Responsibility has always been shared in Australian fire and emergency management. ‘Shared responsibility’ is a normative statement. But the same statement is being used to make different normative claims.
A STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

What does the idea of ‘shared responsibility’ mean, and what are its implications?

Is it a useful policy concept, and if yes what needs to be done to implement it, and what could undermine it?

WHO SPOKE?

1) Expectations and perspectives
- Richard Thornton, Bushfire CRC
- Craig Lapsley, Fire Services Commissioner, Victoria
- Anne Leadbeater, Kinglake community & Murrindindi Shire Council

2) Perspectives from current research
- Blythe McLennan, Centre for Risk & Community Safety, RMIT University
- Michael Eburn, Fenner School of Environment & Society, ANU
- Barbara Norman, Urban & Regional Planning, Uni of Canberra
- Leo Dobes, Crawford School of Economics & Government, ANU

3) Panel – Community/local perspectives
- Julie Molloy, Volunteering Queensland
- Vanessa Fabre, Brisbane City Council
- Sam Johnson, Student Volunteer Army, Christchurch
- Kate Lawrence, Macedon community & National Rural Women’s Coalition
- John Richardson, Australian Red Cross
- Aronoy Towers, Centre for Risk & Community Safety, RMIT University
- Malcolm and Jane Calder, Steele Creek community

4) Panel – Government perspectives
- Chris Collett, Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department
- Mark Ockworth, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria
- Terry Hayes, Country Fire Authority, Victoria
- Jeanette Pope, Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria
- Steve Oppen, NSW SES
- Russell Rees, Municipal Association of Victoria

5) Open discussion and panel – Key issues for the future
- Noreen Kruse, Bushfire CRC
- John Schauble, Office of the Fire Services Commissioner
- Chris Collett, Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department
- Kate Lawrence, Macedon community & National Rural Women’s Coalition
- Anne Leadbeater, Kinglake community & Murrindindi Shire Council
- Barbara Norman, Urban and Regional Planning, Uni of Canberra
- Peter Stanley, Centre for Historical Research, National Museum of Australia
WHO WAS THERE?

WHAT DID THEY TALK ABOUT?

Many things but two stood out...

Communicating limits to government capacity

Communities having greater control
What exactly is responsibility?

Risk and responsibility both require agency.

Responsibility implies choice, control and capacity.
Shared responsibility needs to be accompanied by a freeing up of control. It starts with risk acceptance. It is also about agencies and government trusting communities in order to give up control.

There is a tension in government about how to contribute to shared responsibility without taking over.

Behavioural change is less about convincing communities and more about changing how governments engage with communities on these issues.

It needs to be said by Government. "We don’t know how to protect you all the time". Requires a leap of faith.

[Communities] are overly regulated and so we expect that someone else is always in charge.

Government has an overarching presence /control in our lives. Communities and citizens have become dependent and disconnected from their own determinism/ responsibility.

It is not about government telling people what to do; it’s about harnessing and supporting what’s already happening.

The role of government is more as an enabler than as a provider.

Risk management is:

- Informal
- Decentralised

Risk management is:

- Formal
- Centralised

Assumptions

- Those at risk know about the risk, are capable of responding to it, and choose to take it.

Assumptions

- Those in authority have the greatest capacity to manage the risk
- People trust authorities to take care of the risk

IMPLICATIONS

- Recognise sharing responsibility is also sharing control
  - Control over decision-making (choice/agency)
  - Control in acting (capacity)

- Unpack assumptions about control underpinning normative claims (others’ and our own)

- Consider both push and pull approaches to encouraging community responsibility
  - Push – persuasion, regulation
  - Pull – making space by relinquishing control, building capacity

CONSIDERATIONS

- What about:
  - Risk acceptance?
  - Government accountability?
  - Political factors?
  - Facing the next inquiry?
  - Constraints on community capacity?
  - Control in the context of uncertainty?
LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCES ELSEWHERE

REFERENCES


For a written account of the workshop ‘google’: "visions of sharing“ “bushfire crc"