



A qualitative study of resident involvement in the 2013 Forcett Tasmania bushfire disaster

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Research Question: What is community-led recovery in the context of a bushfire hazard and disaster?

Research Interest: Friday 4 January 2013 was one of the most significant fire days in Tasmania since 1967. The fire threatened life and left a trail of destruction, animals perished, homes, livelihood and landscape were destroyed or damaged. Despite this there appeared to be a level of social structure and processes evident. In the post disaster phase, many of these local processes appeared to be overlooked by the well-intentioned external help or overwhelmed by the visitor-related goodwill.

Research Design: This research investigated the processes that residents' used in the 2013 Forcett Tasmania bushfire disaster event. Constructivist grounded theory offered a practical method to gather qualitative data, analyze actions and processes, and construct theory. The 40 people participating in this study were residents of the small communities impacted by the bushfire disaster, external support volunteers, representatives of local and state government and non-government services.

Research Findings: The study suggests a substantive grounded theory titled Navigating Uncertainty. The theory is built around community members' main concerns and what they did to resolve these concerns before, during and after the bushfire disaster. The psychosocial process constructed from the data involves three phases, characterised as Losing the Familiar, Restoring the Familiar and Living with Change. Each phase implies a process, with properties that help understand what residents' encountered, how they interpreted and managed their individual contexts, and why their actions were significant.

Navigating Uncertainty



Research Usefulness: This research concludes (1) it is necessary to understand the holistic nature of people's lived experience in disaster events and (2) the concept recovery involves the way people interpret and manage their context through all phases of emergency and disaster management, not just the post-disaster phase. Furthermore, the research identifies (3) the importance of safeguarding and sustaining social stability and (4) the need for approaches that value and support the participation of residents in a way that is meaningful and respectful of their experience.