

# MAKING DECISIONS TO MINIMISE RISK: A MULTILEVEL RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

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## Context

Of the Ten Lessons from Murrindindi (McLennan & Elliott, 2010):

- Two identified the importance of **community and social context**,
- Two identified the importance of **information and its sources**,
- One identified the vital **role of anxiety** and **emotional regulation** for survival.

There is clearly scope to apply what we know from psychology to better understand cognitive processing, individual decision making, and community behaviours.

## Rationale

Individuals are influenced by a range of factors, namely the broader community context, the information they encounter, and their own individual dispositional characteristics.

This project will explore the **combined and interactive** role of these factors in decision making.

Beyond the bushfire context, we also seek to contribute to and build on existing psychological theory.

## Research Questions

1. Why are some communities better prepared and more resilient to bushfires than others and what can be done to raise the bar?
  - How and when is the information best delivered?
  - How does the community context moderate the effectiveness of messages?
2. How do individuals use information and warnings to guide their actions?
  - What information should/should not be provided?
  - How and when is the information best delivered?
  - How does the community context moderate the effectiveness of messages?
3. Are some individuals more able than others to make good decisions during a bushfire crisis and can better decision making be enabled?
  - Can we develop an effective cognitive bias modification program for field use?

## Methodology

We intend to utilise a variety of methods across the three research areas including:

- Consultation with key stakeholders and subject matter experts.
- Field research with residents of bushfire prone areas.
- Laboratory studies (simulations of bushfire scenarios).
- Hypothetical scenarios ("What would you do if...").

We also intend to collaborate with other Bushfire CRC researchers.

## Proposed Deliverables

1. Community-level interventions designed to improve preparedness and resilience to bushfires.
2. Individual Bushfire Readiness Barometer.
3. Improved warning and information delivery interventions
  - Improved education programs.
4. Self-administered cognitive bias modification intervention.

## Our Team

The UWA/Flinders team brings expertise in:

- Social change,
- Health psychology,
- Organisational behaviour, and
- Cognitive bias.

