

Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience



Recovery Matters webinar series

Indigenous perspectives of disaster recovery

📅 26 July, 2021

🕒 2pm AEST

📍 aidr.org.au/events

GUEST SPEAKERS

Samuel Savage | Australian Red Cross

Bhiamie Williamson | Australian National University



AIDR Recovery Matters webinar series

Welcome

Amanda Leck

Executive Director, AIDR

Acknowledgement of Country

AIDR acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which you all join us from today and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this event.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters across Australia.

Housekeeping

- You will remain muted and your camera will not be activated for the duration of today's event.
- Today's event will be recorded and made available after the event.
- Please enter questions for our speakers in the Q&A function, not the chat box.
- Please use the chat box to share any thoughts or reflections during the presentation – remember to select 'all panellists and attendees' to ensure everyone can read your message.
- Please be respectful to each other when posting your comments or questions.

Speaker introduction

Bhiamie Williamson

Research Associate and PhD Candidate, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research,
Australian National University

Samuel Savage

North Queensland Emergency Services Regional Coordinator, Australian Red Cross

Bhiamie Williamson

Bhiamie is an Indigenous man from the Euahlayi people in north-west New South Wales, Australia. In 2014, Bhiamie graduated from the Australian National University (ANU) and in 2017 from the Masters of Indigenous Governance at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Bhiamie also holds graduate certificates in Indigenous Governance from the Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona and Indigenous Trauma Care and Recovery Practice from the University of Wollongong. Bhiamie's research areas include Indigenous land management, cultural burning, Indigenous peoples and disaster recovery and Indigenous men and masculinities.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN DISASTER RECOVERY

26 July 2021

Bhiamie Williamson

Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR)

Australian National University



Australian
National
University

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Indigenous peoples in disasters

... disasters can expose, magnify and deepen existing injustices in society, which can then lead to further injustices. This perspective purposefully situates the disaster event in relation to past and present social choices, and also acknowledges that the disaster itself is a dynamic opportunity to investigate perceived injustice and vulnerability using different dimensions of justice. As humans live with and within nature, these matters of justice include nature and consideration of our shared future

- (Lukasiewicz, 2020a; see also Weir, Sutton and Catt, 2020a)



Indigenous peoples in disasters

The experiences of Indigenous people have largely been overlooked in the field of disaster recovery in Australia... Few resources exist to guide recovery workers and organisations in supporting Indigenous peoples affected by disasters.

- ReCap Resource Guide

https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/disaster-hub/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ReCap_2021.pdf



Indigenous peoples in disasters

Connection with Country

Indigenous peoples are uniquely and closely tied to their traditional homelands. Disasters that impact Country directly impact Indigenous peoples health and wellbeing.

Unique Demographic Profiles

Indigenous peoples have a unique demographic profile. The impacts on children (education, mental health etc.) make Indigenous communities particularly vulnerable to long-term impacts of disasters.

Political and Economic Marginalisation

Indigenous peoples are among the most most marginalised in Australia. This is deepened and magnified during and after disasters.

Deep mistrust of non-Indigenous institutions

Generally speaking, Indigenous peoples have a deep mistrust in non-Indigenous agencies and institutions. This results in Indigenous peoples choosing not to access mainstream services during disasters, creating further vulnerabilities and risks.



Demographic profile

Almost 90,000 Indigenous people were directly affected by the 2019-20 black summer bushfires

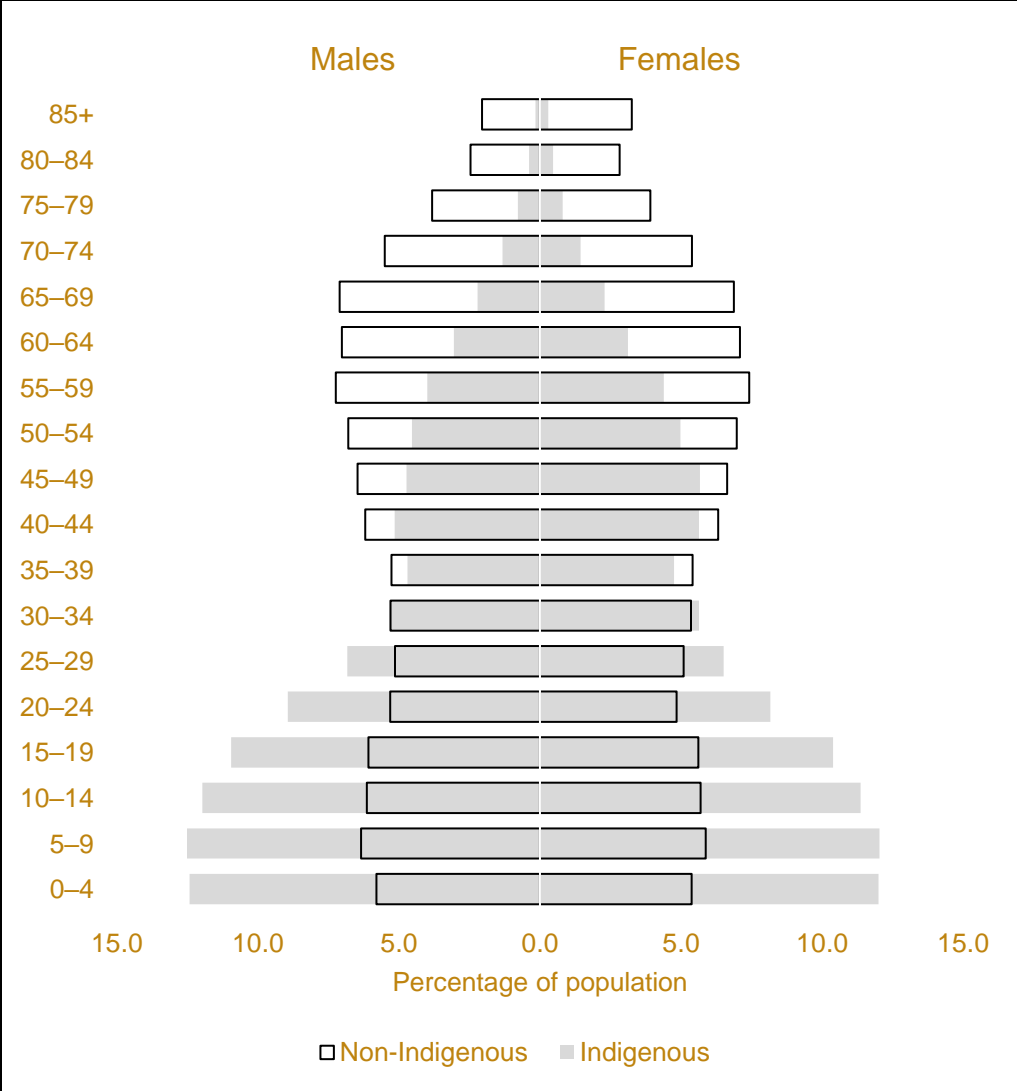
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	% Indigenous
Less than 5 years	10,279	82,170	11.1
5 to 14 years	20,161	176,629	10.2
15 to 29 years	21,808	235,755	8.5
30 to 64 years	27,657	657,692	4
65 years or more	4,284	317,612	1.3
Total	89,189	1,469,859	5.4

Estimated Residential Population of the fire affected area by Indigenous status and broad age group, June 30, 2016



Demographic profile

1 in 10 children affected by the black summer bushfires was Indigenous

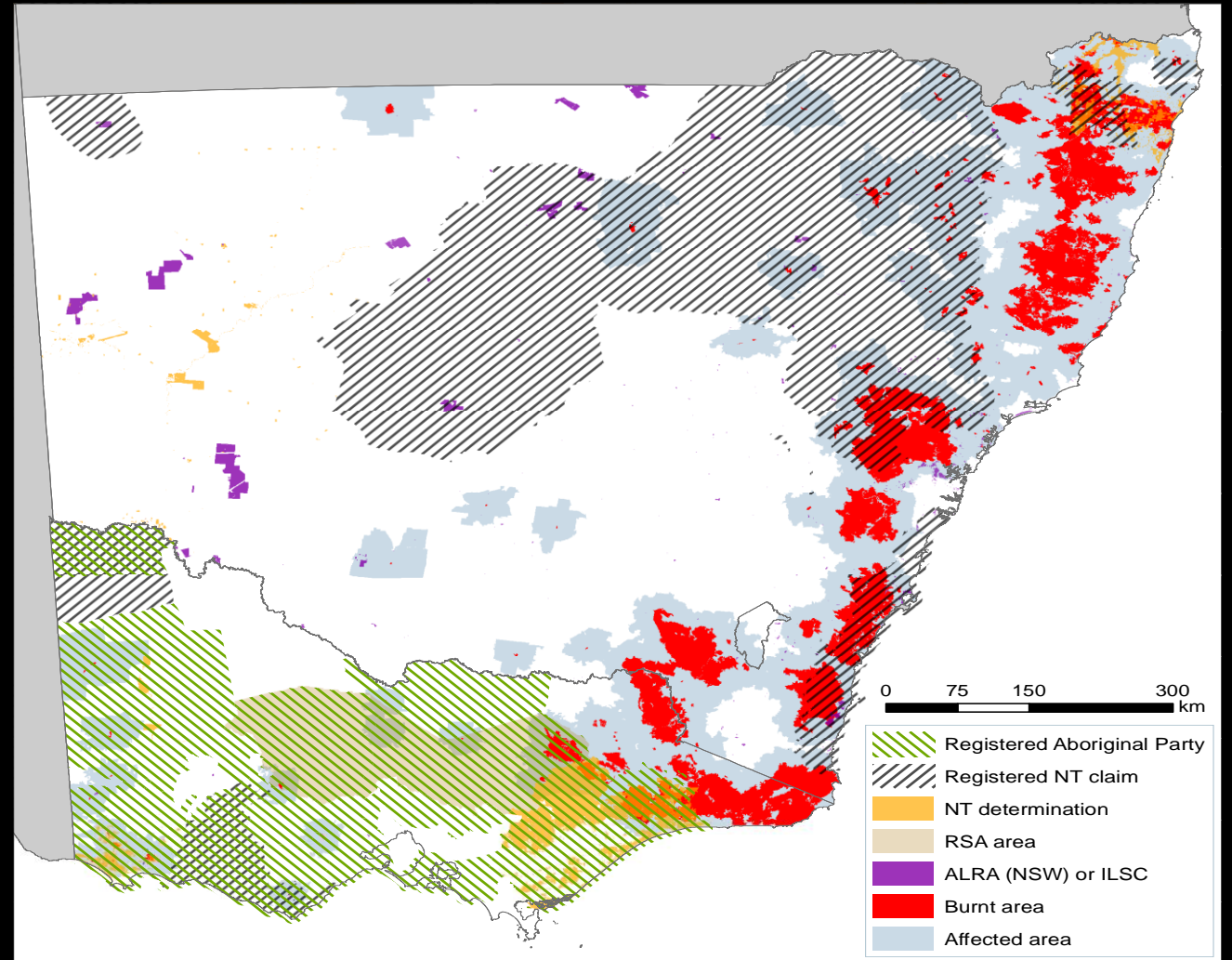


Estimated Residential Population of the fire affected area by Indigenous status and broad age group, June 30, 2016



Rights and Interests

Much of the lands impacted by the black summer bushfires are under some form of Indigenous cultural heritage protections



Areas in NSW and Victoria burnt and affected by fires of 250 ha or more, July 1, 2019 to January 23, 2020, and Aboriginal legal interests in land.



What happened?

'Waminda, located in Nowra, advised during the bushfire crisis that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the region were not able to access evacuation services and supplies. Waminda reported that some who tried were treated badly. To support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the area affected by the bushfires, Waminda purchased and supplied emergency items such as torches, batteries, portable stoves, gas cylinders, sleeping bags, eskies, sanitary items, wipes, nappies, fresh food, petrol and water. These supplies were purchased by Waminda by re-directing existing funding, no additional funding was allocated. Waminda also provided support to Aboriginal communities on the coast which do not fall in their usual area of service.'

- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO),
Submission to the Senate Finance and Public Affairs Reference Committee, 1 April 2020, p.
4



Advocating leads to recognition

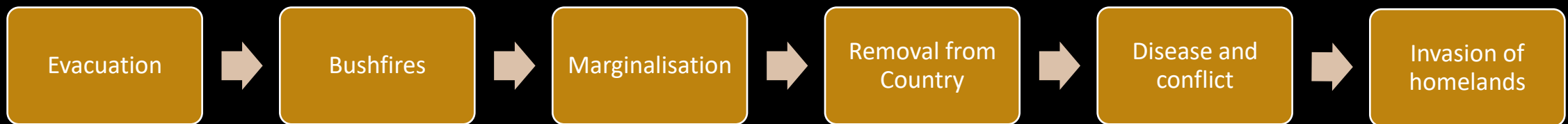
‘The Inquiry was disappointed to learn that in some communities Aboriginal people felt unwelcome at evacuation centres, and in some cases support services were reluctant to provide immediate relief. These experiences compounded the trauma they had already experienced as a result of the bush fires, and in some cases led to people putting themselves at risk as they feared how they would be treated in evacuation centres.’

- Final Report of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, 31 July 2020, p. 379



Cascading Disasters

For Indigenous peoples, the bushfires were the latest in a series of disasters



Resilience fashioned through colonisation

Indigenous Healing

Formed in response to the removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities, but has expanded to include the general experience of Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial countries

Close social bonds

Indigenous communities have maintained and enhanced close and integrated social bonds throughout and as a result of colonisation. These close social bonds are assets in times of disasters.

Strengths-based

Creates to address the deficit-based thinking, practice and policy design that has become a hallmark of Indigenous-state relations

Shared histories

Indigenous people share a sense of history and how they are placed within it. Having this shared understanding of history means that are able to support one another in times of disaster because they understand each other.



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR DISASTER RECOVERY

Culturally safe
physical spaces

Adequate
resourcing

Culturally
competent staff

Embedded in
disaster planning

Close social bonds

Strengths-based

Shared histories

Indigenous healing



SHARED LEARNINGS

- **What can non-Indigenous peoples learn from engaging with Indigenous notions of healing?**
- **How can Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing influence emergency management?**
- **Would non-Indigenous communities benefit from adopting strengths-based policy making?**
- **How might we use Indigenous resilience traits to make non-Indigenous communities more resilient?**



THANK YOU

Contact

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Samuel Savage

Sam is a Traditional Owner of the Bindal Nation in Townsville. His ancestry is both Aboriginal (Birrigubba Nation) and Torres Strait Islander (Mauar Island).

He has worked with the Red Cross since 2014 in a variety of roles, including leading recovery for the 2019 monsoon and flooding event within Townsville and the North West Queensland region, and is a member of the Australian Red Cross First Nations Recovery Group. Sam's current role is the North Queensland Emergency Services Regional Coordinator where he assist various regions in the disaster preparedness, response and recovery space.

Being a member of the Red Cross First Nations Recovery Group has enabled Sam to provide a cultural lens and influence 'change' in mindset, values and organisational practice internally and externally across the Emergency Services sector.

Q & A

Don't forget to enter you questions into the Q&A box.

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Event concludes

Thank you for attending today's webinar.

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