

## Student project

- Key Topics:
- communities [1]
  - vulnerability [2]

The persistent past: flood, fire and migrant memories of natural disasters in Australia [3]

This research explores histories of migration and natural disasters in Australia by investigating migrants’ memories of bushfires and floods, and the long term legacy of such events. Oral history interviews will be conducted with people who were born overseas, migrated to Australia and happened to experience a natural disaster here. The study examines how the migration experience, coupled with a fire or flood, affects our understanding of place, home community and environment

## Research team

### Student researcher

[4]



Gretel Evans  
[4]  
RESEARCH LEADER



[5]

## Full description

This PhD research project is being undertaken by Ms Gretel Evans of the University of Melbourne and explores histories of migration and natural disasters in Australia by investigating migrants’ memories of bushfires and floods. Studies of natural disasters often focus on disaster prevention and preparation, emergency management or the immediate aftermath and recovery period, however, my research focuses on the long term legacy of such events. Building on developing studies of community responses to disaster, my research focuses on the unique experiences of immigrant communities and their experiences of natural disasters in Australia. I am conducting oral history interviews with people who were born overseas and for various reasons, including war and other catastrophes, migrated to Australia where they happened to settle in either a bushfire or flood prone area and subsequently experienced a natural disaster. Through these interviews I endeavour to learn more about how natural disasters influence migrants’ sense of identity and belonging within the Australian community and environment. My project examines how the migration experience, coupled with a fire or flood, affects our understanding of place, home, community and environment.

This research occurs at the intersection of migration, oral history and memory studies but speaks to the environmental humanities and, of course, broader studies of natural disasters and community response and recovery. In particular, I’m interested in whether migrant communities are more vulnerable to natural disasters than other segments of the population, and how they respond in the aftermath of these events. Through case studies of floods in Maitland, NSW and of bushfires in Victoria this research will contribute to understandings of migrant relationships to the Australian environment and community, and the long-term legacy of natural disasters on this process.

## Related News



Migrant voices in new disaster histories collection  
COMMUNITIES, FIRE

10 JUL 2020

[6]



25 JUN 2020

New online - June 2020  
COMMUNICATION, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

[7]



12 JUN 2020

CRC PhDs feature in upcoming book launch on disaster history  
EDUCATION, FIRE

[8]



14 FEB 2019

Still Smouldering: reflections on the symposium  
COMMUNITIES, FIRE

[9]



14 JUL 2016

Migrants' experience of natural disasters: participants needed for study  
COMMUNITIES, FIRE

[10]

# Publications

Year	Type	Citation
2020	Book Chapter	Evans, G. [4] <i>Disasters in Australia and New Zealand: Historical Approaches to Understanding Catastrophe</i> (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). doi:10.1007/978-981-15-4382-1 DOI [11] Google Scholar [12] BibTe

# Linked Projects

## Effective risk and warning communication during natural hazards [15]

COMMUNICATION AND WARNINGS [16]

Prof Vivienne Tippet  
Queensland University of Technology [17]



[17]

[5] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/organisations/umelb> [6] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/news/blogpost/gevans/2020/migrant-voices-new-disaster-histories-collection> [7] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/news/2020/new-online-june-2020> [8] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/news/2020/crc-phds-feature-upcoming-book-launch-disaster-history> [9] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/news/blogpost/gevans/2019/still-smouldering-reflections-symposium> [10] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/news/2016/migrants-experience-natural-disasters-participants-needed-study> [11] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4382-1> [12] [http://scholar.google.com/scholar?btnG=Search%2BScholar&as\\_q=%22Shaped%2Bby%2BFire%3A%2BHow%2BBushfires%2BForged%2BMigrant%2BEnvironmental%2BUnderstandings%2Band%2BMemories%2Bof%2BPlace%22&as\\_sauthors=Evans&](http://scholar.google.com/scholar?btnG=Search%2BScholar&as_q=%22Shaped%2Bby%2BFire%3A%2BHow%2BBushfires%2BForged%2BMigrant%2BEnvironmental%2BUnderstandings%2Band%2BMemories%2Bof%2BPlace%22&as_sauthors=Evans&) [13] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/publications/biblio/export/bibtex/6975> [14] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/publications/biblio/export/xml/6975> [15] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/riskcommunication> [16] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/cluster/communications-warnings> [17] <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/organisations/quit>