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

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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 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

STUDY 2
(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.

(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)
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.