Comprehensive School Safety: A participatory approach to bushfire emergency management planning in schools

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The recently developed UN-level Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) framework (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2014) provides a detailed and coordinated approach to reducing all hazard risks to the education sector.

The CSS provides a guiding framework that can be customised to the Australian school setting to facilitate the development of a participatory approach to bushfire emergency management planning in schools.

Within the Australian school setting there is currently no nationally co-ordinated approach to the teaching of disaster resilience education (DRE) or the delivery of student centred, participatory disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs.

The CSS outlines that school safety rests on three pillars:
- Pillar 1 - Safe learning facilities
- Pillar 2 - School disaster management
- Pillar 3 - Risk reduction and resilience education

RESEARCH AIMS
1. Using the CSS framework as a template, develop innovative, evidence based approach to integrating DRE and bushfire emergency management planning in schools.
2. Develop a data-driven policy and practice framework that enables a systematic and nationwide approach to scaled, sustainable implementation of bushfire safety programs in schools.
3. Design a participatory, methodology for site specific school emergency management planning, which enables schools to better prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from the impacts of bushfire.

The development of a participatory approach to bushfire emergency management in schools, and the adoption of a school safety framework specifically designed for the Australian school setting has the potential to enable schools to better prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from the impacts of bushfire.