BLACK SATURDAY RECOVERY
INSIGHTS, APPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Professor Lisa Gibbs, University of Melbourne
John Richardson, Australian Red Cross
Join Australian Red Cross

100 Years People Helping People
1914-2014

The Power of Humanity

Australia

70c
PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

- A range of community organisations in regional Victoria
- Australian Red Cross
- Primary Care Partnerships from 6 regions of Victoria
- Phoenix Australia: Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health
- Victorian Department of Health & Human Services
- Australian Rotary Health
- Federal Department of Human Services (Centrelink)
- Universities: Melbourne, NSW, Flinders, Swinburne, Sydney
WHAT DID WE DO?

1. Community visits and consultations began. 2010-ongoing

2. In-depth interviews with children & adults (2013-2014) n=35

3. Telephone/online questionnaire with adults n=1056

4. Telephone/online questionnaire with adults 78% response rate

5. Analyses, papers and presentations

6. Final symposium
3-4 YEARS POST FIRE

MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

- 26% HIGH-ImpACT COMMUNITIES
- 17% MEDIUM-ImpACT COMMUNITIES
- 12% LOW-ImpACT COMMUNITIES

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER
ANXIETY
DEPRESSION
CHANGES OVER TIME: ANY DISORDER

WAVE 1: 26%

WAVE 2: 21.9%
RECOMMENDATION

5 year recovery plans
Social ties matter!
Social ties matter ... but it’s complicated
Being close to more people was generally related to better mental health and personal wellbeing.
People in large social networks were more likely to report the loss of someone close.
Living with someone else was associated with better mental health outcomes.
Living with someone else was associated with better mental health outcomes.

Mental health within couples was influenced by attachment styles and gender roles.
Participating in local groups reduced the risk of poor outcomes for those who lived alone.
Moderate involvement in local community groups and organisations was associated with more positive outcomes in terms of mental health and wellbeing.
Relocation
“We've had a couple of close friends from here now leave... When they leave it actually hurts.”
“We've had a couple of close friends from here now leave... When they leave it actually hurts.”

“It'll never be the same town.....it feels like a really stressful place to be for a lot of different reasons...”
MOVING AFTER A BUSHFIRE

STAYED
Those who stayed felt a strong sense of connection which was associated with higher levels of wellbeing

MOVE AWAY
Those who were most affected by the bushfires were more likely to move to a new community

DEPRESSION risk was higher for those who stayed and were connected to people who had left their community

MAJOR LIFE STRESSORS
The impact of subsequent financial and relationship difficulties was often lessened, for those who moved away.
Different opportunities to process the disaster event
Implications

Service delivery in affected communities needs to address subsequent life stressors.

Service delivery to those who relocate needs to prioritise processing of the trauma experience.
Decreased life satisfaction from 3-5 years

Decreased sense of community from 3-5 years
Mental health, stressors & high emotion
Posttraumatic growth
Separation & reunification
Children, schools & parenting
Social networks & community groups
Living alone & couples
Relocation & wellbeing
Natural environment
Gender & violence
Life satisfaction over time
Funding provided by Emergency Management Victoria, Australian Red Cross and Victorian Department of Health & Human Services
Children & schools

Identifying the long term academic impacts of disasters

Developing evidence based resources:

- Parenting post disaster
- Support for school staff following disasters
- Advice from young people for young people
- School entry following disasters
ReCap aims to support wellbeing after disasters by aligning disaster recovery evidence with a framework of community capitals to guide development of recovery strategies adapted to community contexts.

Funding provided by

---

Recovery Capitals
Supporting wellbeing after disasters

- human capital
- natural capital
- social capital
- built capital
- cultural capital
- financial capital
- political capital
Professor Lisa Gibbs
The University of Melbourne
lgibbs@unimelb.edu.au

John Richardson
Australian Red Cross
jfrichardson@redcross.org.au