

Vale Philip Buckle



Remembering Philip Buckle, his drive and commitment.

Perhaps less known in current Australian emergency management circles than he should be, Philip Buckle was one of the pioneers and ground breakers of much of our approach to recovery and resilience building.

In 1983, Philip was the disaster management lead with the Victorian Government's Department of Premier and Cabinet when the Ash Wednesday bushfires swept across south-eastern Australia. One of his responsibilities was managing the distribution of funds to affected families which was very challenging. Philip created a new approach to recovery as he applied it, establishing a team that followed his lead over the months that followed.

The Victorian Government then recognised the need for a people-centred approach to recovery and established the Disaster Support and Recovery Unit within Community Services Victoria. Philip soon became its manager, leading the development of the community-centred approach to recovery that still underpins effective practice more than 40 years later.

In this role, Philip went on to establish recovery programs for bushfires, floods, and the Queen and Hoddle Street shootings. He also provided recovery advice and support to interstate colleagues, including after the Port Arthur shootings.

Throughout this period, Philip contributed to systemic change, being a key driver in the development of *Providing Psychological Services in Emergencies: Guidelines* (1999), *Community Development Handbook* (1999), *Community and Personal Support Services: Guidelines* (1997), and the *Disaster Recovery Manual* (1996).

A key part of Philip's contribution was his early interest in how systems could focus greater attention and investment on communities to build disaster preparedness. This evolved into research on resilience with co-authors Syd Smale and Graham Marsh, starting in the mid-1990s. It was this work that shaped so much of today's focus on resilience.

Philip migrated to Australia from the UK at a young age. A visit back to the UK in mid-life led him to realise it was time to return and spend more time with his family. This also marked a shift in his professional focus, to teaching in UK universities, then as a freelance consultant for international aid and resilience-building programs.

Philip designed plans to mitigate extreme events, supported and evaluated capacity-building globally, and collaborated with International Development Agencies across Central Asia and numerous other Asian countries.

His commitment, until the end of his life, was driven by a determination to test whether disaster risk reduction projects were truly effective for the people they were intended to serve. His concern was that there were often clear benefits for contractors, consultants, donors, and host governments, with too little demonstrable benefit for communities themselves.

Philip also undertook research initiatives to inform the sector globally, and he was a prolific author contributing often to the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*.

To colleagues and team members, he was renowned as a significant practitioner-scholar in disaster recovery, resilience, and risk reduction. Across government, academia, and international agencies, his contribution to emergency management was deep and enduring.

All who knew him experienced his loyalty, commitment, principled approach, and quirky humour. We learnt a great deal from his insightful, questioning mind and his unwavering commitment to disaster-affected people. He challenged us to keep improving our practice, always reminding us that recovery should be shaped by affected people, and that they must have both a voice and the power to direct their own recovery. We carry a keen sense of the absence of his voice and writings, which so often pushed us to do better.

Philip's family, friends and colleagues feel his loss deeply.

Contributors:

Rene Buckle, daughter of Philip Buckle, and friends and colleagues

Andrew Coghlan, Head of Humanitarian Diplomacy, Emergency Services, Australian Red Cross

Sally McKay, Disaster recovery specialist, Australian Centre for Investigation, Incident and Management Solutions, ACIM Solutions

Emeritus Fellow Terry Cannon, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex