

The Australian Journal of Emergency Management (2016-2025): the fourth decade



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The fourth decade of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* (AJEM) coincided with the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience assuming responsibility for publication. It was a challenging decade of severe drought, the 2019–20 bushfires, the COVID-19 pandemic and record flooding in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. It also produced Australia's first systematic national account of what is at risk through [Profiling Australia's Vulnerability](#), leading into the [National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework](#).

Community resilience and shared responsibility

Shared responsibility and a broader conception of the emergency management sector were central themes. [McLennan et al.](#) (2019:3) identify joint decision-making, administration, autonomy, mutuality and trust as indicators of shared responsibility. [Hunt](#) (2016 31:1) applies [Norris et al.'s](#) networked adaptive capacities to government's role in community capacity. Meanwhile, [Ramsey et al.](#) (2016 31:2) and [Mason et al.](#) (2016 31:3) show how leadership, an existing resilience agenda, emergency management focus, diverse participation and skilled facilitation support a scorecard approach to community resilience assessment. [Ogie and Pradhan](#) (2020:1) instead emphasise strengths: focus on 'what is strong, and not what is wrong'.

[Smith et al.](#) (2016:3) examine a smartphone resilience-rating tool and caution that human decisions are not solely financial. [Webber et al.](#) (2017:2) and [Redshaw et al.](#) (2017:2) demonstrate participatory and street-level approaches to community planning. [Kanakis and McShane](#) (2016:2), [Every et al.](#) (2018:4) and [Richardson et al.](#) (2023:2) connect preparedness with perceived threat, appropriate information, social connection, psychological readiness,

psychosocial support, adaptive capacity and behaviour change. [Hou et al.](#) (2025:1) add a humanistic communication model grounded in connectivity, diversity and interactivity.

[Cornes et al.](#) (2019:1) challenge household-preparedness myths and proposes a new approach to community engagement for disaster risk reduction, while [Taylor et al.](#) (2020:1) find uneven understanding and commitment in evaluating community engagement. [McLennan](#) (2016 31:1) considers emergency services ceding control, [Lorenzoni et al.](#) (2022:3) identify limitations in government preparedness measures, and [Westacott](#) (2017:4) proposes public health framed "fire fitness" as a concept for preparedness. [Lakhina et al.](#) (2019:2) show refugee-background communities leading resilience initiatives; [Whittaker](#) (2019:2) synthesises post-Black Saturday preparedness research; and [Vahanvati](#) (2020:1) defines resilience through local lived experience, as 'developing the necessary capabilities to confidently address the future'.

Understanding the consequences of disaster

The decade broadened understanding of disaster consequences. [Handmer et al.](#) (2018:2) update national disaster-cost estimates and identify the growing contribution of bushfires. [Ulubasoglu and Beaini](#) (2019:2) examine Black Saturday's income effects. [FitzGerald et al.](#) (2019:1) describe immediate and short-term health consequences of the 2011 Queensland floods, while [Daneshjoo et al.](#) (2024:1) identify increased high-triage and out-of-area emergency department presentations 2 months after Hawkesbury-Nepean flooding. [Forbes et al.](#) (2018:1) and [Williams et al.](#) (2021:2) show the importance of acknowledging young adults' experiences and

the support offered through virtual communities. [King et al. \(2020:3\)](#) link indirect disruption after Cyclone Debbie flooding with adverse mental health outcomes.

Inclusion, equity and diverse voices

Themed editions brought disability, gender, children, young people, animals and homelessness into sharper focus. [Osborn et al. \(2019:1\)](#), [Brookfield and Fitzgerald \(2018:4\)](#), and [Every et al. \(2021:4; 2020:1\)](#) examine preparedness, service organisations, heat stress and peer co-design for people experiencing homelessness. [Quaill et al. \(2018:3\)](#) synthesise evidence on disability and resilience.

For children and young people, [Treichel \(2020:2\)](#) links child-centred climate adaptation with household resilience. [Le De et al. \(2020:2\)](#), [Gampell \(2020:2\)](#), [Bird \(2020:2\)](#), and [Kaiser and Boersen \(2020:2\)](#) demonstrate participatory mapping, games, film and bicultural tsunami education. [Pooley et al. \(2021:4\)](#) identify fire-safety practices; [MacDonald et al. \(2023:4\)](#) reposition young people as disaster-risk-reduction decision-makers, using the Sendai Framework as a guide; [Gribble \(2024:2\)](#) highlights evacuation-planning gaps for parents of children aged 0-4; and [Tipfler et al. \(2017:1\)](#) identifies ambiguity in New Zealand school disaster risk reduction policy.

McCarthy and Taylor (2018:2), [Bigelow \(2018:4\)](#), [Trigg et al. \(2021:3\)](#), [Kelman \(2013:3\)](#), [Best \(2021:3\)](#), [Vroegindewey and Kertis \(2021:3\)](#), and [Glassey and Thompson \(2020:1\)](#) extend emergency planning to animals, including legal status, veterinary wellbeing and search markings. [Parkinson et al. \(2017:1; 2022:1\)](#), [Leonard et al. \(2022:1\)](#), [Sohrabizadeh and Parkinson \(2022:1\)](#), [Chowdhury et al. \(2022:1\)](#), [Larin \(2024:2\)](#), and [Parsons \(2024:2\)](#) advance gender and sexuality-aware analysis of resilience. [Hayes and Ryan \(2024:2\)](#), [Kelly et al. \(2024:2\)](#), and [Teo et al. \(2018:1\)](#) examine inclusive engagement with multicultural and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.

Recovery as a discipline

Recovery continues to develop as a more structured and complex discipline. [Hallwright and Brady \(2016 31:1\)](#) describe collaborative co-working; [Owen \(2018:1\)](#) considers government support for community leadership; and [Rich et al. \(2016 31:1\)](#) evaluate strengths-based support. [Young and Jones \(2018:1\)](#) argue recovery should shape what is valued in risk management, while [Scott et al. \(2018:1\)](#) apply asset-based community development to recovery programming. [Collins \(2018:1\)](#) examines legal consequences for Christchurch tenants denied access to commercial premises after the earthquake. [Eriksen et al. \(2020:4\)](#) explore insurance's important but contradictory role.

[Ripley et al. \(2020:3\)](#) apply a recovery-capitals framework to develop the Wellington Region's Recovery Framework, extended by [Quinn et al. \(2022:2\)](#) into guidance for practitioners. [Pope and Harms \(2022:4\)](#) consider insider

community participation; [Ogie et al. \(2022:4\)](#) analyse Twitter's benefits and risks in recovery; [Eyre \(2017:3\)](#) stresses validation in personal experiences in psychosocial programs; and [Watkins \(2017:3\)](#) describes sub-clinical peer support groups after traumatic events. [Vosz et al. \(2025:3\)](#), [Yell and Duffy \(2018:2\)](#), [Kothe and Butler \(2025:3\)](#), [Brady et al. \(2025:3\)](#), and [Russ et al. \(2025:3\)](#) address youth recovery, social media, legal assistance, environmental groups and place-based agencies.

Decision-making, learning and professionalisation

Knowledge of professionalisation, learning and decision support accelerated throughout the decade. [Woodman et al. \(2021:3\)](#) examine skill maintenance and decay. [Dippy \(2020:4; 2022:2; 2025:1; 2025:3\)](#) develops practitioner roles, certification and disciplinarity. [Zarghami and Dumrak \(2021:1\)](#) consider artificial intelligence in bushfire management; [Poblet et al. \(2017:2\)](#) examine microtasking; and [Donalson et al. \(2016 31:1\)](#) model cross-sector resource allocation.

[Bearman et al., Penney et al., Butler et al. and McLennan et al. \(2024:4\)](#) examine cognitive aids, decision challenges and training. [Bradley-Smith et al. \(2024:1\)](#), [Bearman et al. \(2017:1\)](#), [Brooks et al. \(2016:4\)](#), and [Launder and Penney \(2023:4\)](#) emphasise non-technical skills, teamwork monitoring, strategic judgement and the operational SPAR(CD) model.

[Mees et al. \(2016 31:2\)](#) and [Klockner \(2017:4\)](#) address organisational resilience and mindful organising. [Owen et al. \(2017:4; 2018:2; 2020:3\)](#) examine research use and organisational learning. [Jackson \(2016 31:1\)](#), [Medbury et al. \(2021:2\)](#), [Eburn and Dovers \(2017:4\)](#), [Eburn, Dovers and Cole \(2018:2\)](#), and [Spencer et al. \(2018:2\)](#) develop lessons management, inquiry and restorative approaches. [Krajt et al. \(2018:4\)](#), [Berry and Jones \(2018:4\)](#), [Young and Jones \(2019:4\)](#), [Malinen et al. \(2021:4\)](#), [McLennan et al. \(2016 31:1\)](#), and [Grant et al. \(2019:3\)](#) address volunteer expectations, diversity, return, coordination and integration. [Ryan \(2017:1\)](#) charts the continuing significance of communication.

Climate adaptation, complex risk and the rise of risk reduction

Risk reduction increasingly intersected with climate adaptation, planning and institutional change. [Owi et al. \(2024:4; 2025:1; 2025:3\)](#) identify fragmentation, difficulties using risk information, stakeholder demands and culture as institutional constraints to further disaster risk reduction. [Taylor et al. \(2025:3\)](#) expose a gap between shared-responsibility policy and grassroots practice. [Florec et al. \(2017:4\)](#) place a value on intangible flood-mitigation benefits; [Beccari \(2020:3\)](#) identifies gaps in local-government research; [Turner and Couture \(2024:1\)](#)

describe advocacy for severe-wind risk; and [Mirfenderesk et al. \(2016:2\)](#) develop flood decision support. [Osbaldeston et al. \(2019:1\)](#) examine underinsurance, while [Ellis and Bajracharya \(2023:4\)](#) call for strategic reconsideration of coastal relocation.

[Neale et al. \(2016:2\)](#) and [English \(2016:2\)](#) examine scientific and tacit fire knowledge. [March and Kornakova \(2025:1\)](#), [Penny et al. \(2024:4\)](#), [March et al. \(2020:3\)](#), [Bajracharya and Hastings \(2020:3\)](#), [Gonzalez-Mathiesen et al. \(2019:3\)](#), [Huggins et al. \(2020:3\)](#), and [Kornakova and March \(2017:1\)](#) address professional capability, wildland-urban policy, land-use planning, developer engagement and defensible space in land use planning for bushfires.

[Schroeter et al. \(2021:1\)](#), [Smith et al. \(2017:4\)](#), [Harwood et al. \(2016:4\)](#), and [Livock and Swinbourne \(2021:4\)](#) examine impact based forecasting, damage assessment, insurance-linked mitigation and storm-surge awareness. [Sullivan-Taylor et al. \(2022:3\)](#), [Payne et al. \(2020:4\)](#), and [Thomas et al. \(2020:3\)](#) address earthquake and tsunami planning. [Gallina and Sidle \(2018:3\)](#), [Gissing et al. \(2018:3\)](#), and [Cawood et al. \(2018:2\)](#) connect coastal risk, levees and flood warning. [Pregauskas \(2016:4\)](#) identifies building professionals' contribution to post-traumatic growth.

Indigenous knowledge and cultural resilience

Indigenous knowledge and cultural resilience came to the fore. [Sangha et al. \(2019:2\)](#) identify the exclusion of remote Indigenous communities from Northern Territory planning. [Morley et al. \(2016:4\)](#) assess community strengths and priorities, noting disaster risk was not the highest priority facing the communities, while [Sithole et al. \(2019:1\)](#) place ceremony at the centre of hazard management.

The first Indigenous-edited AJEM edition appeared in April 2025. [Vercoe et al. \(2025:2\)](#) bridge engineering and cultural infrastructure. [Richardson et al. \(2025:1\)](#) show how Māori practices can address environmental challenges. [Kaiser and Kenney \(2025:2\)](#) examine Māori participation; [Hamilton et al. \(2025:2\)](#) consider climate adaptation in Māori-led tourism; [Taylor et al. \(2025:2\)](#) identify culturally centred public-health support; [Mate et al. \(2025:2\)](#) set out considerations for Indigenous youth fire intervention; and [Djiringanj Country et al. \(2025:2\)](#) document collaborative fire-risk action research with the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Human behaviour and risk ownership

Human behaviour and risk ownership became more prominent. [Young and Jones \(2016:4\)](#) show the challenge of risk ownership and making resilience everyone's business. [Dufty \(2021:2\)](#) identifies optimism bias in flood preparedness; [Adedokun et al. \(2023:4; 2024:2\)](#) examine self-evacuation incentives and reasons for living in bushfire-prone areas, while [Koksal et al. \(2020:1\)](#) show residents valuing bushland living despite bushfire risk.

[Ratnam et al. \(2016:4\)](#) link place attachment with risk acceptance.

[Paton et al. \(2017:1\)](#) examine tsunami-risk rejection. [Gissing et al. \(2016:2\)](#) and [Taylor et al. \(2020:4\)](#) investigate driving through floodwater. [Madsen \(2019:3\)](#) interprets risk-taking through social narrative and memory,

What is an emergency: beyond the traditional focus

The decade expanded what counts as an emergency. [Cuthbertson et al. \(2017:3\)](#) highlight the lack of engagement with non-traditional threats, and [Clune and Eburn \(2017:3\)](#) identify wider threats to community safety, citing femicide and drug epidemics as examples. [Clark and Strong \(2024:1\)](#) challenge the treatment of dust storms as novelties. [Overton \(2016:3\)](#) analyses the H1N1 influenza response, while [Jackson \(2024:4\)](#) draws lessons from South Australia's COVID-19 response.

[Loridan et al. \(2016:4\)](#) and [Nairn and Fawcett \(2017:1\)](#) develop and test the Excess Heat Factor; [Bailey et al. \(2025:3\)](#) explore school heat through citizen science. [Parsons \(2016 31:1\)](#) calls for alignment between mine and community emergency plans. [Calverley et al. \(2025:1\)](#) and [Lawes et al. \(2025:3\)](#) examine beach patrols and emerging lifesaving challenges. [Curd et al. \(2025:1\)](#) highlight the wider role of non-government search-and-rescue organisations, while [Schwartz \(2022:2\)](#) and [Dacey et al. \(2022:4\)](#) examine wilderness search practice and agent-based modelling.

As we close out this fourth decade of the journal, we see how it has grown from a humble 8-page newsletter with practical guidance for practitioners to a journal that tackles a range of new and emerging themes and strengthens existing practice. We also see it transition from a purely operational and hazard focus to a more systemic and nuanced emergency management approach. Bodies of work on health, risk management, exotic animal disease, community engagement, media and communications, recovery, animals, disability, gender, youth and Indigenous peoples were highlighted in special editions. The recognition of the importance of getting policy levers right also emerges through the four decades. The journal has been backed by an increasingly complex body of research generated first by the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), then the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, and finally Natural Hazards Research Australia.

The first edition I settled down to read was back in [December 1997](#). This edition covered an eclectic mix of topics, including disability rights, risk management, online conferencing and the medical management of Port Arthur victims. That breadth continues today, as we grapple with sharing the growing knowledge generated every day across our sector, so you can help reduce disaster risk and support people to live their lives with less disruption from hazards.