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# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: BUILDING STRENGTH AND CAPABILITY

Annual report 2019

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Victoria University





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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>END-USER STATEMENTS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PROJECT BACKGROUND</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>RESEARCH APPROACH</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>MILESTONES AND KEY ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>10</b>
Key milestones and deliverables	10
<b>KEY ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>11</b>
Workshops	11
Collaborations	11
General activities	11
<b>STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
Presentations	12
Posters	12
Articles	13
Social media impact	13
<b>UTILISATION</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PUBLICATIONS LIST</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>TEAM MEMBERS</b>	<b>17</b>
The research team	17
Working group	17
External participants	17
Participating end-user organisations	17
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>18</b>



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project, *Diversity and Inclusion: Building strength and capability*, relies on the generosity and willingness of our end users to open up their organisations and give their time to explore a difficult, and sometimes potentially contentious issue. Research on diversity and inclusion (D&I) requires the same environment that implementing D&I needs: mutual trust and safe spaces where open and honest conversations can be had, and a willingness to be candid about the issue in each organisation.

We especially wish to thank all our stakeholders for their collaboration and in particular, Fire and Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), South Australia State Emergency Services (SASES), The Women and Firefighting Australasia (Wafa), Department of the Environment in South Australia (DoE), South Australian Metropolitan Fire Brigade the New South Wales State Emergency Services (NSWSES) for their support of research activities. We would also like to thank our working group, mentors and advisors who have guided us, and the D&I practitioners within and beyond these organisations who have generously shared their experience and knowledge with us throughout the process. These contributions have been invaluable and our research would not be possible without this.

We would also like to thank the following people for their contributions.

The members of our working group: Janine Taylor, Steve O'Malley, Sonja Braidner and Lisa Jones; and special advisors Mal Connellan, Joe Buffone and John Beard for their encouragement, contributions to, and guidance of, this study; Dermot Barry, Peter Button, Emma Ginman, Faye Morton, Ed Pikusa, Heather Stuart, Dave Baigent, John Bates, and Kelly Martin for their contributions to the research during the second phase of this project; and Nathan Buckley and Costa Harista for their contributions to the development of materials to support its uptake.

We would also like to acknowledge the support of the Commonwealth of Australia through the Cooperative Research Centre program and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Diversity and Inclusion: Building Strength and Capability* is a three-year project commissioned by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC which commenced in July 2017 and has just completed its second year of exploration.

During the second phase, we have focused our activities around key findings and new needs that emerged from our previous research as we continue to build the framework. We have also continued our case study approach in the economic and community areas. The organisational area has opened out in the second phase to look across a number of different organisations.

Key areas of focus for this second phase have been as follows:

- Understanding capabilities of diverse communities.
- Understanding the economic benefits and costs of D&I programs.
- Further exploration of how diversity and inclusion management and measurement can be best embedded into organisational frameworks and practice through connection to day-to-day tasks.
- Further identification of attributes skills and capabilities needed to support effective practice.
- Identification of key organisational areas for management, and measurement and processes needed to support implementation.

A key finding from this phase of the research is that diversity and inclusion (D&I) is a pervasive risk which can impact both service delivery and community safety. This finding has been tested and socialized through a number of presentations and discussions, and was found to be recognized by those working with it, but has not been formally managed by organisations.

In terms of delivery, the project has adjusted its research plan to accommodate the dynamic and evolving D&I agenda in response to the emerging needs of D&I practitioners. The bringing forward of the delivery of the draft framework to the end of Phase One has also enabled the project to undertake additional areas of exploration and resulted in additional outputs.

In terms of stakeholder engagement, this has broadened out in the Phase Two as we have moved into socializing and testing the research for usability as part of finalising the key components of the framework. We have also attracted additional local and international stakeholders. Key activities that have supported this include:

- Individual research updates and presentations to stakeholder organisations.
- Presentation of the research findings at both national and international conferences.
- Engagement with experts from the UK and USA to support review and exchange of knowledge.
- Invited presentation of Phase One research findings to the AFAC Diversity and Inclusion Group, September 2018.
- The development of outreach materials with the BNHCRC communication team including practitioner videos, research update video, a Hazardnote and an article in Fire Australia.



We have continued to build on our established collaborations with our case study organisations: Fire and Rescue New South Wales (FRNSW), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and South Australia State Emergency Services (SASES).

QFES and The Women and Firefighting Australasia (Wafa) have also formed a collaboration with the project to develop activities that socialize the research, raise awareness, and support collection and analysis of data with diverse cohorts across the Emergency Management Sector (EMS). Work undertaken to date has resulted in the report *Shaping the New Norm: Wafa Conference 2018 Evaluation and QFES Workshop Synthesis* and a joint presentation at the Emergency Management Conference 2019 in Melbourne. The collaboration will be also presenting a poster and presentation of our work at the AFAC conference in August 2019 in Melbourne as well as undertaking a survey.

Feedback from our stakeholder group has indicated strongly that the collaborative research process has been particularly useful in creating a safe space where practitioners and researchers can effectively reflect and work together to develop end user focused research.

The strategic process developed in Phase One has also been nominated as particularly useful by a number of stakeholders and has been the most requested output following public presentations. The project was also invited to present to the AFAC Diversity and Inclusion Group (DIG) and the Male Champions of Change (MCC) programs. The presentation to the DIG group was well received and the proposed May 2019 presentation to MCC has been postponed.

The research has also attracted interest outside of the Emergency Management Sector (EMS), with the project team being approached by another agency to undertake work as a result of the Phase One research.

It has been a busy year for the project, and at the conclusion of its second year phase, it is on schedule and well positioned to complete the final phase of this research.



## END-USER STATEMENTS

**Heather Stuart, Cluster Lead End User, Manager, Knowledge and Lessons Knowledge and Lessons Management, NSW State Emergency Service, State Headquarters**

The project has seen strong interest this year, with a number of agencies already applying the research findings and outputs. This interest has been at both an agency senior management level and amongst members of agencies. It is pleasing to see that the research is being so well received at all levels of agencies. The reports and journal articles produced to date have been of a high quality. I am very pleased with the quality of interaction and collaboration between the research team and the end users. The outputs from the project will provide a strong evidence base for future improvement in diversity and inclusivity across the emergency services sector.

**Malcolm Connellan AFSM, Deputy Commissioner, Fire and Rescue New South Wales**

The work is vital for this organisation as we continue on our “cultural” journey. We will not get another chance to get this right, nor assess how we have performed or measured the effects without this piece of work. Additionally, the close involvement in the research phase has provided the opportunity to discuss, test scenarios and propositions with other jurisdictions, more importantly for a sector such as this, external perspectives are critical. The close collaboration is evident in the position and quality of the product to now.

**Janine Taylor, Acting Executive Manager, Talent Development Unit, Human Capital Strategy, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services**

A highlight in terms of the working group and the broader project has been the collaborative approach of all involved. When there is an authentic regard for work being conducted and the people involved, it creates an environment of trust and mutual respect where collaboration flourishes.

**Steve O'Malley AFSM, Leading Fire-fighter, Fairness and Inclusion Officer Culture and Transformation, Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board**

The opportunity to be at the same table as fellow D&I practitioners and then to earnestly contribute to such innovative research at a time of cultural redetermination has been the fillip the EM sector needed. This type of wholehearted and passionate collaboration sets a new standard in high quality research leading to informed practice.



## INTRODUCTION

The Emergency Management Sector (EMS) is a diverse and complex sector whose key purpose is the protection of life and property by implementing 'a range of measures to manage risks to communities and environments' (Emergency Management Australia, 1998, p39). Their scope of activities spans the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) spectrum and requires a range of activities that contribute to the wellbeing of communities.

The context in which many of these organisations operate is changing due to:

- The increasing intensity and frequency of events due to climate change, and the increasing costs associated with these events.
- Changing demographics (particularly in relation to the increasingly diverse community to be served).
- New technologies (particularly digital technology).
- Resource constraints and decreasing volunteer numbers.
- The need to build resilience in both organisations and their communities to reduce future costs and impacts of future events.

As these drivers are dynamic and systemic, they are changing the focus of EMS activities from shorter-term tactical approaches across the PPRR spectrum, to longer-term strategic approaches that focus on future outcomes. These drivers are also driving the need to innovate across the EMS and develop new services that aim to increase resilience of both the organisations themselves and the community. This is fundamentally changing the nature of the relationship EMS has with the community from delivering a service **to** them to working **with** them. (Young et al. 2018). There is also a recognition that emergency services need to better reflect the communities they work to serve (NEMC 2011) to achieve this outcome. Effective diversity and inclusion are central to this agenda.

Currently, there are 'unacceptably low levels of diversity' in the EMS (AFAC 2016). There is however, a growing awareness that there are a number of benefits that can result from increasing diversity in organisations. However, effective implementation is complex due to:

- The need for significant cultural change in the face of entrenched cultural attitudes at organisational and community levels about what emergency services are, how they should operate, and who should be developing, implementing and managing these processes.
- Lack of clarity as to what diversity is and means, the value of the benefits diversity offers, and how to best place and integrate diverse people into current operational activities.
- There is a current lack of understanding of what is effective and how to measure this.

If EMS organisations are to capitalise on the emerging opportunities and fulfil their future potential in this area, they will need to develop new ways of thinking and working. Diversity is not new to EMS organisations and there are existing strengths and knowledge that can be built upon. Understanding what is effective, and why and how this agenda can be progressed, is critical to achieving future outcomes.



## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The project *Diversity and Inclusion: Building Strength and Capability* aims to assist understanding and practice of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the Emergency Management Sector (EMS) through the identification of current measurement, strengths, barriers, needs and opportunities in emergency management organisations and the community.

The key need identified in the scoping phase of this project was to understand what effective diversity and inclusion is, and what this means for EMS organisations in terms of practice and measurement. This has become the project's primary focus. We have developed a definition of effective diversity to guide the project, which is:

The result of interactions between organisations and individuals that leverage, value and build upon characteristics and attributes within and beyond their organisations to increase diversity and inclusion, resulting in benefits that support joint personal and organisational objectives and goals, over a sustained period of time. (Young et al., 2018, p19)

The project is examining diversity and inclusion systemically through a values, narratives and decision-making context across organisational, community and economic themes, using case studies. Aspects of diversity being examined are: culture and ethnicity, gender, demographic status (age and education) and disability (physical). These will be considered through the key drivers outlined in the following section on context, which are currently shaping current and future EMS organisations and communities.

This project has three phases:

- Understanding the context in which diversity and inclusion exists in EMS organisations and the community.
- Development of a diversity and inclusion framework suitable for the EMS.
- Testing and utilisation of the framework.

The aim of this research is to develop a practical framework tailored to the emergency management organisational context that builds upon and leverages current strengths and expertise within the EMS. This is being developed collaboratively with our end-user group as part of our research process. Its purpose is to support better management and measurement of diversity and inclusion by providing a basis for more effective evidence-based decision making.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

Our team at Victoria University specialises in end-user based research using systemic analysis that integrates research into decision making, as part of the research process. This process co-designs and develops both the research and its outputs with the end users to ensure that research products are fit for purpose. Key phases of this process areas shown below (Figure 1).

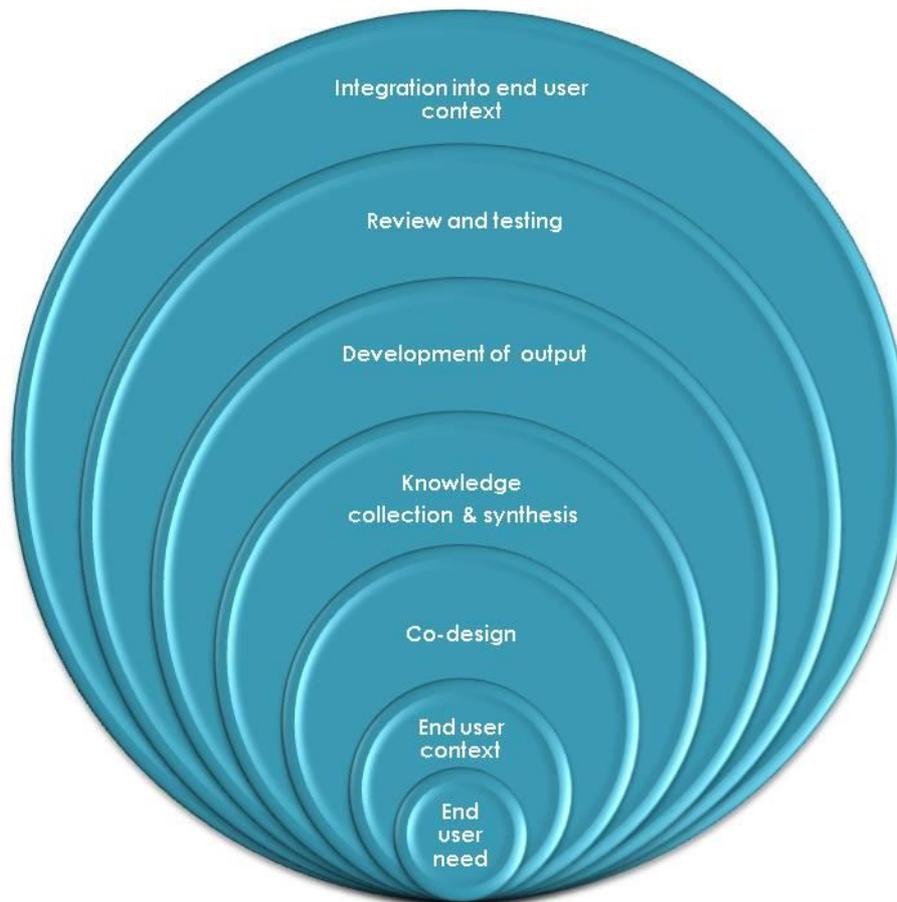


FIGURE 1 IMPLEMENTATION PHASES OF END-USER BASED RESEARCH, YOUNG (2016)

The project uses a transdisciplinary approach which combines different academic methodologies with end-user knowledge. Outputs are tailored towards the decision-making context of our end users, and the collation and integration of end-user knowledge is a key part of our research.



## MILESTONES AND KEY ACTIVITIES

### KEY MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

Milestone	Deliverable	Status
2.2.1	Delivery of workshops completed (U 2.2.11)	Completed
2.2.2	Draft workshop summary report	Completed
2.3.1	Delivery of final workshop summary research report	Completed
2.4.1	Delivery of draft framework	Completed
2.4.2	Research review Phase 2 completed	Adjusted

TABLE 1: PHASE 2 DELIVERABLE SCHEDULE

All milestones and deliverables (Table 1) have been achieved with the exception of the review of Phase Two which has been adjusted to enable stakeholders time to review the workshop report.

There have been additional deliverables and activities undertaken as the result of emerging needs which have been identified as outlined in the next section.



## KEY ACTIVITIES

Key activities undertaken by the project during Phase Two are summarised below.

### WORKSHOPS

**Into the future: building skills and capabilities for an inclusive and diverse workforce workshop** – This workshop was delivered at Victoria University in Melbourne on 5 December 2018. Outcomes were analysed and key findings presented to stakeholders to test for salience. The Report summarizing key findings is due for release in late July 2019.

**Indigenous inclusion** – Planning for this workshop is continuing as it is now being delivered in collaboration with QFES due to a change of leadership and focus with the original partner agency.

### COLLABORATIONS

Wafa and QFES have formed a collaboration with the project to work on an ongoing basis to support socialization of research, sharing of knowledge and data collection and analysis.

### GENERAL ACTIVITIES

**Organisational** – Six focus groups with brigades and units have been undertaken in this phase of work to understand more fully how everyday tasks are linked to D&I.

**Framework development** – Draft process completed in Phase One of the project and delivered in the *Long Road: Building Effective Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Service Organisations*. Key processes to support the three tiers of measurement and management have been identified: Strategic, programmatic and organic bottom-up growth. Three supporting frameworks have been developed and presented to the stakeholder group and also individual organisations to test for salience and usefulness.

**Economic cases studies** (IFARES FRNSW & Lifesaving Victoria CALD program) – Both are progressing but are tracking slightly behind due to a number of challenges experienced both within VU and also the partner agencies.

**Community case studies of community attributes and capabilities** (Youth and Karin Community, Bendigo) – Karin Community case study interviews are completed and currently being synthesized. The youth case study interviews are still in progress. This work is tracking slightly behind schedule and will now be completed in August 2019.

**Collection of indicators** – Ongoing across all areas.



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder activities undertaken during this first stage of research to engage with both the project stakeholders and the broader EMS communities are listed below.

### GENERAL ENGAGEMENT

- Update emails to keep the broader stakeholder group informed of the research as it progressed and shared knowledge.
- Project meetings with end-user group to discuss progress of research.
- Meeting on an as-needs basis with the working group and also individual end users.
- Meetings with external participants associated with the project.
- Ongoing meetings with Project Mentors.
- Ongoing collaboration with WAFA and QFES across numerous activities.
- Workshops (detailed in previous section).
- Dissemination of research outputs and activities through social media.

### PRESENTATIONS

- Young, C. Presentation, Effective diversity and inclusion in Australian emergency management organisations and its role in building resilience, European Climate Change Adaptation Conference. Lisbon, Portugal 26-29 May 2019
- Video Presentation – Report Findings QFES/WAFA workshop, *Stories from the Past, Stories for our Future*, Emergency Management Conference, Melbourne, 29 May 2019
- Young, C. Presentation and workshop, *Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability*, Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC Research Advisory Forum. Melbourne, 8 May 2019
- Young, C. Research project updates presentations. NSW, VIC and SA 2019
- Young, C. Diversity and inclusion: Building strength and capability, Institute of Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities, VU workshop. Melbourne, 19 November 2018.
- Young, C. Invited Presentation of work to date to the AFAC Diversity and Inclusion Group. Melbourne, 19 September 2018

Abstracts accepted for AFAC 2019

- Transforming through diversity and inclusion capability: the pathway to achieving diversity benefits (VU – oral presentation)
- Diversity more than the eye can see: challenging how we look at diversity (QFES, WAFA, BNHCRC – oral and poster presentation)

### POSTERS

- Young, C. and Rasmussen, B. Poster, Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability, AFAC 2018 Annual Conference. Perth, 4-7 September 2018



- Young, C. Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability, Poster presentation at The Women and Firefighting Australasia (WFA) Conference 2018, Looking Forward Looking Back, Shaping the New Norm. Wellington, New Zealand, 26- 28 September 2018.

## ARTICLES

Harista, C. Understanding of the diversity of those in need, Fire Australia, Issue 1, 2019

## SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT

Social media has been a key aspect of outreach for this research phase. Impact is shown in Table 2. This reported impact is limited, as we have not been able to obtain data from all social media platforms such as Preventionweb, which are hosting reports.

Platform	Content	Impact
LinkedIn	Shaping the New Norm report post	649 views
	Effective diversity in emergency management organisations, AJEM article post	642 views
BNHCRC YouTube	Practitioner videos (Steve OMalley and Colin Thomson)	122 views
	Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capacity research update	107 views
ResearchGate	Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability literature review	815 reads
	The long road: building effective diversity and inclusion in emergency management	204 reads
	Effective diversity in emergency management organisations: the long road, AJEM article	21 reads
	Shaping the New Norm: WFA Conference 2018 Evaluation and QFES Workshop Synthesis, Women and Fire Fighting Australasia	72 reads
BNHCRC web page	Diversity and inclusion project page	240 views
	Effective diversity in emergency management organisations: the long road, AJEM article	35 views



Platform	Content	Impact
	Research proceedings from the 2018 Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and AFAC Conference Proceedings	289 views
	Working from the inside out to improve utilisation of research in decision making	21 views
	Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability conference paper	59 views
	Community values survey	42 views
	Building capability in emergency services: diversity and inclusion in communities	32 views
	The long road: building effective diversity and inclusion in emergency management	147 views
	Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability literature review	89 views
	Changing capabilities of emergency service organisations	101 views
<b>AJEM</b>	Effective diversity in emergency management organisations: the long road	19 views
<b>Total impact</b>	<b>Social media reads and views</b>	<b>3634</b>

TABLE 2: SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT FOR BNHCRC DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PROJECT



## UTILISATION

This project completed the development of the draft framework in Phase One, and has been refining this since. The project focus of the final year will be further testing and finalization of the framework and development of supporting materials to aid its uptake.

Feedback received from the end users in the first review workshop and also end user statements in both annual reports have highlighted the value of the collaborative process in supporting their practice and forward movement of this agenda.

The literature review has had the highest level of utilisation on ResearchGate (815 reads). Other social media posts on LinkedIn related to the Wafa, QFES, BHNCRC analysis report (649 views) and the AJEM article (642 views) also show that the material is impacting a broader audience beyond EMS on social media.

The transformation process developed in Phase One of the research is reported by end users and other organisations beyond the EM sector to be useful in terms of understanding the longer-term process and being able to map and understand activities. It is also the most requested piece of collateral following presentations. Two end users reported that they had enlarged it and put it up on their office walls.

There is also anecdotal evidence of insights and concepts developed by this project being used by organisations. The new focus through risk presented earlier this year to a number of stakeholders and also industry bodies, is currently being tracked, and there are signs that discussions around this theme are starting to emerge.

Our work with QFES on the Wafa workshop which was synthesized in collaboration with Janine Talyor and Quinn Cramer from QFES, illustrates use of our evaluation methodology by an organisation.

There has also been utilisation beyond the EMS as the project team has been approached by another agency outside of the emergency services to undertake work with them based on research outputs to date.



## PUBLICATIONS LIST

Young, C. Jones, R.N. (2019) Risky Business: Why Diversity and Inclusion Matter. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. Melbourne

Young, C. & Jones, R.N. (2019) Effective Diversity in Emergency Management Organisations: The Long Road, Australian Journal of Emergency Management, April 2019

Young, C. & Jones, R.N. (2019) Hazardnote 60: Making Diversity and Inclusion the New Normal in Emergency Services. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. Melbourne

Young, C., Taylor, J. & Cramer, Q. (2019) Shaping the New Norm: WAFA Conference 2018 Evaluation and QFES Workshop Synthesis, Women and Fire Fighting Australasia. Nowra, NSW

Young, C., Pyke, J., Maharaj, N., Cormack, C., Rasmussen, B. & Jones, R.N. (2018) Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability research summary. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC. Melbourne

Young, C., Pyke, J., Maharaj, N., Cormack, C., Rasmussen, B. & Jones, R.N. (2018) Diversity and inclusion: building strength and capability. Proceedings from the CRC and AFAC Conference, Perth 5-8 September 2018

Young, C. (2018) Working from the inside out to improve utilisation of research in decision making. Non-peer reviewed proceedings from the CRC and AFAC Conference. Perth, 5-8 September 2018



## TEAM MEMBERS

### RESEARCH TEAM

- Professor Bruce Rasmussen, Victoria University
- Celeste Young, Victoria University
- Dr Fiona Macdonald, Victoria University
- Professor Roger Jones, Victoria University
- Dr Craig Cormick, Thinkoutsideofthe

### WORKING GROUP

- Janine Taylor, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- Sonja Braidmer, Fire and Rescue, New South Wales
- Steve OMalley, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne
- Kristina Wendtman, NSW Rural Fire Service

### EXTERNAL PARTICIPANTS

- Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, UK
- Emergency Management Australia
- Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service
- Yosemite National Park, USA
- Fitting in, UK

### PARTICIPATING END-USER ORGANISATIONS

- Australian Capital Territory Emergency Services Agency
- Country Fire Authority, Victoria
- Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Australia
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria
- Inspector-General for Emergency Management, Victoria
- Fire and Rescue, New South Wales
- Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service
- Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Melbourne
- South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service
- State Emergency Service, New South Wales
- State Emergency Service, South Australia
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- Rural Fire Services, New South Wales
- Emergency Management Victoria
- Tasmanian Fire Service



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Young, C., (2016). Working from the inside out: implementation based research poster, Climate Adaptation Conference, Change Challenge Opportunity. Adelaide, 5-7 July 2016