

Community Engagement Framework



Government of Western Australia
Fire & Emergency Services Authority





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Introduction

FESA recognises that a safer community can best be achieved through the formation of partnerships with communities that enhance the community's level of resilience (self reliance). To achieve this FESA has embraced a more facilitative role in managing risk that involves greater community participation. FESA largely achieves this through its community engagement programs and strategies.

The aim of this Community Engagement Framework is to facilitate the development of programs that foster community involvement and participation in achieving the goal of community safety.

A key focus of FESA's community engagement programs is community preparedness. The impacts of disasters on the community are significantly influenced by the preparedness of the community. Preparedness activities help to build community resilience to disasters

because they build the capacity of the community to withstand, recover from, and respond positively to an emergency or crisis.

FESA also recognises that the community's level of understanding of their exposure to risk and the responsibility they take for reducing or preparing for this risk varies significantly across the diverse groups and individuals who make up the 'community' of Western Australia. The community engagement programs and strategies that FESA facilitates address this diversity by embracing a localised and community-centred approach.

To successfully increase the community's capacity to deal with emergencies requires FESA to ensure there is a direct link between the outcomes of its programs and strategies and its strategic goal of community safety.



1. Community Safety

FESA STRATEGIC VISION – SAFER COMMUNITY

FESA's vision is for a Safer Community. FESA is working toward its vision in partnership with the people of Western Australia.

FESA is taking a long term planning approach that is outlined in the FESA 2023 Shaping Our Future - Futures Strategy.¹ This long term approach aims to encourage the organisation to think about the future but take action today. The Futures Strategy has four key strategic directions, one of which is 'an integrated organisation'.¹

An Integrated Organisation achieves its goals through a foundation of strong governance, collaboration, cooperation and alignment.¹

A key outcome of achieving An Integrated Organisation is: improved community engagement.¹ The following Community Engagement Framework supports this by outlining how FESA can achieve this by embracing a planning philosophy based on community engagement principles that recognise community and environmental priorities and values.



1. Community Safety

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Preparedness activities help to build community resilience to disasters. Preparation not only helps in preventing disasters but can also lessen the impact of disasters when they do occur.²

Community resilience is the capacity of groups to withstand, recover from, and respond positively to an emergency or crisis. Resilience is a dynamic quality that can be developed and strengthened over time.²

Before expecting that communities will undertake prevention or preparedness activities communities need to first be engaged in risk communication to enable them to develop an awareness of the risks they may face. Awareness however does not necessarily lead to preparation. Engagement is an ongoing process that also needs to

include programs that empower and enable communities to believe they can make a difference.

Community engagement increases resilience by firstly raising the awareness of the community to the risks they face and empowering and enabling them to undertake activities that reduce their exposure to this risk. This is achieved through a range of education and empowerment methods that require a long-term approach which involves the establishment of trust and active partnerships between the community and FESA.

Essentially resilience is increased by sharing responsibility for the risk and making the community active participants in risk reduction strategies.



1. Community Safety

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

The United Nations World Health Organisation describes vulnerability to emergencies and disasters as a function of the degree of exposure to hazards and of people's capacity to mitigate events and their consequences.³

Community vulnerability has two aspects:

- Susceptibility - the degree to which a community is exposed to hazards;
- Resilience – the community's capacity to cope with hazards.

Vulnerability reduction requires:

- Policy development;
- Vulnerability assessment (hazard analysis, risk assessment and planning);
- Prevention and mitigation to reduce susceptibility (legislation, regulation, development assessment and planning);
- Preparedness to increase resilience (emergency planning, educating communities at risk).

FESA believes communities should prepare for emergencies because:

- They have most to lose from being vulnerable to emergencies and disasters
- They have the most to gain from an effective preparedness program
- Resources are most easily pooled at the community level. Every community has capabilities. Failure to exploit these capabilities is poor resource management
- Those who first respond to an emergency come from within a community.



1. Community Safety

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

'Community engagement is an essential ingredient in developing community resilience. It ensures that our communities feel empowered and confident that they can deal with emergency situations'.⁴

Community engagement is about providing communities with appropriate opportunities to understand risk and ways of managing risk - enabling them to be better prepared in an emergency.

FESA fosters community participation in the management of risk primarily through its community engagement programs. Community engagement is integral to achieving community safety outcomes and therefore is integral to the large majority of the organisations business.

'Community Engagement is any process that engages the community in problem solving or decision making and uses community input to make better decisions'.⁵

The Community Engagement Directorate's role is to develop programs and resources to support the organisation, including staff and volunteers, collaborate with the community in achieving community safety outcomes.

This role specifically involves the development of programs that promote community resilience by focusing on enabling the community to undertake prevention and preparation activities.

FESA's community engagement programs are developed to achieve the following objectives:

- Raise awareness in high risk areas about the importance of planning and preparing, where possible for hazards such as cyclones, floods and bushfires.
- Increase understanding of how to prepare for, respond to and recover from the stresses particular communities will face.
- Increase adoption of preparedness measures and appropriate response behaviours in high risk areas.



1. Community Safety

RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH – THE PROCESS OF ACHIEVING THE ‘SAFER COMMUNITY’ VISION

FESA continues to embrace a risk management process as a tool to support planning and decision making to achieve community safety outcomes. The risk management approach provides a more systematic and integrated approach to the prevention of incidents, as well as enabling greater innovation and efficiency in the design and delivery of services to the community.⁶

FESA recognises that increasing community safety involves developing a broad range of strategies that are aimed at increasing the community's capacity to deal with risks. These strategies are the responsibility of both the emergency service stakeholders and the community. The risk management process provides a rigorous framework for the identification and prioritization of risk, the establishment of risk treatment strategies and defining roles and responsibilities

for the implementation of these.⁶ The key to fostering responsibility for the implementation of these strategies is to involve the stakeholders, especially the community in the risk management process.⁶

To foster ‘shared’ responsibility it is necessary for FESA to ‘engage’ or involve the community in the risk management process to enable the community to have a realistic understanding of the risks they face and how these are managed. It is also important for developing trust, the community need to understand that responsibility for the risk is being shared and that the emergency service stakeholders are supporting them.⁶

The role of the community in the risk management process is recognised through the community-centred approach that underpins emergency management within Western Australia.

1. Community Safety

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS A RISK TREATMENT OPTION

Importantly the risk management process provides a broader framework for managing risk than the traditional suppression focus. This integrated process enables risk to be approached from a multi-treatment approach involving a range of stakeholders. This creates more sustainable solutions and also a collaborative environment for fostering shared responsibility for the risks.⁶

This also assists the different stakeholders, including the community understand and respect the role the others play in the risk process and the value the other stakeholders can add to their business.

Community engagement as well as being integral to the risk management process is also an important treatment option. Many successful treatment options involving the community are ultimately aimed at social change⁶, these treatment options are a key focus of FESA's Community Engagement Framework.

Treatment strategies that are aimed at social change often involve influencing people's behaviours, attitudes and beliefs.⁶ There are many challenges involved in facilitating these types of strategies.⁶ People often do not always understand or value the long term benefits of changing their behaviours and conversely emergency service agencies do not always understand what is involved in developing programs that facilitate this.

The community is diverse and individuals display a range of responses to risk based on their own perception.⁷ Community engagement strategies also need to be diverse to adequately accommodate the community's needs in responding to risk. This is best achieved at the 'community' or local level.



1. Community Safety

APPROPRIATE RISK COMMUNICATION – ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY CONSTRUCTIVELY

Strategies aimed at invoking a change of behaviour in a community that simply rely upon the dissemination of information are unlikely to succeed.⁶ People's perceptions of a risk, their situation and the applicability of a treatment option all act as 'filters' to the information they receive.⁶ Therefore, if the information does not 'fit' with, or does not effectively challenge an individual's pre-existing understanding, then the passive delivery of information is not likely to lead to behavioural change. In fact, change is only likely to occur if a person or community is in some way receptive to the information and ready to change.⁶

The complexity of encouraging people to change and adopt new behaviours and ideas is associated with the notion that people move through various stages in adopting risk reduction behaviours.⁶ FESA needs to understand the community and involve and communicate with them in a way that is reflective of where they are at.

FESA's community engagement programs and strategies aim to facilitate the adoption of risk reduction strategies or behaviours.

To achieve this FESA needs to not only understand the community to ensure the most effective treatment strategies are identified but ensure the community are involved in the decision making process. Engaging the community will allow the programs to be directed to where the community is at in terms of their readiness to adopt risk reduction strategies.

It is also important to ensure the programs are underpinned by research and evidence to ensure they achieve the intended outcomes.⁶

Engaging the community in the process not only enables FESA a better opportunity to understand the community it also provides the community the opportunity to be participants in the process identifying their own treatment strategies.

2. Community Engagement

FOSTERING SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction

Traditionally interaction between the emergency services and the community has primarily involved a one way transfer of information.⁶

It is now widely accepted that it is unrealistic to expect that applying this type of interaction will have an immediate impact on the community's behaviour.⁶ It ignores the complex process involved firstly in communicating risk and secondly in aligning this to the readiness of the community to change. This traditional approach may result in the community becoming more aware of the risks and understanding the key safety messages, however is unlikely to lead to behaviour change.⁶

Community engagement however embraces a more complex process of education and involves a much higher level of interaction between the emergency services and the community.⁶ It embraces a two-way process of education that enables a greater understanding of a given situation and the establishment of solutions appropriate to the

needs of particular individuals or groups within that specific situation.⁶ In this approach, the transfer of information is only one aspect of the interaction between the emergency services and the community. It also involves shared decision making, two-way education and capacity building and importantly the building of relationships and trust.⁶ This more complex process is challenging and to be effective needs to occur at a local level.⁶

FESA's community engagement framework seeks to foster a more localised approach to its programs to embrace this more complex process. A localised approach is necessary to enable the community to become active participants in the process. It also means the process is able to reflect the local situation both in terms of the hazard profile and the particularities of the local community. Involving the community at the local level also gives the individuals a greater opportunity to be involved in negotiating how to address their needs.



2. Community Engagement

FOSTERING SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

FESA's community engagement programs aim to involve the community in problem solving and decision making rather than being passive recipients of generic broad scale one-off information.⁶ Involving the community in decision making is more likely to lead to behavioural change because it enables individuals to take greater responsibility for their own safety.⁶ Where the community has had the opportunity to develop trust in the process they are more likely to accept responsibility for their role in reducing risk. This is enhanced further when the community can trust they are being supported by agencies such as FESA

who are also undertaking a broad range of strategies to manage the risk.⁷

A localised community engagement process is also more likely to be sustainable as it enables the community to gradually take greater and greater responsibility for their own safety.⁶ This approach also recognises that a community becomes progressively more receptive to change and the adoption of new ideas and attitudes because it respects that people move through various stages of acceptance in adopting risk reduction behaviours.⁶



2. Community Engagement

UNDERSTANDING HOW THE COMMUNITY PERCEIVES RISK

FESA has responsibility for numerous hazards that all vary significantly in character. The level of community preparedness for these hazards is generally low even for those hazards that occur more frequently such as bushfires and cyclones.⁸

Extensive research has been undertaken to better understand how and why individuals and communities respond to risk. Understanding this is helpful in developing effective strategies. The research shows that it is necessary to focus more on the way people interpret information and the quality of the relationship between the community and the responsible agencies⁷, in this case FESA.

When conceptualising risk the community has a bias about low frequency events.⁷ In general people are more likely to adopt protective actions when they perceive themselves faced with high frequency events, and take fewer precautions for low frequency events.⁷ This is the case even if the consequences are significantly greater.⁷ Perception of frequency can also be affected by the length of time people have lived in an area, particularly if they have had a direct personal experience of a hazard activity.⁷

Communicating about risk in regional or generic probability over large geographic areas also affects people's perception as it doesn't relate the risk to them personally i.e. at the household or neighbourhood level.⁷ People tend to believe that it will happen to someone else or it won't happen again e.g. *'what's the chance of getting hit by lightning twice'*. People also then tend to transfer responsibility⁷, e.g. *'if the problem is that big there is nothing I can do about it, it's the Governments responsibility'*. It has also been shown that living in a high risk area or just receiving information about a risk and how it might be managed is not sufficient to motivate people to prepare.⁷

People's belief in whether their actions will make a difference also affects behaviour to risk. This is referred to as 'outcome expectancy' i.e. how people assess the effectiveness of any actions that can be taken to reduce risk.⁷ Negative outcome expectancy describes the belief that the hazard is too destructive for personal action to make a difference.⁷ Positive outcome expectancy describes the belief that personal preparation can make a difference.⁷



2. Community Engagement

UNDERSTANDING HOW THE COMMUNITY PERCEIVES RISK

Those individuals with a tendency toward negative outcome expectancies are highly unlikely to undertake preparation or mitigation activities.⁷

People who hold positive outcome expectancy are more likely to seek more information about risk and how to prepare. These people however still need guidance through the process because while they believe they can make a difference they do not necessarily know how.⁷

Both characteristics benefit from providing information that demonstrates firstly that preparing can make a difference and then providing information or demonstrating how so they can prepare to enable them to act.⁷ For those people with a tendency toward negative outcome expectancy it is also important to distinguish between the controllable and uncontrollable elements of an event to assist them to better understand the complexity of risk and what control or influence they can have.⁷

Personal competencies also affect whether people progress an intention to an action due to people's self belief in their ability to achieve something.⁷

An important aspect of people's coping style is their capacity for problem solving and their ability to actively confront challenges.⁷

The challenge for FESA is to communicate risk in a way that overcomes community bias about low frequency events. It is important to understand that even the more frequently occurring hazards such as bushfire and cyclone have a relatively low likelihood of affecting any individual or household. Strategies that can overcome this challenge of low frequency perception include communicating about risk on the local or community level and also shifting people's timeframe by discussing probability over a lifetime.⁷

Focusing on the consequences and what can be done to control them is also important. This not only assists overcoming bias but addresses other challenges such as negative outcome expectancy.⁷ It is information about consequence that people refer to in their decision to prepare as it influences their belief about whether the actions they take can make a difference to their safety.⁷

2. Community Engagement

HIERARCHY OF ENGAGEMENT – QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS & EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

Empowerment describes an individual's capacity to gain control over their situation and confront issues while being supported by external sources rather than being led by them.⁷ Empowerment is directly linked to people's belief that they can make a difference because they have positive beliefs about their ability to confront and manage issues.⁷

Empowerment is linked to the quality of relationships.⁷ The more an individual perceives their needs are being met by an agency such as FESA, the more likely they are to adopt preparation and mitigation actions that protect themselves.⁷ That is why trust and relationship building form an integral part of community engagement.

How people interpret their own reality differs between individuals, changes over time, depends on context, and reflects the unique experiences they have accumulated during their lives.⁷ It is therefore important that community engagement has the capacity to engage with communities on a range of levels.⁷

The hierarchy of engagement allows FESA to develop flexible programs that reflect not only hazard and risk diversity but also the diversity of individuals within the community. The hierarchy is ranked according to the level of community involvement and empowerment and is ultimately aimed at encouraging sustainable outcomes. This is reflected in the level of control the community has over the interaction the further up the hierarchy.

An effective community engagement program includes a range of strategies based on what the community's needs are. The level of engagement applied will naturally need to be reflective of where the community is at for it to be effective and sustainable.

Importantly the hierarchy of engagement also shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern around the risk.⁹ In reality FESA, its staff and volunteers have limited capacity to undertake community safety activities and community engagement is only one part of this.



2. Community Engagement

HIERARCHY OF ENGAGEMENT – QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS & EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

Most importantly, it sets out the level of commitment being made to the community at each participation level.⁹ As discussed relationship building and trust are fundamental to successful

community engagement. Over committing and not delivering upon promises undermines trust and can have adverse affects that are often difficult to rectify.



2. Community Engagement

HIERARCHY OF ENGAGEMENT – QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

The hierarchy is defined by the following five levels of community participation (see attachment A).⁹

Inform⁹

The 'inform' column of the spectrum describes the communication of information to the community or other stakeholders and is the foundation of all community engagement processes.

The general goal of this type of engagement is to provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information. This process can provide the basis for building knowledge and skills in the community in order to assist decision-making and change through:

- Increasing understanding of risk, alternatives or solutions
- Increasing stakeholder/community ability to address risk
- Increasing community compliance with regulation and other requirements associated with change

The processes used can be proactive (information dissemination) or responsive (responding to questions from the community). Informing involves one or two-way communication over various timeframes.

Examples include one-off communication such as brochures or media releases through to longer term, intensive processes such as community education.

Consult⁹

This column of the spectrum describes the process of eliciting feedback on information provided. The goal of this type of engagement is to obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions.

Consultation actively seeks community views and input into policy, plans and decisions. The responsibility for the decisions remains with FESA.

There is a range of ways consultation can occur, including processes that require little or no dialogue. Examples include written consultation (e.g. a one-off survey in a newsletter, or documents made available for public comment) through to those involving dialogue and debate such as public meetings, focus groups and processes where the stakeholder/community is able to influence proposed options. Processes for gaining rural intelligence, social research and attitudinal surveys would also be included here.



2. Community Engagement

HIERARCHY OF ENGAGEMENT – QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES

Involve⁹

The goal of this method of engagement is to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

The distinguishing difference between 'consult' and 'involve' is the level of participation expected of the community and other stakeholders. While consulting requires the facilitator to seek feedback at a given point in time, involving means deliberately putting into place a method to work directly with stakeholders throughout the process.

However, while 'involve' assumes a greater level of participation by stakeholders as they work through issues and alternatives to assist in the decision-making process, FESA would generally retain responsibility for the final decision.



Collaborate⁹

The goal of this type of engagement is to partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred position.

This method of engagement further extends the level of participation and, consequently, the impact upon the community. Ownership is shared between FESA and the stakeholders. There is a greater level of delegated decision-making, but FESA may still retain the overall decision-making power.

Empower⁹

The goal of this method of engagement is to place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Empowered communities share responsibility for making decisions and accountability for the outcomes of those decisions.

Legislative and policy frameworks give power to communities to make decisions. The community may have the power to make a limited range of decisions (e.g. on a specified issue or for a limited time), or it may have extensive decision-making powers.

3. A 'Program' Approach to Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Directorate is responsible for facilitating and coordinating the adoption and development of a community engagement approach within FESA. This is achieved through a program approach. The aim of a program is to provide a strategic approach to the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of community engagement activities.

FESA's program approach also recognises that effective community engagement is a long term process that involves many people, both community members and stakeholders and therefore requires strong leadership and coordination. To facilitate this longer term view to engaging the community FESA's community engagement programs are based around a 5 year time frame.

The programs are developed around five core community-centred program principles: collaborative arrangements, evidence based decision making, community and organisational needs, appropriate risk communication and treatment options.⁶

Collaborative arrangements - are necessary to provide an open flow of communication, the exchange of ideas and shared decision making to foster ownership among all stakeholders of the

program.⁶ This occurs at both the strategic and local level. An important aspect of collaboration is the recognition of stakeholders. During the initial stages of the program development, Community Engagement consults broadly among the relative stakeholders - for example FESA Operations, Bushfire and Environmental Protection, Fire Investigation and Analysis Unit plus Media and Public Affairs. This also often includes external stakeholders such as local governments and the Bureau of Meteorology.

For the larger programs strategic coordination is facilitated through the establishment of committees such as the Bushfire Community Engagement and Communication Committee. The Committee plays an important role in ensuring the collaborative arrangements embedded within the program are functional and representative of the respective stakeholders groups. It also fosters ownership of the program among the key strategic stakeholders which is critical in the adoption of the program at local level.

Evidence Based Decision Making – because community engagement forms part of a broader risk management strategy it is important that the data and evidence used for community engagement decision making is consistent with the evidence used throughout the organisation.⁶ The risk management



process is consistently used to underpin the organisations planning and therefore is necessary in the development of community engagement programs. For example the identification of priority locations for the Bushfire Community Engagement and Communication Program was based on the State Bushfire Threat Analysis which was then used as a consultation framework at the local level. This allowed the opportunity for the two-way exchange of information as local knowledge was incorporated and the scientific data tested against local community knowledge and values.

Community and Organisational Needs – a program approach facilitates the development of shared understanding between the key risk stakeholders and the community.⁶ Establishing this shared understanding clarifies the difference between the actual and desired state of community resilience.⁶ The program strategies are developed to address this difference progressively over the 5 year period. It enables both the stakeholders and the community to embrace their respective responsibilities gradually and for issues to be researched, reviewed, and reinforced over a more sustainable period.

Shared understanding enables the emergency services to understand the situation from the perspective of the community and for the community to integrate the knowledge of the emergency services within their own perception of risk. It is also provides a constructive framework for agencies to advocate and

disseminate information to increase the communities understanding of risk. Enabling people within FESA and the community to integrate new ideas into their thinking is more likely to lead to behavioural change in both parties.

Appropriate Risk Communication – forms an integral part of the move to a more community-centred approach to managing risk.⁶ The community's level of understanding of their exposure to risk and the responsibility they take for reducing or preparing for this risk varies significantly.⁶ People respond to information based on their own perceptions.⁶ People and communities become progressively more receptive to risk over time.⁶ Any community safety strategy that aims to involve the community in risk reduction must incorporate appropriate risk communication.

Treatment Options – the risk management process provides a broader range of treatment options for managing risks such as bushfire than just suppression.⁶ Community education is an important treatment option. It provides the opportunity to bring about change in the level of knowledge, attitude and behaviour of the community necessary to implement broader treatment options that reduce bushfire risk.⁶ The program approach also allows for FESA and other organisations to embed and align other community safety strategies within the community education and engagement framework i.e. Bushfire Act, Land-use Planning and Building Codes.

3. A 'Program' Approach to Community Engagement

EVALUATION – HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

Engaging the community requires a significant investment in time and resources and more often than not this includes the invaluable time of volunteers. It is therefore important to ensure the activities undertaken are well thought through and have the potential to affect outcomes. In the past there has been a tendency to focus on outputs rather than outcomes. There is little point in engaging the community unless we have some sense of whether our actions will actually lead to a more resilient and safer community.

Community education activities have traditionally been measured by outputs such as how many events were attended⁶, how many brochures and stickers were handed out, how many Bushfire Ready meetings were held.

FESA's Community Engagement Programs focus on the outcomes they will achieve and implements strategies that have outputs as a performance measure that feed into the achievement of the program outcomes.

Whilst outputs are evident in the short-term and are usually directly attributed to the program activity itself, outcomes are usually longer term and may be influenced by factors beyond the program.⁶

At the end of each hazard season community engagement undertake a program evaluation with the stakeholders. For example, the Community Engagement Storm Season Program is evaluated with the key stakeholders each of whom provide input from their respective local regions. The outcomes of this process are then integrated into the planning process for the subsequent season.



3. A 'Program' Approach to Community Engagement

HAZARD FOCUSED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

FESA's community engagement programs are generally developed around a particular hazard profile. This is largely due to the variable nature of the hazards that FESA is responsible for managing, in particular the seasonal and geographic variance and the various stakeholder roles, responsibilities and capacity.

Individual hazard programs enable the development of over arching strategies that reflect the specifics of a hazard. They also allow those hazards with a greater risk priority to have more investment and a greater level of impact. It is also important to develop programs that realistically reflect community need and this also varies between hazards.

The programs by nature foster local level activities, however still need to be aligned strategically to risk priority at the State level.

Hazards such as bushfire and cyclone have typically received greater investment in community engagement due to their hazard characteristic and subsequent risk profile. Bushfire risk is reasonably tangible in that it can be visually quantified and the consequences mitigated at the community and household level. i.e. reducing and/or minimizing fuel loads to create a defensible space around the home; actively managing

vegetation; cleaning gutters; placing metal fly screens on windows etc. Bushfires are also relatively frequent and their consequences significant.

Whereas a hazard such as tsunami is more difficult to quantify on an individual level because the risk exposure is more random as tsunamis can occur at any given time and they have a much lower return probability. Tsunamis also have the potential to affect a more transient and less geographically defined population i.e. beach-users. The availability of actions for the community to take is also less tangible than for example bushfire. Due to its hazard character a key objective for a tsunami program is to encourage people to prepare to respond. This may include relatively simple activities such as preparing an emergency kit and developing and practicing an evacuation plan.⁸ Bushfire on the other hand requires significantly greater investment by the individual or household.

The community therefore has very different perceptions of the risk associated with the respective hazards. The community engagement component of the risk communication strategies for these respective hazards would need to be very different in their approach to realistically achieve increased levels of community safety.

3. A 'Program' Approach to Community Engagement

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - MAKING SURE IT IS EFFECTIVE

FESA operational staff and volunteers already invest large amounts of time in engaging with their community. This investment can be made more effective if the following principles⁵ are considered:

Effective community engagement is clearly scoped:⁵

Make sure both FESA and the community know what the engagement is about (what is the outcome you want to achieve) and what it's not about. Present the problem or issue in a way that is conducive to finding smart and acceptable solutions, and decisions that are informed, understood and implementable.⁵

Have a clear understanding and plan what input from the community will inform your decisions, how we you gather the data and how it will be analysed to create useful information for decision making.⁵

*'The greatest challenge to any thinker is stating the problem in a way that will allow a solution.'*⁵

All too often we see organisations asking communities for comment on preferred solutions to unclear problems.⁵

Make sure community engagement is clear and informative:⁵

Let people know what is happening, what their role is in the engagement activities and how their input will be (is being) used. Ensure that people have access to the information they need to participate meaningfully.⁵

Effective community engagement is connected to decision-making:⁵

When engaging the community gather the input in the form of data, this is then analysed and use it to form part of the decision making.⁵ Make sure that FESA is not wasting everyone's time – the process should actually help FESA make better decisions.



3. A 'Program' Approach to Community Engagement

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - MAKING SURE IT IS EFFECTIVE

Effective community engagement is inclusive:⁵

With such socially diverse communities ensure that you provide an opportunity for all of those that have an interest in or are affected by the outcome of our decisions have a genuine opportunity to participate.⁵ Consider opportunities to engage those that may be missed such as the disabled, mobility issues, culturally and linguistically diverse and the aged.⁵

Effective community engagement is timely and involves deliberation:⁵

Don't leave to the last minute or an afterthought, provide the community opportunities early in the process so that people can generate ideas and express their interests⁵ – not just invite their feedback on FESA's interests. Make sure that there is sufficient time both for FESA and stakeholders to think things through and weigh up alternatives.

Effective community engagement builds positive relationships and builds trust:⁵

Most importantly we get to know people well, provide opportunities for participants to appreciate each others'

perspectives. Building trust in shared responsibility requires FESA to communicate clearly, manage expectations and keep promises in all interactions with the community. The degree to which agencies empower community members will influence trust and thus the likelihood that people will act on information.

Effective community engagement is influential:⁵

Ensure it is worth the community's effort and provide clear evidence that the process genuinely influences outcomes.⁵

Effective community engagement provides feedback:⁵

It is important ensure that participants know how their contribution has made a difference; they will feel valued building on the relationship of trust and respect.⁵ If these principles are adopted in engaging with the community, people's willingness to take responsibility for their own safety is increased, and decisions to prepare more likely.

3. A 'Program' Approach to Community Engagement

FESA'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIRECTORATE - BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

The move to the more complex process of community engagement necessitates the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders, particularly as the process relies heavily on local level participation and coordination.⁶ Community engagement also involves a significant shift in focus from the way the agency has traditionally interacted with the community.

While significant progress has been made within FESA in adopting the community engagement process, it is important to ensure adequate provisions are made to continue to build the capacity of the organisation and its key stakeholders.

The Community Engagement Directorate facilitates this process through a range of strategies including leadership, planning and coordination, capacity building opportunities and demonstrating how community engagement can contribute to the overall outcome of a safer community.

The community engagement programs developed by the Community Engagement Directorate provide a strategic framework to support the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of community engagement activities. The programs also ensure the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made, reflect capacity. For example the Bushfire Program applies the risk management process to identify priority locations to assist in defining achievable goals.

Community Engagement Directorate also provides awareness raising and capacity building opportunities:



3. A 'Program' Approach to Community Engagement

FESA'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIRECTORATE - BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

- Training & Forums – Training provides awareness raising and skills development opportunities for stakeholders to facilitate community engagement. The Bushfire Ready Program has 'Facilitator Training' for the Bushfire Volunteers who coordinate the program at the local level. The training is facilitated by Community Engagement in collaboration with local Operational staff to foster ownership for the process by the local stakeholders.
- Awareness raising & consultation – Community Engagement facilitate strategies that provide the opportunity for stakeholders to understand the value of 'community engagement.' This often involves a consultative process to ensure the process is two-way. This demonstrates the principles of community engagement. For example to raise awareness in the SES a Community Engagement Storm Season Forum was facilitated by Community Engagement. The forum was opened by the Assistant Chief Operations Officer to demonstrate the value of community engagement to the organisation. The process was consultative to ensure the stakeholders had the opportunity to provide input.
- Working with the key stakeholders at the local level – Community Engagement aim to work alongside the stakeholders at the regional level to show support and to assist in the process at a practical level.



Attachment A

Levels of engagement⁹

Level of Engagement	Community Involvement	FESA Initiatives i.e. Bushfire
Empower	<p>Community at this stage operates under its own initiative.</p> <p>Activities contribute to community capacity and resilience.</p>	<p>Bushfire Ready Groups beyond first season</p> <p>The Bushfire Ready program is self managed, flexible and community driven. The Program is coordinated by a trained volunteer Bushfire Ready facilitator and supported by local Fire Services personnel. Members decide when, where and how often they meet and what components of the program they wish to use. These can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing a fire • Bushfire behaviour • How to reduce bushfire risk to your home • Street walk or property assessment • Personal survival • Bushfire survival plans • Passive/Active fire protection • Community strategies and warnings
Collaborate	<p>Perception of fire threat is such that individuals are willing to meet and work with FESA and other community members to improve their own safety.</p> <p>Area of concern is identified thru FESA Hazard committees i.e. Bushfire Community Engagement and Communication Committee, or from regional staff or the community itself.</p>	<p>Bushfire Ready Groups first season</p> <p>FESA provides support and opportunity for residents to establish Bushfire Ready groups.</p> <p>Bushfire Ready is a local community action program aimed at encouraging local residents to work together in preparing and protecting their families and properties against bush fires. Residents can learn how to prepare your family and your property so you can act if a bushfire threatens so you will have the best chance of survival.</p> <p>The Bushfire Ready program is self managed, flexible and community driven. The Program is coordinated by a trained volunteer Bushfire Ready facilitator and supported by local Fire Services personnel. Members decide when, where and how often they meet and what components of the program they wish to use.</p>



Attachment A

Levels of engagement⁹

Level of Engagement	Community Involvement	FESA Initiatives i.e. Bushfire
Involve	A level of community participation exists. Communities of interest e.g. land care as opposed to communities of place e.g. neighbourhood.	Bushfire planning workshops Utilises FESA Community Safety Coordinators to develop and deliver information often in conjunction with other agency staff and programs. Incorporates fire planning with other issues
Consult	Engages individuals and households in high threat areas as opposed to community groups.	Bushfire Week/Community hall meetings Engages 'at risk communities' e.g. street corner meetings in high risk suburbs, or high risk demographic e.g. nursing home staff and residents, tourist going into high risk locations.
Inform	Operating at an individual or household level with some capacity to reach communities.	Media advertisements/FESA booklets, website Provides a clear and consistent message, utilizes high impact image or high profile personnel to promote messages
Non Participation	Individuals and community. Response focus.	Bushfire Information and Warning messages Specific information relating to situation and target audience.



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