COMMUNITY-LED BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS IN ACTION: THE CASE OF BE READY WARRANDYTE

A case study for the Out of Uniform: building community resilience through non-traditional volunteering project

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Be Ready Warrandyte
LIVING WITH BUSHFIRE RISK

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ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This report is an output of the *Out of Uniform: building community resilience through non-traditional emergency volunteering* project. This three-year project is being undertaken by researchers at the Centre for Risk and Community Safety at RMIT University as a part of the research program of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre.

The project has three key objectives:

1. To identify how non-traditional emergency volunteering contributes to building community resilience to disasters throughout different phases of emergency management.

2. To identify ways the emergency management sector in Australia and New Zealand can promote community resilience through support of non-traditional emergency volunteering.

3. To develop and evaluate alternative models for emergency volunteering in Australia and New Zealand that are inclusive of non-traditional volunteering and volunteering organisations.

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STATEMENT FROM THE PROJECT CHAIR

Dick Davies, *Chair, Be Ready Warrandyte. President, Warrandyte Community Association Inc., VIC*

Warrandyte, miraculously, did not go up in smoke on Black Saturday in 2009. However, we were uncomfortably aware that we need to be better prepared in the future. 'Be Ready Warrandyte' began with the aim of getting most households in 'Greater Warrandyte' to have an effective fire plan.

We adopted the tagline 'Living with Bushfire Risk' to emphasise that this was not a scare campaign but another rational insurance decision for people who choose to live in a bushfire prone area. Just as we have house, car and medical insurance, we should have a fire plan.

In the event, we covered a lot of ground – creating a 'toolkit' to assist residents with planning, and holding events to showcase emergency service operations and advice in a populist manner. Our video, 'Do you have a Fire Plan?' went viral globally, even getting a hit in Afghanistan!

The campaign has demonstrated how communities can work in harmony with emergency services and local government to achieve a measurable success. As a council officer put it: "People from agencies came along as *representatives of* rather than *representing* their organisation." As invited guests in a community endeavour, this changed the dynamic enabling frank and open discussion.

Despite reservations that it confused the 'leave early' message, our coverage of bunkers was well received by those who were building them anyway and wanted information. Our coverage of heatwave anticipated the next wave of emergency messaging.

Whilst many things were a success - the campaign was rewarded with three 'Fire Awareness Awards' - we learned from our activities. We would do several things differently now, in the light of our experiences. Nevertheless, it is pleasing that other rural communities are adopting some of our initiatives.

As Chair of 'Be Ready Warrandyte', it was the greatest pleasure to work with so many informed and creative professionals and volunteers who were all so committed to helping our community. I thank them all for the vision, energy and inspiration they brought to the campaign.

KEY MESSAGES

- Be Ready Warrandyte was an award-winning, community-led bushfire preparedness project coordinated by the Warrandyte Community Association. It involved a high degree of collaboration between community volunteers, local governments and the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

- Be Ready was predominantly seen by its participants as an effective vehicle for sharing responsibility in bushfire preparedness and to have struck a good balance between complementing emergency management organisation (EMO) community safety approaches while also challenging and influencing them.

- Participants felt there had been a general increase in the level of bushfire planning amongst local residents over the term of the Be Ready project.

- Participants also felt Be Ready has shown the emergency management sector alternative ways to communicate with communities, and that it provides a proof of concept of the value of community-led initiatives.

- Be Ready demonstrates how community groups can do things that governments cannot.

- The project was strengthened by a well-functioning committee with strong and skilled leadership, professional project management support, a long-term goal strongly supported by all committee members, a sound governance structure and good ideas.

- Community safety risks of EMOs not supporting community initiatives may be greater than the legal risks of being involved. Community-led initiatives may reduce the potential for government liability because they increase community ownership of risk and its consequences.

- Gaps and limitations identified in the project largely reflected different views on the best way to achieve the project's goal rather than any fundamental weaknesses in its approach.

- Some care needs to be taken to recognize and value the impacts of community-led initiatives appropriately. In particular, to recognise and value the benefits that may accrue at the community level as well as at the household level.

- Overall, participants felt that the 'time is right' to pursue closer engagement and partnership between EMOs and community groups. Some made suggestions about organisational changes in EMOs to improve their support for paid staff and volunteers to develop this engagement.

- The processes and outcomes of community-led initiatives are likely to be very idiosyncratic from a state government perspective and not necessarily reflective of EMO priorities. An important aspect of participating in community-led initiatives for EMO personnel may be a willingness to "agree to disagree" with community members – within limits – while also challenging community-based ideas and activities with their emergency management expertise.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Be Ready Warrandyte was an award-winning, community-led bushfire preparedness project coordinated by the Warrandyte Community Association between May 2012 and June 2015. Its goal was "to have more Warrandyte households with effective bushfire plans". The project involved a high degree of collaboration between local community volunteers, local governments and the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

This report presents key findings from a case study of the project. It provides insights into the potential benefits, opportunities, and challenges for community-led initiatives in emergency preparedness that are suggested by the 'on-the-ground' experiences of Be Ready participants.

METHODOLOGY

Data was collected primarily from ten interviews conducted with community volunteers and paid representatives of emergency management organisations (EMOs) that were involved with BRW. This was supplemented by additional secondary data and participant observations by the first author throughout the three years of the project.

THE PROJECT

The initial impetus for the Be Ready Warrandyte project ('Be Ready') came from Community Fireguard leaders and a local CFA brigade captain who were concerned about the low level of bushfire planning amongst residents following the community's near miss on Black Saturday and who felt that the CFA's messaging was not penetrating well into the local community.

Members on the project's committee of management included community volunteers from WCA, Community Fireguard leaders, local CFA fire brigade captains, paid staff from the emergency management departments of two Councils, community safety personnel from two CFA Districts and representatives from DPCD. The committee contracted a local project management business – The Good Work Group – to help coordinate the project.

Volunteers on the committee were predominantly older, professionally skilled, long-term residents, with past leadership experience, a high level of bushfire risk awareness, and an ongoing commitment to community service and voluntary work. Paid EMO staff on the committee actively contributed to the project and strongly represented it within their own organisations.

Be Ready undertook a diverse range of locally-targeted activities including: a community survey, a web page to communicate with the local community, a humorous video on bushfire planning, localised communication materials, three interactive Bushfire Scenario Planning workshops, interactive sample fire plans, a public forum on fire bunkers and a tour of local bunkers, and a project on potential conflicts in bushfire and heat wave messaging.

BENEFITS AND IMPACTS

Overall, Be Ready Warrandyte was portrayed as an effective vehicle for sharing responsibility in bushfire preparedness that had community safety benefits reaching beyond its specific goal and beyond its local community. Its participants felt it had struck a good balance between focusing on meeting community goals and needs while also respecting the established emergency management system, and between seeking to complement EMO community safety approaches while also challenging and influencing them.

A number of participants felt there had been a general increase in the level of bushfire planning amongst local residents over the term of the Be Ready project. This included an increase in the percentage of people who left the area following the fire event in February 2014 compared to an earlier local fire in February 2013. This assessment was based on information gathered in two community surveys and through informal, on-the-spot surveys conducted by Be Ready Warrandyte at the Warrandyte Festival following each of the fires.

Some participants did question the longevity and extent of Be Ready Warrandyte's impact on people's bushfire planning, reflecting the same kinds of challenges that EMO community engagement projects face.

Participants saw a number of community level benefits arise from Be Ready, as well as impacts on broader emergency management thinking and practice. Importantly, Be Ready was able to "*operate between the official message and the practical systems*". It adapted government communications for local conditions, connected further into the community, devised and tested more innovative approaches, led discussion on topics that needed independence from perceptions of government bias or agenda (e.g. fire bunkers), and brought local contexts, priorities, goals and knowledge into emergency management dialogues and planning.

Participants also felt that Be Ready has shown EMOs alternative ways to communicate with communities, and that it has provided a proof of concept of the value of community-led initiatives.

STRENGTHS AND ENABLERS

The project was strengthened by a well-functioning committee with strong and skilled leadership, professional project management support, a long-term goal strongly supported by all committee members, a sound governance structure, and good ideas. This underpinned the committee's ability to be innovative while maintaining focus on a clear purpose, respecting and encompassing differences of opinion, and avoiding political or personal agendas influencing its direction.

Important enablers for the project were: the social context of Warrandyte, particularly its skilled and community-minded population; the Warrandyte Community Association's respected position in the community; the impact of Black Saturday; and the impact of the CFA's Community Fireguard program.

CHALLENGES, RISKS AND LIMITATIONS

While participants recognised sustainability challenges associated with community-led projects, Be Ready was able to sustain activity and commitment from its participants over three years.

Two broad community safety risks for this type of project were identified: 1) giving out information that is incorrect or pursuing bad and untested ideas, and 2) inadvertently creating community reliance that is beyond the capacity of a community group to meet (e.g. providing community warnings). However, these risks were largely alleviated in Be Ready's case by seeking EMO input, engaging with skilled volunteers as-needed, carefully developing communication materials, and through the committee's willingness to learn.

The potential for personal liability of committee members was a project risk. It was reduced by ensuring information given was sound and well-supported by all committee members, having appropriate insurance, and issuing disclaimers.

While EMO representatives on the committee had considered liability, they did not have significant concerns about it. One suggested that community-based initiatives may reduce the potential for government liability because they increase community ownership of risk and its consequences. There was also a broad feeling that community groups could do things that governments could not, in part because they do not have the same fear of liability.

A number of project gaps and limitations were also identified. They largely reflected different views on the best way to achieve the project's goal rather than any fundamental weaknesses identified in its approach. There had been relatively little criticism from members of the community, however participants did report criticisms about "*they don't do anything*", "*scaremongering*" and "*why can't you tell me what I'm supposed to do?*"

ARISING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Be Ready demonstrated how a community-led project that had strong leadership and governance, was authorized by the local community and thoughtfully supported by EMO representatives was able to bridge a number of gaps: between government and community, between centralized and localised planning and communication, and between formal or official and informal or grassroots action.

However, reflection on its experiences also suggests the risk of a mismatch developing between the levels at which the community safety benefits of community-led initiatives are expected to accrue (e.g. at the household level) and where many of their benefits may actually accrue (at the community level). Some care therefore needs to be taken to recognize and value the contributions of community-led initiatives appropriately.

Participants indicated that the 'time is right' to pursue closer engagement and partnership between EMOs and community groups, and that the CFA in particular was already moving this way. However, organisational changes were also suggested to improve EMO support for paid staff and volunteers to develop this engagement: longer-term planning, structures for engagement that representatives can work confidently within, recruitment and training of staff and volunteers specifically for community engagement and planning, and striving to develop organisational cultures that are more supportive of community engagement. Participants also indicated that some of these internal changes had already begun.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents key findings from a case study of Be Ready Warrandyte (BRW): a community-led bushfire preparedness project that was undertaken by the Warrandyte Community Association between May 2012 and June 2015. The project was described as:

> *"A self-help, community-led project to develop tools and resources to help our community to be safer and more able to deal with the risk of bushfires. The project's goal is to have more Warrandyte households with effective bushfire plans".* [1]

Be Ready Warrandyte is notable for being an award-winning, community-led preparedness project, and for involving a high degree of collaboration between local community volunteers, local government and the Country Fire Authority (CFA), all of which were represented on its committee of management. It is an example of a key type of non-traditional emergency volunteering: extending volunteerism.

In the context of the *Out of Uniform* project, non-traditional emergency volunteering is any type of volunteering that is: 1) focused on emergency prevention, preparedness, response, or recovery, and; 2) involves volunteers who are not traditional emergency volunteers affiliated with established emergency management organisations (EMOs). [1]

Extending volunteerism occurs when a voluntary organisation that does not have an emergency or disaster management role extends its activities into that area in response to an event or an increase in risk awareness [2]. This is the case for the Warrandyte Community Association (WCA) whose primary goal is to "promote community life" and "defend the character and heritage of the township" [3].

The goal of this case study was to better understand the key characteristics, processes, activities and outcomes of the Be Ready Warrandyte project. It was not intended as a project evaluation. It did not seek to objectively assess the project's success. Rather, it sought to learn from the experiences and perspectives of those involved in the project. It therefore provides insights into the potential opportunities and challenges for undertaking community-led initiatives through 'extending volunteerism' in emergency preparedness that are suggested by the 'on-the-ground' experiences of Be Ready Warrandyte participants.

The findings will be valuable for emergency management organisations that are moving towards more localised, community-based and partnership approaches to community safety and engagement.

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[1] Note that for the purposes of this project, 'emergency management organisation' (EMO) refers to all governmental and non-governmental organisations that have formal responsibilities in any phase of emergency management.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this case study was collected primarily from ten key informant interviews conducted by the first author in late 2014 and early 2015. This was supplemented by additional secondary data from:

- Minutes of Be Ready Warrandyte committee meetings
- Other Be Ready Warrandyte documentation including the project web page, and the report of a community baseline survey
- Relevant CFA documents and reports

The first author was a member of the project's original committee of management, and her participant observations throughout the three years of the project also underpin this case study.

Key informants were predominantly members of the Be Ready Warrandyte committee of management, and they had a range of affiliations and associations relevant to the project (note that quite a number of participants had multiple affiliations and associations):

- Eight people were current or former members of the Be Ready Warrandyte committee of management while two were associated with the project in non-committee roles.

- Five people participated in Be Ready Warrandyte as volunteers, while four participated as a part of a paid role and one had dual volunteer/paid roles.

- Six people were local residents.

- Six people had emergency management experience, four in community safety, one in an operational role and one in both of these areas.

- Four people were actively affiliated with an EMO at the time of interviewing (one with a Council, three with the CFA), while two had former affiliations with EMOs. In addition, two people had consulted privately to an EMO at some time.

Interviews were semi-structured, following the same loose structure but with specific questions tailored to the particular involvement of each participant. The interviews focused on the key topics laid out in this case report. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed (e.g. copied into a written format), and returned to the participant for review. Interview data was then collated and organized according to a) predetermined topics of interest to the research, and b) key emergent themes.

Data is attributed to participants throughout this report using participant IDs comprising a randomly assigned number followed by a W (for Warrandyte residents) and/or EM (for those with an emergency management background), e.g. 04W, 09EM, 08W-EM. All references to interview data in this report have been reviewed by each participant to ensure their views are represented accurately.

Note that approval for this research was obtained from the Human Ethics Advisory Network of RMIT's College of Science, Engineering and Health on 10th November 2014.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Key characteristics of Be Ready Warrandyte as a case of non-traditional emergency volunteering are provided in Table 1 and Table 2. The project's setting, formation, activities and volunteers are also described in more detail below.

Case dimensions	
Size	Average of 12 members on project committee and approximately 20-30 additional ad-hoc volunteers.
Time	May 2012 - June 2015 (Planning begun In August 2011)
Scale of operation	Local
Hazard/ emergency type	Bushfire/ heat wave
Risk sphere	Preparedness
Catalyst	Community's 'near miss' in Victorian 2009 bushfires combined with Community Fireguard leader's concern about low levels of risk awareness in the community and about CFA messaging not penetrating well into the community.
Instigator/s	Individual community members – Community Fireguard leaders with support from local CFA fire brigade captain.
Purpose and mode	
Type of organisation	Extending
Primary goal	"to have more Warrandyte households with effective bushfire plans"
Primary volunteer activities	Direct project activities through management committee Develop a 'toolbox' of preparedness and awareness raising tools tailored to the local community
Mode of volunteering	In person; management committee
Volunteer accreditation and training	None required
Recipients	Households, residents and businesses in the Greater Warrandyte area

TABLE 1: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BE READY WARRANDYTE: DIMENSIONS, PURPOSE AND MODE OF DELIVERY

Organisational structure	
Structure	Formal – sub-committee of the Warrandyte Community Association
Legal status	Warrandyte Community Association is an Incorporated Association
Associations with other groups and organisations	Representation on the project committee: Country Fire Authority (local brigades and District community safety), Manningham City Council, Shire of Nillumbik
	Contracted protect managers: The Good Work Group
	Community support/involvement: The Warrandyte Diary newspaper, Warrandyte Community Church, Warrandyte IGA, Warrandyte High School, Warrandyte Theatre Company, Warrandyte Festival Committee
	Other: Park Orchards Residents Association (PORA), Random Hacks of Kindness, Bushfire CRC/ RMIT University, Emergency Management Victoria
Funding sources	Primary: Department of Planning and Community Development's Fire Ready Communities grant (One year grant to late 2013)
	Additional: Manningham City Council, Shire of Nillumbik, Warrandyte Community Market Committee, Warrandyte Community Bank
Governance	Formal governance structure established including project management committee, code of conduct, insurance coverage, and privacy policy. All committee meetings formally minuted.
Volunteers	
Demographics	Generally older, often retired professionals, long-term residents, highly skilled, high risk awareness, high level of community service
Selection criteria	No specific criteria. Volunteers with skills, experience and qualification actively recruited from within the local community; availability and willingness
Primary recruitment method	Direct engagement through informal social networks and through WCA membership and networks
Membership	Residents of Greater Warrandyte area, particularly WCA members, local CFA brigade members, and initially Community Fireguard leaders
Geographical base	Greater Warrandyte area approximating 3113 postcode area (Warrandyte, North Warrandyte and parts of South Warrandyte, Park Orchards and Wonga Park).
Time commitment	Committee members – initially fortnightly then monthly meetings; other ad-hoc roles as needed for events and specific projects
	Ad-hoc volunteers – as needed for particular projects

TABLE 2: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BE READY WARRANDYTE: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND VOLUNTEERS

SETTING

The geographic focus of Be Ready Warrandyte was the Greater Warrandyte area on the north-eastern outskirts of Melbourne, which includes the suburbs of Warrandyte and North Warrandyte, as well as parts of South Warrandyte, Wonga Park and Park Orchards (approximating the 3113 postcode area).

This area straddles the Yarra River, with Warrandyte located on its southern side and North Warrandyte on its northern side. Greater Warrandyte is also divided by a number of administrative boundaries aligned with the river. Most notably, Warrandyte is located within Manningham City Council and CFA District 13. North Warrandyte is located in Nillumbik Shire Council and CFA District 14. Three CFA fire brigades serve this area – one located in each of North Warrandyte, Warrandyte, and South Warrandyte.

The combined populations of Warrandyte and North Warrandyte state suburbs for census purposes, which approximately corresponds to the area of activity of Be Ready Warrandyte, is around 8,500 (see Table 3). This equates to over 2,600 households. It is a relatively wealthy area, with median weekly household incomes significantly higher than for the state of Victoria ($2,164 and $2,026 compared to $1,216) [4]. It is also a slightly older community (median age of 40 compared to the 37 for Victoria), with a higher percentage of family households (86.8% compared to 71.2% for Victoria).

	North Warrandyte [5]	Warrandyte [6]	Total
Population	2,954	5,520	8,474
Median age	40	40	40
Private dwellings	946	1732	2,678
Family households	817 (86.3%)	1,507 (87.0%)	2,324 (86.8%)
Median weekly household income	$2,165	$2,026	N/A

TABLE 3: GREATER WARRANDYTE POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD STATISTICS

The Greater Warrandyte area is assessed under the Victorian Risk Register as having an Extreme bushfire risk due to "the combination of high fuel loads in the surrounding forest parks, homes nestled into bushland, the hilly terrain and a lack of accessibility with few major roads and narrow unmade local roads" [7].

This area has a long history of bushfire, with major events impacting it in 1851, 1939 and 1962. There have also been a number of recent local fire events:

- 7th February 2009 - It was threatened in the Victorian 2009 ('Black Saturday') bushfires that killed 173 people.

- 11th January 2013 –a large grass fire began in Kangaroo Ground near to North Warrandyte, burning around 20 hectares.

- 14th January 2014 – a medium sized grass and scrub fire started in nearby Kangaroo Ground that had the potential to threaten North Warrandyte.

- 9th February 2014 - a fire that started in south west Warrandyte resulted in the loss of 3 houses and burnt over 10 hectares [8], [9]

The CFA's Community Fireguard program is strong in Greater Warrandyte, with a number of established groups active in the area. Community Fireguard is a program in which neighbours work in groups with CFA facilitation and training to increase their risk awareness and improve their household bushfire planning. One participant in this case study emphasized that the state-wide CFA-led program actually has its roots in an initiative begun by a local Landcare group in North Warrandyte (05W-EM).

FORMATION AND PURPOSE

The initial impetus for the Be Ready Warrandyte project came from two Community Fireguard leaders, supported by a local CFA brigade captain, who were concerned about the low level of bushfire preparedness in the area following Warrandyte's 'near miss' in the Black Saturday bushfires. The project instigators also felt that CFA's community safety communications were not penetrating well into the local community (03W, 05W-EM).

The group spearheaded a successful proposal for funding from the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development's (DPCD) Fire Ready Communities grant. They approached the Warrandyte Community Association (WCA) to become the lead organisation for the project as it had run a number of well-attended community meetings following Black Saturday. The WCA also took the view that "bushfire was something that affected the whole community so it was appropriate for a community association" (04W).

A management committee was established as a sub-committee of the WCA to oversee a program of local preparedness activities. Chaired by the WCA's president, original committee members included community volunteers from WCA, Community Fireguard leaders, and two local CFA fire brigade captains. The committee also included paid staff from the emergency management departments of the two relevant Councils, community safety personnel from the two CFA Districts and representatives from DPCD. The initial committee comprised 23 members (11 volunteers and 12 paid EMO and DPCD representatives).[1]

The committee determined that paid project management was needed and it contracted a local project management business that specializes in services to not-for-profits – The Good Work Group. The committee then set up governance arrangements, including insurance, a code of conduct and a privacy policy.

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KEY ACTIVITIES

Over three years Be Ready Warrandyte undertook a number of awareness-raising and fire planning activities targeted to the local population:

- Conducted a baseline survey to assess the level of community awareness and knowledge in regard to bushfire safety preparedness [10]. The survey results informed Be Ready Warrandyte's suite of preparedness activities.[2]

- Set up a web page to communicate with the local community and to share locally-relevant preparedness resources and information that featured customized apps for local conditions (http://warrandyte.org.au/fire/).

- Created a "light-hearted video on bushfire planning with a serious message" titled 'Do you have a fire plan?' [11]. Produced with the Warrandyte Theatre Company, it has been viewed over 11,000 times on You Tube (https://youtu.be/jty_99L5eJA)

- Facilitated three interactive Bushfire Scenario Planning workshops that involved representatives from CFA, Victoria Police, Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment and Primary Industry.

- Developed interactive sample fire plans for households with children, pets, and those living alone.

- Conducted two activities focused on the issue of private fire bunkers: a public forum ('Bunkers or Bunkum?') and a tour of local bunkers.

- Undertook a pilot project on potential conflicts in bushfire and heat wave messaging [12].

- Held a final event to celebrate the project and thank participants and supporters.

Additional activities undertaken by the project are listed below in the project timeline (see Table 4 over page). A more detailed list of activities is available in the project's final report [13].

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[2] Note that the authors of this report analysed and reported on the survey results.

August 2011	• Initial planning for proposal to DPCD Fire Ready Communities gr program by Community Fireguard leaders begun
March 2012	• Grant from DPCD approved
May 2012	• Project formally launched
September 2012	• Household survey conducted
December 2012	• Random Hacks of Kindness engaged
January 2013	• Grass fire at Kangaroo Ground
February 2013	• "Do you have a fire plan?" – a humorous educational video produced with local theatre association and released on Youtube
March 2013	• Conducted an informal poll on what people did during the January fire at the Warrandyte Festival
May 2013	• Pilot Scenario Planning event held • Warrandyte Fire Watch app developed
August 2013	• CFA Community Engagement & Fire Awareness Forum in Bendigo – presented "Do you have a fire plan?" video •
September 2013	• Updated Sample fire plan released • Bunkers or Bunkum"? forum held
November 2013	• Scenario planning event – *What if it's Warrandyte?*" • BRW wins a High Commendation at the Resilient Australia Awards
Dec ember 2013	• Formal report on the project submitted to DPCD • WCA won three awards at Fire Awareness Awards - for Excellence; Media and Communications; Community Preparedness.
January 2014	• Grass fire at Kangaroo Ground threatens North Warrandyte
February 2014	• Fire in south west Warrandyte destroys three homes • "Warrandyte: What did you do?" A post-fire community fire • BRW facilitated for the CFA to attend a meeting with the Goldfields traders to assist them with their business bushfire planning
March 2014	• Conducted a second informal fire poll at the Warrandyte Festival – and hosted the CFA's 'Captain Koala' show. • Warrandyte Fire Community Survey conducted by Community Capability team of CFA's Eastern Metropolitan Region • "A great place to live" cartoon video released on Youtube
September 2014	• Tour of local bunkers • Representatives of Wonga Park and Park Orchards join committee
October 2014	• Received Bendigo Bank grant to update sample fire plans • Scenario planning event – *Are You Ready?*"
Late 2014	• Assisted Councils with 'New Residents Kits' and visitor information • Partnered with Random Hacks of Kindness to develop a 'What's the plan?' app to enable residents to write a personalised fire plan • Heatwave project launched
January 2015	• Release of 'leave early' videos by Warrandyte High School VCE students • Updated sample fire plans released
May 2015	• Presentation on BRW made at the Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management conference
June 2015	• Heat wave project concluded • Final celebration of the project with project supporters • Project closed and website maintenance handed over to WCA • Pictorial project report released (Snapfish report)
July 2015	• Final report on the heat wave project released • Final Be Ready Warrandyte project report released

TABLE 4: BE READY WARRANDYTE PROJECT TIMELINE

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers on the Be Ready committee of management included Community Fireguard leaders (early in the project), volunteers from WCA, and volunteers from CFA brigades. In general, volunteers on the committee were predominantly older, professionally skilled, long-term residents, with past leadership experience, a high level of bushfire risk awareness, and an ongoing commitment to community service and voluntary work. A number were recognised community leaders with strong political connections, including past and present elected Councillors and a former Mayor.

A number of participants commented on the very high collective capacities of the volunteers on the committee, describing them variously as people "who have held senior positions in organisations" (07EM) and as "very capable " (07EM), "very strong people" who "knew their stuff" (09EM), "incredibly smart, clever, creative, community-minded people" (10W), "movers and shakers" (02EM), and with assessments such as "the amount of talent within the individuals is quite inspiring" (08W-EM) and "Be Ready Warrandyte had more intellectuals than it should have had for a community organisation" (06W).

The project benefited from a sustained core group of around half a dozen volunteers on the committee throughout the project's three-year duration (10W). However, there was also considerable turnover amongst volunteer and paid representatives on the committee over time with approximately half the original committee no longer actively involved at the time of interviewing (10W, 04W). However, high numbers of committee members had been maintained overtime, both amongst volunteers and paid employees of EMOs, with a number of new members joining over time. Participants emphasized the importance of taking on new volunteers for "driving fresh ideas" (01EM, 10W, 04W), and the project was seen to have benefited from a "healthy changing of the guard" over time (10W).

The project committee was also supported by a wider group of ad-hoc or on-call volunteers (04W, 10W), including former committee members, that served as a skilled "back bench" for the project (10W). Most of these were local residents, but the committee had also approached people from beyond the local community with relevant emergency management expertise that advised and contributed to the project on a voluntary or pro bono, as-needed basis (04W, 01EM).

VOLUNTEERS

CASE ANALYSIS

EMO ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Be Ready project benefited from good relationships between community volunteers and EMO representatives. Overall, the volunteers on the committee had a commitment to working with established emergency management organisations (07EM, 04W, 10W, 06W, 08W-EM, 05W-EM, 02EM). It was recognised by some EMO representatives that this commitment is not necessarily present in other community groups focused on emergency management issues in the same way:

> "Warrandyte is very much "we need to link into the established systems to do this", other communities are more "we need to do this and sometimes avoid and let's see if we can do this without anyone noticing." And that's partly personality and partly community driven and there's a range of factors." (07EM)

The project received strong support from both Manningham and Nillumbik Councils (04W, 10W, 06W, 08W-EM): both from elected Councillors and emergency management officers. WCA had established good relationships and credentials with both local governments before the project began which facilitated LGA support for the project (04W, 07EM).

In the beginning, CFA endorsement on all the project's products and activities was mandated by DPCD as a condition of its funding. However, the commitment and culture of 'working with' established EMOs extended beyond the need to meet funding conditions. Indeed, the committee maintained a commitment to obtaining CFA endorsement on its materials beyond the one year term of the contract with DPCD (04W). This decision meant that the project had to strike a balance between complementing CFA policy and messaging on one hand, and representing the community and being innovative in its communications on the other hand (04W):

> "In terms of matters of substance, particularly in relation to the CFA, it was a condition of funding that whatever we do was endorsed by the CFA. We took the view that the CFA, you know we had to tow the CFA line whether we agreed with it or not. I mean [one of the project instigators] specifically wanted to challenge the CFA view on some things and he may well be right. But it wasn't an option to take that, other than on the bunker thing. Well they said, they didn't say don't go ahead with it. They said "we're not going to be involved with it"." (04W)

One participant felt that Be Ready Warrandyte was too closely aligned to state government policy (03W). Others saw benefits from working closely with CFA. In particular, it enabled EMOs to feel confident in supporting the project and to trust the committee to try out new ideas (01EM, 02EM, 08W-EM, 05W-EM, 09EM):

"I think the out of the box solutions are critical but thinking about it, Be Ready worked because it did have a fair bit of corporate [CFA] influence. It kind of did its own thing but it did have a corporate influence. I mean, part of the conditions of the funding was that it, even though it was supposed to be an out of the box solution it did have to have some guidance and the levels of approval from the authorities. I think we got the balance right. I think as a whole the authorities supported what they were doing." (05W-EM)

Other reported benefits from having active participation of EMO representatives in the committee included that they:

- Provided information about and a "conduit" into emergency management systems (08W-EM, 07EM), including linking into local brigades (04W) and help with "working around systems" (07EM);

- Lent credibility and expertise to scenario planning events (04W, 08W-EM);

- Ensured the project's messaging was appropriate and safe and could be confidently supported by all participants(10W);

- Helped the group to garner funds and influence policy (08W-EM);

- Contributed valuable ideas and expertise to committee discussions and decisions (10W, 06W)

- Advised the committee about potential consequences, limitations and risks that might be encountered (07EM, 01EM).

Overall, EMO representatives were generally felt to have actively contributed to the project and to have strongly represented it within their own organisations (10W, 06W, 04W, 05W-EM).

"I know they [the paid CFA employees], regardless of the corporate, I think they have a passion. You know, they're in the job because they have a passion for community engagement so it was a win-win situation. But they had a reporting structure as well. And to Be Ready's credit they took on board what was said and I think it ended up being a very effective partnership." (05W-EM)

Two community volunteers also emphasized that they considered EMO representatives to be a part of the community rather than external to it (10W, 06W):

"Remember many of the agency people are also involved in community. They came along in their suits and their uniforms but they were also community people as well." (06W)

Participants were asked what advice they would give to EMO representatives taking up similar roles in other community-led initiatives (see Table 5). Responses indicated that EMO representatives have to balance dual roles of representing their organisations' official positions with being active supporters, contributors and champions for community-led projects; as well as walking a line between supporting community ideas and priorities and needing to test and challenge them. They also reflected the need to commit considerable time in establishing relationships and allowing initiatives to develop at their own pace.

Be supportive of community priorities without being overly directive or bureaucratic	*"It's having to inform those people about what's possible and what's not possible without being the bureaucratic brick wall that you're never going to get through." (07EM)* *"Be open. Be supportive. And sit back. Do not dictate to a community group because you do not know the community. I can say that wholeheartedly." (01EM)* *"Don't get caught up when they do something that's not quite along the line of what we do because it's not just about us. It's the community. It's what they need. So it might have an element of what we need them to do but it's about what they want to do. So that bit I struggled with a little bit as well. […] but it's what they see as a need." (02EM)*
Challenge and test community ideas and assumptions	*"Don't be frightened of engaging with the community and hearing what they have to say. Don't be frightened to tell them to butt out when you have to."(10W)* *"There's a chance for good socially focused community development people to go "well whatever the community comes up with is a good idea." There's a real risk involved in that because sometimes it isn't. So there needs to be a process around testing if it's a good idea. There needs to be some advice."(09EM)* *"Be prepared to challenge their assumptions and to challenge yours as well." (07EM)*
Get to know the community, build trust, be honest	*"Every area has a better way to do it. And it's learning which way it is." (02EM)* *"I think the key things are understanding the nature of that community, and getting their trust and being honest with them about what you can and can't do and working with them." (07EM)*
Work out why you are there and what role you are fulfilling	*"The first thing I'd say to [others] is to work out why you're there. So are you there as a community member who happens to also be a representative from [an EMO]… or are you going there just to be the voice of [your organisation]? That's one thing I didn't know going in to Be Ready Warrandyte. I didn't get what I needed to be here. It took me a while to work that out."(02EM)*
Commit to the process long-term	*"It's a long term thing, it is a long-term thing. […] If you don't hear from them don't think they're not still there." (07EM)* *"It's really long term. […] You can't roll in, you know, next week we'll have a selection process. The week after that we'll have our first meeting. The week after than we'll have our final meeting. It's this weird spirally thing. It just takes a lot of time. And it has to be done at community time." (09EM)* *"The longer you take in the process the longer the outcome will be sustainable." (09EM)* *"They have to put enough support in for enough time for the thing to be effective. They can't just put some money in to kick start it and then assume that somehow or other it's just going to keep going. That's just not going to happen. You've got to support it properly." (04W)*

TABLE 5: ADVICE TO EMO REPRESENTATIVES ON SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

Community volunteers and EMO representatives on the committee did have some significant differences of opinion that were not reconciled. In particular, there were different views on the appropriateness of activities regarding private fire bunkers. Be Ready Warrandyte undertook two activities focused on increasing people's knowledge around bunkers: a public forum that CFA corporate supported and participated in, and a tour of private bunkers which CFA corporate did not support but which a local fire brigade did.

"They didn't try to stop it [the bunker tour] but they didn't want to be associated with it. […] the long and the short of it is that people are putting bunkers in. So they're going to do it anyway and so you know it's an opportunity for people to share information." (04W)

"My criticism of the group is that they do sort of focus on bunkers a little bit.

We tried to steer them away from it. At the same time, that's their idea. Bunkers are a shelter option for people but it is not to be their plan a, plan b, plan c. it is an option for them should they get stuck." (01EM)

However, good relationships with EMO representatives enabled the group to proceed with the bunker tour while 'agreeing to disagree' and without disrupting the working partnership in the committee:

" I threw in a few of the buts, but once they made the decision they were going to do it I'm not going to keep harping because as a group, and the CFA link, the brigades took part in this as well so they've made the decision. So if that's what you want to do as a community you go and do that. I've told you what the CFA stance is." (02EM)

BENEFITS AND IMPACTS

While this study did not aim to evaluate the success or otherwise of the Be Ready Warrandyte project all participants were asked about their perspectives on the project's key benefits and impacts. These fell into two broad categories: community safety benefits for the local community (see Table 3), and impacts on broader emergency management thinking and practice (see Table 4).

The project's specific goal was "to have more Warrandyte households with effective bushfire plans". The community baseline survey conducted in late 2012 by Be Ready gathered information about the extent of resident's bushfire planning at the beginning of the project [10]. A planned post-project survey was not conducted because the CFA had already conducted "a much more comprehensive survey" (04W) following the 2014 fire event [8]. This community survey was conducted by the Community Capability team of CFA's Eastern Metropolitan Region "in order to gain greater insight into the community's planning, actions and responses during this event" (p.2). It found that, for the 2014 fire, "a large majority of people left the area before the incident (either the day before or early in the morning)" (p.2).

The two surveys asked different questions and sampled different people, and therefore it is difficult to compare their findings to measure any change in levels of household bushfire planning. Notwithstanding, they do suggest an increase in the level of household planning between 2012 and 2014 while the Be Ready project was underway.

A number of participants felt there had been a general increase in the level of bushfire planning amongst local residents over the term of the Be Ready project (04W, 07EM, 10W,08W-EM). This included an increase in the percentage of people who left the area following the fire event in February 2014 compared to an earlier local fire in February 2013. They felt this was indicated, albeit not in a scientifically rigorous way, in informal, on-the-spot surveys conducted by Be Ready Warrandyte at the Warrandyte Festival following each of the fires. They also felt it was reinforced by the results of the CFA survey.

Impacts	Reported by	Examples
Contributed to an increase in the level of household planning and bushfire awareness	04W, 07EM, 10W,08W-EM	"On that day of extreme fire danger on 9th February there were a lot less people in Warrandyte. So what are the differences between that and previous years? The influence of that group [Be Ready Warrandyte]." (07EM)
Extended the reach of emergency management organisations & community safety messages into the community	07EM, 02EM, 06W, 10W, 05W-EM	"[CFA is] a paramilitary organisation, and there are a lot of people who resist that form of authority and certainly out of Be Ready we discovered that was definitely the case: [...] If people don't want to talk to a fire fighter they can talk to someone at Warrandyte Neighbourhood House or the Warrandyte Community Association." (05W-EM)
Adapted and reinforced community safety messages to have more salience and visibility in the local community	05W-EM, 04W, 02EM, 06W	"That's what [leave] early really means to the CFA. But that might not be what people here mean. So just about bringing a different perspective I guess to the communication, to the messages." (10W) "If we can raise awareness in the community of the bushfire risk it helps the CFA interact with the community. It helps them be noticed and it helps them in their job. They're not dealing with people who've got no awareness." (06W)
Built community resilience through a post-fire event community de-brief	07EM, 04W	"That's really building up those people's resilience. "We've had this incident, now let's talk about it" and you were getting behavioural change out of that." (07EM)
Increased the sharing of responsibility for bushfire safety between EMOs and the community	09EM, 05W-EM, 06W, 08W-EM	"Prior to Be Ready Warrandyte the responsibility of fire safety for the Warrandyte community was the CFA. Now the CFA is just a player. They're just one of the participants. They do what they can, that will be respected. Thank you very much for doing what you could. Council did what they could. We as people did what we could." (09EM)
Used humour and controversy to reach people who are not receptive to EMO safety messages	02EM,05W-EM, 04W	"It [the video] was also controversial enough in its style for those who hadn't heard of it to get interested in it. So it was edgy enough to go "oh, okay. People are talking about that I'll have to have a look at that." (05W-EM)
Improved relationships and communication between EMOs and the local community	07EM, 09EM, 06W, 04W	"When they're in their police station, or when they're in their offices, [they] are unable to relate to the community in quite that way. There's not the degree of contact. There's not the degree of trust. There's not the degree of openness and, of all things, agreeing to differ." (06W)
Raised awareness of local priority safety issues with EMOs	07EM, 9EM, 08W-EM	"There's been discussion at CEO level between VicRoads, Councils, EMV, Craig Lapsley's office, around some of the Warrandyte issues. I think the Be Ready project has contributed to that stuff being pushed to that level." (07EM)
Increased support for community safety activities amongst local fire brigade members	01EM, 02EM	"The hard work that they've done and involving the local [brigade] members it has highlighted that community safety has got just as much of an impact as what the operational response does." (01EM)
Established a trusted network of community leaders that can engage with EMOs now and into the future	09EM, 01EM, 10W, 06W, 02EM	"I know that when something dramatically bad happens in Warrandyte, there'll be a group of go-to people who will hit the ground running and they'll be respected and they will be leaders and agencies will go to them and ask questions about "what do we do now?" which is very different to most other communities." (09EM)
Directly engaged with the local business community on community safety issues	07EM, 01EM, 08W-EM,	"We've also been able to do a lot more with the businesses [...] they've [BRW] been able to go in there with a warm heart rather than [as] a state government body." (01EM)
Initiated discussion and communication on local priority safety issues in ways that EMOs are unable to	04W, 07EM, 01EM, 09EM	"Government can't lead a discussion on fire shelters and bunkers. A community group can because there's no risk. There's no responsibility. There's no liability. There's no anything. There's no negative outcome. It's just "let's have a rational discussion about this issue"." (09EM)

TABLE 6: REPORTED COMMUNITY SAFETY BENEFITS OF BE READY WARRANDYTE WITHIN GREATER WARRANDYTE

Importantly, the benefits of the project in the local community were also seen to extend beyond its specific, stated goal (see Table 6 above). It had also improved communication and relationships between EMOs and the local community, and provided a vehicle for sharing responsibility for bushfire safety between them. Participants also indicated that it had contributed to building the community's resilience, for example, through establishing a network of engaged and trusted community leaders that could better support the community to respond to and recover from a fire event in the future.

Regarding broader impacts on emergency management thinking and practice, it was clear from participants' comments that the flow of influence and learning from the project had been two-way (see Table 7). In particular, it was felt that Be Ready Warrandyte had influenced CFA thinking at a corporate level about its approach to community engagement:

> *No one's said it out loud but I think the CFA learned a lot out of Be Ready. I think it was the kick […] that the CFA needed to tell them a) there are other opinions and b) the one size fits all doesn't fit all. There's been a definite shift in that direction." (05W-EM)*

At the same time, some participants also questioned the longevity and extent of Be Ready Warrandyte's impact on people's bushfire planning (10W, 08W-EM, 05W-EM, 04W, 03W). This reflected similar challenges to those faced by community engagement personnel in EMOs:

> *"There are all sorts of different constituencies in the community and after a while you look at the people who come to meetings and so on and you're talking to the same people all the time. So how do you get to those other people? I think that's the most important area for anybody to be following up." (04W)*

One participant felt that the communication materials prepared were not adequate to inform residents in the future "who have no proper understanding of what a robust and comprehensive household bushfire survival plan involves" (03W). However, other participants felt the project had left a legacy in this regard (06W, 01EM, 10W, 04). In particular, the 'what's the plan?' templates on the website, which provide interactive PDF forms to help people prepare fire plans for different scenarios, were seen to provide an ongoing tool for residents that is "taking some of the hard work out of writing a fire plan" (10W), This "is now live and is going to be seen by hundreds or thousands of people" (01EM).

Meanwhile, another participant emphasized that the community safety impacts of Be Ready Warrandyte are likely to accrue slowly over time:

> *"I think the major achievements of Be Ready Warrandyte will not become apparent for some years to come. And some of them are subtle but far-reaching. You could say that Be Ready Warrandyte set out to raise the level of awareness and preparedness of the people who live in Warrandyte, to raise the level of awareness that they live in the middle of a bunch of kindling ready to catch fire at any minute. But there is a threat and a hazard which people that have lived here for many, many years just were totally unaware of – myself included. And that process is generally fairly slow, you think, "Oh I'd better do something about that! Oh I'd better do something about that." And every year you have another think about "oh perhaps I should be doing this as well" and so it's a slow accretion." (06W)*

Impacts	Reported by	Examples
Showed EMOS alternative ways to communicate with communities; challenged 'one-size-fits-all' approach	10W, 02EM, 04W, 06W, 05W-EM	"I think they have opened a few of the emergency service's eyes to other ways of, how the community are going to actually take this message and how else do we get community's buy in to accept that these messages are not only good for them but created by them." (02EM)
Provided a proof of concept of the value of community-led initiatives	09EM, 02EM, 08W-EM, 05W-EM	"It proved a concept that they didn't know they were setting out to prove essentially and that is communities can run their own discussion and can lead the way and that agencies can support that and have extraordinary outcomes for everyone." (09EM) "I think it's actually made the emergency management community realise that the community have a great amount of power. That something that's born from right at the community level has the capacity to be fantastic and to really take off. And it works sometimes a lot better than trying to push the message down from the top." (02EM)
Influenced emergency management policy and dialogue in response to community concerns and priorities	10W, 08W-EM	"In the time that we've been involved the CFA's position and Emergency Management Victoria's position on bunkers has changed. […] The landscape's shifting on this and it's shifting because of pressure, community pressure. […] in our local community I think it's probably very much about Be Ready but I don't think we're the only people having this conversation." (10W)
Developed communication tools that other community groups and EMOs can use	10W, 01EM, 04W	"And from that we've had other groups that have done very similar videos. […] so they've been able to take the majority of that material but put their own localised information into it. So that's been good that we've been able to extend that." (01EM)
Provided input and inspiration to initiatives in other communities and jurisdictions	04W, 01EM, 10W	"Around Dandenong, up in the hills, Olinda. We've been to meetings that they've organised […] After they became aware of what we were doing." (04W) "[Groups in other communities] are actually working in with Warrandyte to see that structure is working." (01EM)
Was a cost effective way for EMOs to deliver community safety messages	01EM, 08W-EM	"It's a pretty good investment for them [government]. The amount that they actually contribute and the value that you get out of it: it's good value for money." (08W-EM)
Tested and inspired new ideas and approaches	01EM, 02EM	"Some things you go "oooh, I wouldn't necessarily do it that way but let's see how it works". And the good thing is you have to test these things otherwise you're never truly going to know. I can sit in my box and go "yes that will work, no that won't". But I can't speak on behalf of the community." (01EM) "They can do things, they can take risks that government can't and with great outcomes." (09EM)
Brought fresh eyes to the challenges of community bushfire safety and were unaffected by the fallout of the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission	05W-EM	"So there was very much a bunker mentality that came after [the Royal Commission]. […] again that was a refreshing thing about Be Ready because they weren't affected by that. In essence they were, I think naïve is probably a good word. So, and they didn't see the horrors of the day. So again it was the perfect situation and it's exactly what was needed." (05W-EM)
Increased or reinforced support for community-led initiatives amongst EMO representatives involved	01EM, 02EM, 05W-EM	"The more I attended I thought "yeah we need to be doing this everywhere."" (02EM) "I'll fully admit I walked in there thinking these guys would [mess] it up. I'll admit that but I've been proven totally wrong." (05W-EM)

TABLE 7: REPORTED IMPACTS OF BE READY WARRANDYTE ON BROADER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT THINKING AND PRACTICE

STRENGTHS AND ENABLING FACTORS

Project strengths

Participants were asked to identify key strengths in the way the project was undertaken (see Table 8). The responses highlighted the importance of a well-functioning committee with strong and skilled leadership, professional project management support, a long-term goal strongly supported by all committee members, a sound governance structure, and good ideas. These qualities underpinned the committee's ability to be innovative while maintaining its focus on a clear purpose, respecting and encompassing differences of opinion, and avoiding political or personal agendas influencing its direction.

In particular, the leadership skill and style of the project Chair was largely credited by the majority of participants with establishing and maintaining an effective and positive committee environment while also keeping the project on track, being inclusive of differing views and avoiding any personal agenda.

> *That's one thing that* [the Chair] *has been very good at; his working around people's egos and facilitating what their individual needs are while at the same time achieving the intended outputs and keeping the thing in the right direction.* (08W-EM)

A second key factor seen to underpin the functioning of the committee and the outputs of the project was having professional project management by people who were also members of the local community.

> *"One of the reasons for success of Be Ready Warrandyte is the engagement of […] executive officers to support their stuff. Good community people should be the strategic thinkers and the voice of the community, the thermometers, barometers of community opinion and that sort of thing and identifying community needs, community strengths, community weaknesses, community risk. So they should focus their very valuable and precious energy on that and not on writing minutes and making phone calls and chasing things up and organising the sign writing and those sorts of things. So engaging a professional to do that has been a fantastic model for Be Ready Warrandyte." (09EM)*

However, one participant also commented on the cost to a community group of engaging paid project managers and suggested that "*again if you looked within your community to tap into what's there you might find those people and not need that project support.*" (02EM)

Project strengths	Reported by	Examples
Strong leadership by the Chair	06W, 10W, 08W-EM, 05W-EM, 02EM, 01EM, 09EM	"We have a healthy absence of big egos in the room. And I think part of that is because he [the Chair] doesn't travel with a big ego. It's not all about him; it's not his way or the highway. […] a lot of the quality of the work and the clarity that we get about what we need to do is very much driven by the fact that we've got a really good Chair." (10W)
Professional project managers were contracted to coordinate the project	04W, 01EM, 09EM, 10W, 06W, 08W-EM, 07EM	"One really important part of Be Ready Warrandyte's success was to have that good secretarial or project management base. I think that was really important. Without that […] I don't think it would have been as successful." (08W-EM)
The project managers were from the local community	10W, 01EM, 02EM, 04W	"They are professional project managers but they all live in the community. [They] have got children that go to the local schools so they're well aware of what we're trying to do. And they obviously do more than what they're paid for because they're part of the community." (04W)
A good governance structure was established early on	07EM, 04W, 01EM, 06W, 05W-EM	"The basic corporate governance stuff is important and boring. […] The problem with that is you've got to make sure that doesn't dominate: that isn't the purpose of a meeting, it's a means to an end." (04W)
There was a common goal and an absence of political and personal agendas	01EM, 10W, 02EM	"There's no self-interest. Nobody has any vested interest, politically or practically or economically in the outcome. And they are inarguably the right outcomes about saving lives. You can't take a different point of view really. You can differ dramatically about how that can be achieved but ultimately the goal is a really, clean, clear, authentic and real goal." (10W)
Good ideas were put forward by committee members; the underlying idea was a good one	08W-EM, 01EM, 05W-EM	"And people who have got good ideas. All these things that Be Ready Warrandyte did came out of someone's idea." (08W-EM)
Focus was maintained on a clear purpose	01EM, 04W, 06W, 08W-EM, 7EM, 09EM, 05W-EM	"You have to be very strategic in what objectives you can achieve. And that's where the group have been good […] That shotgun approach won't work and that's where I'll give them credit." (01EM)
Differences of opinion were encompassed within the committee	10W, 06W, 08W-EM	"There's a healthy difference in the views. There's never argument. There's discussion and healthy debate." (10W)
The committee had a willingness to learn	06W, 04W, 10W	"One thing that did characterize the Warrandyte Be Ready group was a willingness to learn […] you don't actually learn much when you're spouting and some committees are full of people that spout a lot and it was a quiet group." (06W) "Being willing to change your mind [is important]. Not being so wedded to what you expected that when the community or your data actually tells you something else you can't shift your framework: being open to being challenged." (10W)
Had a long-term vision	06W, 09EM	"It had a goal and a perspective that said this isn't a one off event. This is an ongoing activity involving the community with a horizon that's ten, twenty, thirty, forty years out. I find that community involvements and projects that have a longer timescale are infinitely better for the community than just having a fete." (06W)
Recognition of effort and achievements internally and externally	06W, 10W, 07EM	"I mean we won three awards [at the 2014 Victoria Fire Awareness Awards] […] So I think it's pretty important for the team as a whole. And for the community to understand that what we're doing is being recognised as being useful, it's not just you know, "those guys banging on again."" (04W)

TABLE 8: REPORTED PROJECT STRENGTHS OF BE READY WARRANDYTE

Enabling factors

Along with these internal project strengths, responses from participants also suggested four external factors were important enablers for the project. The first, previously mentioned, was the social context of Warrandyte, particularly its skilled and community-minded population (10W, 04W, 09EM, 07EM, 08W-EM):

> *"We said right at the beginning that if it doesn't work in Warrandyte it won't work anywhere because Warrandyte is a very well-endowed community in terms of professional expertise. You can find people who can do almost anything and we've used most of them. You know, smaller communities or communities elsewhere might not have access to the same range of skills."* (04W)

However, two EMO representatives suggested that the social elements to enable this type of project also exist in some form in many other communities, stating that "*I believe that every community has leaders: that they wouldn't function if they didn't*" (09EM) and "*Warrandyte always think they're different. It's the same everywhere they're just at a different level.*" (02EM).

A second enabling factor indicated was WCA's respected and established position in the community, which gave the project community authority, put it in a good position to represent the community to government, and underpinned government support for and trust in the project (10W, 07EM, 09EM, 04W):

> "*WCA has been in existence for a long time. It's very influential within the community and has for some time been in close contact with both Manningham and Nillumbik Shire Council. It's a group which is very well organised, very well established and as its membership very capable, characterised by people who are probably retired or semi-retired, who have held senior positions in organisations often. And as such they're very astute as how the systems work, they're very politically astute, so pre going down the path of the Be Ready program they were very much well-positioned to influence local government and state government.*" (07EM)

The third enabling factor was the impact of Black Saturday, which was a trigger for the project in three ways. It was a trigger for raising risk awareness in the community, leading two Community Fireguard leaders and WCA to pursue the project (03W, 05W-EM, 04W). It was also a trigger for the DPCD grant program that initially funded the project. Finally, it was a trigger for raising the profile and legitimacy of community engagement and community bushfire safety generally, which has contributed to increasing EMO willingness to support community-based initiatives:

> *I think that Black Saturday changed the mind set of everyone. It certainly changed my mind set. I think engagement's taken on a legitimacy that I don't think it had beforehand. The age-old Australian thing of telling people only what we thought they needed, I think that is a culture that's almost been totally removed from us. (05W-EM)*

The fourth and final enabling factor indicated was the impact of Community Fireguard. It contributed more specifically to the presence of the well-informed, concerned, and risk-aware Fireguard leaders who instigated the project (03W, 04W, 05W-EM) as well as more generally underpinning the approach of

community members and EMOs working together on the project (05W-EM, 06W):

> *"Now admittedly and in full recognition, the CFA's initiative from a few years ago with the Fireguard groups was the backbone of that approach […] that thinking perused the whole of Be Ready Warrandyte. […] It was a foundational perspective on which BRW was built. We're in this together. None of us can do it on our own." (06W)*

CHALLENGES, RISKS AND LIMITATIONS

Challenges encountered

While the project had maintained strong attendance at committee meetings over a three year period, a number of participants also recognised sustainability challenges faced by community-led project of this type (see Table 9). In addition to avoiding volunteer burnout, a second volunteering challenge mentioned was the influence of changing styles of volunteering amongst younger people that are not well suited to traditional committee work and which represent a challenge as far as succession planning over longer periods of time. The project had also encountered some difficulty in securing ongoing funding beyond its initial one-year grant from DPCD, reflecting short lifecycles in government grant programs and the impact of political changes. In this environment contingency planning becomes an important undertaking; one that some participants felt the project could have benefited from had they engaged in it further.

There were some differing views about the optimal duration for the project, for example, that it had more left to do, even without access to funding (02EM) that it had gone on too long, diluting the impact of its initially novel approach (05W-EM), and that the original vision of three-years was the most that could be expected before "campaign fatigue" and "message fatigue" set in (04W).

One element that was noted as being important for sustaining the project's community safety impact and legacy in the community beyond the project's timeframe was the ongoing presence of WCA:

> *"I think the biggest challenge is to maintain that commitment in the long term to ensure the information that some people have come to rely on is reliable and that's the role the WCA will take." (10W)*

Other challenges faced by the project concerned limitations to its community safety impacts, already discussed: namely maintaining people's awareness and engagement over time (08W-EM, 10W, 05W-EM, 04W), and reaching less risk-aware segments of the community (05W-EM, 04W, 08W-EM). Another challenge indicated was managing community expectations of the project (07EM, 10W, 04W):

> *"We've had some niggles from some sections of the community. Just small, you know, "why can't you tell me what I'm supposed to do". It's a bit like a book on parenting. Everybody wants the definitive book on parenting but nobody can write it. And it's a bit the same in terms of this conversation." (10W)*

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There were also some challenges in matching the times that volunteer and paid committee members were available for meetings (10W, 05W-EM).

Sustainability challenges	Reported by	Examples
Sustaining core volunteer commitment/ avoiding volunteer burnout	02EM, 04W, 09EM, 01EM, 07EM,	*"This community safety approach is very altruistic and for the most part the people who drive it have already got their stuff in order. They're already safe. They've already got their plan. They're already organised. They're trying to help other people be safe. And at some stage you get tired of that. You do what you can."* (09EM)
Changing government personnel and governments	04W	*"It does depend on the personalities and the thing is that these things can change pretty quickly, not just in the volunteer part, but also on the full time part. A lot of the people we dealt with on the full time part have changed. [...] within a year all that lot had gone [from DPCD] and there's a new lot and they don't necessarily have the commitment"* (04W)
Impact of the changing nature of volunteering, particularly amongst younger people	10W, 04W	*"It's not something I've resolved in my own mind but sadly the succession planning for organisations like the WCA is in a difficult place because there's no way, there's no obvious influx of the next generation of people to take up the mantle."* (10W)
Accessing and sustaining funding	04W, 08W-EM, 07EM, 02EM	*"Then a new government brings in a new program and so while "you're on the old program, that's a Labor program so we don't want to know anything about that".* (04W) *"So they'll fund a pilot program, they'll fund a new initiative but they won't fund recurrent things and whilst the council [...] came on board for a third year, that's it."* (04W)
Undertaking adequate contingency planning	01EM, 06W	*"it was a bit of a back-pedal about half way through last year when they didn't get the grants they were hoping for. [...] Then you may lose some of the passion because all of a sudden you're having to backpedal, your approach isn't as strong, you're just doing a minor thing just to keep in the game and it may not be of value and that's where you lose some committee members."* (01EM) *"I think it failed to adequately anticipate changes in government and to pursue opportunities [...] foreseeing is a bit hard for a community group but anticipating. "What would happen if there was a change in government? What would happen if…?"'* (06W)
Determining when to end the project/ losing momentum, impact	05W-EM, 01EM, 02EM, 04W	*"I wouldn't want it more than three years, we'd all get sick of it. There'd be campaign fatigue and also message fatigue."* (04W) *"I hope they aren't just sort of winding down because they haven't got the funding because there's still stuff they could be doing as Warrandyte Community Association without the funding."* (02EM) *"I think it probably went on about a year too long. [...] just trying to extract the last elements of life out of it. I think there was a point where it's [the message] now gone back to the mundane."* (05W-EM)
Determining how to exit the project well/ succession planning	04W, 10W, 09EM, 01EM, 08W-EM	*"when we talk about committees that have a short life cycle of three years, succession planning really is a big issue in that because it's not like the committee's going to have a ten year life span and you've got to feed in new minds."* (08W-EM)

TABLE 9: REPORTED SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

Risks

Key risks faced by Be Ready Warrandyte fell into the categories of community safety risks and project risks.

Two community safety risks were indicated by participants for this type of project generally: 1) giving out information that is incorrect or pursuing bad and untested ideas (01EM, 09EM), and 2) inadvertently creating community expectations and reliance that a local volunteer initiative does not have the capacity to meet (01EM, 02EM, 05W-EM). The first of these risks was significantly reduced in Be Ready Warrandyte by seeking CFA input on all materials, engaging with volunteers with appropriate expertise on an as-needed basis, by taking time to develop communication materials carefully and rigorously (10W), and through the committee's willingness to learn and accept community and EMO feedback (10W, 06W).

An example given by one participant of the second of these risks (creating community reliance) was in the area of community warnings via Facebook and the project's website, which the group experimented with during one fire season but did not continue with (01EM).

In addition to the risk of not securing additional funding to sustain the project already mentioned, a second project risk was the potential for personal liability of committee members (01EM, 02EM, 04W, 08W-EM). In addition to the steps taken to ensure information was sound listed above, this was also dealt with by having appropriate levels of insurance and issuing disclaimers. The project was covered by the WCA's insurance policies, which included general liability and director's insurance. However, the WCA had also received conflicting legal advice (between a pro bono service and a lawyer known to WCA members) about the extent of coverage of their insurance (04W). At the beginning of the project the WCA took out volunteer's insurance but found it was not needed.

While EMO representatives on the committee had considered liability, they did not have significant concerns about it (01EM,02EM, 07EM). As one explained, liability concerns were alleviated by the good governance of the project and the trust and good relationships that had built up within the committee:

> "Ah, not a concern [liability]. The minutes have been very good. If we've said we don't agree it's in the minutes. And it's just been very clear in what our advice is, yes we agree or no we don't and this is why. And having open communication with them." (01EM)

The same participant also suggested that community safety risks associated with EMOs not supporting community-led initiatives were greater than the legal risks of being involved:

> "If I was to start to go, "oh I can't be involved in that [because of liability concerns]", then they [community groups] would go off and do their own thing which may not stick well with where we want to focus or what we want to do. And then you might have the split community because we're going in saying one thing and they're doing the other. You've got to have that trust." (01EM)

One participant, referring to a local brigade member's involvement in the tour of private bunkers, did have concerns about the liability of local brigade

members who have to walk a difficult line between being CFA representatives and local community members at the same time (02EM).

A participant with a community safety background argued that in general community-based initiatives may actually reduce the potential for liability issues to arise for governments from disaster events because they increase community ownership of risk and its consequences:

"My belief is that the more community focused, the more community-based, the less the liability. It actually shares it around. […] I think it actually defuses the anger and the seeking of revenge. Where communities are not engaged at all and stuff happens to them then the anger spills over. It's directed at the agencies. It's directed at the government." (09EM)

It was also felt by some that community groups could do things in this space that governments could not because they do not have the same fear of liability (09EM, 07EM):

"They're filling the gap that has been avoided because there's all that sort of fear, whether its saying stuff and we're going to be liable to be held to account. So they can operate between the official message and the practical systems type thing, so I think that's where they can do things that [government] organisations struggle to do because of the risks." (07EM)

Gaps, limitations and criticisms

Participants were also asked about gaps and limitations: in essence the things they felt could have worked better in the project (see Table 10). With the exceptions of engaging more with younger members of the community and having more of an all-hazards/ resilience / recovery focus, there was little overlap in the issues participants raised, with most being raised by only one person. The issues they specified were diverse and, as one participant emphasized, reflected different views on the best way to achieve the project's goals, and the extent to which it ought to have focused on various elements, rather than indicating fundamental weaknesses in the overall project approach:

"I guess everyone's got an opinion about the art of something but ultimately the proof is in the results and no one refutes the results." (05W-EM)

In general, participants had received relatively little external criticism from members of the community. However, there was some criticism from within the community about the impact of the project ("Other groups are like "what do they do? They don't do anything" 07EM), some concern expressed about "scaremongering" (10W) and "making a mountain out of a molehill" (04W), as well as expectations about "why can't you tell me what I'm supposed to do?" already mentioned above (07EM, 10W).

Gaps and limitations	Reported by	Examples
More engagement with young people and younger styles of communication (e.g. social media)	06W, 03W, 04W	"Things that I would do very differently is I would have a much, much greater focus on younger people. If you're planning ten years ahead you need to be talking to young people." (06W) "You'd certainly want to get younger people involved. And you'd certainly want to use, or want them to use social media and those sorts of things more effectively." (04W)
Representation of newer , less risk-aware residents on the committee	05W-EM	"We ended up with people who are long-time residents who potentially didn't actually understand the problems that we wanted, again the phrase "singing to the choir". […] it ceased to have representatives of fundamentally the market I believed – and I thought the committee believed – we should be targeting." (05W-EM)
Stronger focus on preparedness activities during the year, before the fire restriction period and before high danger days.	03W	"There is insufficient emphasis by the state or WCA on preparation - irrespective of whether the intention of a household is to stay or leave. Insufficient information on the benefits for people who harden up their home and property to improve the chance the house will survive even if they have left or if the family has to shelter there when their leave plan cannot be implemented."(03W)
Broader goal to undertake fire planning at a community rather than household level	09EM	"The original [goal] was about getting more people to have their own individual household fire plans. Something like that. But it actually has more potential and more complexity than that. […] It can lead, it can head in directions about what, how do we operate after a major fire? What activities can we do as a community? What do we need help with? What can we set up? How do we prepare? As a community [that] is, I think, where it's gone and really challenged." (09EM)
Engagement with local Community Fireguard groups	03W	"There was no connection from the WCA project back to Community Fireguard. Did not hear one thing from them in my role as a Fireguard Leader about their project." (03W)
Creation of emotionally safe spaces for dialogue and sharing	06W	"I would try to create much safer spaces for people to come together and talk about stuff that matters to them. I mean emotionally safe. […]You've got to find ways of making it safe for people to be part of the journey that you're on; in changing the way people are thinking about seeing the environment that they live in and understanding the risks and thinking about how they might deal with those risks." (06W)
Too closely aligned with government messaging	03W	"WCA it seems to me looking at it pretty cynically that they're just another voice of the agency, the state, which wasn't the point of all of having a community-based group involved." (03W)
Did not have capacity for one-on-one engagement	05W-EM	"I guess that's probably another downside of the Be Ready thing is being a volunteer organisation they didn't have the capacity to potentially follow up in an individual basis. The one thing I've learned particularly in the last few years is ultimately no matter how you push the message it all gets down to a one-on-one conversation because everyone's situation is different." (5W-EM)
Greater representation of North Warrandyte	02EM	"Maybe the North Warrandyte people felt like they were well-represented, but sitting outside and looking into it […] I felt like "oh, really, what about North Warrandyte?"" (02EM)
Greater engagement with stronger differences of opinion	06W	"In Be Ready Warrandyte it was a great sadness to me that some of the stronger differences of opinion were not able to be incorporated." (06W)
More of an all-hazards/ resilience / recovery focus	08W-EM, 06W, 09EM	"If a disaster is – over a period of time – pretty much inevitable then some effort I believe needs to be put into recovery or resilience or whatever that current buzzword is." (06W)
Lower percentage of paid people on the committee	05W-EM	"Those sorts of things [administrative boundaries] dictated to a certain degree the size of the committee, the direction it went [...] This is where I personally feel it fell down is because it was made up of fifty to sixty per cent people who are employed and the remainder volunteers." (05W-EM)

TABLE 10: REPORTED GAPS AND LIMITATIONS

ARISING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The particular case of Be Ready Warrandyte suggests opportunities and challenges for community-led initiatives in emergency management planning and preparedness more generally.

Notably, support for community-led initiatives was high amongst the participants interviewed for this study, with a number of them indicating that Be Ready Warrandyte had exceeded their expectations and that their involvement with it had strengthened their support for and faith in community-led approaches in general.

Overall, Be Ready Warrandyte was portrayed by its participants as an effective, efficient vehicle for sharing responsibility in bushfire preparedness that had community safety benefits that reached beyond its specific goal "to have more Warrandyte households with effective bushfire plans", as well as beyond its local community into the broader emergency management community. It was predominantly seen to have struck a good balance between focusing on meeting community goals and needs while also respecting the established emergency management system, and seeking to complement EMO community safety approaches while also challenging and influencing them.

This case study also suggests a potential challenge for establishing the legitimacy and benefit of community-led preparedness projects. There is a risk of a mismatch developing between the levels at which their community safety benefits are expected to accrue by emergency management stakeholders and where many of their benefits may actually accrue. The Be Ready experience shows that significant benefits can accrue at the community level (e.g. improvements in community bushfire planning and relationships amongst stakeholders). Yet the community safety focus of EMOs, and also the Be Ready project, is predominantly on the household level (e.g. increasing the number of households with bushfire plans). This suggests that some care may need to be taken in the future to recognize and value the contributions of community-led initiatives appropriately.

There are also many lessons that can be taken away from the Be Ready Warrandyte experience about the ways that community leaders and EMO personnel might support local emergency management planning and preparedness through working together in a sustained way on locally targeted projects. There are challenges and risks in doing this but also considerable potential benefits. Potential problems can be alleviated through measure like the ones that participants felt were effective for Be Ready Warrandyte: establishing good governance structures, taking time to develop and maintain honest and respectful working relationships, and keeping focused on a clear and common goal. The role of professional project management is particularly noteworthy, given that participants saw this as crucial for keeping the project on track, yet the involvement of professional project managers in community projects in this way is rare.

Participants in this study also indicated that the 'time is right' to more actively pursue closer engagement and partnership between EMOs and community groups.

"The previous Chief Officer said at a forum years ago he said "the day will come when how we engage with the community will be as important as how we suppress fires." I think we're there now. I think the community is willing." (05W-EM)

A number of participants indicated that the CFA's approach to community engagement was already moving this way (02EM, 05W-EM, 09EM), and that community groups had become more active in seeking out engagement with EMOs in areas of community safety in the last few years (01EM, 02EM, 05W-EM, 09EM). Black Saturday was seen as something of a tipping point for both of these shifts.

Importantly, this case study also shows that even quite significant differences of opinion can reside within a project of this sort, the issue of private bunkers being a case in point. One of the important aspects of participating in community-led initiatives for EMO personnel may therefore be a willingness to "agree to disagree" with community members – within limits – while also challenging community-based ideas and activities with their emergency management expertise.

Related to this, the Be Ready Warrandyte case also highlights how community-led initiatives effectively switch the roles of government and community in community safety. More commonly, EMOs have set community safety goals and devised projects within their organisations and then engaged with communities to bring them on board. In community-led approaches it is community representatives that set goals and devise projects, backed up by the support and expertise of EMO representatives.

Two important consequences arise from this switching of roles. First, the processes and outcomes of community-led initiatives are likely to be very idiosyncratic from a state government perspective and not necessarily reflective of EMO priorities. Second, EMOs will need to make some changes to their internal planning and processes in order to support it.

Regarding the first of these, one participant emphasized how the processes and outcomes of community-led projects are very much dependent on the particular circumstances in which they arise and the particular capacities of the people involved:

"A group of people, some of whom you know particularly well, others you've not met anywhere before, come together and display qualities that astound and amaze you and sometimes disappoint, but you get what you get. You can't repeat. You can't say we need a [Robert] or we need a [John] or we need a whatever-it-might-be in order for this to work. I think there are lots of ways of working. I think the things that worked were as a result of the capacities of the people that were there but if you changed all the people it would be a different set of capacities and it might not have been quite the same but maybe they could have done other stuff that we didn't do well." (06W)

Regarding the second of these consequences, EMO representatives in the Be Ready Warrandyte project suggested changes that their organisations (CFA and Councils) needed to make to support both paid and volunteer representatives to engage with community-led initiatives. These included longer-term planning, providing structures for their representatives to work

confidently within, recruiting and training volunteers specifically for community engagement, and developing organisational cultures that are more supportive of community engagement. They also indicated that these types of internal changes had already begun.

A final important theme arising from this case study is the importance of community-led initiatives being able to establish authority within the broader community. In Be Ready Warrandyte's case, community authority was established through the WCA's standing in the community. However, as one participant emphasized, in communities where an existing community organisation with that authority is not already present, community authority can be obtained in other ways, for example through consultation with community leaders from a range of community groups, or through electing representatives (09EM).

This also raises issues about what constitutes community. In general, emergency management participants in Be Ready Warrandyte tended to regard the committee of management as representing the voice of 'the community' (e.g. 08W-EM, 07EM) whereas community volunteers tended to indicate a need to engage 'the community' more broadly in order to represent its values and needs (e.g. 06W, 10W). This suggests there may be a difference in the depth of representation and engagement that EMO representatives and community volunteers see as necessary in order to confidently represent and speak for a local community.

> *"One of the interesting things that came up when we were up there one cold night sitting in a room with about 8 members of [another] community. They turned around and said "well okay, when do we take this to the community?" Which to me as someone working for [government] is well, isn't that you guys? How far do you go?" (07EM)*

Be Ready Warrandyte demonstrated how a community-led project that had strong leadership and governance, was authorized by the local community and thoughtfully supported by EMO representatives was able to bridge a number of gaps: between government and community, between centralized and localised planning and communication, and between formal or official and informal or grassroots action. It was able to adapt government communications, connect further into the community, devise and test more innovative approaches, lead discussion on topics that needed independence from perceptions of government bias or agenda, and bring local contexts, priorities, goals and knowledge into emergency management dialogues and planning. Importantly, it did this through working closely with EMO representatives that were committed to supporting and actively contributing to its activities while not directing them.

One participant in the case study effectively summed up the significance of Be Ready Warrandyte as a practical demonstration of what is possible with community-led planning in emergency management:

"I think [community-led planning] is a huge cultural shift in agencies, government, and communities. […] government is used to command and control. Communities have become used to dependences on government. Government will fix it. To the far end which is government must fix it. This is their job not our job. So changing all that around it's a complete shift in the way everyone thinks and it's, we're going to have to demonstrate [it]. We're going to have to prove it for people to get comfortable with it. So Be Ready Warrandyte is an example of that, that everyone looking into this space goes "it worked there maybe we can try it somewhere else" or "maybe it will work somewhere else or maybe we can get comfortable about trying this somewhere else"; and communities look into this space going "they did it. Maybe we can. What [are] their lessons that we can take on? Why were they successful and how do we build on that?" (09EM)

Thus, the significance of Be Ready Warrandyte is not as a model for community-led bushfire preparedness for others to follow, but as a learning case on which others can reflect and take away lessons to apply and adapt to their own local projects, with their own people, and in their own times and places.

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