

COUPLE'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES INVOLVED IN THE FORMULATION OF A LONG TERM HOUSEHOLD BUSHFIRE PLAN

Mary Cadeddu

Bushfire CRC PhD Scholarship Holder, PhD Candidate, School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University, Victoria

Supervisors: : Dr Lynette Evans¹, Prof Jim McLennan¹, Dr Meagan Tyler²

¹ La Trobe University, ² Victoria University

AIM

To identify significant couple/marital judgment and decision-making processes which influence survival-related decision making in forming a bushfire plan. These processes involve long-term planning and preparation decisions, rather than decisions made under imminent bushfire threat

METHODOLOGY

The research utilises both qualitative and quantitative methods and and the project comprises three related studies:

STUDY 1 (Completed)*

Analysis of reported couples' bushfire safety decision-making by couples who were threatened by bushfires

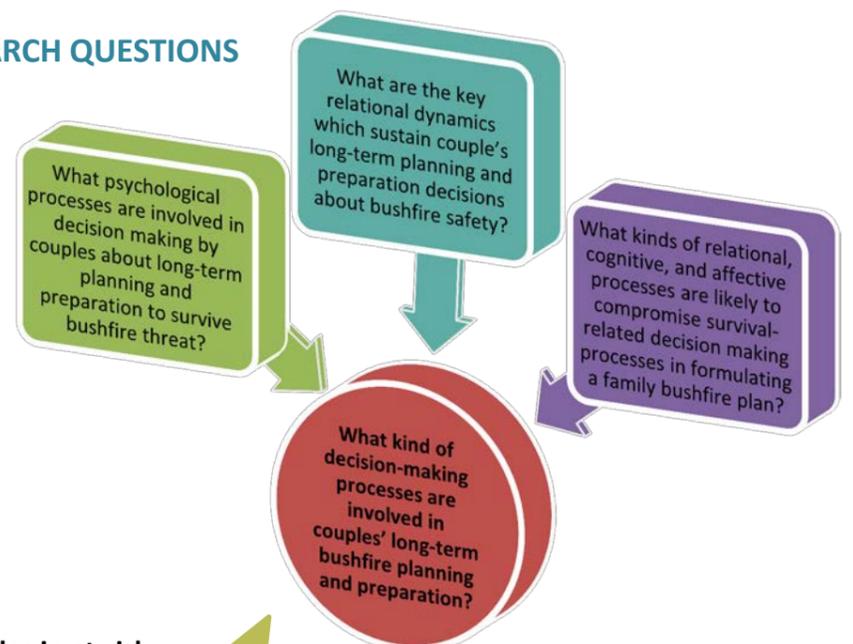
AIM: to identify issues and processes involved in couples bushfire planning and preparation emerged with householders affected by the Lake Clifton fire (Perth, WA) on Monday 10 January 2011.

FINDINGS:

- ⌘ Moderate level of concern
- ⌘ Only few couples planned; many made some *ad hoc* preparations
- ⌘ Rather than "WAIT AND SEE" some "**WENT TO SEE**" what the fire was like
- ⌘ Long term preparation focused narrowly on protection of the house
- ⌘ Household bushfire preparation mainly managed by husbands
- ⌘ If threatened by a bushfire in the future, most of the couples would act in the same way as they had on the day of the fire

*Cadeddu, M., McLennan, J., Evans, L. (2012). Couples' bushfire survival planning: A case study: The 2011 Lake Clifton (WA) Fire. Conference Proceeding (2012 Bushfire CRC and AFAC Annual Conference).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



STUDY 2 (In progress)

(In progress)

Surveys of members of couples in at-risk communities and analysis of associations among variables

Currently 101 completed surveys returned, n56 from men, n45 from women.

AIM: to understand what forms of cognitive and relational processes are involved in couples' bushfire safety decisions.

Individual decision-making styles, adult attachment styles, gender role preferences, and the quality of the relationship are measured to better understand:

- (a) which combinations of these variables are more likely to be associated with more comprehensive bushfire planning and preparation;
- (b) how the quality of relationships may affect bushfire planning and preparation

STUDY 3 (In preparation)

(In preparation)

Couple study – Observation of joint decision-making tasks in ≈ 30 couples

AIM: to understand how couples arrive at their choices regarding planning for emergency situations, and which relational processes are likely to influence these decisions.

The perceived use of spousal influence, the perceived reality of the task for the couples, and their individual commitment level to the relationship, will be studied



Findings will assist agencies and local government in delivering community bushfire programs to help families develop bushfire plans appropriate to their circumstances.

It will inform stakeholders about how to plan on the way people would behave, instead of planning on the way they want people to behave.

