Response and recovery from disaster in Australia – a community development approach

Allison Rowlands PhD
NSW Community Services
Australia
• Natural disasters in Australia
• Disaster recovery planning
• National Framework and Principles for Disaster Recovery
• Black Saturday Bushfires, 2009
• The role of the recovery manager
• Challenges
COORDINATION
Department of Community Services

WELFARE RECOVERY SERVICES

RECOVERY CENTRES
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
PERSONAL SUPPORT
ACCOMMODATION
CATERING
CLOTHING & PERSONAL REQUISITES

NSW Department of Community Services (2009)
Principles of Disaster Recovery Planning

• management arrangements recognize that recovery from disaster is a complex, dynamic and protracted process
• agreed plans and management arrangements are well understood by the community and all disaster management agencies
• recovery agencies are properly integrated into disaster management arrangements
• community service and reconstruction agencies have input to key decision-making
• conducted with the active participation of the affected community
• recovery managers are involved from initial briefings onwards
• recovery services are provided in a timely, fair, equitable and flexible manner
• supported by training programs and exercises

Emergency Management Australia, 2004:5
Black Saturday Bushfire impacts

- 173 people killed
- 500 people injured
- 7500 people homeless
- 78 townships
- 450,000 hectares burnt
- 2029 homes destroyed; 1400 homes damaged
- 61 businesses destroyed
- 5 schools and kindergartens destroyed
- Loss of family pets and livestock
More than 1085 building permits have been issued to date, including for homes, sheds and businesses. Some people are choosing to construct new sheds first, to act as storage and temporary accommodation as they work on rebuilding their homes.
Recovery Manager

• Knowledge & skills –
  – assessment, planning, advocacy, communication, mediation

• Personal qualities –
  – participatory management, cope with pressure, energy and resilience, belief in the rights and integrity of individuals, intuitive, flexible

• Supervision and consultation
Work is underway to repair visitor facilities, other infrastructure and habitat affected paths and
reinstate for the benefit of the natural environment and to ensure visitor activities are restored.
The Rebuilding Together Plan includes spending of more than $2 million to restore the key Caledon attraction, the Great Ridge Rail Trail, which was badly affected by the fire.