

FIRE UPDATE

BUSHFIRE CRC NEWSLETTER JUNE 2011



More than 60 Bushfire CRC end-users and researchers met in Brisbane last week to discuss the progress on a range of projects. See Richard Thornton's Blog on page 2 for more on the Research Advisory Forum.

BUSHFIRE SCIENCE INTERACTION IN STAWELL

It's been raining, it's been pouring but what does this mean for bushfire risk and your preparations for the next fire season?

An expert panel of bushfire researchers discussed bushfire behaviour, risk, and how to best communicate information at the Stawell Entertainment Centre in western Victoria in May.

The audience interacted with the speakers by voting on hand-held key pads (see photo, right) to various questions raised during the presentations. The public event was put on by Free Range Science and hosted by RiAus (The Royal Institution of Australia) as part of its Talking Science in Regional Victoria program.

This Bushfire Science event was supported by the Bushfire CRC with several researchers contributing to the program. Two Bushfire CRC speakers headed up the program at Stawell, Researcher Dr Chris Weston, of the University of Melbourne, spoke about the role of fire in the landscape with specific references to the



history of fire and the changing vegetation in this part of Victoria. John Schauble, Acting Commissioner in the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner, talked about research conducted on how communities make a decision on whether to stay and defend their households or leave early. John is a lead end user in the Bushfire CRC program Effective Communication - Communities and Bushfire. Michael Boatman, CFA manager of community safety for the Grampians region, showed how the research was being applied by partners in the Bushfire CRC, in particular, how the CFA was informed by research conducted on community attitudes and decision making processes.

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John Schauble, Acting Commissioner in the Office of the Emergency

RESEARCH PROMINENCE AT WILDFIRE CONFERENCE

The Bushfire CRC was represented at the Fifth International Wildfire Conference in South Africa in May by the Chairman, CEO and several researchers. It was clear from the open discussions on the potential for collaborative research that Australian and New Zealand bushfire science has much to learn and much to offer with international colleagues in this field. Bushfire CRC researchers who presented

included Mick Meyer, Jim Gould, Fabienne Reisen and Raphaela Bianchi, all from CSIRO. Neil Burrows presented for researcher Roy Wittkuhn (both WA DEC), Alen Slijepcevic presented for Andy Ackland (both DSE Vic) on practical use of Kevin Tolhurst's research and presentations were also heard from Bushfire CRC Board members Murray Dudfield (NZ National Rural Fire Authority), Naomi Brown

CEO'S BLOG

GARY MORGAN



A MODEL RESPONSE TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION

A report detailing the Victorian Government's progress on implementing the 67 Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations was tabled in State Parliament this week.

Tabled by the Deputy Premier and Minister for Bushfire Response, Peter Ryan, the Bushfires Implementation Plan outlined the measures being taken by the Government to improve Victoria's response to future bushfires.

Of specific interest to the Bushfire CRC is the progress on recommendation number 65 – that the Commonwealth establish a national centre for bushfire research. Although this recommendation is directed at the Commonwealth, the Victorian Government is in full support and keen to make this a reality.

The report notes that the Bushfire CRC has a proposed model for an Australasian Fire Research Institute. It is pleasing to read that the Victorian Government will progress this model with the Commonwealth this year via the National Emergency Management Committee.

(AFAC) and Ewan Waller (DSE).

All up, the Bushfire CRC was prominent throughout the conference in 20 sessions by people proudly acknowledging their involvement in the Bushfire CRC and its research.

The Bushfire CRC coordinated a prominent poster display on the Australasian Wildland Fire Network, which showed the links between the Bushfire CRC, AFAC, NAFC, FFMG and PIFSA.

WHAT'S NEW ONLINE

Check the "Recent Posts" section of our website for new videos, reports, news items and Fire Notes. Recent additions include:

- *Staying Safe Before, During, and After a Bushfire*, a slide show from Professor Jim McLennan, La Trobe University, analysing more than 600 interviews with survivors of the 2009 Victorian Black Saturday fires.
- *Human behaviour under stress*, lead authors professors Carmen Lawrence, Colin MacLeod, David Morrison and Timothy Skinner of the University of Western Australia, slide show looking at how people think and act when faced with bushfire.
- Photo slide shows from all recent annual conferences, and other

events including the 2010 Highfire Forum and the Fire in the Interface symposium. Go to Events.

- Videos from the Fire fuel and weather seminar at the 2009 annual conference, including edited presentations and interviews with Bushfire CRC researchers.
- Two Fire Notes – *Firefighter health and safety*, by Dr Brad Aisbett, Deakin University, and *Hydration of Australian Rural Bushfire Fighters*, by PhD student Jenni Raines, Deakin University – containing overviews and the latest research from the Bushfire CRC Firefighter health and safety project.

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RESEARCH BLOG

RICHARD THORNTON



Around 60 end-users, researchers and students gathered at the Queensland

Fire and Rescue Service's complex in Kedron Park, Brisbane for the fourth meeting of the Research Advisory Forum (RAF). The audience heard progress reports and presentations from around half of the projects in the Bushfire CRC and from a number of students. It was particularly pleasing to hear that all of the projects are now underway and are making substantial progress. We heard from researchers and students who are conducting research in all states and New Zealand.

The feedback from the forum was highly positive with most attendees rating it very highly; also the general feedback on the projects was equally positive. Many of the researchers received approaches from the end-users to work in their jurisdiction and be involved with the research.

The RAF is a critical part of the research governance for the Bushfire CRC and the feedback from the stakeholders has been compiled and will be discussed with the individual projects and lead end-users in the coming weeks.

The next meeting will be held in Canberra on the 26-27 October, and the presentations from the forum will soon be available under the events tab of the website.

RESEARCH UTILISATION BLOG

NOREEN KRUSEL



The utilisation of research comes through a long and convoluted process of identifying problems,

conducting research, figuring out what it might be telling us, what that might mean to us, and then, doing something about it. What's more, none of this happens without people engaging in the process; people thinking and finding meaning in their own context.

Agencies also support research utilisation in many ways. Here are a couple of recent examples.

FESA in Western Australia has arranged a professional development session where team members review research articles, and give a presentation that includes an overview and key lessons for FESA.

In his Blog, the Chief Officer of the CFA in Victoria regularly draws attention to our Fire Notes, highlights the relevance to fire fighters and encourages people to read them. This is a great way of connecting people to the research.

Any more examples from agencies? Let me know.

RESEARCH BLOG MICHAEL EBURN



Last month, with the support of the Bushfire CRC, I had the chance to travel to San Diego to take part in the 5th Annual Wildland Fire Litigation conference to share insights into Australian law and to learn about the conduct of post-fire

litigation in the United States. The conference has a unique format. The organisers realised that there was a reasonably small cohort of lawyers conducting fire cases so it aims to bring lawyers from all sides to the table to learn from each other and to work together to actually limit the issues that are disputed before the court.

As part of the Bushfire CRC research on mainstreaming emergency management across law and policy, I gave a paper on the 'state of play' of bushfire litigation in Australia and identified some issues that may explain why we have much less post fire litigation than our American colleagues. I was also able to represent the Bushfire CRC at the sponsor's hall and there was significant interest in the CRC research program, and collecting copies of *Fire Australia*.

COMMUNICATIONS BLOG DAVID BRUCE



Have you noticed we have been using video content to complement the other types of information available on our project pages? The idea is that the online visitor can view a poster, read a research report, access a journal article and then watch a brief video of the researcher

describing the purpose of the research.

We started out a few years ago filming all the PhD students. Those interviews are still online. So if what you are looking for is some plain language statements by researchers, I suggest you check out the following:

- The *Fire fuel and weather* seminar at the 2009 annual conference, including edited presentations and interviews with Bushfire CRC researchers. Go to the Events pages and see the 2009 conference.
- *In their own words* – short introductions to PhD projects by Bushfire CRC students. Go to the Education/Research Students pages.
- *VicFires Taskforce* – videos of the researchers explaining how they examined properties after the Black Saturday fires. Go to the Taskforce page under Our Research.