



**Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC  
Expression of Interest to become the**

**Integrated Research on Disaster Risk  
National Committee for Australia**

The Bushfire & Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNH CRC) hereby expresses its interest in being recognised as the IRDR National Committee for Australia.

The following pages describe the vision, structure, capabilities and goals of the BNHCRC, and in turn demonstrate the alignment of the Centre with the Objectives of IRDR.

***Overview of the Bushfire & Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre***

The Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNH CRC, [www.bnhcrc.com.au](http://www.bnhcrc.com.au)) draws together Australia's fire and emergency services authorities, land management agencies, emergency management departments at state and national level, Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC), universities, the Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia, Red Cross, and non-government organisations to explore the causes, consequences and mitigation of natural disasters.

The \$130 million BNH CRC commenced operation on July 1 2013. It is funded for eight years with \$47 million from the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Program. The remaining funds - cash and in-kind - comes from approximately 50 partner agencies, government organisations and research institutions from all Australian states and territories and New Zealand.

The BNH CRC is an incorporated not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee. It is managed through a small central office co-located with the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council in East Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. It has a skills-based Board of Directors elected by its Members. The Board is chaired by an independent Director, Dr Laurie Hammond. The Chief Executive Officer is Dr Richard Thornton.

Our mission is to provide valued, high-quality research and advice on bushfire and natural hazards in order to Reduce risk; Enhance disaster resilience; Reduce negative social, economic and environmental impacts; and Build an internationally renowned Australasian research and utilisation capacity and capability.

The BNH CRC research capacity is built around 21 partner universities covering all Australian states and territories, the Bureau of Meteorology and Geoscience Australia. Other research organisations participate on a contracted basis without becoming formal partners of the BNH CRC. The breadth of partnership and scope of activity makes the BNH CRC Australia's leading research organisation in natural hazards across the Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery spectrum.

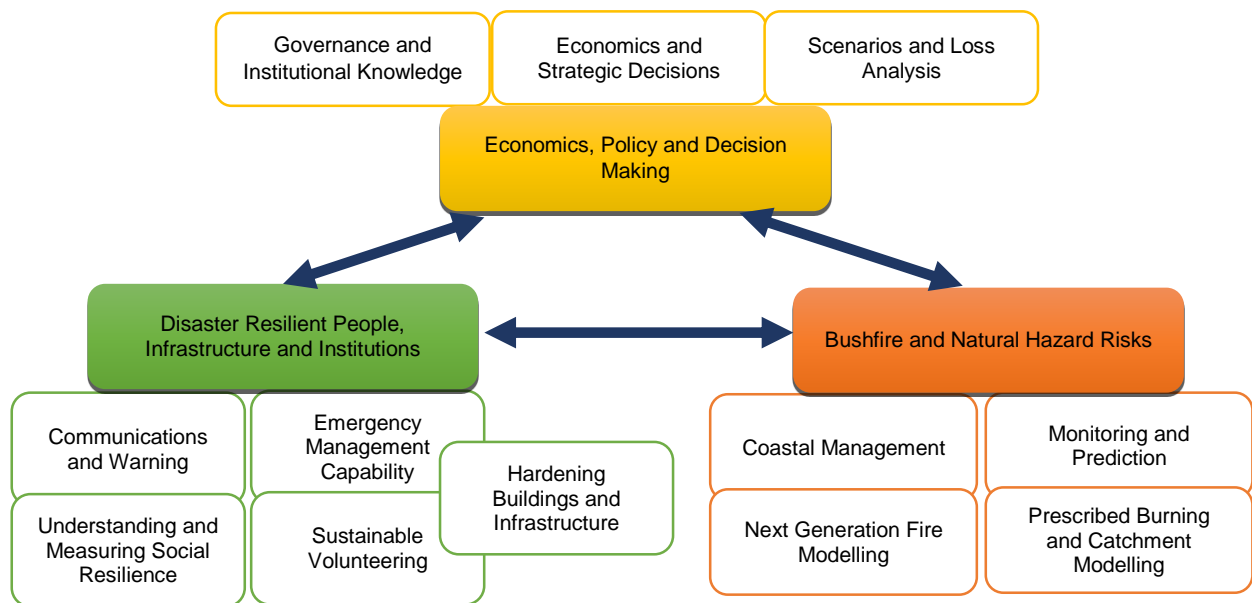
Current international linkages include the New Zealand Natural Hazard Research Platform and the US Forest Service.

**Research and Professional Activities:**

The BNH CRC builds upon the legacy of the Bushfire CRC ([www.bushfirecrc.com](http://www.bushfirecrc.com)) which operated from 2003 until 2014, expanding the research undertaken there into natural hazards. Specific activities undertaken in the Bushfire CRC, and expected to continue in the BNH CRC include an extensive communications program, including production of Fire / Hazards Notes, production of a magazine; yearly conference in conjunction with AFAC; postgraduate scholarships program; Professional Development Program; and research utilisation program focussed on translating research outputs into tangible products. Numerous formal research collaborations with organisations are also expected to continue, such as with University of California, Berkeley - College of Natural Resources - Center for Fire Research and Outreach, University of Chile, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, US Department of Agriculture - Forests Service and the NZ Natural Hazard Research Platform.

The BNH CRC ongoing research program is focussed on conducting high quality applied research inspired by end-users, to reduce the risks from natural hazards, contribute to the national disaster resilience agenda; and build Australian research capacity.

The research program currently comprises 35 projects, grouped into 12 clusters of related research in work in 3 major themes. A high-level view of the research program is provided below.



*Economics, Policy and Decision Making* deals with economics and the interface between risk-based priorities and the practice of decisions to allocate resources where the potential for some of the greatest tangible benefits can be made.

*Resilient People, Infrastructure and Institutions* aims to improve the conceptualisation of resilience and the factors that both promote and inhibit its development. Improved understanding of these factors is intended to contribute to and optimise the development of a capability to identify vulnerability, manage the risk and enable resilience.

*Bushfire and Natural Hazards Risks* seeks better forecasts of likely events and precursor conditions; greater accuracy of forecast tools and more timely forecasts. This leads to increased preparedness for the impacts of natural hazards, improved communications and warnings and enhanced ability to predict and mitigate the risk.

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***Vision and alignment with IRDR Objectives:*****First IRDR Objective:**

The vision of the BNHCRC is to be the preferred and trusted source of research and knowledge in bushfire and natural hazards. The challenge presented to Australasia from bushfires and natural hazards is an ongoing one, and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC will be working with its partners and governments to establish a sustainable resource for the nation and the region.

As noted earlier, our mission is to provide valued, high-quality research and advice on bushfire and natural hazards in order to Reduce risk; Enhance disaster resilience; Reduce negative social, economic and environmental impacts; Build an internationally renowned Australasian research and utilisation capacity and capability. The BNHCRC will form a critical part of the implementation of the Council of Australian Governments' National Strategy on disaster resilience. The Centre will seek to reduce the impacts of hazards through the *application* of better knowledge and the *creation* of core national datasets.

**Second IRDR Objective:**

As the leading national body in integrated research on disaster risk the BNHCRC is already promoting linkages between existing research programs at the national level, for example, such as coordinating research on the development of a new National Fire Danger Rating System for Australia, and the bringing together of a range of economic analysis techniques to better understand trade-offs in government policy across the PPRR spectrum and across multiple hazards. Further, our goal is to bring into Australia best of breed research that can be adapted to the Australian environment, while at the same time as exporting Australian expertise to other countries in order to enhance their disaster risk reduction capabilities.

**Third IRDR Objective:**

An on-going challenge for all jurisdictions is the escalating cost associated with the impact of natural hazards and consequently a new focus on mitigation and adaptation rather than response and recovery is under way. Further, the costs associated with research are also escalating as the breadth and complexity of the problems of natural hazard disaster management increases. Consequently, the BNHCRC views partnering at both national and international level, and the prioritisation of research activities, as being essential to delivering cost-effective advice and building relevant capabilities. The BNH CRC aspirations in this area are thus closely aligned with IRDR's overall goals.