Animal Ready Communities (ARCs)

Community-based best practice in animal emergency management

RSPCA Animal Welfare Seminar 2022

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Australian Government
Department of Industry, Innovation and Science

Business Cooperative Research Centres Programme

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Introduction

Social scientist (psychology)

Research/activities

- BNHCRC – ‘Managing Animals in Disasters’
- World Animal Protection – NPPAD study
- Post-bushfire interviews with NSW RFS
- Scoping national handbook on animals in disasters for AIDR
- Community-led work in the Blue Mountains

Philosophy

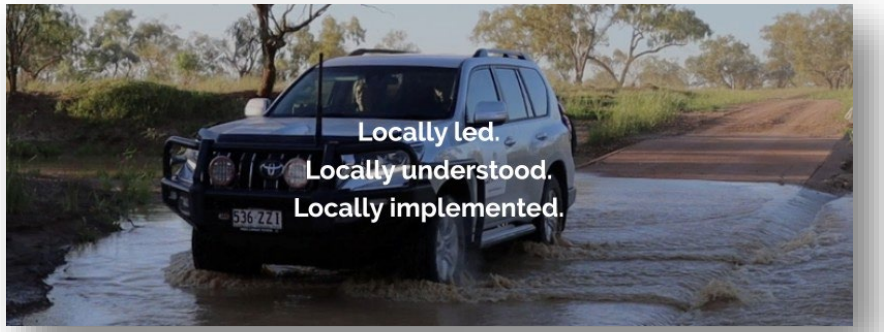
– ‘One Welfare’ (One Health)

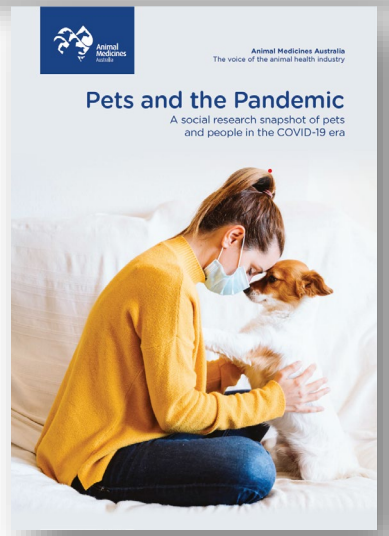
BLUE ARC
ANIMAL READY COMMUNITY

Why do we need community involvement?

Policy, Operational and ‘extrinsic’ drivers (push)

- Protecting ‘what the community values’
  - shared responsibility
- Ownership levels
  - capacity and resourcing
  - increasing, worsening, compounding disasters (climate change)
- Animals as property
- Your animal, your responsibility
- Primacy of human life
  - role conflict, public expectations/acceptance





Animal Medicines Australia, 2021

Why does community want to be involved?

Human, ‘intrinsic’ drivers (pull)

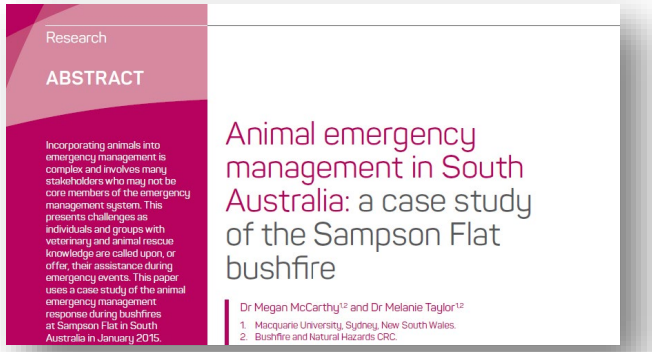
- Human-Animal bond
  - care, compassion, love, livelihoods – ‘family’
  - responsibility – own/others/no ones
  - impacts on behaviour – failure to evacuate, leaving late, rescues, returning
- People want to do ‘something’
  - agency, self-determination, empowerment
  - ‘fill the vacuum’
- Local knowledge, expertise, connection/s
  - capability, capacity, longer term investment

Barriers to community involvement

- Complexity of emergency management system
  - even more so for animals – roles and responsibilities
  - ‘You don’t know what you don’t know’ – easy to make mistakes
- Public safety concerns
  - some phases/activities more problematic
- Issues for informal (spontaneous) volunteers
  - lack of integration, inclusion, legitimacy
  - communication, coordination
  - confusion, duplication of effort, frustration, ‘personalities’

“…Government needs to recognise that that [community involvement in animal emergency management] will happen and facilitate it, or allow it, or support that kind of community resilience - that community drive to help themselves”. (Sampson Flat bushfire – SA 2015)

FAWNA – WA response 2016 – NARGA Disaster Response Team Facebook page


Research

ABSTRACT

Incorporating animals into emergency management is complex and involves many stakeholders who may not be core members of the emergency management system. This presents challenges as individuals and groups with veterinary and animal rescue knowledge are called upon, or offer, their assistance during emergency events. This paper uses a case study of the animal emergency management response during bushfires at Sampson Flat in South Australia in January 2015.

Animal emergency management in South Australia: a case study of the Sampson Flat bushfire

Dr Megan McCarthy[1,2] and Dr Melanie Taylor[1,2]

1. Macquarie University, Sydney, New South Wales.
2. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol33(2) April 2018)

Challenges for community approaches

- Volunteering
  - fatigue/burnout, demographics, commitment, competing demands
- Oversight/support
  - issues if lacking an overarching organisation or facilitation
  - longevity, succession
  - RoI - training, time investment
  - consistency, patchwork, evaluation
- Engagement without experience of disaster
- Timelines
  - community development

What can we do about (all) this?

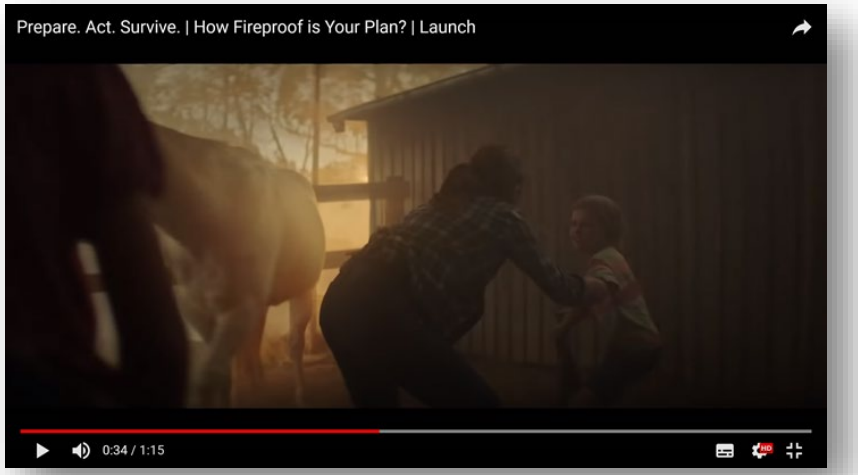
- Raise awareness of the need to consider animals
  - community and emergency service organisations
  - improving - but still pockets of denial!
  - better understanding of the limitations of ‘Response’ and the expectation of responsibility
- Engage and enable communities
  - examples/case studies
  - resources
  - find pathways and link/connect groups/people
- Leverage existing networks and consider alternative approaches/models
  - integrated vs standalone approaches

Get Ready Animals – NSW SES

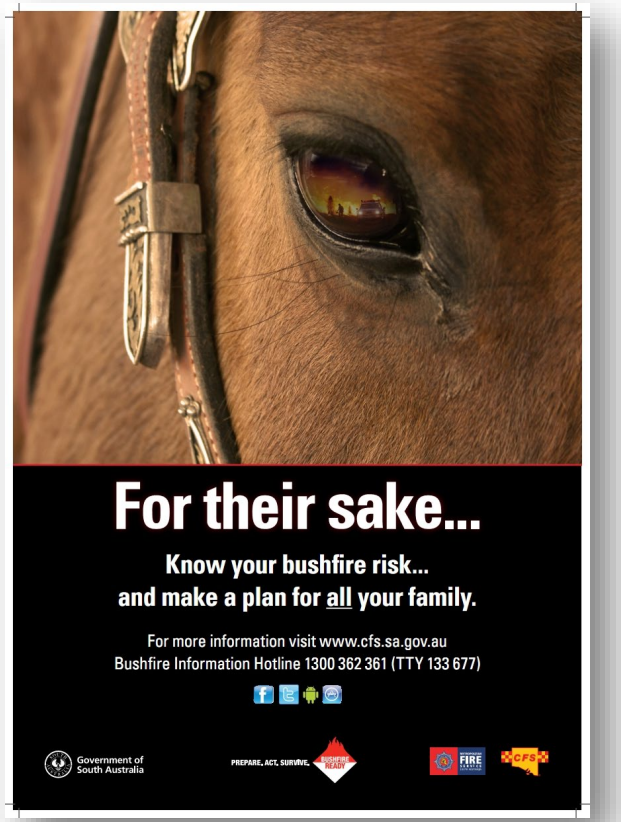
Animal Ready Community - case studies

- Blue ARC – Blue Mountains Animal Ready Community
- Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley ARC working group

- Both leverage human-animal bond to motivate animal emergency preparedness



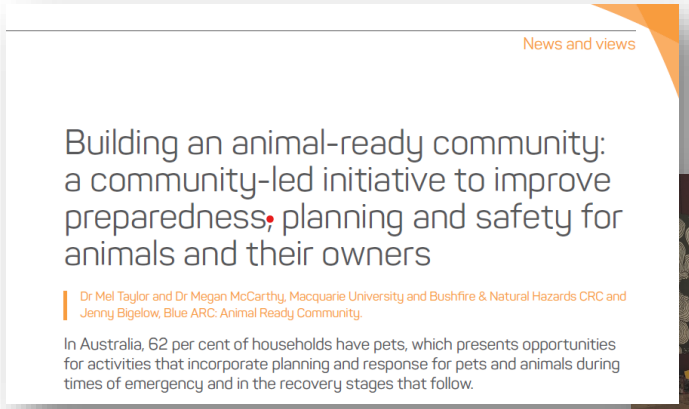
How Fireproof is your plan? NSW RFS 2018.



Blue ARC – Animal Ready Community

- Community-led group in the Blue Mountains

The aim of Blue ARC is to support community resilience in emergency events through better awareness, preparedness, planning and response for companion animals, livestock, and native wildlife.


News and views

Building an animal-ready community: a community-led initiative to improve preparedness, planning and safety for animals and their owners

Dr Mel Taylor and Dr Megan McCarthy, Macquarie University and Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC and Jenny Bigelow, Blue ARC: Animal Ready Community.

In Australia, 62 per cent of households have pets, which presents opportunities for activities that incorporate planning and response for pets and animals during times of emergency and in the recovery stages that follow.

Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol32(4) October 2017

NSW Resilient Australia Awards 2018
Highly Commended – Community Award

- Developed resources, training, run social media page, connect with official emergency management structures through Resilience and Preparedness Working Group

“I was one of the long distance commuters sent home early on the day of the October 2013 fires.

We looked in horror at the amount of smoke outside the train windows and felt powerless as we shuffled along.

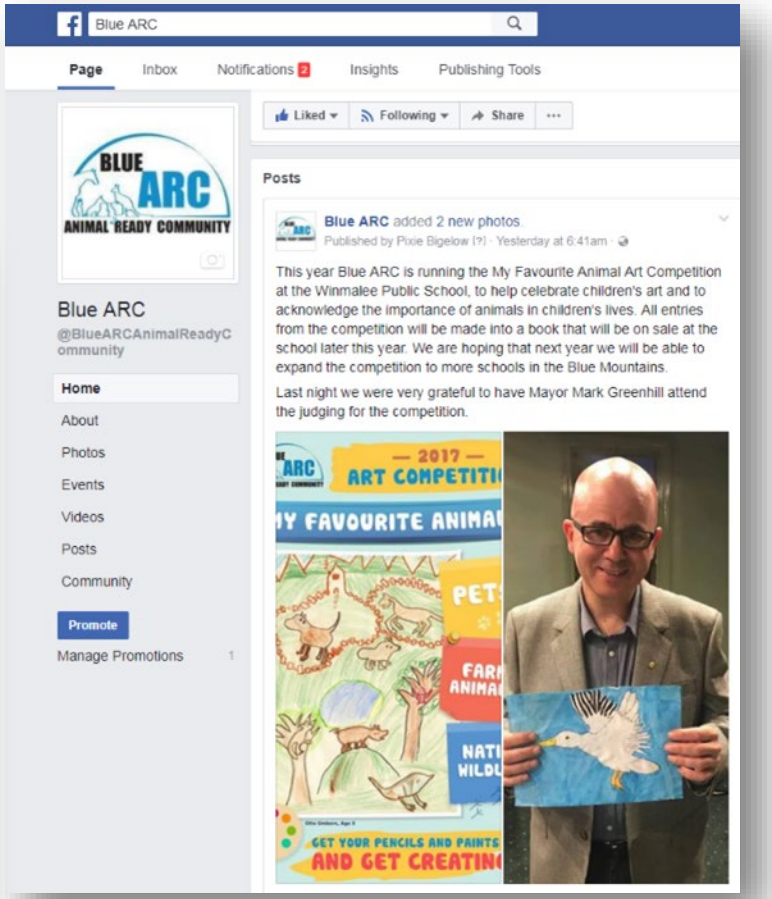
There was one young woman on the phone desperately trying find someone to get her horses in Winmalee to safety.

It was heart wrenching to listen to as were all the other calls.

The pets of long distance commuters are particularly vulnerable in this situation and it would be good to offer some sort of support for them. ”

Blue ARC strategy

1. Keep it manageable
2. Be inclusive – partner
3. Don't reinvent
4. Support the 'system'
5. Keep it real(istic)
6. Keep it (locally) relevant
7. Not an animal rescue group!



Blue ARC outputs

Hawkesbury-Nepean Animal Ready Community (H-NV ARC)

- Funded by the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Working group - INSW-led, with support from NSW SES, NSW DPI, GS LLS, BNHCRC, Local Equine Veterinarian, Local Council, NSW RFS, Blue ARC

H-NV ARC – Activities

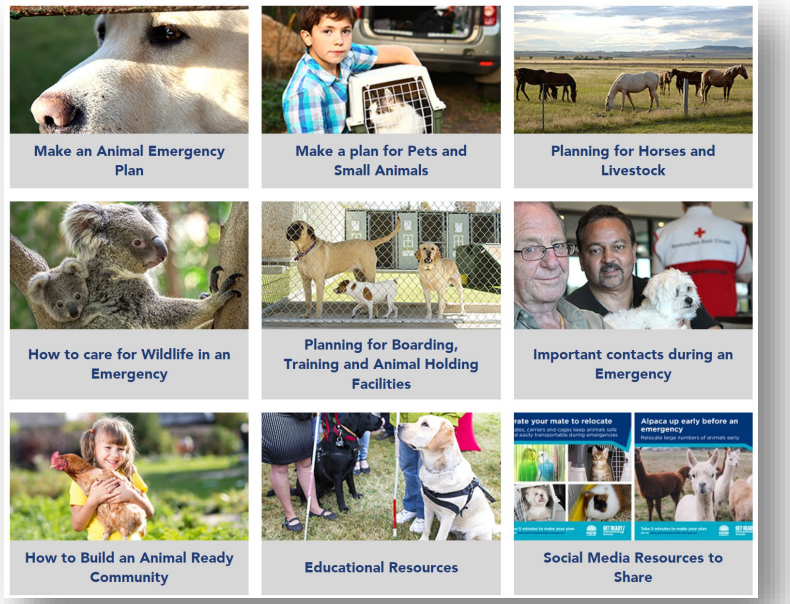
Horse Care & Safety Open Day

- Focus on care of horses and horse behaviour – with consistent emergency preparedness messages
- Mix of stalls and events in arena.

HNV ARC – Activities

Resources

- content and videos hosted by NSW SES (Get Ready Animals) website – linked/added to ‘Ohana’ project outputs
- working towards supported preparedness training



Thank you

Questions

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