

# SCOPING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE



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## SCOPING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE THROUGH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) IN NORTHERN TERRITORY REMOTE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

The need for effective emergency response in remote Aboriginal communities in Northern Australia is widely acknowledged and in many places seen as immediate. Everywhere around the world, there is emphasis on ensuring community resilience to environmental change and natural disasters. A community based model of emergency response brings with a big commitment to listen to the people and build on their knowledge, experiences and preferences. Research practitioners from the Aboriginal Research Practitioners' Network (ARPN<sup>1</sup>) use simple participatory tools from the ARPN<sup>1</sup> Dilly Bag<sup>2</sup> to create 'comfortable spaces' for people in the community to tell a "strong story" which can be the basis for developing genuinely community driven models of emergency response.

Other organisations involved in different parts of the project include NAILSMA and RIEL who will draw expertise from other departments including the Northern Institute to do other aspects of the project.

Two medium sized communities will be involved in the study. Research in both communities will be led by experienced community based Aboriginal PAR practitioners. Each will lead a group of 8-10 Aboriginal research practitioners who are also experienced in the use of PAR and questionnaires. There is a possibility to extend this project to other regions of Northern Australia. Talking to the community, finding out what they think of hazards, finding out how they respond to hazards, what plans they have made and how they feel about safety is crucial for community based adaptation and resilience. The Aboriginal practitioners will ask people to think about



- ❑ Two key Aboriginal organizations (ARPN<sup>1</sup> and NAILSMA) in Northern Australia are involved in the project.
- ❑ Competent community based research teams comprising men and women who will receive pre-project training.
- ❑ The participatory approach and tools used in the project emphasizes the importance of process and makes sure to use tools that enable local people to feel their voice is being heard.
- ❑ Links to other organizations, like NAILSMA, RIEL, researchers and projects under the Northern Bushfires Hub ensure that communities get the benefit of a wide array of expertise and data.



- ❑ Bushfires and natural hazards, are they really hazards for us mob?
- ❑ Are you vulnerable when there is a hazard... Depends on where you are maybe worse in community than outstation what do you think?
- ❑ Are there any stories about bush fires and hazards that you know?
- ❑ Do we know what to do...of course we have our knowledge but maybe we should find out what them other mob have been planning?
- ❑ Are there any emergency plans ... what's an emergency plan anyway, what's it say?
- ❑ Who should people go to about this emergency plan, is it government mob or our old people?

"Emergency response is important to community living in remote areas. As Indigenous people we look first to our knowledge, to our stories to find out what to do. Our elders, they know about hazards and in Old man time we have stories about how our people responded to hazards. Most families in outstation still follow the old ways, but in the community it is different story. That's one way, but we also know there is another way, the government way. It is important that the story come out, Aboriginal people look at bushfire and natural hazards different way from Balanda<sup>3</sup> and government mob (Aboriginal Focus group meeting, March 2014)

### CONTACT US!

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1. <http://vimeo.com/73684355>

2.

<http://riel.cdu.edu.au/blog/2013/11/arpnet-dilly-bag-in-ngukurr-video-released/>

3. Non-Aboriginal people

ARPN<sup>1</sup> research practitioners are community based Aboriginal researchers who use a variety of PRA tools and questionnaires to conduct research.



ARPNet