.

A draft report of the Stage 3 research has been circulated for review. It identifies a range of mechanisms used to share responsibility in different contexts. It also highlights common factors that shaped how responsibility was shared through each of these mechanisms. These included the intended goal of the mechanism, the parties involved, the components of risk and facets of responsibility emphasised, and the influence of situational drivers and contexts. Finally, the report presents a simple but powerful model for comparing different mechanisms, which draws attention to important dimensions of difference in the frames underpinning different approaches.

5 Key project outputs

Presentations

- ◆ Handmer, J. & McLennan, B. *Sharing risk, responsibility and blame*. Presentation to the Bushfire CRC - Community Projects Research Workshop, 29th-30th July. (Adelaide, SA)
- ◆ McLennan, B. & Handmer, J. (2010). *Sharing Responsibility - A project of the Bushfire CRC*. Presentation to the Bushfire CRC Research Advisory Forum, 25th November. (Adelaide, SA).
- ◆ McLennan, B. & Handmer, J. (2011). *Sharing responsibility*. Presentation to the AFAC Community Education Subgroup, 17th March. (Melbourne, VIC)
- ◆ McLennan, B. & Handmer, J. (2011). *Sharing responsibility- Feedback*. Presentation to the AFAC Community Safety Group, 14th April. (Launceston, TAS)

Posters and communication material

- ◆ McLennan, B. & Handmer, J. (2010). Sharing Responsibility project statement. Available at <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/resources/research-report/sharing-responsibility-project-statement>
- ◆ McLennan, B. & Handmer, J. (2010). Moving beyond the blame game: sharing risk and responsibility. Poster presented at the annual conference of the AFAC/ Bushfire CRC conference. (Darwin, NT). Available at <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/resources/poster-presentation/moving-beyond-blame-game-sharing-risk-and-responsibility>

Discussion papers

- ◆ McLennan, B., & Handmer, J. (2011). *Reviewing research for policy-making: A discussion paper for the Australian fire and emergency management industry*. RMIT University & the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre. Melbourne. Available at: <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/resources/reviewing-research-policy-making-and-practice-discussion-paper-australian-emergency-manage>

Final project reports

- ◆ McLennan, B., & Handmer, J. (2011). *Stage 1 concept review: framing the challenges for sharing responsibility*. A final report of the Sharing Responsibility project. Centre for Risk and Community Safety, RMIT University & Bushfire CRC. Melbourne, Australia.

Draft reports

- ◆ McLennan, B., & Handmer, J. (2011). *Stage 2 policy review: mechanisms to share responsibility in risk management*. A draft report of the Sharing Responsibility project. Centre for Risk and Community Safety, RMIT University & Bushfire CRC. Melbourne, Australia.

Manuscripts accepted for publication

- ◆ McLennan, B., & Handmer, J. (Forthcoming). Re-framing responsibility-sharing for bushfire risk management in Australia after Black Saturday. *Journal of Environmental Hazards*

Manuscripts in preparation

- ◆ McLennan, B., & Handmer, J. What is the problem with sharing responsibility?
- ◆ McLennan, B., & Handmer, J. 'Seeing' the responsibility of homeowners and landholders to reduce wildfire risk through different lenses.

6 Looking ahead

6.1 Works in progress

A number of communication and reporting activities were underway at the close of the first year of the project. These activities will be completed early in the second year. Consequently, a number of key outputs targeted to both industry and research audiences will be distributed in the next few months. Anticipated timeframes for these outputs are included below. All documents will be made available for download on the Bushfire CRC website.

- ◆ Final reports
 - Final report of the Stage 1 concept review (July 2011)
 - Final report of the Stage 3 policy review (September 2011)
- ◆ Communicating with industry:
 - Bushfire CRC Fire Note article on reviewing research for policy (August 2011)
 - Paper presented at the AFAC/ Bushfire CRC annual conference (September 2011, to be published in conference proceedings)
- ◆ Forthcoming manuscripts
 - McLennan, B., & Handmer, J. What is the problem with sharing responsibility? (to be submitted for review in September 2011)
 - McLennan, B., & Handmer, J. Seeing responsibilities for fuel treatment and defensible space through different lenses. (to be submitted for review in October-November 2011)

6.2 New activities and outputs in year two

A major shift in emphasis will take place in the second year of the project. Research activities will move from a focus on analysing the idea of sharing responsibility in risk management broadly to analysing it in practice in particular contexts and scenarios.

New activities to be undertaken in the second year include:

- ◆ Eliciting industry feedback on completed research stages
- ◆ Coordinating and integrating learning so far across the 'Community expectations' research program
- ◆ Conducting two to three analytical case studies of responsibility-sharing in Australian fire and emergency management contexts
- ◆ Initiating workshops with stakeholders to evaluate policy alternatives in conjunction with the 'Community expectation' research group

Key outputs for the second year will include written material such as case study reports and an additional manuscript for publication in an academic journal. However, there will also be a greater focus on generating learning opportunities for both researchers and end users through interactive workshops.

7 Research team contacts

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More information and project documents can be found on the Bushfire CRC website:

www.bushfirecrc.com

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