

Community Led Planning Demonstration Project

Evaluation Findings

2 December



nous group

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2. Evaluation Approach
3. Key findings
4. Some initial Implications from the findings have emerged
5. To achieve ongoing value, certain success factors and limitations should be acted on
6. New insights on community responses to fire threats may be particularly for helpful in the next stage of the CLP approach

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There has been a strong push towards community capacity building in the sector

Recent reviews of the emergency management sector at both a state and national level have highlighted the need for increased community participation in emergency responses as previously:

- The policies from agencies were poorly suited to local needs and largely unknown to those who are meant to use them, and
- The sole use of information dissemination reached only a limited number of people who are at risk.

To address this, agencies are to focus on community capacity building with the aim of achieving a greater sense of shared responsibility for disaster preparedness and risk and increased resilience.

Community capacity building focuses on ‘bottom up goals’

Capacity building involves developing the skills and competencies of individuals and communities so they can take greater ownership of issues that affect them and are better equipped to confront societal challenges.

The focus is on identifying ‘bottom up goals’ which can then be fed through the system (e.g. the emergency management sector) to improve its overall effectiveness.

Figure – Different levels of capacity building



Figure Source: Adopted from the VicHealth capacity building framework, ‘Capacity Building for health promotion – Information Sheet’, VicHealth, 2012.

The Community Led Planning (CLP) Demonstration Project responds to this push

The CLP Demonstration Project seeks to address two problems central to community resilience:

- Community Bushfire plans that are not locally driven endorsed and developed, result in limited shared responsibility, and
- Communities underestimate the hazard and agencies lack local knowledge of vulnerability, resulting in limitations to a fully informed approach to risk planning.

A facilitator is assigned to each participant communities and assists a community steering committee (CSC) of 8-10 community participants to implement the five-staged community led planning approach.

The five stage approach involves:



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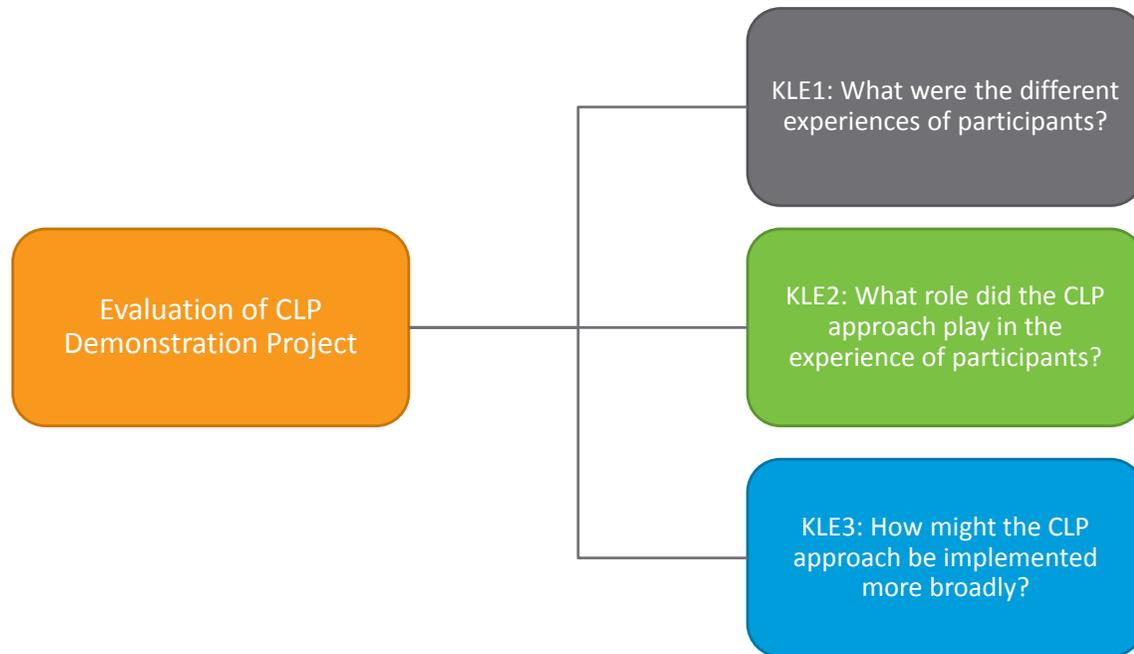
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Three Key Lines of Enquiry framed the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to understand the range of experiences of participants in the CLP Demonstration Project, and from this assist the CFA to better understand community led approaches to risk.

Three Key Lines of Enquiry (KLE), shown below, formed the analytical approach.



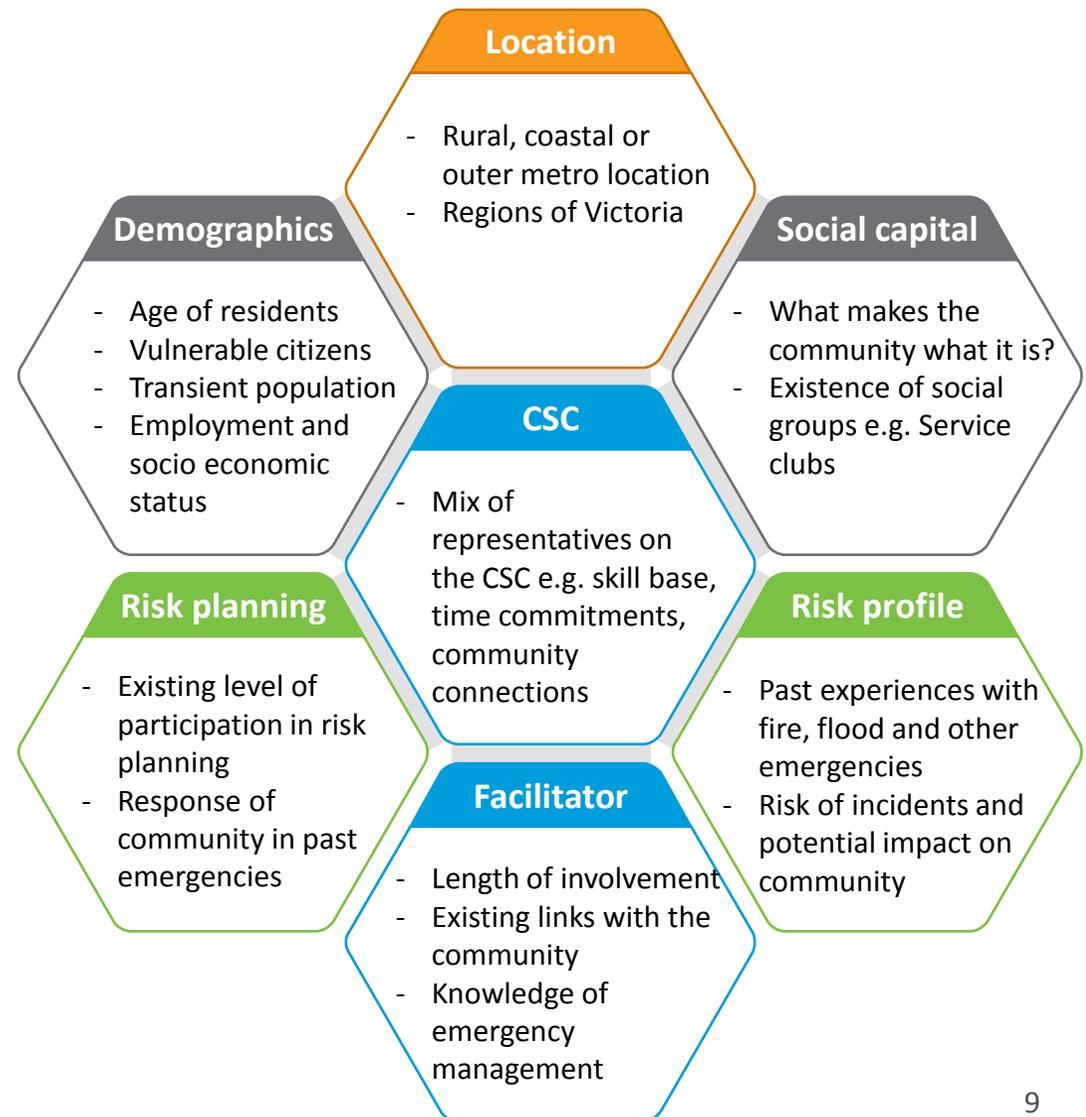
Five communities were selected as case studies

Nous developed a series of selection criteria to identify the five case study communities. This ensured the evaluation covered a sufficiently representative sample.

This process aimed to capture:

- The diverse characteristics of participant communities that could influence their involvement in the project, and
- The different ways communities, through their facilitators and community steering committees, chose to participate in the CLP Demonstration Project.

Figure: Case study selection criteria



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Key findings: What were the different experiences of participants?

- 1. Participants recognised a need to improve their community's understanding of risk**
- 2. The level of change in individual knowledge and skill varied considerably**
- 3. Most felt their understanding of the community had improved**
- 4. Stronger relationships proved the most important capacity improvement**
- 5. Changes in the community's capabilities has not yet occurred**

Key findings: What were the different experiences of participants?

1. Participants recognised a need to improve their community's understanding of risk

- Participants could generally be characterised as community minded people and in most cases participants were approached to become involved through an existing contact.

'I'm not sure I would have done it as I've got a lot on and I'm involved in a lot already but I'm so glad I did.'

- Participants commonly had an existing concern about how the community more broadly understood and prepared for disaster risk.

Key findings: What were the different experiences of participants?

2. The level of change in individual knowledge and skill varied considerably

- Participants' generally characterised themselves as having a reasonable understanding of risk before their involvement in the project.

'The people who were chosen were probably already aware and also people that felt there was an issue.'

- Although not a prime motivation for becoming involved in the project, some participants did feel their understanding and skills for responding to risk had increased.

'I feel a lot more realistic about preparing for fire. We have actually written our fire plan down now and will go through a test run with the kids so they know what to do.'

- The experience of obtaining new knowledge and skills from involvement in the Project varied considerably amongst participants, those with CFA experience in particular reported little change in their capabilities.

Key findings: What were the different experiences of participants?

3. Most felt their understanding of the community had improved

- While only some participants reported gaining new insights about risk, most did feel they gained a better understanding of who was in their community and how they may be affected in a disaster through the CLP approach.

‘The project made us on the committee more aware that there are a lot more people out there that need to be taken into consideration - up until now we just called people we associated with during a bushfire.’

- The process also highlighted for some CSCs concerns amongst community members that had not previously been considered a priority.

Key findings: What were the different experiences of participants?

4. Stronger relationships proved the most important capacity improvement

- Participants consistently reported having gained stronger connections within their community, including more proactive engagement with agencies active in the area.

'It has been really good to work with the SES collaboratively through this project, particularly getting more into planning and preparedness rather than just in an incident response.'

- Other participants felt that the project helped to facilitate discussion between community organisations that usual do not interact.
- In those communities where there is commonly little to no interactions between individuals, the Project assisted to build up new community bonds.

'I definitely feel more a part of the community than I did before the project'

'It has increased my network as it includes people from the different corners of town – that has been really good.'

Key findings: What were the different experiences of participants?

5. Changes in the community's capabilities has not yet occurred

- The CSCs were yet to implement their initiatives and participants subsequently felt that the broader community's awareness of risk was yet to change.
- The group in Buffalo River decided to do their survey through a face-to-face door knock so found they had already had an opportunity to have useful discussions on risk with other community members.
- Participants from four of the case study communities also reported a sense of confidence that they had a core group that was ready to make decisions, even if attitudes in the broader community were yet to change.

Key findings: What role did the CLP approach play in the experience of participants?

- 1. Communities pursued similar types of initiatives, delivered through local channels**
- 2. Community engagement was central to the CLP process**
- 3. Groups found the CLP challenging and the role of the facilitator was important**
- 4. Participants recognised the value of the Project**

Key findings: What role did the CLP approach play in the experience of participants?

1. Communities pursued similar types of initiatives, delivered through local channels

- Most CSCs adopted a general focus on increasing awareness in the community and providing useful material for reference during a disaster.
- CSC's then more overtly incorporated local characteristics into how these similar initiatives were organised and implemented. Reflecting this, participants particularly valued the opportunity to directly address local concerns and have discussions with other community members through the activities.
- Longer terms issues identified throughout the project (but beyond the scope of the CSC's work) also commonly targeted risks more specific to local concerns.

Key findings: What role did the CLP approach play in the experience of participants?

2. Community engagement was central to the CLP process

- The level of engagement within a community was considered a main factor on what could be achieved by the CSC.

'In this place, unlike a typical country town, there are a whole lot of people that don't talk to others in the community. How then do they all come together to respond to risk?'

- Most participants felt that engaging people would continue to be a significant challenge for their CLP approach.

'[It's] about moving on from the town hall meeting format that no one turns up to anyway.'

Key findings: What role did the CLP approach play in the experience of participants?

3. Groups found the CLP challenging and the role of the facilitator was important

- The level of engagement within a community was considered a main factor on what could be achieved by the CSC.
- The CLP approach was not easy, relying on strong and cohesive group work.

'At the start everyone really had their own agendas – had a reason why they were there and concerned. As we got more into the process we came together and were considering things more as a community.'

- All participants felt the facilitator had an important impact on their overall experience.

'It felt like our group had access to all these resources of knowledge and expertise and I found that really reassuring.'

'I think that the facilitator needed to impart more information to us and step us through the [CLP] process more.'

Key findings: What role did the CLP approach play in the experience of participants?

4. Participants recognised the value of the Project

- Participants widely held the view that the initiatives undertaken could not have occurred without the Project.

'We wouldn't have been talking about these things and considering these issues without the project.'

- The common consensus was that momentum would continue up until this fire season, but a sustained CLP approach past then was unlikely.

'For this to work well it needs to be a long term project with external input e.g. getting the facilitator back for 2-3 meetings in 12 month time. This would get much better outcomes as these projects aren't about short term gains.'

Key findings: How might the CLP approach to risk management be implemented more broadly?

- 1. Selecting the right people to be involved is important**
- 2. Local dynamics require flexibility in how the CLP approach is applied**
- 3. The CLP approach should be acknowledged as a long term process**

Key findings: How might the CLP approach to risk management be implemented more broadly?

1. Selecting the right people to be involved is important

- The formation of new relationships between CSC members was the most valued experience for participants.
- To support this, interviewees across all communities highlighted the importance of consistent participation of CSC members.
- Participants also highlighted the importance of trying to capture a broad group within the CSC from across the community that do not all know each other.

Key findings: How might the CLP approach to risk management be implemented more broadly?

2. Local dynamics require flexibility in how the CLP approach is applied

- In comparing the five case studies, what was valued in one community could be considered a limitation in another community.
- This included contradicting perspectives on the involvement of local CFA representatives in the Project.
'I found that the fire brigade had their own agenda. They said 'the CSC is great' but then had a certain idea of things and it was challenging to cross those boundaries and come together.'
- Understanding such dynamics within a community and supporting the facilitator to actively manage this in the CLP approach would be helpful.

Key findings: How might the CLP approach to risk management be implemented more broadly?

3. The CLP approach should be acknowledged as a long term process

- Most participants found the Project a valuable experience overall.

'It was a very positive experience, and if we can keep the momentum going it will be good for the town'

- There was also strong consensus from those interviewed that emergency preparedness needs to move on from plans that are developed by agencies without input from the community or an understanding of local issues.

'From the project you could really see the value of local knowledge as people just ignore a plan that is imposed on them.'

- Participants subsequently felt the CLP approach should really be acknowledged as a long term process

'I'm re-iterating that it shouldn't end here. We are wanting more to progress it further.'

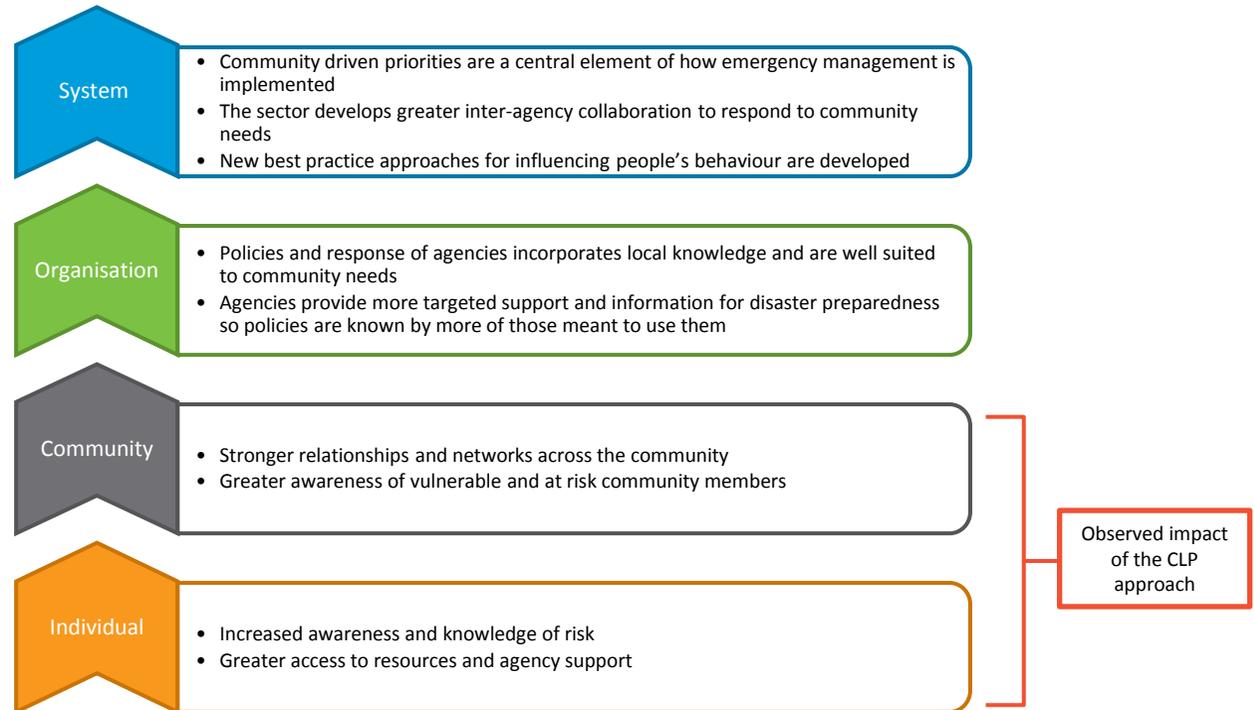
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Some initial Implications from the findings have emerged

1. The CLP approach provides value in line with recent reforms

- Overall, the CLP approach was considered a valuable process.
- This experience of participants shows that a positive impact can be made in the five-staged project.
- These observed outcomes are also in line with recent emergency management sector reforms.



Some initial Implications from the findings have emerged

2. To achieve a sustainable impact, a more organic process is required

- Community led planning needs to be understood as a long term journey that will ultimately allow communities to develop plans with relevance across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.
- The strength of the project lies in the ability of facilitators to mould the process to participants' needs so they can then go out and engage with their own community. To maximise the impact of the CLP approach in the future, agencies should subsequently encourage facilitators to be responsive and organic in their approaches.
- Leveraging its organic process, more effective community engagement could also be possible through the CLP approach.

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To achieve ongoing value, certain success factors and limitations need to be acknowledged

Success factors

1. Selection of the Community Steering Committee
2. Communication at the initiation of the process
3. Timing of the process
4. Length of process
5. Selection of the facilitator

Limitations/challenges

1. Local sensitivities
2. Demands of a dynamic process
3. Community engagement

To achieve ongoing value, certain success factors and limitations need to be acknowledged

1. These success factors could be leveraged to increase the benefits achieved from the CLP approach

1. Selection of the Steering Committee

- Involve both those with substantial experience in local emergency management and those that are new to risk planning but can provide new enthusiasm and diverse perspectives
- Participants with strong community links will assist the CSC in engaging widely in the development of the plan

2. Communication of the beginning of process

To initiate the process, potential participants should be:

- Provided with clear expectations about what the process involves (e.g. length and level of time commitment) the long term goals of community led planning.
- Consulted about how the process can best align with local community networks (e.g. local CFA brigades)

Reflecting on these success factors, how could your CSC be strengthened?
(e.g. are there particular members of the community missing whose input could be helpful?)

To achieve ongoing value, certain success factors and limitations need to be acknowledged

1. These success factors could be leveraged to increase the benefits achieved from the CLP approach

3. Timing of process

- Evaluate a group's progress at key points in the process to consider whether the original timeline and frequency of meetings is still appropriate
- Provide the support of a facilitator until the process is complete.

4. Length of process

The CLP process should cover a full season to allow:

- Preparation and implementation of initiatives in the pre-fire season when communities are more attuned to fire risk concerns
- Evaluation of the impact of their initiatives and consider the implications for the future

Reflecting on these success factors, what would be the best timeline for your CLP project in 2014? (e.g. when should meetings resume, what would key points for evaluation be, where is the participation of the facilitator crucial?)

To achieve ongoing value, certain success factors and limitations need to be acknowledged

2. Mitigations of the identified limitations could also improve the CLP approach in the future

1. Local sensitivities

The effectiveness of the CLP approach could be compromised by local dynamics:

- tensions between established community groups
- politicised issues in the area (e.g. need for burn offs)
- strong views over town boundaries

A prescriptive approach could fail to best accommodate these local nuances.

How should the CLP approach be structured to accommodate local sensitivities?

To achieve ongoing value, certain success factors and limitations need to be acknowledged

2. Mitigations of the identified limitations could also improve the CLP approach in the future

2. Demands of a dynamic process

The CLP approach requires participants:

- to commit to a lively process which can test their beliefs, values and assumptions
- participate in as part of a group, requiring active interactions and compromise

This could be challenging to many individuals more accustomed to passive involvement or one way decision making on community issues

How could participants be best prepared/supported to engage in the dynamic process?

To achieve ongoing value, certain success factors and limitations need to be acknowledged

2. Mitigations of the identified limitations could also improve the CLP approach in the future

3. Community engagement

As commonly experienced in programs targeted at the community, engaging a wide cross section of people proved challenging in the CLP process.

While the CLP approach is unique in getting individuals to engage with their own community, only some of the individuals that need to be aware of risk were reached.

What tools and/or approaches could your CSC use to engage a wider cross section in the community?

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New insights on community responses to fire may be particularly helpful in the next stage of the CLP approach

1. A recent report by the Fire Services Commissioner unpacks the different attitudes of people in responding to a fire threat



Can do defenders:
action orientated and self sufficient, with the confidence and determination to protect property and deal with the fire



Considered defenders:
strongly committed to staying to protect their property having recognised the risks and made deliberate efforts to prepare for fire threat



Livelihood defenders:
committed to staying to protect their property, stock and other assets from the threat of fire if possible given the likely conditions

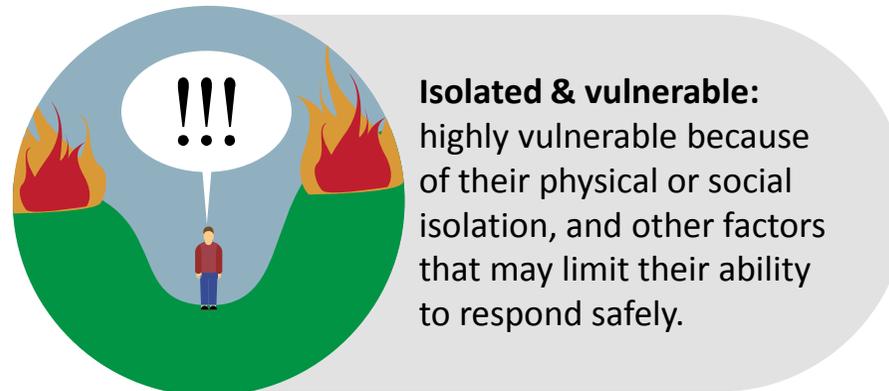
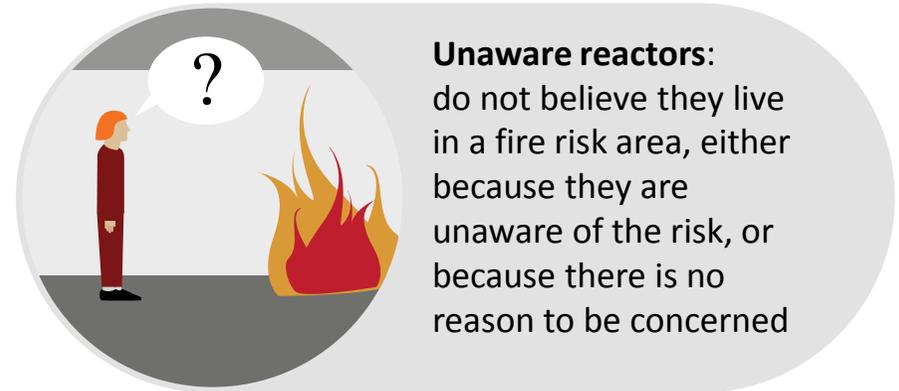


Threat monitors:
do not intend to remain at their property if the threat becomes serious, but do not want to leave until they feel it is necessary

Review of the community response in recent bushfires', Fire Services Commissioner/Nous Group, 31 July 2013, p. 2

New insights on community responses to fire may be particularly helpful in the next stage of the CLP approach

1. A recent report by the Fire Services Commissioner unpacks the different attitudes of people in responding to a fire threat



Review of the community response in recent bushfires', Fire Services Commissioner/Nous Group, 31 July 2013, p. 2

New insights on community responses to fire may be particularly helpful in the next stage of the CLP approach

2. These different response types can help make sense of why broad community engagement is difficult to achieve

Table 1: Attitude to awareness and education activities

Response Archetype	Attitude to awareness & education activities
Can do defenders	High self-belief in their abilities and knowledge of fire – highly unlikely to participate in bushfire education programs or to access bushfire safety information from authorities
Considered defenders	Make deliberate efforts to prepare - most likely to access information to help prepare e.g. home defendability assessments, and participate in programs e.g. Community Fireguard
Livelihood defenders	Likely to feel sufficiently well informed about fire and about how to prepare (often through experience) – unlikely to feel the need to access further information or programs
Threat monitors	Limited interest in education programs but possible interest in some topics e.g. passive house protection measures, care of pets, what authorities will do to warn people
Threat avoiders	Have little, if any, interest in how to defend - concern about fire may motivate to seek advice (e.g. warnings), but less likely to want information about preparing the property
Unaware reactors	Unaware that they could be at risk - no incentive to seek out information about fire or fire safety, and unlikely to engage with agencies e.g. by attending meetings
Isolated & vulnerable	Highly unlikely to access information from authorities

'Review of the community response in recent bushfires', Fire Services Commissioner/Nous Group, 31 July 2013, p. 24

New insights on community responses to fire may be particularly helpful in the next stage of the CLP approach

3. The CLP approach could be well suited to act of these insights to improve community awareness and participation

These insights shows that rather than adopting a uniform approach, awareness and education activities will be more effective if tailored to the motivations of these different attitudes.

As the CLP process already encourages participants to develop localised responses and initiatives it could be well suited to adopt this new understanding of best practice for education and awareness activities.

How could the CSC use this knowledge to better target its engagement with the community?