



## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

### Recovery from disaster experiences: effects on perceptions & resilience

**Description:** Recovery from disaster experience: its effect on perceptions of climate change risk and on adaptive behaviours to prevent, prepare, and respond to future climate contingencies (2010-2012)

**Funding** Commonwealth Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

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#### Objectives

Climate change is predicted to lead to an increase in natural hazards such as cyclones, floods, heat waves, fires and droughts, and Australia in particular, is set to be heavily impacted by such environmental events. While much media attention has focused on the impacts of natural hazards on particular Australian communities, and the vulnerabilities of these communities, the factors that have helped these communities to bounce back and resume their everyday functioning have not yet been documented.

#### Methodology

This research will identify indicators of community resilience to climate change in diverse communities experiencing disasters events in eastern Australia. Through case studies of communities which have experienced cyclone (Innisfail), flood (Ingham), fire (Beechworth) and drought (Bendigo), a range of factors of community resilience will be documented. Interviews, focus group discussions and a household survey will be used to collect data

#### Key Findings

Preliminary investigations and interviews suggest that the nature of the disaster event determines how quickly a community is able to bounce back to normal pre-disaster functioning.

The more sudden and severe events, such as cyclones or bushfires, have more lasting effects upon the

individuals who have experienced them, testing their resilience.

Moreover, the greater the personal loss sustained by an individual as a result of a natural disaster, the slower the rate of recovery and the less resilience exhibited. Assistance from both state and federal government appears to be an essential part of the recovery process for communities, but also community cohesion and a sense of place expressed by the residents are important factors supporting community resilience. Community leadership and preparedness and existing organisational infrastructure are also critical in supporting community recovery and resilience.



#### Outputs

Demographic profiles of each site have been completed and individual and focus group interviews done in the four case study areas with reports prepared. A literature review on individual and community resilience has been submitted to *Natural Hazards Journal*. The household survey has been tested and will be distributed in 2011

#### Outcomes

This research will help implement appropriate and equitable emergency management policies and mitigation strategies for climate change events at national, state and local government levels.

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