

Australian Disaster Resilience
Conference presents

Knowledge Week

24 - 27 AUGUST 2020

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Australian Disaster Resilience Conference presents

KNOWLEDGE WEEK



DAY TWO

Local leadership

2 - 4.30PM AEST | 25 AUGUST 2020





Dr. Bev Sithole

Aboriginal Research Practitioner's Network

The future is in our own hands – effective pathways for disaster risk reduction in remote communities in Northern Australia



The future in our own hands - effective
pathways for disaster risk reduction in
remote communities in Northern
Australia

Dr Bev Sithole, ARPNet @RIEL, CDU

A group of people are sitting on a blue tarp outdoors, engaged in conversation. The scene is set in a dry, open area with some people sitting on chairs in the background. The text is overlaid on the image.

It's about recasting the conversation

Do you see like a Brolga or the Jabiru ?



Our ways!!!!

- Our ceremony
- Our institutions
- Our practices
- Our knowledge



Big challenges

- **Paternalism Government policies**
- **Dependency on western knowledge systems**

BUILDING STRONG EMERGENCY RESPONSE (ER) INSTITUTIONS IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

Protocols for effective engagement in Ramingining

Building strong institutions for emergency response in remote communities involves sitting together with the right people, it involves working continuously with the knowledge holders and bringing together both ways of knowing - Balanda knowledge and Bininj knowledge. It also involves whole community engagement and continuously building community skills not just targeting particular groups. It includes an acknowledgement that Balanda way is different from Bininj way but through 'yarning'/talking we can move forward and be stronger together for the future. Balanda need to move away from ticking boxes, we need to sit down and work together to come up with a plan where we are all players - where there are bits that countryman are good at and can do and bits that the Balanda are good at and can do. We can all do our part. But to do this, agencies need to cost engagement properly so that there is time and resources to do engagement more effectively.

Know the hazard and identify the right people (holders of the key) for that hazard.

For example, that cyclone belongs to the Dupapunya clan and they have a kinship relationship with the cyclone.

Each hazard has a different configuration of people who hold knowledge and have the acknowledged responsibility for responding to that hazard. There are recognised ways of communicating about the hazard among those that hold the knowledge and responsibility. In each community there will be individuals or clan groups identified with a hazard. This is an important group to engage with. Check in each community to find out who these people are. Involving them will mean that more people in the community will hear about warnings and what to do. We must value inclusion as a strength not a problem.

Know what constitutes the community (and what sub groups are in it) you are working with.

Know what the constituent elements of the community are and how leadership is connected. This can be clan groups, outstation communities or visitors to the community. Most communities are able to give clear directions to the way the community is constituted. If this is not available, the community elders are often able to identify sub-groups within the general community. Though this version is unofficial, it is probably more accepted therefore not contested. This does not always provide enough information about the layers of leadership. This means there is not one but many leaders and each or all per group needs to be engaged.

Emergency Response governance structure and our role, they not connected proper way yet

What is possible to do now

Defining clearly the parameters under which working together are crafted.

"Time to find those 'hidden' Bininj structures, they are not hidden and EM gotta connect with us!"

A pathway for effective community level decision-making for emergency response in central Arnhem land.



Bev Sihole, Otto Campion, Robert Burunguar, Charlie Brian, Stephen Sulton with ARFnet Team

WITH 'SHARED RESPONSIBILITY' EM AGENCIES SHOULD ASK: "HOW DO YOU WANT US TO WORK WITH YOU?"

BUT THE REALITY IS THAT 'AT THE COALFACE' FEW EVER ASK THE QUESTION AND EVEN LESS READY FOR THE ANSWER!

THIS POSTER PRESENTS A MODEL AS AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION FROM THE COMMUNITY ELDERLY AROUND RAMINGINING. THEY ARE CLEAR ON WHO AND HOW THEY NEED TO BE CONNECTED TO THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF DECISION-MAKING.

Up till now...

Without knowing about the existing structures and protocols for decision making in Aboriginal societies EM agencies have created structures based on their own culture (committees) which then lack local legitimacy. Committees are convenient for Balanda but created a negative dynamic in the community that has seen the following:

- Outside agencies failing to achieve real representation.
- The privileging of individuals by placing them in decision-making/leadership roles they have no cultural right to and do not understand. This alienates them from their own people and undermines the primary objective, community representation.
- Ignorance of community dynamics, interclan/family dynamics means that outside agencies persist with a model where individuals can represent/or access all.
- Outside agencies have ignored for too long the lack of alignment between their business and Bininj business on country. This has moved the two towards each other.
- Agencies are unaware of the burden of meetings and the burnout resulting therefrom especially for individuals who sit on committees.
- Bininj want to be strong actors in delivering Aboriginal safety.
- Communities vary and they will want different models. This notion has been said before and should be accepted.



What needs to happen from now....

Government needs to **make enough room** for Bininj to participate. Making room means engaging with more Bininj, it also means setting aside resources to support their participation. This decision-making pathway/model;

1. Brings together the Bininj and Balanda systems for EM and identifies at least 5 Bininj who should be involved ,
2. Gives guidance on the preferred spaces for meetings and working together and what is required to make this structure viable.
3. Associated with this pathway is the requirement for easy access to simple and effective messaging. The 3D model of Ramingining makes planning and visioning of EM more visual for country.
4. Inclusion of people with skills in response is crucial to this new way.

Bring back hidden governance structures

- Explain how indigenous governance works
- Suggest clear pathways for connecting indigenous pathways with EM governance structures
- Advocate for government to properly resource the model

Invest in community driven plans



- **Clear commitments by communities and agencies**
- **Investments needs clearly costed**
- **Capacity building on both sides**



Is change in our lifetime possible?

- **Changing models – shopping trolley**
- **Receptive agencies**
- **Strong local institutions to demand change**
- **Strategically located champions to push the agenda forward**

The future in our own hands?



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