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"Influencing and supporting change to policy and practice in government departments and agencies", or..

Politics and disasters: the good, the hard or the ugly?

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Sources for most of what follows:

- Generally: Handmer, Dovers. 2013. *Handbook of disaster policies and institutions.* 2nd ed. Routledge.

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- Eburn, Dovers. 2015. Learning lessons from disasters: alternatives to Royal Commissions and other quasi-judicial inquiries. *Austn J Public Admin.* 74: 495-508.

- Lukasiewicz et al. 2017. Shared responsibility: the who, what and how. *Environmental Hazards.* 16: 291-313.

- Dovers. 2017. Emergency management and policy: research impact and utilization. AFAC 2017.

- Cole et al . 2018. Can major post-event inquiries and reviews contribute to lessons management? *Austn Journal of Emergency Management.* 33(2): 34-39.

- Samnakay. 2016. Thinking strategically in federal policy: defining the attributes of high-level policies. *Aust. J. Public Admin.* 76: 106-21.

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But first … disasters & politics

With apologies to Dorothea Mackellar

I love a populist country

A land of sweeping claims

Of self-appointed opinion leaders

Of greed and near term gains.

I love her weak land use planning

The hypocrisy that is so strong

The headlines and litigation

And the blame when things go wrong.

The case for policy change, and against

- Globally and nationally, mounting evidence of increasing frequency of disasters, more impacts, and rising costs.

- Increasing recognition of links across major global policy platforms – Sendai, Sustainable Development Goals, and climate change.

- Global, national and sub-national policy inexorably shifting from reactive to proactive approach: risk reduction, reducing vulnerability (**P**PR**R**).

- **Proposition**: policy change to seriously advance DRR has (almost) nothing to do with emergency management – planning, human development, housing, service provision, infrastructure, insurance....

- **BUT: these sectors have other priorities** – housing affordability, real or assumed property rights, economic development, rural town revival, insurance premiums, costs of infrastructure provision, etc.

What do our prime lesson-learning mechanisms say? (Cole et al 2018; Eburn & Dovers 2015)

- Over 140 post-event inquiries since 2009; various styles.
- 55 key inquiries, ~1300 recommendations.
- Vast bulk of recommendations target state EM agencies.
- Some other sectors (eg building and planning)dealt with, but narrowly.
- **Very little attention to: volunteers, the C'wealth, private sector, individuals, households, insurance, recovery….**
- So much for "shared responsibility" (Lukasiewicz et al 2017)or whole-of-govt approaches?

So, the challenge

- Assuming that emergency management in Australia, which is already world class, keeps learning lessons and improving (resources permitting)…

- … what are the prospects for significant **shifts in other policy sectors** that define vulnerability and could enhance DRR?

- Questions:

1. How do we find out what we should do: policy learning.

2. What information gets used in policy, and how?

3. Who should be targeted and how, to drive policy change?

- Go through these 3 questions…

Policy learning, a prerequisite to change

1. Policy 101: Who learns what, why? (Handmer & Dovers 2013)

Form	What is learned?	Who learns? (example)	Intended result (example).
Instrumental and operational learning	How policy instruments and implementation processes have performed relative to stated goals	Core members of relevant policy network, especially government officials and close non-government partners responsible for policy implementation.	Redesign of existing or better design of future policy instrument and detailed implementation procedures. SAME PROBLEM FRAME.
Government learning	How administrative structures and processes have contributed to or limited policy implementation	Members of the policy network, especially senior government officials and key stakeholders accountable for design and maintenance of policy process.	Redesign of existing or better design of future administrative structures and processes. SAME PROBLEM FRAME.
Social learning	The relevance and usefulness of policies and policy and social goals.	The broader policy community, including more and less closely engaged actors within and outside government.	Reframed problems and goals, via altered understanding of cause-effect understanding or social preferences. REFRAME PROBLEM?
Political learning	How to effectively engage with and influence political and policy processes	Actors wishing to enhance their ability to change policy agendas and outcomes or defend and maintain existing ones	Changes in problem definition, policy goals, membership of the policy network, power of particular groups. REFRAME PROBLEM?

Proposition:

- **The sector is rather good at (1) Instrumental and Operational Learning, albeit could always improve and need better implementation resources. That's the core business of ESOs.**

  Evidence: AFAC working groups, extensive doctrine, etc; AIDR handbooks and AJEM; BNHCRC and its (remarkable) end user model; internal reviews, prep exercises, and more.

- **Sometimes OK at (2) Government Learning, which involves others.**

- **Far less good at (3) Social Learning and (4) Political Learning, which involves <u>many others</u> and is more explicitly political.**

- **Conclusion: learning and improvement stronger when ESOs attend their own agenda, weaker when the focus is wider.**

Information utilization in public policy

(terminology from Hezri 2004, J. Env. Man. 73: 375-71)

- **Instrumental utilization**: where scientific and other 'expert' information directly influences policy:
  → *rare, very little empirical evidence.*

- **Conceptual utilization**: information and research "seep" into policy thinking, slowly manifesting in change over time
  → *much more common, complicated, and balanced with other knowledge and imperatives.*

Information utilisation (cont.)

- **Tactical utilization**: further information gathering is a delaying tactic:
  → *not unusual, not always a bad thing?*

- **Political utilization**: where information is used without reference to its validity, to support a pre-determined value position:
  → *common, both deliberately and unwittingly?*

- **All are apparent (and necessary?) in the emergency management context.**

- **Which avenue would you prefer to use?**

AFAC 2012 Dovers

"Evidence-based policy"

➡ **Head, B (2008). Three lenses of evidence-based policy.** *Austn Journal of Public Admin. 67*: **1-11.**

1. Systematic ('scientific') research.
2. Program management experience ('practice').
3. Political judgment.

Where do policy ideas come from? Four levels of policy learning (Dovers & Handmer 2013)

- **General policy styles and institutional options**, where another jurisdiction that has experimented with a different approach: eg. collaborative versus coercive policy style. **GOOD BUT RARE**?

- At the level of **policy program or organizational model**, with transfer of 'blueprint' from one context to another, eg. a risk management framework to replace or supplement existing prescriptive standards. **RISKY BUT POPULAR**?

- **Detailed sub-components** of policy programs and organizational models, such as communication strategies within a program, aspects of regulatory design, or cross-agency coordination plans. **GOOD, LESS COMMON**?

- **Operational and technological options**, less dependent than the above on contextual variation, including 'hardware' such as communication devices or fire suppressant delivery systems, or 'software' such as computer programs or training modules. **GOOD, VERY COMMON, EFFECTIVE**?

Diversion: policy integration needs a strategic framework to guide efforts

- **National Disaster Resilience Strategy 2011.**

- **National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2018.**

- Samnakay 2016, APJA, features of successful strategic policy:

  -- consultative process and support.
  -- clarity of objectives and purpose.
  -- consideration of systemic factors (ie vulnerability).
  -- govt commitment (CoAG?) and financial backing.
  -- legislative underpinnings.

- **How does our strategic policy framework measure up?**

So, what to do?

- In brief, three political change and outreach strategies for the sector:

- The good,
- The hard,
- And the ugly.

1. The good (designing research for policy relevance)

→ Further detail in Dovers, AFAC 2017 paper:

1. Is it really a policy question?
2. What's the <u>policy problem</u> (not a research question, or a complaint)?
3. Who could be interested/have influence, and why? How can they be connected to the research design and process?
4. What policy instruments/processes might be considered?
5. What (sub)disciplines and skills are needed?
6. Any policy "hooks" or "windows"?
7. Where does the target audience (who hold the levers) get their information from? Publish there, not in AJEM.

2. The hard: a comprehensive strategy

- A multi-pronged strategy for cross-sectoral awareness and policy reform, decadal in scope.

- Target different levels, including mid-level public officials, industry organisations, backbenchers, parliamentary committees, parliamentary library, key serious journalists….

- Regular, structured briefings (not one-off events), and consumable but rigorous materials (The Conversation, etc?).

- Develop strong, achievable policy proposals for such a time as when they are needed (or, suffer the grab for quick and easy answers).

- Be aware of policy "hooks and windows" and use them well.

3. The ugly?

- Shameless recourse to **populism**, simplifying situations, creating easily communicated slogans and policy answers.

- Mirror the media '**blame game**' style, but shift the focus.

- Utilise **resentment** and suspicion of elites and professionalism.

- Plan for policy "hooks and windows"; use ruthlessly (the NRA strategy…).

- (See "political utilization" of information above.)

- An increasingly used and successful political strategy in many countries….

(In)conclusion: discussion points

- Does the EM sector **really** need to drive change in other policy sectors, to reduce vulnerability and increase prospects for DRR?

- **If so, what sectors are the most crucial, and in those sectors:**

1. What are the key changes, in **policy** terminology?

2. How can DRR **messages** get through to them?

3. What **messaging** would work best?

4. **Who should/can do what** – researchers, senior officials, emergency managers…?

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