



BUILDING RESILIENCE IN SENIORS TO EXTREME WEATHER



LITERATURE REVIEW

PREPARED BY

THE HUNTER COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
AND PLANNING GROUP

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The image is a full-page background with a monochromatic green color scheme. The top half is dominated by a dark, stormy sky filled with heavy, textured clouds. Several bright, jagged lightning bolts are visible, striking down from the clouds. The bottom half of the image shows a vast, desolate landscape of rolling dunes or hills. In the lower center, a small, dark silhouette of a person stands with their back to the viewer, looking out over the horizon. The overall mood is dramatic, mysterious, and somewhat ominous.

Literature Review

Literature review - Older People, community engagement and disaster preparedness

The following literature review provides a broad overview of key research literature in the areas of community education, community engagement and disaster preparedness in relation to older people in Australia and internationally. The review is designed to capture key relevant research, practice and theoretical literature in the areas named and will underpin the workshop design and focus. The literature review begins with an exploration of community education then moves to consideration of the literature with regard to older people, community engagement and disaster preparedness.

Community Education

In order to ensure a strong evidence-base underpins the development of the workshop package and materials, literature relating to education was sourced. This section of the literature review will explore ways of working with people in an educative environment. Specifically, the concepts of community education and adult learning principles will be examined.

Firstly, to better understand the concepts, it is important to define key terms. The term ‘community’ itself is a contested one. Taken at a literal sense the term “describes all elements of a geographical area regardless of the make-up of its population”(Fitzsimons, 2017a, p. 38). Communities can also develop around an issue or area of interest (Fitzsimons, 2017a). The use of the word generally denotes positivity and an ideal of cohesiveness which can fail to recognise the complexity of defining any group of people with a homogenous label by virtue of a shared commonality. This has led to a confusion between the empirical definition of community (as what ‘is’) and the normative sense of what is desired (what ‘could be’) (Fitzsimons, 2017a, 2017b). David Clark speaks of a community which is discursive and constantly re-negotiating relationships through place, beliefs, values and people. For Clark, community is solidified through three feelings, namely being seen as significant, a sense of belonging, and a feeling of safety and non-maleficence (Clark, 1996).

In a similar vein the term ‘education’ carries, generally, a positive connotation. From a political perspective, however, there are arguments that reform is needed of educational structures in order to create a more inclusive, emancipatory, equitable system (Freire, 1970; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Illich, 1971). Community education provides both a process and platform for connecting practical knowledge and action with regard to working on community based issues such as disasters with particular place based or population groups.

Bringing the terms together, community education can be understood to have characteristics of being process-oriented, multi-layered in approach, being underpinned by egalitarian principles of equity, being participatory in nature, responsive to the needs of the community, and being concerned with social justice and change. There is also a sense of community ownership and responsibility for the process and outcomes (Fitzsimons, 2017a). The process is closely connected with community engagement and is based on the idea of developing a learning conversation leading to action and behaviour change which is generated from sharing knowledge, experiences and ideas, rather than one way content delivery or didactic presentation of information.

Literature in relation to community education traverses health promotion, activist education, workers education and community organising and development. There are a number of different models and approaches documented with the common focus on connecting and redistributing knowledge and power. These range from those which critique the danger of community education allying itself too closely with those in power (Martin 2000; Tett 2010; Fitzsimons 2017a & b) to those which intentionally challenge existing power structures and seek social change (Freire 1970)

Martin (2000) sees three philosophical, at times overlapping, approaches to community education. A 'universal' or consensus model is the first of these and goes to the earlier discussion of 'community' in an assumption of a homogenous and harmonious set of interests and shared views of society. He couches the term 'lifelong learning' within this universal approach but notes, as do other authors, without a social justice framework this model can reinforce inequalities (Fitzsimons, 2017a; Martin, 2000; Tett, 2010b). His second model ('second chance') describes an educational approach, which does acknowledge heterogeneity and diversity in that it recognises some individuals are more disadvantaged and marginalised than others in terms of access to education. This model is one, which aims to increase opportunity. The third model is that of radical community education. It differs from the first two models in its fundamental premise of aiming to bring about structural social change. This can be fostered through group process within a framework of a reflective, cyclical process, combined with action in order to create change. Characterising this approach a 'bottom-up', collective voice which challenges traditional power structures and values participant knowledge and voice (Falk, 1997; Fitzsimons, 2017a; Fook & Gardner, 2007; Martin, 2000; McIntyre, 2008). It is, in this sense, community education can be seen as a democratic process concerned with equity and equality (Fitzsimons, 2017b) and one in which facilitators consciously work to minimise power through language and a preparedness to engage in open, discursive conversations, rather than adopting the position of 'expert' (Fitzsimons, 2017b; Freire, 1970; Lucio-Villegas, 2018). This radical or critical approach to community education rejects assumptions made based on structural issues such as class, gender, ethnicity or age (Fitzsimons, 2017b). It also locates education in the interests and experience of the ordinary people impacted by the topic or issue and invites people who may not feel powerful,

in a structural sense, to gain power through their experiential knowledge (Tett, 2010a). Once given voice there is capacity for participants to continue learning outside of the formal process through the engendering of autonomy, action planning, and supporting people to know they can develop their own forms of knowledge (Tett, 2010a). In order to make change long-term the people most impacted need to take ownership of future planning (Freire, 1970; Lucio-Villegas, 2018; Tett, 2010a). These principles of emancipatory community education inform approaches to adult learning and pedagogical models. These will now be explored within the next section of this literature review.

Community Education and Older People

In the context of this project, a focus on community education as a way of sharing knowledge, connecting older people with an opportunity to contribute to individual and collective decision making, and of supporting social change through building community connections links well to approaches outlined above. The body of literature, which focuses on community education with older people highlights the potential of peer education in relation to behaviour change focused on health issues (Ogren et al 2017; Khong et al 2017), the importance of intergenerational community education (Spiteri 2016) and the critical role played in adult educational design in engaging older people around change (Lyons 2014). Lyons (2014), particularly found a number of factors were central in community education design in relation to nutrition programs with older people. These included limiting the number of messages conveyed, relating personal connection and discussion, and including practical and participatory activities which enabled older people to learn by doing.

Meyer et al (2018) found in their study that equipping the workforce providing care and support for older people to engage with diversity was also critical in connecting older people with knowledge and appropriate support across a range of issues. This is similar to findings by Araujo et al (2017) who found in their study of informal carers, that practical community education interventions resulted in significant improvements to health outcomes for older people for whom they were caring. This was also the case in another study, where older people were acting as carers for people living with HIV in South Africa. (Boon et al 2009). In this study, community education had a positive impact on confidence, skill level and quality of care delivered by older carers. While these studies are focused in areas outside the current project, they are important to consider in terms of locating older people and their experience within support systems at a local level.

Adult Learning Principles

There is an acknowledgement adults learn differently to young people (Knowles, 1970). Before exploring what this means in practice it is worth considering some of the underpinning epistemologies of adult and lifelong education.

Bagnall and Hodge (2018) outline four epistemologies (or ways of understanding) for adult and lifelong learning. They argue these ways of 'knowing' are often competing in that they value different aspects of importance. The first of these is the 'disciplinary' epistemology which holds knowledge as bearing a truth of reality. This is an explanatory, theoretical, so-called 'objective' model often promulgated through discrete academic disciplines. A 'constructivist' view of knowledge (the second epistemology explored) speaks of education as engagement and immersion with lived experience. It is student-centred and, in this respect, aligns well with a critical radical approach to community education previously discussed. 'Instrumental' epistemology views knowledge as only being effective if enacted according to rationally approved processes. It is a reductionist approach and one which is central to neoliberalist arguments about education needing to have a vocational outcome. The fourth framework is that of 'emancipatory' epistemology. This, again, aligns well to principles of radical community education as it views knowledge as holding power and being an influencer of relational structures between people. Put simply, this approach recognises structural disadvantage and works to promote change both within the formal education setting and to empower participants to take action beyond that setting (Bagnall & Hodge, 2018; Martin, 2000).

Much of learning theory has been derived from studies of learning in children (pedagogy) under compulsory attendance. The term 'andragogy' refers to the "art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1970, p. 55). The characteristics of adult learners are different to those of young people. Knowles (1970) argues six key characteristics which should be considered when designing workshops or training with adults:

- 1** Autonomy and self-direction – adults expect to be included and valued and to be facilitated not directed;
- 2** Life experience and knowledge – an awareness each individual brings unique experiences;
- 3** Goal orientation – a sense of purpose;
- 4** Relevancy-oriented – the process needs to be perceived as being valuable and one in which participants can choose their projects and areas of interest;
- 5** Practical in nature and capacity to be extrapolated;
- 6** Respectful interactions.

These principles are relevant to all adults, however there are also some particular issues to consider when working with older people, particularly given the reality of structural marginalisation through ageism (Hughes & Heycox, 2010).

Working with older people

Constructions of older people often include terms such as ‘helplessness’, ‘frailty’ and of needing to be cared for. It is because of these constructions older people can be marginalised, excluded from planning and decision making due to paternalism and ageism (Ritchie, 2000). As the percentage of older people increases worldwide both governments and non-government organisations (NGO) are asking questions about their care (Hughes & Heycox, 2010; Ritchie, 2000). Korten (1990) puts forward the concept of ‘generations’ of development-oriented strategies – welfare/relief models, community development, sustainable systems development and people’s movements. The choice of strategy will, in turn, influence the length of the project, the purpose and the role of government or NGO. The latter three approaches offer higher influence and participation for older people, being underpinned by empowerment principles. They move away from traditional welfare models of an older person being a passive recipient of services. These three models are also more likely to engender a sense of ‘ownership’ for older people, essential for sustainable change (Ritchie, 2000).

Based on the belief traditional education for older people fails to consider empowerment, Battersby and Glendenning (1992), developed a set of principles to guide educators/facilitators. These principles were also derived from evidence indicating it is middle-class, financially secure older adults who have already benefited from the education system who are most likely to be attracted to program involvement (Glendenning & Battersby, 1990).

The first principle involves a movement from a functionalist view which sees older people as a social problem. Secondly, education needs to be placed in a critical framework which challenges perceived neutrality of conventional paradigms and consciously work to uncover aspects in which older people may feel disenfranchised. Core to this is the emphasis on autonomy and choice for older people. Statement three argues for an overt enunciation of concepts of emancipation and transformation within program design and delivery. The final statement of principle is predicated on the idea of praxis – theory based on action and practice (Battersby & Glendenning, 1992).

Community Education and Disaster Preparedness

A growing body of research literature focused on the role of community education in natural disaster preparedness. King (2000) recommended targeted education and knowledge building as key to communities building resilience in the face of unpredictable weather patterns. Preston et al (2015), in their comparative international study of community learning in the context of disasters, proposed a learning framework, which included, both small, adaptive and incremental, as well as larger paradigm changing learning. Their research highlighted community learning as critical across geographic areas and disaster types and described this learning as characterised by a focus on navigation, organisation and reframing in response to disaster events. Webb and Ronan (2014) found that interactive disaster education with young people yielded benefits across a range of preparedness indicators. For van Kessel et al (2015) similarly, found that engaged learning and knowledge building which included both practical skill building and attention to areas such as managing emotions were beneficial in communities post disaster. They argued that adopting an ecological model of resilience learning and building which includes a range of individual and collective experiences provides an environment which is conducive to recovery and preparedness.

In addition to community education regarding disasters, research literature also highlights the critical roles played by community connection, social capital and informal networks as sources of learning and support for communities in relation to disaster. Boon (2014) found that social connection and connection to place were central factors in supporting recovery for those impacted by floods in an Australian study. Provision of support, knowledge and skills in place are important considerations here in shaping the current project. Mathbor (2007) also emphasises the role of social capital and informal networks in generating knowledge and action in relation to natural disaster resilience.

Engaging Older People

Before we are able to successfully deliver community education with sound adult learning principals as discussed previously, we must ensure we are effective in the first step of this process; the positive engagement of older community members. The following section is concerned with the engagement of older people in this process of awareness raising and education and the factors which may inhibit successful engagement with particular attention placed on the available literature in the community education and disaster context.

Within the literature focusing on older community members and participation, there is a focus on programs relating to active and healthy ageing, including recognition of the importance of social participation. However, little attention has been directly focused on the more holistic process of the engagement of older people. Reviews to date have been largely concerned with effectiveness of such programs but haven't, in many cases, included the participants perspectives on the acceptability of the programs (Menichetti, Cipresso, Bussolin and Graffigna 2016).

This discussion around the engagement of older people in the planning of disaster responses and how this is approached can also take learnings from literature and theory around inclusion and exclusion. Lui, Warburton, Winterton and Bartlett (2011) discuss the impacts of social exclusion on older people and the lack of attention to this demographic within the discourse. They offer an explanation of social exclusion as being when an individual doesn't participate in key activities of the society in which they live. This includes production, or participation in economically and socially valuable activities and political engagement, which includes local or national decision making (Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud 2002). Whilst not without critique, the social inclusion approach can highlight factors which may contribute to the social exclusion of individuals, such as entrenched disadvantage across the life course that can further contribute to social exclusion in later years and further impact on successful engagement (Social Exclusion Unit, 2006). This is a significant consideration for the project as a growing body of disaster focused research indicates that the intersection of poverty and social isolation across population groups (including older people) significantly impacts on the capacity of people to prepared, the intensity of the impact and the length of time and support needs required for recovery (Howard, Agllias, Bevis and Blakemore 2018)

Contrary to a stereotyped view of older people as generally inward looking and services dependant, Lui, Warburton, Winterton and Bartlett (2011) contend that older people value social participation and are concerned with a wide range of issues outside their own family context. It is also noted that they generally continue to reside in community settings along with children and family and continue to make economic and social contributions to Australian society (citing Gibson 2010; National Seniors Australia 2009; Warburton and Cordingley 2004; Warburton & Jeppsson Grassman, 2010; Quine, Morrell, & Kendig, 2007).

In Australia, older community members have historically been actively encouraged to take part in community life and political processes under the 'community management model'. Particular focus of this type of model is the value placed on the expertise of older people, along with the implementation being responsive to community need. Diversity, flexibility and inclusiveness are hallmarks of this community management approach. Leonard and Johansson (2007) noted the increasing challenges to this model from the increasing emergence of the quasi market approach over a decade ago. This trend has continued and has greatly deemphasised such practices (Leonard and Johansson 2007). This managerial approach also, in many cases, defines older people through the perspective of being service users, which is contrary to evidence within available literature. By extension, this framework also seeks to assess and make meaning of the experiences of older people from the perspective of service providers, rather than the older community members themselves.

Although in more recent policy and practice (Red Cross REDI Plan), there has been a shift towards greater community engagement and the implementation of community led and shared responsibility approaches to natural disaster preparedness, the role older people can and do play in communities as connectors and assets in relation to disasters remains undervalued (Howard, Blakemore and Bevis 2015)

Research involving older people and their experiences of disasters is largely limited to disaster planning. There is even less research on preparedness of older people living in their own homes or on agencies that provide care to older people in their homes (Laditka , Laditka , Cornman , Davis and Chandlee 2008). Discussion thus far largely considers the development of checklists that are assumed will help older people prepare for emergencies, rather than what might influence their decision to prepare. Also, most of the literature to date has been concerned with response and recovery to emergency events rather than preparedness (Cornell 2015). This categorisation of older people as vulnerable has significant implications around effective engagement and has often been counterproductive, discouraging resilience rather than support the capacity of older people to prepare effectively for, respond to and recover from disasters.

In considering social inclusion and community management model approach to community engagement and inclusion of older people, the value placed on the expertise of older people is an important consideration. Cornell's paper (2015) 'What do older people's life experiences tell us about emergency preparedness?' notes this as a key finding, that being that older people do not feel vulnerable and do not define themselves as such. She highlights that older people accept their limitations, but feel confident in their ability to cope. Likewise, Howard, Blakemore and Bevis (2017) found that older people (particularly those aged 65-74) were both more prepared than other groups deemed "at risk" and could provide numerous practical examples where they had responded effectively and supported others in their neighbourhood by utilising both their experience of previous disasters and practical assistance including cooking, providing torches and other equipment to families less prepared, and even providing accommodation in their houses for families in their street who were made homeless in particular disasters.

A number of additional studies have found that while it is important not to minimise the risks and vulnerabilities posed to all community members in natural disasters, it is important to view older people as active participants and contributors rather than simply passive recipients, a perspective supported within international literature (Collom 2008; Davis et al. 2012; Gallagher 2012).

Given older peoples lack of recognition in this space to date, this suggests the need to reframe the narrative from that of 'vulnerable older people', to community members with specific needs, who also have a wealth of knowledge, experience and community spirit. Rather than generalising about older people, research cited above points to the need for a more nuanced approach where particular vulnerabilities are recognised alongside strengths and capacities amongst those included under the heading of "older people". Issues facing those with chronic health conditions, experiencing social isolation and disadvantage and people with disabilities all face specific challenges in relation the disasters. However, research in this area highlights to key role which well older people play in connecting with and supporting people with specific challenges. (Howard et al 2015)

If we consider lack of engagement a defining factor in 'hard to reach' community groups, then many older people fall within that category. Issues such as lack of affordability, costs relating to travel and mistrust of professionals, particularly from marginalised or minority community groups are noted to inhibit engagement. Drawing on the example of engagement and participation in health promotion, gender is also a factor to consider, with research suggesting that older males are often under- represented, with the reasons being little understood (Anderson, Seff, Batra, Bhatt and Palmer 2016).

It is evident that community connections and social capital are recurring themes emerging from the research literature. The link between social capital, or support generated and supported by formal in informal networks and connections in society, and community resilience to extreme weather is gaining prominence. This research examines the critical role of everyday community connections and informal support networks in first responses to disasters as well as in ongoing recovery. (Ashida, Robinson, Gay and Ramirez Hawkins and Maurer 2010; Howard, Blakemore and Bevis 2017; Mathbor 2007)

Discussion has taken place around the development of tools to assist older people prepare for disasters, however little attention has been placed on examining what might influence older people in their decision to prepare (Cornell, Cusak and Arbon 2012). This is an area particularly relevant to the present project.

Howard, Blakemore and Bevis (2017), note in their research 'Older people as assets in disaster preparedness, response and recovery: lessons from regional Australia', a 'striking feature' being the older people consistently expressed desire to organise systems, networks and community- level responses. They expressed frustration at what they perceived was a mismatch of between what they had to offer, in terms of time, skills and motivation, and their ability access to being part of planning and decision making in the disaster preparedness sphere. This correlates with findings from Hodgkin (2012) relating to older people's contributions to social capital in a rural Australian context. A feature of this study was the higher engagement in civic life by older community members. A desire to be included and recognised as contributors, alongside frustration expressed by many older people about being marginalised or treated as passive recipients in formal disaster planning is an important consideration in the development of any community engagement and education strategy.

While the literature relating to older people and disaster preparedness and management is diverse and often focuses on post disaster there are some key themes, we can draw from to inform engagement and program content. Older people, when approached from an asset perspective can provide significant contribution to the social capital, resilience and response from within the community. In terms of workshop development, key learning from the literature review includes:

- Learning needs to be designed in a way which recognises and engages actively with the skills and experiences of older people. This means workshops must be much more than information provision or even how to instruction. Utilising adult learning principles, workshops need to be shaped around dialogue with older people, some information, and action based approaches which provide clear and achievable strategies older people can enact individually and collectively.
- Community education and engagement is more effective if it is strength based and connects with older people as active contributors to their own and community safety and preparedness.
- Consideration of specific vulnerabilities such as health challenges, frailty or disadvantage is critical but should be undertaken in a nuanced a focused way. Research evidence indicates clearly that generalising about the vulnerabilities of older people has been ineffective, and even counterproductive in community engagement and education with this group regarding natural disaster preparedness.
- Place based approaches offer an effective way to frame disaster preparedness with older people as this group is often at home more, more engaged with localised community support networks, and with more knowledge about who needs or may need help in their neighbourhood.
- It will be important for workshops to be connected with clear and practical processes which support the contribution of older people in relation to disaster preparedness at both an individual and community level.



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