



# COMMUNITY-LED RECOVERY – BLACK SUMMER FINAL REPORT

**Evidence, dimensions and supports for Community  
Recovery Committees**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community-led approaches to disaster recovery are regarded as the optimal approach to sustainable disaster recovery, fostering self-reliance and self-determination within affected communities (Dibley, Mitchell, Ireton, Gordon, & Goron, 2019; Olshansky, 2005). However, as noted by Dibley et al. (2019), “[w]hat is less clear in the literature is **how** government might best foster and enable community-led recovery while maintaining their role and responsibilities in coordination after a disaster,” (p. 3, emphasis in original).

The objective of this research was to address this gap by examining ways in which governments can better support and enable communities to lead their own recovery after bushfire disaster events. Specifically, the following research questions were explored:

1. How can government best support community-led deliberative decision-making processes in post-disaster bushfire recovery?
2. How can government best leverage existing and emerging community organisations, structures, and networks in post-disaster bushfire recovery?

This project developed a set of resources to broaden the knowledge base and disseminate best practice, both within and beyond end-user organisations. Research findings from this project expand our knowledge on how community structures may modify the decision-making function of community recovery bodies (i.e., Community Recovery Committees), and shape residents' perceptions of community recovery. These resources include:

- a theory and evidence-based factsheet on community-led recovery
- an analysis of community group structures that will inform how Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) and government bodies engage with existing community social structures.
- a self-assessment tool for CRCs to describe their own key dimensions and anticipate forms of support that they will likely require.
- research guidance for end-user organisations to support recovery progress monitoring to provide a broad benchmark by which to track recovery, service utilisation and satisfaction over time, and to identify recovery priorities within the community.

These resources are intended to be utilised by community engagement staff, other state and local government staff, CRC members, and not-for-profit staff who are involved in recovery. In all, the resources developed as part of this study are intended to be useful beyond the current cohort of CRCs operating in the wake of the 2019/20 bushfire season, which formed the basis of this research analysis. We hope that these efforts will form the basis for recovery progress monitoring, benchmarking, and support activities within disaster-affected communities and risk areas. However, it is a complex field, and so a proposed agenda is also provided for next steps in research and applications.



## END-USER PROJECT IMPACT STATEMENT

**Andrew Haywood**, *A/Executive Director Recovery Strategy and Planning, Bushfire Recovery Victoria*

and

**Stewart Davies**, *Director Community Engagement, Bushfire Recovery Victoria*

This project has reaffirmed the value, and challenges, of community-led recovery. This initial work has highlighted the challenges to both define what community-led recovery means, and to understand how communities need to be supported to undertake that leadership role.

There is significant opportunity for the Community Recovery Committees (CRC) modelling tool (following testing) to unpack the underlying assumptions that community-led recovery exists in a government, political and community system that is unified, coherent, and consistent. We know that community-led recovery is undertaken in varying contexts and the different experiences, expectations and priorities of communities has significant impact on the approaches and effectiveness of recovery responses. The CRC modelling tool has great potential to enable the provision of targeted and effective supports to CRCs, based on their own assessment of their strengths and needs.

There is potential for the community perceptions analysis and recovery progress monitoring components to support accurate understanding of communities' perception of their recovery, and potentially validate communities' own recovery efforts over the longer-term. The research has emphasised the importance of identifying individuals that have their 'finger on the pulse' of their communities and can speak most accurately to the sentiment or wellbeing of the broader population.

The evidence summary offers quick reference to evidence and considerations that can easily be digested and applied 'in action'. This is an important resource for recovery practitioners that are faced with making early decisions that may impact long-term recovery engagement and planning approaches. It can also be applied in response to future disasters to inform how new CRCs or other community-led recovery bodies are engaged, developed, established, and supported.



## INTRODUCTION

Community engagement lies at the heart of recovery. An established body of literature makes the case for community-led approaches to recovery from disasters (Dibley et al., 2019; Olshansky, 2005). In Australia, 'using community-led approaches' has been identified as one of the six core principles to consider for successful disaster recovery (AIDR, 2018; SRRG., 2018). The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for Disaster Recovery emphasises the centrality of community-led processes to achieve a successful recovery, defined as achieving the outcome of a sustainable and resilient community (Verlin & Argyrous, 2018).

In Victoria, Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) are perhaps the primary means by which community-led approaches can be established and facilitated through collaboration among government and community bodies.

CRCs play an essential local role in coordinating people, communities, organisations, and government agencies in the recovery process, recording and setting priorities for recovery, across many social, political, natural, financial, and built dimensions. The 2009 Victorian "Black Saturday" bushfire disaster provided a range of examples of how CRCs grappled with novel challenges and issues in shaping and driving their own recovery (Leadbeater, 2013; McAllan et al., 2011). These show the role of CRCs is complex and demanding, requiring a body to organise itself, establish roles and practices, and consult with residents and communities that have complex and interrelated, yet also potentially competing, needs and priorities. Yet, CRCs are as diverse as the communities they aim to represent, ranging from re-purposed community groups that pre-date the disaster, to the formation of new groups. Moreover, these groups vary in terms of the skills, capacities, connections, and culture needed to carry out their remit. Consequently, CRCs require appropriate supports to optimise their decision-making responsibilities, and their capacity to provide reliable advice to government recovery agencies.

A key challenge of government is therefore how best to support CRCs in making effective decisions that are representative of the community as a whole, while maintaining a flexible approach that respects the unique structure and context of each CRC and the wishes and timelines of that community.



## **BACKGROUND**

This project aims to promote better understanding of, and more effective support for Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) working across Victorian communities affected by the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires.

The project aims to contribute to the evidence base on the operation of CRCs, expand knowledge of the diverse forms that CRCs take, and facilitate flexible and appropriate multi-stakeholder, including government and non-government supports for these bodies.

The resources developed as part of the project will be utilised by project end-users as a regular guide for planning, engaging with, and providing ongoing support to current CRCs. It will also inform the approaches taken to engage with communities following future disasters to consider, help establish and support the development of new CRCs or other community-led recovery bodies that may emerge following a disaster.





## RESEARCH APPROACH & PROGRESS

This project focuses on supporting community-led recovery bodies in the weeks, months and years following a disaster. Drawing upon previous work, the University of Melbourne conducted the following streams of enquiry and translation in collaboration with end-user agencies Bushfire Recovery Victoria and Emergency Management Victoria:

1. **Evidence summary.** A factsheet providing an overview of theory, evidence, and frameworks for community-led recovery.
2. **Community perceptions analysis.** A draft research paper drawing on existing data in bushfire-affected communities to identify the characteristics of individuals and community groups likely to be able to provide accurate assessments of community satisfaction.
3. **CRC modelling.** A description of different types and forms of CRCs and their likely support needs, with a prototype tool for self-assessment (Self-Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees).
4. **Recovery progress monitoring.** Research guidance to support end-user development of research plans for recovery progress monitoring.
5. **Research priorities for future benefit.** Identification of research priorities and opportunities to guide the next phases of community support and community-led recovery.

### 1. EVIDENCE SUMMARY

The *Community Recovery Committees in Post-Disaster Settings* factsheet (Leppold, Gibbs, Ireton, & Brady, 2021) was developed to provide an overview of existing evidence and wider frameworks relating to community-led recovery and deliberative democratic approaches (see Appendix A). This work draws on relevant findings from the Beyond Bushfires study and related research conducted by the University of Melbourne for Bushfire Recovery Victoria and includes illustrative case studies. The key messages from the factsheet are presented below in Table 1.

Fact-sheet evidence area	Summary
Planning and starting CRCs	There should be an emphasis on flexible and open planning and support for the development of CRCs that is responsive to community's wishes, timelines, and capacity for community control.
	Includes a case study of Community-led recovery in Strathewen after the Black Saturday bushfires (Leadbeater, 2013).
Community	There is not one set way of engaging with communities



engagement techniques for successful CRCs	<p>in disaster recovery; instead, technique in engagement is a more important principle (Bogdon, Bennett, &amp; Yumagulova, 2017; Dibley et al., 2019).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberative democracy</li> <li>• Deliberation and influence</li> <li>• Inclusion</li> <li>• Working with local leaders and groups</li> </ul>
Building capacity to engage with communities	<p>Certain skills may be needed on the part of government officials or recovery agency officials who are looking to effectively engage with communities through CRCs.</p>
Measuring progress	<p>Recovery programs and supports may be f evaluated in relation to the level and effectiveness of community engagement</p>
	<p>Highlighted by a case study of the Community Congress II following Hurricane Katrina (Millen, 2011; Wilson, 2009).</p>

TABLE 1.

## 2. COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ANALYSIS

In the Australian context, CRCs are most often drawn from local leadership, as well as, in certain cases, existing community groups. While this approach may satisfy the need to respect local leadership, local cultural dynamics, and systems of legitimacy, it presents an issue with respect to representativeness. This is because the active component of a society is unlikely to be representative of the population as a whole (Verba & Nie, 1987; Wollebaek & Selle, 2002).

For this reason, it is necessary to understand how CRCs' reliance on pre-existing community structures may modify (i.e., skew) the information that it has access to through network connections. To better understand how consultation through community groups may affect CRCs' perception of the community, an analysis of local community organisations was undertaken, focusing on their role in reporting on community outcomes. This work draws on existing data on group membership, a survey of the Beyond Bushfires longitudinal study of individual and community recovery following the 2009 Victoria 'Black Saturday' Bushfires (Gibbs et al., 2013).

### Research questions

Our general research questions were as follows:



1. How does sense of community and group participation relate to ratings of community satisfaction, controlling for other factors?
2. How does sense of community and group participation relate to accuracy in those ratings, as measured by the average of personal life satisfaction of other community members?
3. What is the relationship between one's own life satisfaction, and the satisfaction of others?

## Data

Data was drawn primarily from Wave 1 of the Beyond Bushfires study (Gibbs et al., 2013), collected across 5 regions that were moderately to highly impacted by the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, approximately three years after the event. Participants for this analysis (n = 620) only included participants living in the study community at the time of data collection.

## Key variables

**Life satisfaction (self and community).** Of primary interest were outcomes variables related to life satisfaction ratings. Participants were asked the following two questions:

1. “How satisfied are you with life as a whole at the moment?” (rated on a scale from 0 to 10)
2. “How satisfied do you believe others in your community are with life as a whole at the moment?” (0 – 10 rating)

Using these two ratings, we computed an accuracy score for each participant in comparison to the region in which they lived.

**Group involvement.** Participants were asked to name each group they were currently involved in, along with the length of their involvement in that group. Details of the types of groups named are included in the next section.

**Sense of Community.** Participants were further assessed on behavioural, psychological, and affective integration into their community using the Neighbourhood Cohesion scale by Buckner (1988).

## Group categorisation scheme

A key area of interest to end-users is the implications of consulting with different types of groups within the community. Thus, a typology of groups was formulated by the research team, using data provided by participants. The results of this typology are presented in table 2.

Group type	Group subtypes	Example groups
Recreation	Leisure, hobby, and recreation	Hobby groups, arts and crafts, local social groups
	Sport teams and clubs	Football, netball, basketball, etc.



	Youth groups	Youth groups
Organising and service	Service groups	Rotary, Lyons, Country Women's Authority, Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc.
	Governance	Boards, committees, advocacy groups
	Environmental groups	Environmental action groups, land management groups, gardening groups
	Emergency groups	Volunteer emergency services, Neighborhood watch
Local commerce		Business and trade groups
Religious		Churches and affiliated groups
Support		Health or support organisations
Unknown		Unidentifiable group membership

TABLE. 2. GROUP INVOLVEMENT CATEGORISATION

## Summary of results and implications

In general, most participants rated their own life satisfaction as higher than that of their community. Therefore, assuming the community samples are representative of the wider community,<sup>1</sup> there is a systematic tendency to underrate life satisfaction in the community. This pattern could suggest downward social comparison processes, in which people are motivated to compare themselves favourably in comparison to others who are relatively worse off (Wills, 1987). This tendency to report lower life satisfaction in the community was stronger in certain types of individuals, and weaker in others.

Those whose community involvement began at the time of the bushfires, and whose involvement related to groups that take on organising and governance duties, tended to rate community satisfaction as lower than did other participants. This may have been an inaccurate tendency, with most people in our sample reporting higher personal life satisfaction than that of their community. A prominent potential explanation for this finding is that individuals involved in governance and service organisations are dealing with the “nuts and bolts” of recovery, and thus must confront a range of the most difficult challenges associated with recovery, such as dealing with conflict, figuring out how to address the needs of multiple impacted parties, and burdensome administrative tasks. Managing these difficult situations may provide these individuals with the impression that wellbeing in the broader community is low – perhaps lower than it is in actuality.

The potential for this finding is that individuals who most often have a role with CRCs may be well aware of the burden being experienced by highly impacted

<sup>1</sup> This is a contestable assumption, given that the sample skewed older and more female than the general population.



members of the community, but their estimation of overall community wellbeing may be erroneously low. While further research is needed to confirm this finding, it would suggest that CRC members would benefit from regular updates from representative community surveys regarding where the community is in terms of satisfaction. With anecdotal reports of burnout and turnover in community leadership roles, such information may help stem attrition in the ranks of CRC membership and provide crucial positive feedback for their work.

Intriguingly, self-rating oneself highly on the item - “I think I agree with most people in my community about what is important in life” (Buckner, 1988), predicted a more accurate perception of life satisfaction in the community. The potential implication of this finding is that people may have some insight into how good an informant they are for the community as a whole. Future research might fruitfully examine the issue of the reliability of self-nominations (and/or nominations by others) for informant accuracy.

## Next steps

### Manuscript development

A manuscript detailing these analyses has been drafted in consultation with end-users and is included in supplementary material. It will be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal following an additional round of revision with end-users, and in conjunction with BNHCRC publication protocols.

### Additional research priorities and opportunities

The Beyond Bushfires data can be further utilised to address empirical questions regarding social capital in affected communities, health outcomes associated with group involvement, and social network connections among groups. These options include those listed in Table 3.

Patterns of community group participation	
<b>Characteristics of group members</b>	What are the typical characteristics of members of different types of groups (e.g., sex, age, disaster exposure, mental health status)?
<b>Changes in group involvement following a disaster</b>	How does group participation change over time, and in relation to mental health and other measures of personal recovery?
<b>Key local groups in community networks</b>	<p><b>Which groups are likely to be most influential for their central network position in a community, for the purposes of consensus building or information dissemination?</b></p> <p><i>***This dimension is regarded as most relevant to community recovery, as it addresses connection</i></p>



*among groups, and how those connections can be utilised to help CRCs work more effectively.\*\*\**

TABLE 3. ADDITIONAL RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS ANALYSIS.

### 3. MODELLING OF COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEES

The modelling of different types and forms of CRCs and their likely support needs drew on a series of interviews with end-user personnel involved in CRC engagement. The aim of this portion of the research was three-fold:

- To identify the key dimensions of CRCs
- To map key characteristics of CRCs to support needs, with the goal of matching different types of CRCs to the most relevant types of support available from state and local agencies.
- To formulate strategies for testing and validation of a self-assessment tool based on the devised questionnaire, to be disseminated to CRCs across the state.

#### Data sources: consultation with end-users

Initial formulation of the CRC dimensions, and their mapping to sources of support was based on a series of discussions (conducted via teleconference) between the research team and members of end-user organisations, including community engagement managers and specialists currently working directly with CRCs in both Northeast and East Gippsland areas, as well as specialists in the Tasmanian government with experience of bushfire recovery community engagement. Through this iterative series of discussions, end-users were asked to describe their experience of various current CRCs in their area, including key differences, as well as unique support needs arising from those differences.

At each step, the research team collated notes to initially formulate a model of CRC dimensions and supports, and then successively refined the model. Updated versions of the model were then presented to end-users to gain feedback.

#### Initial findings

The current version of the model has been used to assemble an initial draft the *Self-Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees* to be used prospectively for self-assessment by CRCs (See Appendix B). A summary of these dimensions and supports is provide in Table 4.

As part of discussion with end-users, a set of closely related research needs were also identified to better understand the context in which CRCs might conduct a self-assessment (see Table 5).

#### Dimensions and supports for CRCs


Dimensions of CRCs	The Self-Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees (untested) has been developed as a
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	<p>practical tool for CRCs to ascertain how their groups may function. Examples of these dimensions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its geographical spread</li> <li>• Issue-focused versus place-based CRC</li> <li>• Whether the CRC is drawn from an existing group, or formed anew</li> <li>• How decisions are made</li> <li>• How members are selected and retained</li> <li>• How tasks are carried out</li> <li>• Whether it identifies overarching priorities of the community, and/or manages specific projects</li> <li>• Its relationship to government</li> <li>• Whether the group is time-limited</li> <li>• The degree to which the group was self-starting versus instructed to form versus co-designed in partnership with government.</li> </ul>
<p>Mapping supports for CRCs</p>	<p>Examples of the types of support that may be needed for CRCs, based on the dimensions of the self-assessment questionnaire include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Training in democratic decision-making techniques</li> <li>• Communications and/ or media support</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Leadership and mentoring</li> <li>• Wellbeing support – including working in a trauma informed way</li> <li>• Project management (including but not limited to construction and environment)</li> <li>• Scoping and assessment</li> <li>• Grant writing and acquittals</li> </ul>

TABLE 4.

<p>Additional research priorities for CRC modelling</p>	
<p>CRC membership composition</p>	<p>There was wide discussion about the importance of the characteristics of CRC members. In particular, discussion centred around the types of connection (social capital) that different types of members might bring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual CRC members with vertical connections (linking social capital) to government and corporations.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals with horizontal connections (bridging capital) within the community</li> <li>• Individuals who advocate narrowly on a particular issue or set of issues.</li> </ul> <p>The discussion acknowledged that an imbalance in certain characteristics may affect the functioning of the CRC more widely and may alter the types of supports needed.</p>
<p>Definition and minimum requirements of CRCs</p>	<p>It was widely acknowledged that CRCs may take on various forms and functions and may be drawn from a range of community groups and structures.</p> <p>However, there was a remaining lack of consensus among end-users about the essential functions of a CRC, and the relationship of CRCs to state and local agencies.</p>
<p>Measuring representativeness of CRCs</p>	<p>A recurring question was whether a CRC was “representative”. This raised issues of how to define the term, with various possible definitions relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the CRC appropriately consulted widely with the community to ensure that an appropriate sample of voices were heard as part of decision-making.</li> <li>• Whether the CRC membership resembled the wider community in terms of socio-demographics.</li> <li>• Whether the CRC membership resembled the wider community in terms of individual and group interests (e.g., economic, residential, environmental, etc).</li> </ul>

TABLE 5.

### Next steps

Given the untested nature of the Self-Assessment Tool, a further stage of testing and validation with a wider network of stakeholders is warranted. This has the potential to be followed by the translation of the questionnaire into a working self-assessment tool, to be hosted digitally by end-user organisations.

### Testing and validation strategy of the Self-Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees

To ascertain the usefulness of the Self-Assessment Tool, and validate its mapping onto potential supports, it is recommended that a wider range of stakeholders be consulted during a testing phase. This could include current and historical CRCs, BRV and EMV, along with other local and state government agencies, not-





for-profit organisations, and bodies from other states. A further series of model refinements and support mapping would then be possible. Stakeholders could assist in the piloting of these materials with current CRCs, taking care to ensure that the research aligns with current workloads.

### Exploration of additional research priorities

With respect to the additional research priorities listed in Table 3, there is scope to examine these further, through consultative discussions and survey work with stakeholder staff members and CRC members alike. A proposal for this extended consultation is depicted in Figure 1 on page 24.

### Tool and guidance development

There is potential to convert a tested version of the Self-Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees into a digital tool to be hosted on Vic Gov website. As part of this, the research team could develop guidance for stakeholder staff members who are working to support CRCs on identifying different types of support needs.

## 4. RECOVERY PROGRESS MONITORING

The research team was able to provide progressive support to the end-user organisations regarding community research strategies and measures, particularly in relation to Bushfire Recovery Victoria's plans to conduct a recovery progress study. The purpose of this study is to provide a broad benchmark by which to track community perceptions of recovery, satisfaction with recovery services and over time, and to identify ongoing recovery priorities within the community.

### Research planning workshop

A workshop involving the University of Melbourne research team and the lead end-user was conducted in April 2021 to develop potential research questions, evidence gaps, tools and survey measures, recruitment and data collection strategies, analysis, and reporting options.

### Datasets and measures

The following datasets were identified as potential sources of existing data, useful indicators and comparative measures:

**Beyond Bushfires dataset.** A longitudinal dataset on individual and community recovery following the Black Saturday bushfires, the Beyond Bushfires dataset covers a range of wellbeing and recovery-related variables, as well as socio-structural indicators by which to measure community resilience processes.

- Group involvement
- Sense of Community / Community integration
- Mental health



- Life Satisfaction
- Self-reported Health
- Perceptions of recovery in the local community

**Victorian Population Health Survey.** Administered annually across Victoria, VPHS uses a series of common social capital measures and other community indicators. Their inclusion in a prospective survey would provide a broad point of comparison against Victoria as whole.

- Generalised Trust – the degree to which people in general can be trusted
- Feels valued by society
- Feels safe walking alone down their street at night
- Has opportunity to have a real say on important matters

**General social surveys.** Additionally, a range of additional large-scale social surveys have been consulted for indicators of social capital, trust, and community attitudes. Options for inclusion are:

- A multidimensional view on life satisfaction: Self and community ratings
  - Economic, health, social, environment, democracy, etc.
  - Self-ratings, and rating of the community
  - Social capital indicators and measures

### Priority themes for service utilisation

The following variables were identified as important for consideration in a recovery progress monitoring:

- Recovery priorities – Open-ended responses on social, cultural, political, built, and economic priorities
- Attitudes towards/ satisfaction with service providers (local government, state government, CRC, etc.)
- Service utilisation – The use of recovery services by the participant
- Organisational justice – Perceived fairness of recovery decisions

### Methodology

Different research strategies and study designs were discussed and debated with reference to Bushfire Recovery Victoria's progress monitoring goals, feasibility and affordability.

### Outcome

A research plan (confidential) was prepared by the lead end-user for internal consideration, informed by the workshop discussion and outputs. This plan will be integrated with BRV's Recovery Outcomes Framework – a core document on research priorities which will be informing the baseline.



## 5. RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE BENEFIT

The final aim of this project was to draw on previous findings from the other components of this research, as well as related research such as the *Beyond Bushfires* study, to develop research priorities for future end-user activity in recovery progress survey. The priorities already identified in this report are summarised below and in the Key Milestones and Next Steps in the next chapter (Table 6).

- **Measuring representativeness of CRCs.** How should representativeness be conceptualised and measured with respect to CRC's community engagement? How can conceptual and methodological advances lead to improvement in gaining representative idea of community priorities in recovery?
- **Patterns of community group participation:** What are the prevailing demographic patterns of local group participation within bushfire-affected communities, and how this information be used to improve key CRC functions and goals (e.g., communicating effectively to the community, achieving representative input). (See Table 3).
- **CRC membership composition:** What are the different characteristics and types of social connections that different types of CRC members bring to the group, and how do different mixes of CRC members affect its functioning? (See Table 5).
- **Definition and minimum requirements of CRCs:** Among the many forms that CRCs may take, what are the essential feature and functions of a CRC? What should the relationship of CRCs be to state and local agencies? (See Table 5).

## KEY MILESTONES & NEXT STEPS

The key milestones for this project are outlined in Table 5, all of which were completed by the due date.

Table 6 provides further details of next steps for the project in 2021/22, pending funding, to further develop the research and applications to support community-led recovery.

Figure 1 provides additional detail regarding the stakeholder engagement process for testing and validation of the Self-Assessment Tool.

Milestone	Date
Dimensions and support questionnaire for CRC self-assessment (untested)	31 May
Evidence-based factsheet	31 May
Community perception analysis (manuscript)	31 May
Research priorities for future benefit	31 May

TABLE 5. CURRENT PROJECT MILESTONES.

		Deliverables for funded portion of project (End of May 2021)	Options for Deliverables if the project is extended
Primary stakeholders		BRV, EMV	BRV, EMV, CRC members, Local and state government, Not-for-profit agencies
Project elements	Theory and evidence-based approach	Provide overview of theory, evidence and frameworks in a summary factsheet	Continue to draw on emerging evidence to guide practice. Contribute to evidence base through research papers.
	CRC Models: Committee dimensions	Document the dimensions of CRCs based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature Review</li> <li>Interviews with BRV, EMV, and specialists</li> </ul> Develop CRC dimensions questionnaire to be a practical tool for CRCs to identify how their groups will function and the support needed (untested)	Test dimensions of CRCs with end-users and other stakeholders.  After testing, CRC self-assessment tool to be hosted as a digital tool on Vic Gov website  Develop content on dimensions of CRCs for inclusion in the BRV Community Engagement Framework revision.
	Support required by CRCs	Provide examples of the types of support that may be needed for	Engage with stakeholders to identify



		<p>CRCs based on the dimensions of the untested tool.</p>	<p>types of supports required by CRCs.</p> <p>Map tested support needs onto the CRC self-assessment tool, to be hosted as a digital tool on Vic Gov website</p> <p>Develop content on supports for CRCs for inclusion in the BRV Community Engagement Framework revision.</p> <p>Develop guidance for stakeholder staff members on identifying different types of support needs.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Project elements</p>	<p>CRC membership composition</p>	<p>Document different types of CRC member categories based on interviews with BRV staff and one specialist (Tas gov).</p> <p>Identify possible strengths and limitations of committees with memberships skewed to one category of CRC members.</p>	<p>Work with stakeholders to identify the strengths and supports required for different categories of CRC members.</p> <p>Apply findings from groups analysis (below) to identify forms of develop a targeted approaches to community consultation.</p> <p>Develop guidance for state, local government and not-for-profit staff members who are working to support CRCs on identifying different types of support needs.</p>
	<p>Definition and Minimum Requirements of CRCs</p>	<p>Provide a preliminary spectrum of community group types.</p> <p>Develop a questionnaire to gauge an understanding of how different players consider the minimum requirements of CRCs.</p>	<p>Undertake a consensus building process to identify the definition and minimum requirements of CRCs with stakeholders.</p> <p>Documentation of consensus of CRC definition and minimum requirements and process undertaken to</p>



		<p>Please note that this questionnaire will not be issued before the end of the project.</p>	<p>form consensus (if reached).</p> <p>Develop content on definition and min requirements for CRCs for inclusion in the BRV Community Engagement Framework revision.</p>
<p>Project elements</p>	<p>Integration with community groups analysis</p>	<p>An analysis of community groupings with relation to key outcomes of interest, as identified by end-users.</p>	<p>Work with BRV to develop a shared model of community group types to be implemented within recovery progress survey.</p> <p>Conduct proof-of-concept network mapping of community groups and their interlinkages through shared membership.</p>

TABLE 6. NEXT STEPS IF PROJECT IS EXTENDED.



### Engagement plan to test and validate Self-Assessment Tool

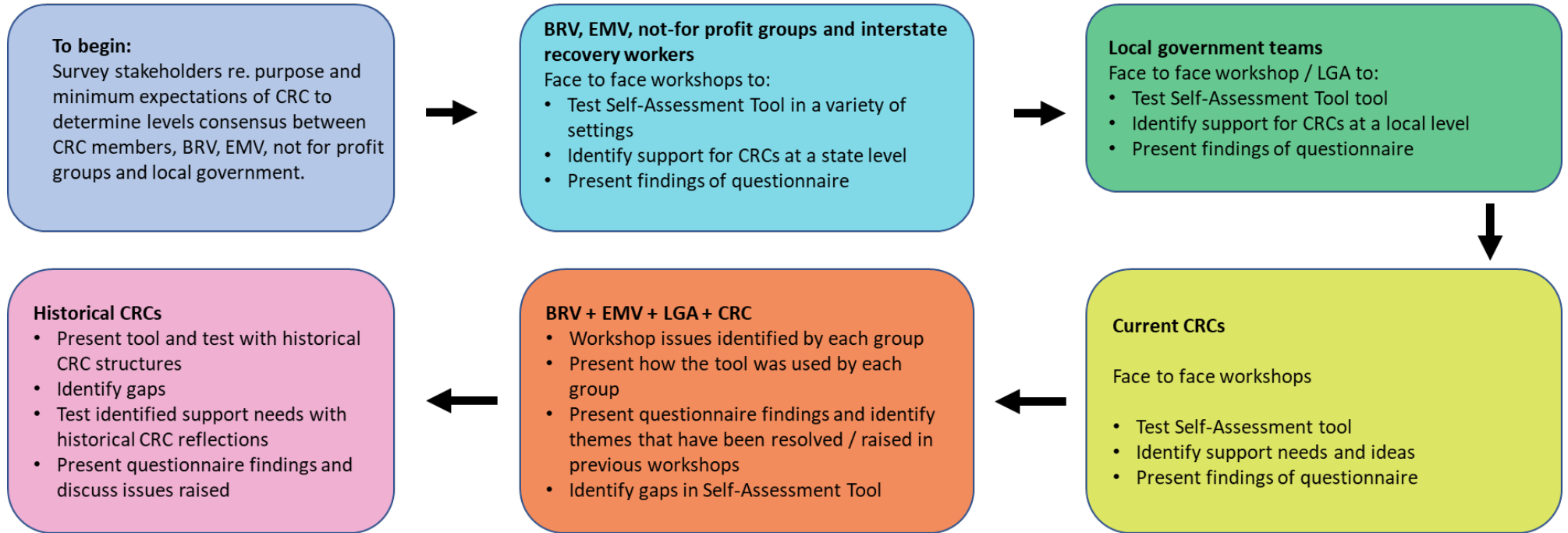


FIGURE 1. FUTURE PROPOSED ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR DIMENSIONS QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT.



## UTILISATION, IMPACT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN RESEARCH

### SUMMARY

This project's outputs include the following:

- Community recovery committees in post-disaster settings (FACTSHEET)
- Dimensions and support questionnaire for CRC Modelling
- Research guidance for recovery progress monitoring
- Community groups analysis (manuscript to be submitted for publication)

### COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEES IN POST-DISASTER SETTINGS (FACTSHEET)

#### Output description

This resource summarises existing evidence and wider frameworks relating to community recovery committees and the deliberative democratic approach to community engagement. It provides an accessible synthesis of key concepts and evidence, links to further resources, and a 'tip sheet' for recovery workers to keep on hand while in the field.

#### Extent of use

The Community Recovery Committee factsheet is currently under review within one of the end-user organisations (BRV) for distribution to staff and wider recovery workers currently supporting recovery from the 2019/20 bushfires. BRV will consider the best approach for disseminating this information and engage further with the University of Melbourne to ensure it is appropriately represented and communicated.

#### Utilisation and impact potential

- This factsheet can be used by anyone involved in the design and delivery of disaster recovery support and programs. It can be particularly useful in building knowledge amongst those new to working in recovery, conveying points of relevance to those whose primary work has a different focus, by providing concise evidence summaries and planning prompts to support decision making.
- The 'tip sheet' at the end of the factsheet provides a one-page succinct summary of key messages, in a format that can be taken into the field (i.e. for quick reminders of evidence when recovery workers engage with community members).
- Through delivering a summary of evidence on risk factors and factors for success in CRCs, this factsheet has the potential to improve recovery worker practices in engaging with communities post disaster and





supporting the establishment or running of CRCs. This factsheet is still in final stages of development within BRV. The full utilisation impact will be observed after its release.

- BRV's Community Engagement team has reviewed the resource and consider it as a useful resource that will contribute to the review of their Community Engagement Framework.

## COMMUNITY PERCEPTION ANALYSIS

### Output description

This manuscript reports on the results of a statistical analysis on how accurate participants are with respect to life satisfaction in their community. It provides detailed results on demographic and behavioural predictors for perceptions of community satisfaction, including accuracy in these perceptions. It offers a discussion for the implications of these findings, including ramifications and potential innovations as part of community consultation.

### Extent of use

At the end of this project timeline, a manuscript has been drafted. This will undergo further revision in collaboration with end-user representatives and submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

### Utilisation and impact potential

- Through an analysis of predictive factors for accuracy in reporting on community wellbeing, this analysis will inform recovery worker practices in engaging with communities post disaster and supporting the establishment or running of CRCs. The full utilisation impact will be observed after its release.
- This analysis will directly contribute to the design and aims of recovery progress monitoring, allowing recovery workers to better assess recovery priorities and community wellbeing in relation to reports coming from community members themselves.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEES

### Output description

A Self-Assessment Tool which CRCs can self-administer or undertake with local and / or state government agencies to identify the dimensions and scope of the individual CRC, the support needs of the CRC, and an agreement of expectations between the CRC and government agencies.

### Extent of use

At the end of this project timeline, the tool had not yet been tested with CRCs (owing to CRC workload). BRV and EMV teams have reviewed the tool and



anticipate that it will become a critical element of CRC development and support.

### Utilisation and impact potential

- Once tested, there is opportunity to incorporate this tool into a digital platform. It is anticipated that this would offer significant benefit to CRCs and communities by enabling individual CRCs to (easily and at their own pace) identify specific and targeted supports they require.
- In doing this, there is potential to decrease the significant workload and pressure on CRCs by supplementing any gaps and/or offering considerations for CRCs based on resources available to the broader recovery workforce.
- There is also opportunity for the CRC to translate or provide the assessment to government to help government to more effectively engage and support CRCs in the recovery planning processes, through better understanding their individual scope and needs, and how those change over time.
- This tool could also be used in other forms (written, audio/video, etc) and built into BRV/EMV/council engagement process/training.
- In an adapted form, the tool will be extremely useful for communicating in the initial post-event phase, where community groups/ leaders may not yet be organised but seeking information on the most appropriate form/model of organising community responses, the pros and cons of each form, and tips and hints on how to mitigate challenges and build on strengths of each.

## RESEARCH GUIDANCE FOR RECOVERY PROGRESS MONITORING

### Output description

Research guidance to potential methodologies, strategies, databases, measures and tools for monitoring recovery progress.

### Extent of use

At the end of this project timeline, an internal proposal had been developed for consideration within BRV. The outcome of this proposal had not yet been announced.

### Utilisation and impact potential

This advice has informed the development of a recovery progress study to build BRV's understanding of communities' progress in their recovery journey at a point in time after the event and will provide a foundation from which BRV's can understand communities' recovery journey into future years. The study will provide insight into:

- The differences in recovery progress between cohort groups (i.e. Aboriginal Victorians, young people, older people, women, people with



- a disability) and locations (i.e. between regions, rural vs remote communities),
- inequalities in recovery program design and delivery, and access to recovery services,
- community perceptions of recovery services design, delivery and performance.

## CONCLUSION

There are key considerations for government and recovery bodies to consider when supporting CRC development and operations. Due to limited evidence published to date, this report and associated resources draw on emerging evidence and wider frameworks relating to community recovery and deliberative democracy. This work is based on the premise that a flexible approach – one in which government and recovery bodies are led by community needs and wishes – is key for successful recovery and appropriate support for community recovery bodies such as CRCs. Existing literature suggests that a deliberative democratic approach, centred on inclusion, fostering deliberation processes in communities and allowing for real community influence over decision-making and policy, is central to achieving community-led recovery. While there are inherent challenges to this way of designing, establishing, and maintaining CRCs, there are also distinct advantages that can come from a recovery process that is genuinely led by communities. To support that process, this project has led to the development of a tool for CRC self-assessment that identifies how each CRC has been formed and operates, and likely support needs. Separate analyses of individual and group data from previous bushfire affected communities has provided important insights into the characteristics of people and groups likely to be the best guide to community levels of satisfaction. Additional research support was provided to end-users to enable meaningful recovery progress monitoring to guide support research activities. Finally, research priorities and next steps were proposed to ensure this work continues to be developed to maximise community-led recovery.



## **PUBLICATIONS LIST**

### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

- 1 Gibbs L, Coghlan A, Molyneaux R, Gallagher HC, Richardson J, Quinn P, Leppold C, Harms L. Seeking the ideal in the realm of reality – community led recovery. ADRC Conference, Sydney, Australia Aug 2021.

### **EVIDENCE FACTSHEET**

- 2 Leppold, C., L. Gibbs, G. Ireton and K. Brady (2021). Community Recovery Committees in Post-Disaster Settings: Factsheet for Bushfire Recovery Victoria. Victoria, Australia, University of Melbourne.

### **PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLE**

- 3 Gallagher HC et al. Convergence in community perceptions on disaster recovery: Its relation to social participation. (manuscript drafted – submission pending).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL**

- 4 Brady K, Gallagher HC, Gibbs L, Leppold C. (2021) Self-Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees. Victoria, Australia: University of Melbourne.



## TEAM MEMBERS

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  - Yvette Clarke
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- Emergency Management Victoria
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## APPENDIX A. EVIDENCE FACTSHEET

**Citation:** Leppold C, Gibbs L, Ireton G, Brady K. Community Recovery Committees in Post-Disaster Settings Factsheet for Bushfire Recovery Victoria. April 2021, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.



### Introduction

This factsheet draws on emerging evidence and wider frameworks relating to community recovery and deliberative democracy. It is intended for anyone involved in the design and delivery of bushfire recovery support and may also have relevance for recovery from other disasters. It may be particularly useful for: building knowledge amongst those new to working in this area of recovery; conveying points of relevance to those whose primary work has a different focus; and providing concise evidence summaries and planning prompts to support decision making.

### Summary

- A flexible approach in which government and recovery bodies are led by community needs and wishes, is key for successful Community Recovery Committees (CRCs).
- Existing literature suggests that a deliberative democratic approach, centered on inclusion, fostering deliberation processes in communities and allowing for real community influence over decision-making and policy, will be central to achieving community-led recovery.
- While there are inherent challenges to this way of approaching CRCs, there are also distinct victories that can come from a recovery process that is genuinely led by communities.



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## The Case for Community-Led Recovery

There is an established body of literature that makes the case for community-led approaches to recovery from disasters (Dibley et al. 2019; Olshansky 2005). In Australia, ‘using community-led approaches’ has been identified as one of the six core principles to consider for successful disaster recovery (SRRG. 2018; AIDR 2018). Community Recovery Committees (CRCs) are one way that community-led approaches can be created, fostered and enabled through government, recovery body and community collaborations.

CRCs can be regarded generally as community-led bodies that may collect, record, and report on local priorities for recovery. The definition of a CRC is contested because it is difficult to precisely determine the difference between community groups that communicate with state and local recovery agencies about local recovery priorities, and community recovery committees that have a role in representing the community. Depending on the range of issues that the group consults on, and the degree to which it consults with a representative swathe of their community, these groups may receive a formal designation. This may entail financial and other forms of support. However, formality may be seen as a continuum, rather than a threshold, and need not be a prerequisite for a relationship with government.

### Planning and starting CRCs

A key message from existing literature is that the stages of planning CRCs should be flexible and open, and tuned-in to community wishes. In the process of community engagement, government officials may feel an urgency to act quickly to start a process towards disaster recovery. However, previous academic studies and grey literature suggest that government officials should understand that disaster affected communities may not want their help in the form that it is offered (Barton 2017; McLennan and Handmer 2014; McLennan 2018; Taylor and Goodman 2015). It has been emphasized that communities may not always be willing or able to participate in CRCs (Love and Vallance 2014), and availability for participation should not be assumed and will likely vary from event to event (Dibley et al. 2019). Many have underscored that both the state and the community will be experiencing stress following a disaster, and not functioning as usual (Love and Vallance 2014; Galvovic 2014). There have been suggestions that offering communities time and space to consider their options away from immediate pressures to rebuild is beneficial – a process that has been referred to as ‘holding the space’ (Ireton, Ahmed, and Charlesworth 2014). A study of disaster-affected communities across Australia similarly recommends that communities should be given time to define ‘what they need and when they need it’ (Moreton 2018: 22).

#### Case study: Community-led recovery in Strathewen after the Black Saturday fires

The success of a Community Renewal Association in Strathewen after the Black Saturday fires has been partly attributed to the creation of time and space for communities to come together before a formal recovery association was developed (Leadbeater 2013). This allowed for communities to ‘revisit local priorities and aspirations and to support inclusive processes that are valued by and make sense to local people’ – a process found to be key in the beginning stages of community-led recovery (Dibley et al. 2019: 34). In Strathewen, this began organically within the community in the second week after the fire, when some local community members came together in an initial meeting to discuss recovery. When government and recovery bodies seek to launch CRCs, it will likely be beneficial to try to understand what discussions or meetings are already happening in communities.





## Community engagement techniques for successful CRCs

There is not one set way of engaging with communities in disaster recovery. Some academics have drawn on existing evidence to suggest that technique in engagement is a more important question than whether to engage or not (Dibley et al. 2019; Bogdon, Bennett, and Yumagulova 2017). There is growing evidence for the benefits of applying a deliberative democratic approach [detailed below] to post-disaster community engagement (Millen 2011; Wilson 2009). There is also evidence that when a deliberative democratic process is not applied, and communities are instead ‘consulted’ without being given significant influence over decision making, communities can experience persisting stress, resentment and disempowerment (Dibley et al. 2019; O’Neill 2015; Taylor and Goodman 2015). In the history of CRCs in Australia, some have been ‘advisory only’ while others have had formal ‘sign off’ roles on multiple recovery projects (Taylor and Goodman 2015); for those that were ‘advisory only’, it has been found that ‘this status reinforced a chasm between the government rhetoric of community-led recovery and the reality of few, if any, real decision-making opportunities’ (Dibley et al. 2019: 33).

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation describes different levels of community engagement in decision making, from ‘inform’ (providing public with information) to ‘empower’ (‘placing final decision making in the hands of the public’) (IAP2 International Federation 2018). The challenge in applying this model to the disaster recovery context is that CRCs will have a range of different relationships with government across the IAP2 spectrum, and the broader members of the community will have varying levels of engagement in decision making with their local CRC. A CRC that sets the recovery agenda for their community and uses deliberative democratic approaches to engage community members in the decision making would fit into the ‘collaborate’ or ‘empower’ levels of participation described by IAP2. A key principle is for government to provide various supports for CRC development and operation, while not overriding the basic collaboration with community on which they are (ideally) built.

### Deliberative democracy

Deliberative democracy means partnering with the public in decision-making, and critically, empowering the public – with final decision-making placed in the hands of the public (Hartz-Karp 2004). There are three key elements of deliberative democratic practice (Dibley et al. 2019: 28; Hartz-Karp 2004):

- Influence: the process should have the genuine ability to influence policy and decision-making
- Inclusion: the process should be representative, inclusive and encourage equal opportunity to participate
- Deliberation: the process should provide open discussion, access to information and movement towards consensus” (Dibley et al. 2019: 28; Hartz-Karp 2004).

There is growing evidence to support deliberative democracy in community-led disaster recovery (Millen 2011; Dibley et al. 2019). In this light, establishing a CRC is a possible outcome of a collaborative process with communities that government may support and foster, but not determine. Equally, a CRC may employ deliberative democracy strategies to engage the broader community in recovery decision making. There are case studies of deliberative democratic community-led recovery following the Cedar Rapids flood (Millen 2011), and Hurricane Katrina (Wilson 2009). The case study of the Community Renewal Association in Strathewen after the Black Saturday fires also reflects deliberative democratic principles (Leadbeater 2013).

### Inclusion

A key feature of deliberative democratic approaches is that they are inclusive. Getting the whole community to communicate and coordinate together has been described as one of the biggest challenges for community-led recovery (Becker, Kerr, and Saunders 2006; Monday 2002; Vallance 2011). Rather than a conventional model of consultation which may result in the ‘most incensed or articulate’ being heard, deliberative democratic community engagement means seeking to be inclusive enough to include the ‘silent majority’ (Hartz-Karp 2004). In literature on community-led disaster recovery, there has been an emphasis on the need to incorporate deliberative strategies to include potentially marginalized or under-resourced groups (Hamideh 2020), as well as children and young people (Gibbs et al. 2014). Inclusion is particularly relevant in community-led disaster recovery as there is evidence that disadvantaged groups may be more affected by disasters for longer time-periods (Mutch and Marlowe 2013; Jacob et al. 2008), but may have less say in recovery decision making unless they are explicitly included (Olshansky 2005).



Academics have previously identified that there is a need for further research on specific approaches that can be adopted to facilitate the participation of hard to reach or other marginalized groups in community-led disaster recovery (Dibley et al. 2019). Inclusion will be a point for careful consideration when setting up deliberative democratic CRCs.

#### Deliberation and influence

Deliberative democracy also means that communities have power in deliberation and influence in policy decision making. In this regard, it is important to recognize that different communities ‘may choose different paths to recovery’ (AIDR 2018: 31). This may mean that each deliberative democratic CRC runs differently, and that each community, and different groups within the community, may want to influence the decision-making process on recovery in different ways. For instance, one previous study of community-led recovery after the Christchurch earthquake found that communities did not want to have direct decision-making authority, but did want to influence the decision-making process (Love and Vallance 2014). In this way, there is not one deliberative democratic CRC ‘model’ that will represent every case; rather the central premise of CRCs is to be guided by communities.

#### Local community leaders and community groups

Identifying and engaging with community leaders and community groups can be critical for the success of the community-led recovery process, as highlighted both in academic literature (Dibley et al. 2019; Johnston, Becker, and Paton 2012; Leadbeater 2013; Olshansky and Johnson 2015) and grey literature (McAllan et al. 2011; IAP2 Australasia 2015). Working with local community leaders and groups can help to bring different members of a community together for disaster recovery (Cretney 2018) and protect grassroots community initiatives (Brandsen 2016; Lin, Kelemen, and Kiyomiya 2017). Working with different community groups can also be a way to deliberatively seek inclusion of marginalized communities (Hamideh 2020).

At the same time, it has also been pointed out that not all community groups or leaders will be seen as equally legitimate to disaster-affected communities. Dibley and colleagues (2019) recommend identifying place-based community groups that have already been involved with community development prior to disaster. It can also take time for local leaders to be identified in a community, and important to recognize that there may be existing leaders or new leaders after a disaster (Leadbeater 2013).





## Building government and recovery agency capacity to successfully engage with communities

There are skills that may be needed on the part of government officials or recovery agency officials who are looking to effectively engage with communities through CRCs. It has been suggested that government should build its own capacity to engage with communities in ways that will maximize community leadership, collaborating with communities as equal partners (O'Neill 2015). For this purpose, there is evidence to suggest that a broad skillset is required from government and recovery agency officials, with a need for 'people-focused' skills rather than traditional 'task focused' skills (Holmes 2011; O'Leary, Choi, and Gerard 2012). In *The Skill Set of the Successful Collaborator*, O'Leary, Choi and Gerard (2012) note key attributes and skills to include: being a good communicator, an excellent listener, adept at working with people, able to facilitate, negotiate, engage in collaborative problem solving, conflict resolution, consensus building and mediation. Further, it has been pointed out that government staff who are working to promote community-led recovery will need to be supported by directors and managers who are understanding and supportive of the goals of community engagement (Taylor and Goodman 2015). Grey literature has also emphasized that government staff need to be transparent with communities when shared decision-making is not feasible, identifying any 'non-negotiables' (i.e. budget, legislative requirements) from the beginning of the CRC process (IAP2 Australasia 2015; McAllan et al. 2011).

## Measuring progress

It is worth considering how recovery is understood and tracked in relation to CRCs and community engagement. Some general guidelines for measuring progress towards disaster recovery have paid particular attention to community-led recovery. In Australia, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for Disaster Recovery emphasizes the centrality of community-led processes to achieve a successful recovery, defined as achieving the outcome of a sustainable and resilient community (Verlin and Argyrous 2018). This framework provides an outline for assessing the extent to which the community-led principle is being actively incorporated in disaster recovery programs working towards this goal. A key evaluation question suggested by the M&E Framework (section 5.2.2) is 'How appropriately did the engagement process draw from the community to ensure the community was integral to the recovery process?' (Verlin and Argyrous 2018: 34). When CRCs are happening, it may be worth considering how to continuously draw on this question and evaluate how communities are being engaged in governance to ensure their say in the recovery process. It is also important to evaluate the extent to which the government follows through with recommendations made by CRCs – as highlighted by the case study below.

### Case study: Community Congress II (CCII) after Hurricane Katrina

Following Hurricane Katrina, 2500 New Orleans residents were brought together for a forum called Community Congress II (CCII), to discuss recovery and deliberate recommendations and ultimately inform the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) (Wilson, 2009). CCII had many positive outcomes: it served as a forum for rebuilding community connections, led to community members wanting to participate in more civic engagement, and influenced policy-making. In the end, the UNOP reflected the recovery recommendations from CCII and was endorsed by over 90% of CCII participants (Wilson 2009). However, after CCII, community members became concerned that 'their original plans were not being acted upon and felt that they no longer had involvement in planning the rebuilding process – suddenly they were no longer included' (Millen 2011: 8). There was not visible follow-through by the Office of Recovery Management, as 'the necessary institutional infrastructure for ongoing civic engagement in the recovery process had not been built' (Wilson 2009: 20). This ultimately led to an erosion of public trust – the 'halo' of CCII disappeared. This case highlights the importance of continuously reviewing community engagement as suggested by the M&E Framework, but further highlights the need to review the extent to which there is instructional infrastructure to facilitate community-led recovery and follow-through on decisions made in CRCs.



## COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEES - TIP SHEET

### AVOID

- Imposing unrealistic timeframes on communities
- Assuming individuals and communities will be available and willing to engage in CRCs
- Assuming that recovery will be linear and straightforward
- Recruiting participants in a way that does not account for potentially marginalized or under-resourced groups
- Engaging with communities in a 'tokenistic' way that does not allow for real influence in decision-making
- Hiding any agendas you know about from community members
- Asking for feedback if you're not planning on acting on it
- Promising the community more than can be delivered

### CONSIDER

- Remember that communities will be facing stress and may be limited in time and capacity to participate in CRCs
- Give communities time and space to consider how they would like to see CRCs carried out
- Work to understand community values and discussions that are already happening about recovery (i.e. through informal meetings) before starting CRCs
- Identify and work with local community leaders
- Incorporate deliberate strategies to include potentially marginalized or under-resourced groups in CRCs
- Understand the differences between a top-down 'consultation' and a participatory and deliberative democratic<sup>1</sup> CRC
- Be transparent with communities about any constraints or 'non-negotiables' that you know about (e.g. budgets, legislation)
- Recognize that consensus may not always be possible in CRCs and develop an agreed strategy for decision-making
- Remember that different communities may want to influence decision-making in different ways
- Monitor progress and continuously assess how communities are being engaged
- Find ways to foster long-term community-led recovery that will outlast CRCs

<sup>1</sup>Deliberative democracy involves partnering with the public in decision-making, using an inclusive process and careful review of information and discussion before reaching decisions that have genuine influence on outcomes.



## Further Resources

### Academic literature

While not CRC-specific, Mitchell (2019) has compiled a list of case studies exploring community-led recovery and coordination.

### Grey literature

The Red Cross has published a handbook of advice, written by CRC members, that draws on lessons learned in CRCs following the 2009 Victorian bushfires (McAllan et al. 2011).

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia has published a Guide to Engaging in Disaster Recovery that includes lessons on community-led recovery (IAP2 Australasia 2015).

In the US, the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) has published a report on community recovery with practical lessons for workers at all levels of government (FEMA 2011).

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**Citation: Leppold C, Gibbs L, Ireton G, Brady K. Community Recovery Committees in Post-Disaster Settings Factsheet. Victoria: University of Melbourne, May 2021.**



## APPENDIX B. SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR CRCS

**Citation:** Brady K, Gallagher HC, Gibbs L, Leppold C. (2021) Self-Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees. Victoria, Australia: University of Melbourne.

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# Self Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees

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May 2021







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Brady K, Gallagher HC, Gibbs L, Leppold C. Self Assessment Tool for Community Recovery Committees. Victoria, Australia: University of Melbourne; 2021.

Design by Alana Pirrone.

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## INTRODUCTION

Community-led recovery is recognised as being an integral element of successful and sustainable disaster recovery efforts<sup>1-4</sup>, and is a cornerstone of Australian disaster recovery principles<sup>5</sup>. This is reflected in national, state and territory and local recovery planning arrangements. However, in practice many recovery efforts do not fully activate community-led recovery approaches and governments often struggle to identify or provide the necessary structures and support to ensure their success.

Post disaster environments are marked by uncertainty, challenges and complexity. Community recovery committees (CRCs) are one mechanism to ensure that community priorities, voices and intentions are included in recovery efforts and help steer direction setting and resource allocation following disasters. It should be noted however that CRCs may not be community members' preferred mechanism for recovery, and even where they are wanted it may be too difficult for community members to participate due to disaster related stressors<sup>6</sup>. In communities where CRCs are formed, some time may pass between the disaster event and the formation of the committee.

Where CRCs do exist, they take place in a range of forms. There is no one structure for a CRC, and the support needs of different groups will vary based on a wide range of factors including committee goals, membership and locations.

The need for communities and CRCs to identify their requirements for support has been identified in both 'grey' literature and academic research<sup>7,8</sup>. This work tends to focus on why this is important, and processes to consider, such as community engagement techniques. There is limited material available which identifies the particular structures and support needs of CRCs to help guide CRC members and the organisations supporting them.

## PROJECT AIMS

The objective of this research was to examine ways in which governments can better support and enable communities to lead their own recovery after disaster events.

Initially, the proposed project scope was to focus on:

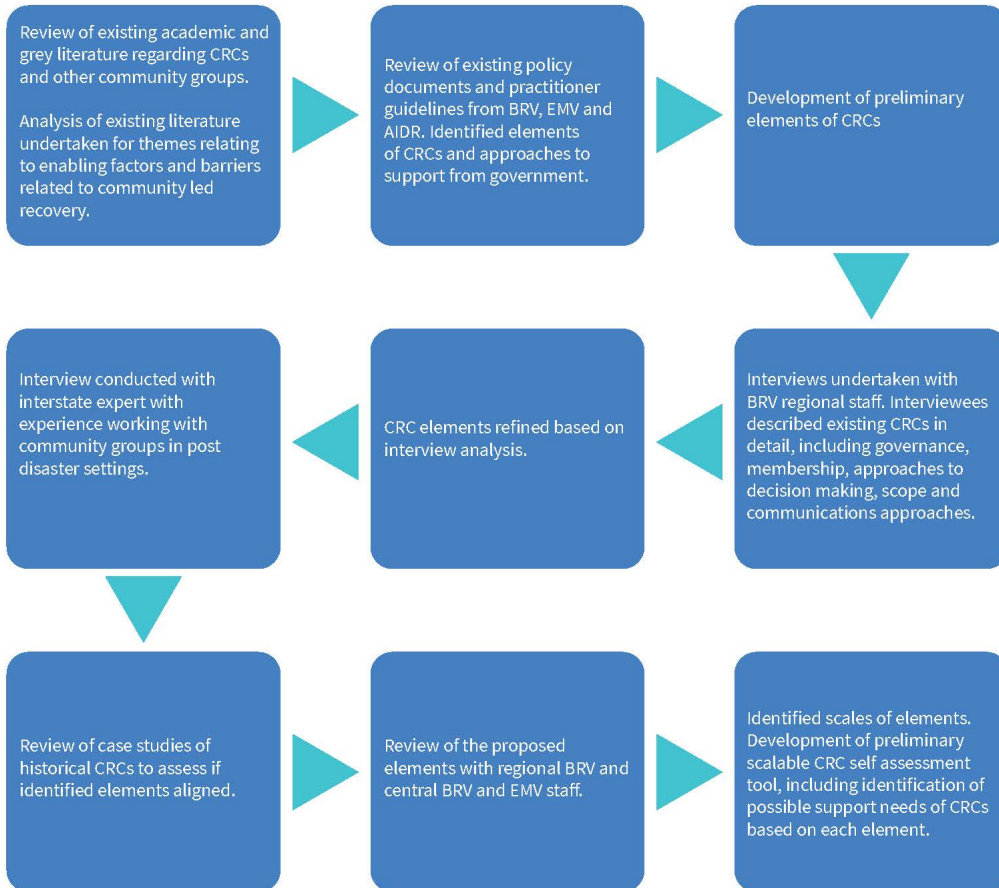
- How can government best leverage existing and emerging community organisations, structures and networks in post-disaster bushfire recovery?
- How can government best support community-led deliberative decision-making processes in post-disaster bushfire recovery?

The first part of the project was to undertake an analysis of community groups to identify how CRCs can accurately get information about how their community is recovering (for more information, see the final project report submitted to BNHCRC in May, 2021).

The second component of the project was to develop a scalable approach to identify how community groups, including CRCs, could be better supported into the future. This component was to build on the community-led approaches being implemented through Bushfire Recovery Victoria's (BRV) Recovery Framework for the eastern Victorian fires 2019-20 and to have practical application. This component of the project is detailed below.



## METHOD:





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## OUTPUTS:

The intention behind the scalable CRC tool is for communities to:

- Be supported to build a CRC structure that is most suitable for their community.
- Be provided with examples of support that may help them develop their preferred CRC model and achieve their goals.
- Develop clear expectations of the role of the CRC and how the committee intends to interact with supporting agencies, including government.

This tool can be used by:

- Community members who are trying to decide if a CRC would be suitable for them after a disaster.
- CRCs which have formed but are still unclear about their structure.
- Established CRCs which are looking to review their processes and support needs.

It is important to note that (at the time of this report) this portion of the project has not been tested with CRC members, local government and other stakeholders. It is intended to be tested with stakeholders before a final version is used in communities.



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## COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEE KEY ELEMENTS

Based on the analysis of the existing literature and interviews undertaken for this project, the below elements have been identified as important components of CRCs. These elements will look different for CRCs based on community needs and capacity.

### Formation and scope:

- Geographic scope of the CRC
- Issue scope of the CRC
- New committee or adaptation of pre-existing group
- Selection and appointment of the committee members
- Time between disaster event and formation of committee
- Committee approach to community representation

### Governance and decision making:

- Decision making role of group
- Decision making processes of group
- Governance structure
- Committee roles
- Set time limits for committee / or ongoing
- Set time limits for roles / or ongoing
- Financial responsibility of committee
- Legal status of committee
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning processes
- Access to subject matter experts

### Stakeholder engagement:

- Connections to government bodies
- Engagement with media
- Connections to elected officials
- Engagement with broader community
- Role of broader community in decision making
- Role of CRC in influencing decision making



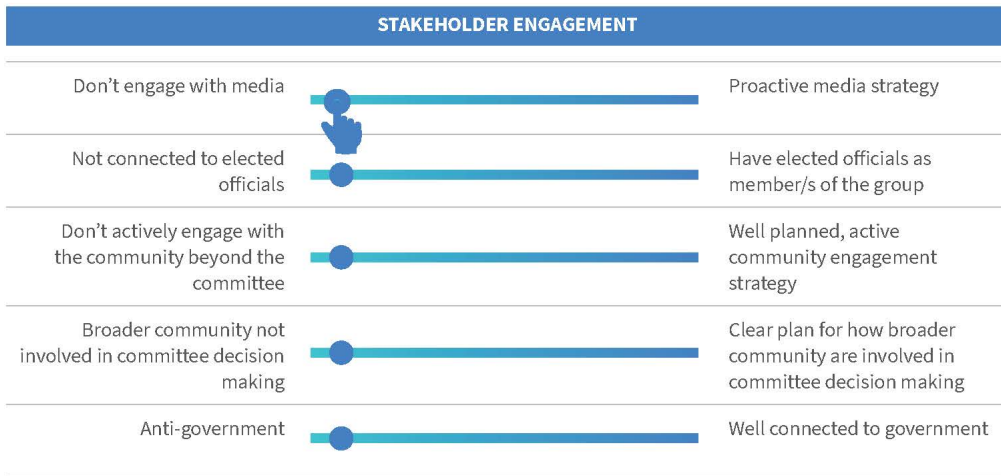
## COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEE SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL: STEP 1 – IDENTIFY THE PREFERRED MODEL

Disaster affected communities can use this tool to identify how particular elements of CRCs could be structured to best suit their community.

FORMATION AND SCOPE		
One well defined location		District level, multiple locations
Single issue focus		Whole of recovery focus
Pre-existing group		Completely new group
Self-appointed group		Formal election process
No clear objectives for the group		Clear, deliberate goals and parameters of the group
Do not manage projects		Manage all projects
Group formed / adapted very soon after the disaster event		Group formed / adapted some time after the disaster event
No financial responsibility		Complex financial responsibility
No legal status of group		Clear legal status of group



GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING		
Group will not exist beyond the planned government involvement		Group will exist beyond planned government involvement
Provide ideas and feedback only		Clear and defined decision making role
Loose, ad hoc group arrangement		Formal governance structure
Everyone does a bit of everything		Formal governance structure
No planned timeframe for the group		Clear sunset plan for the group
Individuals can stay in roles/the group for as long as they'd like		Clear set term for roles / individual members
No access to funds		Have funding, manage budgets
Diversity of group membership not prioritised		Diversity of group membership high priority
No planning around representing all sectors of the community within the committee		A core element of planning is consideration of whose voices in the community may be missing
No access to subject matter experts for advice / information on issues		Regularly request information from subject matter experts to help inform decision making
Committee may contribute to a recovery plan being organised by another organisation		Committee will develop its own recovery plan
No monitoring or evaluation processes		Monitoring and evaluation planning built in to all parts of the committees work.







## COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEE SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL: STEP 2 – IDENTIFY THE SUPPORTS NEEDED BY THE CRC

After completing step 1 to determine the elements of the CRC, committees can then use this tool to identify supports they may need to undertake their roles.

Please note that at the time of this report, these support needs are suggestions only and have not been tested with CRC members. It is intended that this would be tested with CRC members before this is finalised.

FORMATION AND SCOPE				
Examples of possible support needs			Examples of possible support needs	
Support to integrate the work of this CRC with other recovery plans in the area.	One well defined location		District level, multiple locations	Support to understand the impacts to the locations covered, venue to meet, transport.
Support to integrate the priorities of this committee into broader recovery plans.	Single issue focus		Whole of recovery focus	Support with planning. Access to subject matter experts. Support to develop sub committees.
Support to understand recovery context.	Pre-existing group		Completely new group	Facilitation of early meetings.
Community engagement planning support.	Self-appointed group		Formal election process	Support to undertake election process.
Planning support.	No clear objectives for the group		Clear, deliberate goals and parameters of the group	Planning support. Group facilitation.
Connections with project managers / groups who can manage the projects identified.	Do not manage projects		Manage all projects	Project management support. Administration support. Liaison point to local government.
Support to help plan and define the group as they may not have had time to do so.	Group formed / adapted very soon after the disaster event		Group formed / adapted some time after the disaster event	Support to identify / map how the CRC will connect to existing groups.
Auspice support	No financial responsibility		Complex financial responsibility	Accounting, budgeting, reconciliation support. Audit support.
Auspice support for grants or insurance.	No legal status of group		Clear legal status of group	Legal advice. Support to establish group legally.



**GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING**

Examples of possible support needs			Examples of possible support needs
Support to plan for conclusion of committee.	Group will not exist beyond the planned government involvement		Group will exist beyond planned government involvement
Liaison points to other recovery planning groups.	Ideas and feedback only group		Clear and defined decision making role
Project and administration support.	Loose, ad hoc group arrangement		Formal governance structure
Support to plan regarding group objectives.	No planned timeframe for the group		Clear sunset plan for the group
Support to help identify burn out and fatigue	Individuals can stay in the group for as long as they'd like.		Clear set term for roles / individual members
Auspice support for grants.	No access to funds		Have funding, manage budgets
Support to develop community engagement plans.	Diversity of group membership not prioritised		Diversity of group membership high priority
Support to develop community engagement plans.	No planning around 'missing voices' within the committee		Consideration of whose voices in the community may be missing a core element of planning.
Information provision about key issues the committee will be working on. Connections with historical CRCs to learn about how they made decisions.	No plans to access subject matter experts for advice / information on issues		Regularly request information from subject matter experts to help inform decision making
Support to connect to broader recovery planning processes.	Committee may contribute to a recovery plan being organised by another organisation		Committee will develop a recovery plan
Support to review work.	No monitoring or evaluation processes.		Monitoring and evaluation planning built in to all parts of the committees' work.



**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Examples of possible support needs			Examples of possible support needs
Liaison point to direct media queries.	Don't engage with media		Proactive media strategy Media training.
Liaison point to connect with elected officials.	Not connected to elected officials		Have elected officials as member/s of the group Support to manage bipartisan engagement.
Support to develop community engagement plans.	Don't actively engage with the community beyond the committee		Well planned, active community engagement strategy Support to enact community engagement plans.
Support to develop community engagement plans. Support to document decision making processes to promote transparency.	Broader community not involved in committee decision making		Clear plan for how broader community are involved in committee decision making Support to enact community engagement plans. Support to develop and document decision making processes. Support for monitoring, evaluation and learning plans.
Connections to non-government agencies who may be able to provide support.	Anti-government		Well connected to government Liaison points to government agencies.



## COMMUNITY RECOVERY COMMITTEE SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL: STEP 3 – MAKE A PLAN FOR THE COMMITTEE SUPPORT NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Based on the above components, CRC members will be able to use the information they have generated about how their CRC will work to develop a plan for support needs and as a way to discuss expectations between government and the CRC. Building a plan based on these points will help CRC members have a structure for their group and will provide clarity to the groups working to support them.

Please note that at the time of this report, this plan template is an untested suggestion. It is intended that this would be tested with CRC members before this is finalised.

CRC element	Support needs	Expectation and intention statements of the CRC
<p><b>Geographic scope:</b> We will represent the communities in x, y and z suburbs.</p>	<p>We request the assistance of a state government regional recovery officer to come to our meetings once a month so that we can connect to the broader recovery plans of the area.</p>	<p>We expect that when the government is making plans that affect x, y and z suburbs recovery efforts that we will be included at the beginning of the planning process.</p>
<p><b>Appointment of committee members:</b> We will undertake an independent election for the committee members.</p>	<p>We request the assistance of the state electoral commission to undertake the election process.</p>	<p>We will notify the state and local government of the election dates, the names and roles of the people elected and the first meeting dates.</p>
<p><b>Duration of committee membership:</b> Each committee member role will be for two years, with the option for members to nominate for re-election for another term.</p>	<p>We request advice from subject matter experts who regarding fatigue/ burn-out prevention for our committee members.</p> <p>We also request support to connect with people who have been committee members on other CRCs to seek advice regarding maintaining well-being while a CRC committee member and advice in transitioning responsibility between members.</p>	<p>We intend to plan committee member transitions six months ahead of time. We would like support from local government and other supporting agencies to assist us to make these transitions as smooth as possible, and to provide additional support as needed to new committee members.</p>



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