

Cooperation or Legislation? Bushfire Preparedness in Victoria Post-Black Saturday.

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Research Aim

This project explores whether the introduction of greater legislative responsibility for individuals in bushfire preparedness programs can be acceptable to the general public (see Winter *et al*, 2009; Schoennagel *et al*, 2009).

Leading to a PhD, this work examines whether legislation would use a useful compliment to Victoria's existing fire programs.

Research Context

This PhD aims to build on the debate between Coleman (1988) and Burt (1992) on the formation of social capital, assess the appropriateness of the community engagement approach given the significant demographic changes that have occurred in at-risk communities.

What's Significant?

Demographic changes in at-risk communities – in-migration and population growth – have led to the formation of structural holes in the social networks present in interface communities and, therefore, to the weakening of social sanctions that previously enforced individual bushfire preparedness.

Bushfire Preparedness: Then and Now.

Image 1: Preparing a dugout shelter, Tyers Junction, 1939.



Image 3: Residents and volunteers armed with green braches against bushfire, c. 1920s.



Image 2: CFA's recommended Relocation Kit, 2011.



Image 4: CFA Equipment, 2009.



Other Alternatives to Consider

It is early days – as well as the potential of a legislative approach, the pre-Black Saturday focus on community engagement and social capital in efforts to mitigate the risk of fire will also be considered.

Comments and inputs are invited.

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Images:

- Image 1: *The Weekly Times*, 2008.
 Image 2: CFA Fire Ready Kit, 2011.
 Image 3: State Library of New South Wales, c. 1920.
 Image 4: CFA, 2009.