

Developing a realist typology for community safety programs for wildfire.

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Abstract

In recent years there has been a rapid growth in the number and range of community safety programs for wildfire in Australia. An initial assessment has shown that close to fifty community safety programs for wildfire exist across Australia's states and territories. These span the complete range of community safety approaches, from information dissemination through to community development. In order to gain a more coherent understanding of how these programs work, and whether they are effective, this paper seeks to classify the programs in two ways. Firstly, it will outline the programs within the risk management framework of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Secondly, it will apply social realist thinking in order to consider the particular contexts within which the programs are designed to work, the mechanisms that appear to be enabled by the program strategies, and the outcomes that the programs expect to deliver. This paper contends that adopting this approach to identifying and classifying the wide range of wildfire community safety programs in existence not only furthers understanding on the dynamics of complex multi-site programs, it also provides a solid knowledge base for more in-depth program theory evaluations of individual programs.

Keywords: wildfire, community safety programs, realist classification

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