

Gender and Disaster Pod (GAD Pod)



Project Summary

The GAD Pod brings a gender focus to disaster policy and practice. Its website synthesises resources developed since the first research in Australia on violence against women after disaster. Other ‘firsts’ include research with men after disaster and establishment of the Victorian “Gender and Disaster Taskforce”.

Background and situation context

The GAD Pod was formally established in 2015 to promote understanding of the role played by gender in survivor responses to disaster, and to embed these insights into emergency management practice.

In 2009, research about the implications of gender to disaster experience in developed countries was rare. In 2012, the first Australian research directly with women on this subject - *The Way He Tells It* - was released at Australia’s first conference on disasters and family violence; *Identifying the Hidden Disaster*.

The *Hidden Disaster* conference galvanised interest in gender issues in disaster, and led to a successful submission to the National Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme. The researchers then considered men’s experiences of health and wellbeing during and after Black Saturday. The findings are captured in *Men on Black Saturday: Risks and opportunities for change*. The ‘Just Ask’ conference on men’s experiences of disaster followed.

Since undertaking these foundational research projects, the Pod partners have led diverse initiatives—with input from emergency management, community members, masculinity experts and government representatives—to inform responses to women and men in future disasters. In January 2014, Australia’s first Gender and Disaster Taskforce was established, auspiced by the Victorian Emergency Management Commissioner.

Activities

The GAD Pod has built on community engagement - via qualitative research and consultation - with 30 women, 32 men, and 47 workers affected by the Black Saturday bushfires. The initiative has been led and driven by the two women’s health services whose board members and managerial staff comprises of all women, from different backgrounds and communities. The men’s research was guided by a high level Men’s Advisory Group, Chaired by The Fire Services Commissioner and, after establishment of the GAD Taskforce, by Emeritus Professor Frank Archer. Activities have included the hosting of national conferences with international keynote speakers, and collaborative curating with Steve O’Malley from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade of the gender stream of Victoria’s Emergency Management Conference. The GAD Pod’s executive support for the GAD Taskforce has involved a key role in developing the foundational documents for this group, along with its workplan and ongoing evaluation. Conference presentation and journal articles, together with training developed and offered to the emergency management sector, have been key ways to disseminate the research findings and achieve positive change for those involved in and affected by disaster. A gender and disaster website and unique ‘Roadmaps’ section (funded by DHHS) allows easy access to a wealth of resources.

This initiative is now complete.

Results

Gendered research was first covered in two reports entitled “*The Way He Tells It: Relationships after Black Saturday*”¹ and “*Men on Black Saturday - Risks and opportunities for change*”². Recommendations for improving disaster planning, training and ESO practice have been informed by the stories, experiences and advice offered

¹ “*The Way He Tells It: Relationships after Black Saturday*” is a WHGNE research report that captures the experience and knowledge of **women** who survived Black Saturday. It was published in 2011.

² “*Men on Black Saturday – Risks and opportunities for change*” is a 2013 report on research into **men**’s Black Saturday experience in Victoria. The research was conducted under the auspices of WHGNE and Monash University’s Injury Research Institute (MIRI).

by community members, community and ESO workers, and academics working in the fields of masculinity, gender and disaster.

Filmed proceedings of the two national conferences, featuring presentations by academics, community members and on-the-ground workers are available online. Both conferences were privileged to host Dr Elaine Enarson as keynote speaker, along with leading Australians experts such as Professor Bob Pease and Dr Christine Eriksen.

These conferences were the catalyst for the Victorian Gender and Disaster Taskforce – the first in Australia, and as far as we know, the first in the world.³ Established January 2014, the taskforce meetings six times per year. Foundational documents and a workplan have been collaboratively developed and guest speakers inform the senior emergency service organisational leaders, community members, non-government representatives and academics present.

The research has been presented at national and international conferences (Japan and Copenhagen) and forums, and MUDRI Forums and at the 6th Annual Professor Frederick ‘Skip’ Burkle Jnr Keynote Lecture.

Journal articles and book chapters have been published.

The initiative has been awarded twice – by VicHealth and by the Attorney-General’s Department.

URL www.genderanddisaster.com.au

POSITIVE impacts/changes/benefits for the target beneficiaries

- Funded projects have seen the development, piloting and ongoing delivery of training on Family Violence and Natural Disaster, and Men and Disaster. A further two training modules have been piloted on Gender Equity and Disaster, and Living LGBTI in Disaster. A series of six short films were made as key resources and are available online. Training is aimed at middle managers in the emergency sector, local government and community members.
- A new collaboration with 1800 RESPECT has resulted in inclusion of the gender and disaster information in the web-based information at 1800 RESPECT, a community service announcement to be played through ABC rural radio stations during fire season, and a video.
- The current initiative is the collaborative development of national gender and emergency management guidelines, funded in three parts by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, the Attorney-General’s Department and Emergency Management Victoria. It will culminate in a 2-day summit in late 2016.

NEGATIVE impacts/changes for the target beneficiaries

- None

Next steps

- Progressing training so that it is taken up systematically, particularly by the emergency management sector.
- Consulting with all Australian states and territories about the gender and emergency management guidelines.
- Publishing journal articles particularly on the increase of violence against women after disaster in Australia.

Reflection

Factors that were unique/good practice:

- The establishment and successful operation of the first Australian “Gender and Disaster Taskforce” to reduce the compounding effects of gender on disaster impacts, (as detailed in the URL link).
- This initiative is good practice in that it has:
 - catalysed partnerships and collaboration among multiple stakeholders from diverse horizons
 - institutionalized and sustained such partnerships and collaboration over the long term, in a key structure - the Taskforce;
 - galvanised interest in a previously un-researched field; (4) it has made proper use of available technology;
 - resulted in a number of Australian “firsts”; and

³ Article about the Taskforce: <https://ajem.infoservices.com.au/items/AJEM-30-04-08>

- utilized women's skills and leadership for risk reduction and resilience building.

Critical factors for success:

The impacts, results and achievements mentioned above have all been the results of the leadership and work of WHGNE and WHIN whose board members and managerial staff are all women from different backgrounds and communities. The women's efforts have made the project a success in the Gender & Disaster area in particular, and in the disaster/climate risk reduction and resilience building areas in general. The collaboration with Monash Injury Research Institute since 2012 has assisted immeasurably in gaining recognition for the work and extending its reach.

Challenges faced and solutions:

Major challenges have included the need to include gender into the disaster context, when people feel there is no time to consider this. Dr Elaine Enarson writes about this challenge. "Each summer," she says, "the bushfire season again diverts attention on to 'urgent' matters and attention to gender issues is relegated to the unimportant. Yet its importance lives on as both men and women suffer from the gendered expectations of ESOs, their communities and society as a whole."

Areas for improvement:

- Training would ideally be adapted for different audiences.
- Sex-disaggregated data could be gathered by all disaster agencies.
- Family violence data should be collected and monitored by a nominated agency.
- Prioritization of family violence awareness before a disaster occurs.
- More documentation through journal articles should be completed.

Sustainability and potential for replication in other settings:

Project funding has been achieved to late 2016. Further funding is as yet unknown.

Lead organisation/s

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE)
North Women's Health Goulburn (WHIN)

Partner/s

Monash Injury Research Institute, Monash University (MIRI)

Funding source

WHGNE
WHIN
National Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme (NDRGS)
National Emergency Management Projects, Attorney General's Department
Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Emergency Management Victoria (EMV)
1800 RESPECT
Department of Environment, Lands, Water and Planning (DELWP)

Funding amount

From external sources: \$550,000 since 2012

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Hurdles to submitting the details of this project

This Initiative is now complete.