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**Project evaluation report: Prevention is better than cure: a community-based participatory research project**

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# Project Evaluation Report

Prevention is better than  
cure: a community-  
based participatory  
research project

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# Executive Summary

In early 2018, the Karen community of Nhill, Country Fire Authority (CFA), Nhill Learning Centre (NLC) and The University of Adelaide collaborated on a project to conceive and develop a fire prevention film, titled, *Fire Safety: Prevention is better than cure*. The film refashions current CFA Fire Danger Period (FDP) and Total Fire Ban (TFB) information (i.e. 'Can I or Can't I?') for Karen communities (former humanitarian refugees from Myanmar/Burma).

This report critically evaluates this project's processes and outputs (the film), and pays particular attention to the efficacy of the community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach that informed the project's methodology. The CBPR approach was chosen to enhance genuine and meaningful collaboration between project partners, with a view to creating a film that could overcome some of the inherent communication barriers that diminishes the effectiveness of mainstream CFA information for Karen and other newly arrived refugee groups. Accordingly, this project composes a film that merges expert (CFA) knowledge with that of the Karen community: experts on their communication preferences and contexts in which fire safety and prevention issues arise.

Employing qualitative (focus group and semi-structured interview) methods, this evaluation examines the extent to which the project effectively engaged with and utilises respective knowledges, expertise and capacities of the Karen community, CFA, and NLC to produce the film. Further, we review whether, and in what way, the project engendered trust and built relationships between partners - these are central goals of the CBPR approach and predictors of successful projects using this paradigm.

We also report on findings from the first stage of a longer-term evaluation of the film's effectiveness in communicating key CFA messages in a culturally salient and meaningful fashion.

Findings from the process evaluation were overwhelmingly positive. Karen project participants' reported that:

- The experience of working equitably and collaboratively with the CFA on a project that would benefit their community had begun to break down beliefs about the organisation's authority status and implicit threat.
- Being 'listened to' by CFA members and feeling empowered to reformulate CFA information to meet their community's needs was a unique and powerful experience.
- Their experience of taking increasing responsibility for developing the film's storyline, scene construction, and cultural overlay was integral to establishing 'ownership' of the film.
- CFA's demonstration of trust in, and respect for, the community throughout the process built confidence in Karen partners to take increasing responsibility for the project.

The CFA projects partner interview findings corroborated evidence garnered from the Karen project participants' focus group. Key themes articulated:

- Surprise in how effective the CBPR model worked in practice, generating a film that effectively simplified and contextualised mainstream CFA information.
- Appreciation of the Karen community's capacity to translate and effectively truncate complex FDP and TFB information.
- The critical importance of CFA partners in sharing responsibility and 'ownership' of the film with the Karen community.

The Nhill Learning Centre (NLC) managed the project and was key to facilitating communication and relationships between project partners. Findings suggest that their experience of the project was highly rewarding, yet, concurrently, stressful, and at times highly demanding. Key findings in relation to NLC, were:

- The project helped evolve relationships between all key project partners.
- As a consequence of the project, NLC and the Karen community's leadership group have built a closer working relationship.
- Amid initial concerns (during a script writing session) that the project would not be community-led, the Karen community did ultimately drive the conception of the film's script and scene settings.
- Project budget costings could have been more carefully considered - NLC were not fairly remunerated for their effort and time commitment.
- The project's timeframe, as determined by CFA's Summer Local Initiatives grant, was problematic, especially for such a complex project, and compounded stress associated with NLC staffing resource limitations.

The film evaluation focus group with non-project Karen community members' generated key insights into the film's potential communication efficacy. These included:

- The initial introduction of the central narrative (introduction of a new Karen family to Nhill) was unclear (this was remedied before the final version of the film was released).
- The main communication device of 'demonstrating' (as opposed to CFA 'telling'), and peer-to-peer interactions between Karen actors, was considered superior to alternative communication methods.
- The 'cause and effect' relationship between risk behaviours (e.g., cooking outside) and consequences (bushfire) could be strengthened.
- The introduction of dramatic bushfire scenes would improve message salience.

In summary, this project met most of its process objectives. There is strong demonstrable evidence that genuine collaboration between project partners and a co-contribution of respective knowledges led to the production of the film. There is also evidence to confidently purport that all project partners had learnt from one another, and that the skills, knowledge and experiences reaped from the project will have ongoing positive influences in their respective fields of work and communities.

This evaluation highlights that positive outcomes of this nature are deeply contingent upon the willingness of those in positions of authority to lay aside assumptions about their roles and obligations, and trust in culturally diverse communities to take on equal responsibility for understanding and finding solutions to the problems they face. Another decisive factor shaping this project was the resourcefulness of the Karen community's leadership group, and their capacity to trust and work alongside an organisation (CFA) with inherent jurisdiction and power. Lastly, without NLC to broker and facilitate collaborations central to this project's success, it is difficult to imagine that the film would have taken its current form, or could have been made at all. Indeed, effective communities require nuanced and experienced leaders that can mediate between diverse and sometimes disparate groups, breaking down social impediments, leading to more coherent, safer, and integrated societies.



# Background

Previous research by The University of Adelaide with the Nhill Karen community, Nhill Country Fire Authority (CFA) Brigade and Nhill Learning Centre (NLC) concluded that there was a critical need to improve CFA information for the Karen community on what Fire Danger Periods (FDP) and Total Fire Bans (TFB) meant, and what behaviours could and could not be carried out during these periods. This need was initiated, unfortunately, by an event where a Karen community member unwittingly contravened fire restrictions and caused a serious grass fire, leading to charges being laid and a court ruling that instructed that fire awareness education be provided to him and the community.

Through the initial University of Adelaide consultation process, the Karen community concluded that a short film would be the most appropriate way of communicating FDP and TFB information. A draft scrip was authored and a basic conceptualisation for a film was delineated. Unfortunately, in 2017, funding for the project was withdrawn by the Federal government and the project stalled.

In early 2018, NLC won a Summer Local Initiatives Grant through the CFA. This funding enabled the film to be further developed. In a very short timeframe, NLC engaged a Melbourne-based film maker (Remember the Wild) and, once again, the Karen community got the project.

It is also important to note that this project, from the very beginning, hinged on the long-standing relationship NLC had with the Karen community. The NLC provides English language classes, educational, vocational skills, and settlement programs for the community, and was perfectly placed to lead this community-based project because of the trust accrued over many years of working with the Karen community and the CFA in Nhill. Thus, the NLC acted as 'cultural brokers' between the University, CFA and the filmmakers.

## Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

To contextualise the project and its evaluation, we briefly describe the project's methodological and theoretical approach (CBPR) to community engagement, and the development of a risk communication intervention with, and for, a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) group. Community-based participatory research is defined as a:

*collaborative approach to research, [CBPR] equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change to improve community health and eliminate health disparities. (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003, p. 4)*

In recent years, public participation in developing risk communication resources has become increasingly accepted in the field (Spoel & Barriault, 2011). Indeed, research continually demonstrates that an interactive (two-way), participatory model is well suited to constructing and disseminating meaningful risk messages with CALD, enhancing the efficacy of messages to inform communities and build resilience (Selnow et al., 2009).

A CBPR approach proposes that expert and lay perspectives should co-inform each other. The CBPR approach should be grounded on a democratic process of information sharing between relevant stakeholders - including targeted lay publics - on a given hazard, its risk, and what should be done to mitigate its impacts through resilience. Establishing a two-way line of communication between CALD and Emergency Management (EM) agencies can help overcome problems of messages not accounting for what different communities *need to know* in their respective contexts, and in relation to their discrete communication needs. Risk messages are likely to fail when they simply disseminate risk information without consideration for how hazards interact with people's lived experiences – that is, their living conditions and contexts (Frewer, Scholderer, & Bredahl, 2003). In other words, EM modes of communication are often at odds with the publics' normal means of communication, actual concerns about a hazard, and how these interact with the context(s) in which frame their lives (Miles & Frewer, 2001).

Therefore, according to the CBPR model of risk communication, to avoid communication failures between EM communicators and CALD publics, specifically, it is imperative that EM information messages encapsulate meanings that CALD audiences associate with a hazard (its risk).

The principles of CBPR are particularly pertinent when communicating with new CALD groups with a refugee background. Their communication and information needs are complex. Their settlement process in Australia is determined by multiple factors, including: English proficiency, level of education, potential psychological trauma arising from dislocation, persecution and torture in their home countries and refugee camps, lack of experience with Australia's social and governmental systems and, their unfamiliarity with the vagaries of their new environment.

The current project under evaluation used the CBPR approach to empower the Karen community to critically consider CFA's FDP and TFB information, and make their own determinations about: what components of this information to include in the film; how to 'deliver' this information (i.e. directive 'telling' or, more subtly, through storytelling); which film locations to use, and: what cultural aspects (overlay) to employ in delivering the narrative. In essence, it was envisaged that the Karen Community, in collaboration with CFA and NLC, would take a leading role in the film's development, ostensibly because they were considered *the experts* on their own communities' communication preferences and needs.

A significant proportion of this evaluation concerns whether these objectives were met.

## Project Objectives

In consultation with the Karen community, CFA and NLC, the objectives of this communication initiative were to:

- a) Develop a film that would improve understanding within the Karen community of what FDP and TFB mean;
- b) Support safer and more informed behaviour during FDP and TFB, enhancing the Karen and wider communities' safety in Nhill, Victoria and other jurisdictions;
- c) Support the Karen community to learn new skills and knowledge, and engender confidence in community leaders and others to grasp future opportunities for community development and research, and;
- d) Test and demonstrate the efficacy of the CBPR approach in the co-design of risk communication interventions, and building local connections within CALD communities and local CFA Brigades.

## Project Evaluation

The University of Adelaide's School of Public Health was engaged by the NLC to conduct this evaluation. The evaluator was present at all key meetings with the Karen community, CFA, NLC, and filmmakers. He also attended the film's shooting days and observed many of the interactions between project partners. The evaluation particularly focuses on how the CBPR approach functioned throughout the project, and how its processes were experienced by the project partners.

The evaluation follows a model advocated by Patton (2008) called Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UF-E), which is one of the most widely recognised approaches used in the field of evaluation. This approach was chosen because it concentrates on how *useful* the evaluation could be for intended users. Identified users of this evaluation are the Karen Community, CFA and NLC.

Evaluation findings will have a range of applications, including:

- facilitate the conceptualisation and planning of future projects and grant applications (Karen, NLC and CFA).
- gauge the efficacy and utility of the CBPR approach for use in similar initiatives across Victoria (CFA).
- measure the effectiveness of the film (and the approach that undergirded it) to engage Karen audiences and communicate key bushfire prevention information (CFA).
- gather and build evidence on the CBPR approach to risk communication for CALD communities.

The evaluation is designed to assess the project on dimensions of *process* and *outcome*.

1. *The process evaluation* measures the extent to which the project engaged and utilised the knowledge, expertise and capacities of the local Karen community, CFA, and Nhill Learning Centre, to collaborate and produce a film designed for Karen audiences. The evaluation will also measure how the project engendered trust and built relationships between stakeholders.

The process evaluation methodology employs a qualitative approach as recommended by Patton (2002). A focus group with project participants explores how they experienced the project, especially in terms of the CBPR principle defined hitherto.

In particular, questions will focus on how project partners:

- viewed their role in the project, and their agency in fashioning the film for the Karen audience and shared key CFA information.
  - understood and experienced their relationships with other project partners, i.e. the Karen community, CFA, NLC, film makers.
  - construed the strengths and weaknesses of the project and its processes.
2. *The outcome evaluation* measures the film's interpretability and potential capacity to communicate key FDP and TFB messages in a culturally salient and meaningful fashion. The film will be tested with a sample of local Karen community members who were not involved in the project, hence avoiding some of the problems associated with a range of bias's i.e. confirmation bias, halo effect. This focus group examines the various strengths and weaknesses of the film, including components such as narrative, scripting, acting, music, and message clarity.

Although not within the current evaluation's remit, the evaluators will monitor the reach of the film across the Australian Karen community, CFA, and other community service sectors with a stake in community development and refugee settlement.

# Evaluation methods

The evaluation collected qualitative data from the Nhill Karen community, Nhill Learning Centre and the Nhill CFA Brigade.

Table 1. Evaluation methods

<u>Participants</u>	Karen Community	Nhill CFA Brigade Member	Nhill Learning Centre
<u>Methods</u>	Focus group 1: Project participants	Semi-structured interview: Ms Jo Ussing	Semi-structured Interview: Ms Annette Creek
	Focus group 2: non-project participants		

## Project participant and non-participant focus groups

Two separate focus groups were conducted:

- a) A project participants' focus group was convened to gauge how well the project utilised the communities' knowledge, skills and resources in accord with the CBPR approach (process evaluation). A small set of guiding questions were co-designed with the principle evaluator and co-evaluator, Ms Sher - a Karen community leader and participant in the project - to elicit participants' subjective experiences of the project. Questions and follow up questions centred on the positives and negatives of involvement, and whether participants would consider being involved in another similar project. The purpose of these questions were to identify and articulate project processes that could have enhanced or diminished positive involvement, including agency (sense of control) in the film's development, direction and purpose. The focus group was attended by 5 community members, the lead evaluator, and Ms Sher, who acted as interpreter. The focus group was conducted at NLC - a location familiar to the community. The focus group was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participant names were removed to protect privacy. Employing Thematic Analysis (), transcripts were then subjected to initial coding, which involved an iterative process of close-reading and re-reading of each focus

group transcript. This process generated the initial coding frame and coded extracts were sorted into overarching thematic categories and sub-categories.

- b) A second focus group (outcome evaluation) was conducted with non-project participants to explore their views on the film's interpretability and potential capacity to communicate key FDP and TFB messages. The focus group also sought to explore how well the film embedded cultural meanings into the film's narrative and scripting. Eight (8) participants were shown the film in its entirety, twice. A 15-minute discussion on the film was conducted between the first and second showings of the film. A further 30-minute discussion then ensued. Recording and analysis of the data replicated methods followed in the first focus group.

## Semi-structured interviews: Nhill CFA and NLC

Semi-structured interviews with lead project partners from CFA (Ms Jo Ussing) and NLC (Ms Annette Creek) were conducted, and question focused on:

- What worked and didn't work during the project?
- How did you understand your role, and did it change as the project proceeded?
- How did you experience your relationships with the other project partners?
- What could have been improved or done better in the project?
- What is your impression of the film?

Interviews were audio recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim. The lead evaluator analysed the transcripts and coded themes using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006).

# Findings

## Focus groups

### *Karen Community: Project Participants*

The Karen project participant's focus group explored how participants understood and experienced their role in the project, relationship with the CFA, and the relevance of the film for their community. Questions also inquired into participants' impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of the project and its CBPR methodology.

One of the recurrent themes that emerged from the focus group discussion related to the maturation of trust in CFA, and an evolving understanding of their role and mission to help the community.

*Participant: I personally think it's a very good idea, the real people, the CFA, come in to be part of the community. I know they [are] already are out in the community, but with the new residents it's a way of working together and us, making it their [main purpose] is very important as well because they are always out there, we don't know what they're doing, so calming a person, breaking their authority, "like we are just normal people, just like any other people" [speaking of the CFA]*

Here, the participant explains how the experience of making the film and the processes of script writing and filming with CFA functioned to normalise and humanise CFA members, and soothe potential fears about their authority status. This statement should also be read in a historical context; as noted already, a Karen community member had been prosecuted under CFA regulations for lighting a fire during a TFB. Anecdotal evidence further suggests that this event had distressed the community and further entrenched fears about the CFA's role and future risk of being prosecuted. Thus, the process of coming into contact with CFA under a very different set of conditions (non-punitive) to collaborate on a common goal, afforded a rich opportunity for the community to overcome some of its fears and, potentially, develop a new model of engagement with CFA from that of the past.<sup>1</sup>

The following extract further illustrates how the act of meeting around a table, under the conditions of respect and equitable collaboration on a specific project, can construct a climate of trust and, hence, motivate diverse groups to work together.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1954) postulates that one of the best ways to reduce conflict, prejudice, or stereotypes between majority and minority groups is *interpersonal contact* under appropriate conditions (e.g. equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation).

*Scott: Everyone was here for that first meeting, weren't we, with the CFA? Do people remember how you felt during that meeting with the CFA people and Annette, Amanda and me? What was that like to talk about the film? Was it difficult or good?*

*Participant: It was a good experience and it was also good to meet the people from that position, and it's good to know that those people in hierarchy wanted to do something for the community, so it's such a privilege. They [the community] feel privileged again because they [CFA] wanted to improve the condition of the community, they wanted to work with the community to do something there to improve it, so that means they care about the Karen community, therefore they are here to work with us to create something better.*

A revelation arising from the project for Karen partners was that CFA members (held in some esteem by the Karen community), were willing to work with the community to 'create something better'. It could be argued that this was an unfamiliar or novel experience for the community; that is, an agency with authority were willing to sit down and work on a solution to a problem their community were concerned about.

The following extract elaborates on this theme and suggests that it was not simply the CFA's willingness to work with the Karen community that made this situation unique; it was that they were willing to communicate on equitable terms and *listen to the community*.

*Scott: Were you worried about talking and being honest with the people from the CFA?*

*Participant: Once again, it's good because these people are working together. It's like we say something, and they accept our views, and then whatever their view on the issue the information they tell us, and it's not like me telling you, it's like we are telling each other. Share together, work together and it's such a privilege once again because these people in a bigger position are here to work with us to improve something better.*

The sentiments within this statement represent a common thread running through the focus group: the experience of working cooperatively with the CFA, and the recognition that they, as a community, had as much to imbue the process as the CFA, was remarkable and ultimately empowering. This extract also strongly suggests that the Karen community were comfortable with the CBPR approach employed in the project, and viewed it as an appropriate model upon which to develop a communication resource that could meet their needs.



In a similar vein, in response to a direct question about the community's agency (ability to mobilise control - power) in fashioning a film that would benefit their community, the participant underscores the importance of equitable collaboration, a fundamental principle of CBPR.

*Scott: Did you feel like the community had enough power to make the film in the way that they work best for the community?*

*Participant: This is the good way to do it. This is the best way. Collaboration again. The scenes are basically our ideas but because we are not professional we have limited knowledge of the total fire ban, therefore the authority people give us knowledge therefore we work together. They give us information and we create the scenes to show it.*

One indicator of a successful CBPR risk communication project is when communities are enabled to reformulate expert (CFA) information into a resource that is interpretable, engaging, and salient to its audience. Indeed, it was heartening to hear that the Karen partners saw the project as blending respective knowledges (Karen and CFA) to inform the film's script and framing of key messages. Critically, underpinning this conflation of knowledges was a willingness of respective groups to share 'power' in this process. The sharing of power in developing the film script plainly meets one of the key evaluation criteria.

Another important evaluation question (and CBPR principle) addressed whether Karen project partners' had attained new knowledge and skills that could potentially grow community capacity in research, film making, etc. The following extract exemplifies what was learnt and how this knowledge could be used in the future to advance the interests of the community.

*Scott: In terms of the process of making the film and negotiating and doing the bits of the film, was there anything learnt or felt that is important now to you? Did you take anything away from the project that you can use in life?*

*Participant: The two things that we learnt from this process is 1: The filmmaking process...is like "Where is the best to stay?" [where to shoot scenes] even you said the micro – what do you call it, the voice that – the microphone, it's like it depends you know where the winds come and that you have to be very careful with those and the filmmaking was capturing this and this and as they put it together it's looking very good. The other one is like the information we get from the CFA, they collaborate, working together as a team and the information that needs to be addressed to the filmmaking and the information. It's a great network isn't it?*

Making a film was a 'first' for most Karen partners. The notion that they held requisite skills and knowledge to author a script and tell a compelling story on FDP and TFB was a source of pride. For one other community leader, the experience re-motivated him to seek funding to develop his own Karen cultural film he has been hoping to progress for some time. The project had enabled him to develop his networks, especially in regard to a filmmaker who could help him with his project.

For other participants, playing a meaningful role in the project helped them learn more about the CFA role and FDP and TFB information that the film aimed to disseminate.

*Participant: In Burma we are aware of what is fire, we are aware that we have to be careful with fire but when we are in here we what is fire but we don't know what is the systems out there, how do you protect yourself, so it's really awesome to meet someone in real life and tell us those kinds of things. It's not like through the screen they are giving us information but they are in here in person which is really great to meet them and know about their roles, their responsibility to the community because every country has a regulation that we have to obey, it's very important that these people are here telling us, informing us about the fire.*

Face-to-face interactions between project partner groups during the project, and the impact these had on Karen participants, did indeed appear to break down some of barriers that previous engagement attempts may have been less successful in achieving. Moreover, we speculate that this specific project setting - one of working equitably towards a mutually valued goal – might provide a fruitful context by which new relations can be fostered, and learning can take place and rendered more meaningful than if received via other channels ('through a screen').

Another participant drew confidence and knowledge from being involved in the film:

*Interpreter: CFA trucks are usually everywhere, it pops up here and then there, but she has no knowledge about those stuff, like "What are they? What are they doing? Why are they called CFA? What's the purpose? What's their role?" From this process we learnt about those people and the CFA is the fire, they are looking after us in case of....you see in fire, those kind of stuff. You know when you are driving on the road they have like a sign saying, that pointing thing, danger period, so previously have no knowledge about those, and we drive past it was like, "What's that?" but now she has more confidence*

Lastly, participants were asked if there were any aspects of the project that were experienced as difficult, or that could be improved. One Karen participant noted that he did feel quite 'nervous' in his acting role in the film (of which he was 'volunteered' by his peers), while others were both

concerned and excited about how the film would be received by the wider Karen community. Other than this feedback, no negative responses to this question were articulated. We do not presume that no negative experiences or feelings were occasioned by the project for the Karen partners as part of their involvement in the project. Clearly, social, language and cultural factors may have impinged on how willing participants were to freely share thoughts and ideas that they considered negative or critical. Future evaluation interviews, without the lead evaluator present, may shed light on alternative versions of participants' experiences.



A Script writing session with the Karen community, CFA, NLC and University of Adelaide

## Summary

In summary, findings from the Karen participant' focus group strongly suggests that they viewed their role as central to the film's development. The consensus was that they were genuinely, and equitably, partnering with the CFA - not only to translate CFA information but, rather, to completely refashion the information to mesh with the cultural practices that their community valued, and which are impacted by FDP and TFB legislation.

The Karen group made plain that through face-to-face meetings with CFA members, and sharing the common goal of producing a film that could improve their community's resilience, was integral to breaking down pre-conceived beliefs about the organisation and their role in the community.

There are important implications arising from the Karen participants words reported here. By any measure, we can confidently state that in respect to CBPR, the project did indeed utilise the strengths of the community in the film-making process, and that they were empowered, with support from NLC, to make important decisions on the film's direction and overall development. Karen participants appraised the film as a resource that would help remedy one of the core communication barriers that increased their risk of contravening FDP and TFB laws.

## *Karen Community: Non-Project Participants*

A focus group with Karen community members not involved in the project aimed to gain insight into the film's interpretability, coherence, and overall efficacy in communicating key fire safety messages

Participants' provided a spectrum of positive and constructively critical evaluative feedback. This feedback can be thematically categorised thus: a) the film's key story-line ('the new family being shown around Nhill') is not introduced well and is unclear; b) the film could have included more vision of actual ('dramatic') fires as a consequence of cooking and smoking outside, and emergency contact details e.g., '000' or CFA website address; c) the scenes of backyard cooking, smoking and fishing are realistic and help communicate key messages in a culturally salient fashion; d) the film is valuable as an educational tool for new arrivals and longer-settled Karen residents, and; e) the communication method of 'demonstration' and peer-to-peer information sharing is considered superior to that of authority figures 'telling' the community information.

### ***a) the film's key storyline (introduction of the new family) is unclear from the first scene***

It became apparent during the film viewings, and also to the lead evaluator (who had not previously seen the film with English subtitles), that the introduction to the story of the new couple arriving in Nhill being introduced to the town could not be assumed. Fortunately, this feedback was provided to the filmmakers in time for a correction to be made that introduces this narrative with far greater clarity.

**b) the film could have included more imagery of actual ('dramatic') fires as a consequence of cooking and smoking outside, and emergency contact details e.g., '000' or CFA website address**

*Participant: I would like to know something about the action... about the fire, the bushfire, if you put one like a bushfire picture or something, bushfire is a fire, is something, this is better, or they understand because this really happened.*

As a number of participants explained, some scenes lacked an explicit (visual) linking of 'cause and effect'; fire 'risk behaviours' such as cooking and smoking outside were not accompanied by imagery of bushfire, which could have elucidated the link between these potential causes of fire and their consequences. The following extract echoes this view:

*Participant: It will be great to have a screen [image] of a fire and then someone is dialling 000 and the CFA people would come, "What's happened? What's going on?" in there.*

These views were widely shared amongst the group, and they are instructive in that a perceived lack of 'dramatization' within the story was considered problematic. Other participants suggested that emergency contact detail be provided at the end of the film (at the time of the showing this draft version of the film, this information was not included, but was slated for the final version). These insights could be considered for inclusion in the design of future communication resources.

**c) the scenes of backyard cooking, smoking and fishing are realistic and help communicate key messages in a culturally salient fashion**

*Scott: What did you like about the film?*

*Participant: Cooking outside, you know how the warm winds can come and carry on the fire, that's the point, that's very nice because usually they would cook outside. All of them are good but that outside one is highlighted.*

*Scott: The one in the backyard?*

*Participant: Yeah, in the backyard. It's more dangerous cooking outside. Many people cook outside as part of their lifestyle, so it is very good to highlight that. The music is really good and especially the action and the music combine perfectly in that sense, and also, it's really good to have this kind of film out there.*

The group responded positively to the scene context of cooking outside, and the use of this cultural practice in sharing information about fire risk. It is clear in this extract that the participant's recognition of this practice is culturally salient, and is thus appraised as an effective device to communicate this information to the Karen audience.

***d) the film is valuable as an educational tool for new arrivals and longer settled residents***

*Scott: Do you think it would be helpful for people who are new to Nhill?*

*Participant: Newly arrival, yes definitely, including the existing residents as well because some people may not have knowledge about this. Some of them [new arrivals] they are living in their country they never see the fire, bushfire like in this here so when they arrive here...more information about how to control and danger and someone tell us.*

*In this case it's good for the newly arrival, but, also, it's an updating information of the existing residents, yeah.*

Overall, most participants felt that the film held potential to inform new Karen arrivals and longer-term residents about bushfire prevention, FDP and TFB. The film's utility in 'updating' bushfire prevention knowledge for longer-term Karen residents suggests that these messages are not redundant for this group - replicating 'already known' knowledge. This bodes well for the uptake of the film's information for newer and longer-settled communities in Nhill and other locations around Victoria.

***e) the communication method of 'demonstration' and peer-to-peer information sharing is considered superior to that of authority figures 'telling' the community information.***

*Participant: The film has people from the community that are doing it, telling it, educating others which is the good thing, because if there is an authority person standing there and talking about it it's like "I'm telling you, you do", but this one is a calm, natural environment.*

Reiterating a theme identified previously, the use of Karen actors to articulate and demonstrate key CFA information was considered effective. They clearly oriented to the film's general tone, and the representations of familiar environments and normative interactions, that we suggest, resonate well with the Karen culture and modes of communication.

## Summary

In sum, evaluation of the film's efficacy provided constructive insights on how the film's storyline could be rendered more coherent and have included a clearer association between behaviours that may start a fire, and images of an actual bushfire. The first criticism has led to a short edit to the film that clarifies that the couple being shown around Nhill are indeed a newly arrived family. The second critique will be considered in future projects.

The positive evaluation of the film in relation to its ability to reach and inform new and longer-settled Karen residents is reassuring, so too is the feedback that peer-to-peer (or 'modelling') technique of risk communication sat well with the cultural preferences of the evaluation participants.

We are aware that some participants may not have felt completely comfortable with sharing all of their thoughts on the film due to social or cultural conventions, including politeness and an avoidance of potential conflict. With this caveat in mind, we suggest that the film be evaluated again with a selected group of Karen individuals from outside of Nhill and conducted by a Karen leader known to them. This repeat evaluation may elicit new feedback that could augment that discussed here.

## Semi-structured interviews: Nhill Learning Centre and CFA

### *Nhill Learning Centre*

The lead evaluator interviewed Ms Annette Creek, Director of NLC on 1 June, 2018. Ms Creek won and managed the CFA's Summer Local Initiatives Grant on behalf of NLC.

Her appraisal of NLC's involvement in project are categorised under 2 key categories: a) Relationships and; b) Learnings.

### Relationships

A core focus of the process evaluation is to explore how relationships between the Karen community, CFA, University of Adelaide, filmmakers, and NLC functioned and evolved during the project, and how these may have ultimately influenced the film itself.

Ms Creek's impression of how project partners collaborated was overwhelmingly positive, and has led to CFA, NLC and the Karen community becoming more closely affiliated. Ms Creek, when asked what question she would ask if *she were evaluating the project*, responded:

*Annette: For me it would be, "What connections have been built through it and what have been the substantial outcomes from our perspectives?" I think those connections have definitely been made – there's been some really good connections*

*built. Our relationship with you in your role, the filmmakers, CFA, the Karen community, it's brought together quite a few different groupings really so to me outcomes are great. Seeing the Karen community, I think they've also taken a real pride in the project, I think they will be very proud of the film.*

In another section of the interview, Ms Creek again underscored how the project had facilitated the relationship between Nhill CFA and the Karen community:

*Annette: I think it did strengthen ties there definitely, even from the brigade's point of view of understanding the Karen community better... I think it probably has gone a long way to just strengthening that relationship, the brigade knowing more about them as a community and just working with them a little bit more. I'm sure that's had good effects, Scott. Obviously as the film goes out, more connection will happen. From CFA's perspective it will definitely help to build those kind of relationships.*

More specifically, Ms Creek identified a key moment in the initial script-writing session where the CFA members, to their great credit, transformed their traditional approach to how CFA information should be communicated (e.g. a 'directive approach'). This moment was a turning point in the project where the CFA members appeared to place trust in the CBPR approach, and the Karen community to take a lead in selecting and culturally translating relevant CFA information. This transformation is well described in the following extract:

*Scott: Did you feel like there was a change in approach from the CFA who were involved in the project...?*

*Annette: Yes, I think it did because remember that very first meeting we had and I said to you, "This is interesting, they're [CFA] saying what needs to happen" and then I think they realised, "Hang on, these guys know what they want to do". I think by the end of it they were more, "Let's join them in it rather than trying to tell them what to do", that was good to see. I was pleased they didn't stick to "You must" or "We must vet this".*

This extract explicates a formative moment in the project that the evaluator recalls lucidly. Up to that point in the session, a clear disjuncture between how local CFA members viewed their role in the project, and that of the other stakeholders around the table. Soon after the moment described by Ms Creek, session participants split into 3 working groups to further develop the script. When the whole group reconvened, each had designed a narrative that won consensus



agreement from the CFA, NLC and The University of Adelaide. From this point onwards, it was notable that the relationship and role understandings between CFA and Karen community had pivoted; moving from one of CFA 'direction' to that of equitable collaboration and, putatively, one of greater trust. It cannot be overemphasised that without strong leadership from the Karen leaders, and support from NLC in that specific context, the project could easily have blown off course.

Moreover, NLC's relationship with the Karen community was bolstered by working together on the project.

*Annette: Certainly, it's given us another insight with the Karen community and working with them. It's given us more connection with them. I think it's stepped up a level with the Karen leadership team, we've connected more with them now and seen them as a leadership group together, so it's given me thoughts about being able to work with them as a leadership group in some other roles.*

A central principle of CBPR is that it should strengthen capacity within communities and incorporate community participation in decision-making (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). As Ms Creek notes, this project provided opportunities for Karen community leaders to 'step up' – to become an increasingly cohesive group that could partner more effectively with agencies like NLC in the future. This is key positive outcome arising from the project that may have ongoing implications for the Karen community's socio-economic conditions, and linkages with government and non-government organisations.

## Learnings

All community-based projects deliver learnings to participant stakeholders that can be used in planning for and conducting future projects, and this also holds true for NLC. Ms Creek recurrently commented on how much the project had taught her organisation and the Karen community they work so closely with, and of the future potential in developing working relationships with organisations such as CFA and universities.

One important learning outcome for NLC related to funding of staff to manage activities associated with the project. On reflection, NLC recognised that they had not fully appreciated the scope of the project in terms of staff resources and the strain on the two key staff involved in the project. This issue is epitomised by the following statement:

*Annette: Yes, we've enjoyed it. I've certainly enjoyed the role. I think the only thing that we didn't allow for, which was my fault, was proper costing of our time. It's probably a fair bit more than what we would have anticipated, but that no doubt happens on every project you do, you think, "yes that's fine". I would have maybe*

*looked at it a bit differently and said, “Look, we need some project management time in there to allow for multiple people’s time”. It was probably fairly onerous just timewise for us. Having said that, very worthwhile. We’ve certainly not regretted our involvement, but we were really fortunate that the Karen community came on-board like they did. If they hadn’t have it would have been a far more onerous task. It was great having them pick it up as well as they did. Looking in hindsight I can think there were risks in there that we didn’t consider particularly well, but then do you ever do a project if you do?*

The CFA’s Local Summer Initiatives grant is, in relative terms, small (\$15,000). Most of this money was allocated to the filmmakers and to fund the project evaluation. In hindsight, this allocation of funding could have been more evenly spread amongst key stakeholders. The funding was allocated based on the view that because some preparation work had already been done with the community, and the project management component of the project was assumed to be minimal. This view, unfortunately, was mistaken.

Future funding proposals will need to include more realistic budgets for local stakeholders like NLC. Moreover, it is also apparent that the budget for the filmmakers was underestimated, and that they had been giving ‘in kind’ support to finalise the film.

Ms Creek also stated that the grant’s timeframes were unrealistic for a project of such complexity.

*That was the other big thing, really to be given a project like that and want it done and dusted in three months or four months, that’s quite ludicrous really when you look at what was involved. I think we did extremely well to have a product by the outcome date, to even have something produced. As far as processes go I think we worked really well together and it was succinct and pretty well drawn together but looking back the timeframes were on the ludicrous side. To scope a project, get it up and then and have to pull in several players - we were just darn lucky we had filmmakers that were so easy to work with and could do it. I wouldn’t imagine that that would happen so quickly, yes...we definitely needed longer timeframes*

The timeframe provisioned for the project (although a small extension was ultimately negotiated) could be deemed to have compounded budget constraints affecting NLC’s project management. Most of the project work was compressed into 3 months, which accentuated the stress already being felt by staff at NLC.

Lastly, a key learning for NLC was the seeding of new project ideas and grant proposals to work with the Karen community in Nhill on other hazards (e.g. drowning risk for children). A chief tenet of CBPR is that it empowers and enables groups and stakeholders to learn new skills and

develop knowledge, affording communities opportunities that can advance their communities wellbeing. The project has achieved this, as the following quote demonstrates:

*The project has definitely been learning processes for us. It's given us a whole new understanding of a different type of project that, we've never been involved with before. No regrets from that point of view, it's given us understandings, even just seed thoughts for other things we could work with the Karen community on. You look at them and you think, "Oh well there's whole bodies of knowledge here that they could still be learning about". I've applied for another grant now for water safety; that was directly out of this project, watching them by the water and thinking, "Heck, I think we need to do some water safety". Things like that.*

In summary, NLC has benefitted through the evolution of its relationship with one of its key client groups: the Karen community. Working closely with this group enabled NLC to forge closer ties with the Karen leadership group and build a stronger base from which to collaborate together on similar projects in the future. Likewise, the relationship with CFA, the filmmakers and the University was fostered, generating a richer potential for future project ideas to be conceived and sought funding for. These are not insignificant outcomes - positive relationships engendered by such projects are not always guaranteed. It is not unheard of for project partner relationships to become dysfunctional and lead to the complete failure to achieve planned outcomes.

Time commitment and budgetary planning were critical learnings for NLC that will no doubt be drawn upon when planning future project proposals. NLC also developed confidence in extending the current project to other hazard topics using the CBPR paradigm, and film as a communication modality. When considered against the process evaluation questions, NLC's project experience was overwhelmingly positive. The organisation has built experience and garnered insights and skills, which can be fed back into current programmes and future projects.

## CFA

Ms Jo Ussing was interviewed by the lead evaluator on 21 June, 2018. Ms Using is Group Officer for 9 CFA brigades around the Nhill region, and was a key CFA partner in the project's development. Like the previous interview with Ms Creek, the focus of this interview was to gain insight into how the local CFA experienced their involvement in the project and what learnings could be gleaned to inform and improve future projects.

Two major themes emerged from the interview, relating to: a) CFA's changing role in the project, and; b) translation of complex CFA information.

## CFA's Changing Role

Preparing and educating the public to 'share responsibility' for fire safety is a core component of CFA's mission. Traditionally, when sharing information on FDP and TFB (e.g. 'Can I Can't I' brochure'), the organisation relies on web-based or physical brochures that include a complex array of text-based 'rules' that closely align with government policy. The present project represents a fundamental shift away from this approach, in that only relevant information (to the Karen community) was selected to include in the film, something that Ms Ussing remarks on:

*Scott: How did you understand your role? What did you think you would be doing as the Group Officer?*

*Jo: I thought that I may have been asked to have a speaking role, and be explaining things and to be honest that wasn't something that I was really comfortable about doing, and as it turned out the Karens took ownership of it and they took on the speaking parts and it all worked beautifully.*

*Scott: That change in your role, was okay for you?*

*Jo: Yes. I think it will be far better accepted if it comes from them for them rather than having some person from outside preaching to them, telling them what they can and can't do, I think it's better to come from them themselves. I see it as a positive.*

*Scott: How was your experience of that [scriptwriting] meeting in particular?*

*Jo: I was blown away by that meeting because we took to the butcher's paper and started to draw but the Karens had just taken it over and said "This is what we want to do, how can you make it better for us?" Instead of it coming from us it came from them with our information and I thought that was brilliant*

This extract very much speaks for itself; however, it does underscore how crucial the Group Officer's (and other CFA partners at the session) willingness to share 'ownership' of the script writing was to the project and its CBPR principles. Success or failure of a CBPR project often hinges on moments described by Ms Ussing in this instance. Equally, the willingness of the Karen partners to take up this opportunity with support from NLC was also critical. Once again, as the evaluator recalls, during this session there was a manifest shift in how CFA partners initially understood their role, towards a new understanding of their position as co-contributors.

### *Translation of complex CFA information*

Throughout this project, CFA partners made an unmistakable shift away from the traditional role they held in the design of previous information resources. Yet, Ms Ussing held pragmatic

concerns about how the 'Can I Can't I?' brochure information could be truncated into a version necessary for the film.

*Jo: My concerns were that the difference around the terminology of fire danger periods, fire danger ratings, total fire bans and fire restrictions can get really messy and confusing when you're speaking in English, and then when you try and work in another language I thought there's the potential here for some real problems, yeah. With the help of Community Educator Jenny McGinniskin and others, I think we've been able to make it fairly simple and easy for everyone to understand.*

*It is a very complex set of rules and that's not the film, it's not the Karens, it's not us, it's the government policy. I think really we've done a great job with a very complex topic.*

It is instructive that one of the CFA's most convoluted and technical documents (Can or Can't I?) could be adapted to fit a film format, in another language, and in such a way that the chief messages remain accurate, while improving interpretability for its target audience. Further, and more generally, this achievement highlights the potential untapped resources that CALD communities could employ if they were genuinely engaged to collaborate on reformulating text-based resources into pictorial or other communication mediums, including film.

The CFA's role transition throughout this project represents a key indicator of a successful CBPR process, whereby a key partner with statutory power profoundly modified its traditional and conventionalised approach to engaging with a CALD community. This transition, from one of 'teller' to one of 'partner' (and sometimes, 'learner'), was fundamental to the project's success and the film's strength in harnessing CFA knowledge *and* that of the Karen community.

# Conclusion and recommendations

The evidence presented in this report strongly indicates that the project successfully amalgamated two very different bodies of knowledge (CFA and Karen cultural knowledge) to produce a community-based fire prevention film. It is highly likely that the film will effectively communicate FDP and TFB information to Karen audiences, and that it represent a significant advancement over previous fire prevention resources available for the Karen community.

The CBPR process that the project followed enabled the Karen community, with support from NLC, to draw upon their story-telling resources and cultural knowledge to craft a bushfire awareness film that featured everyday cultural practices, which are potential sources of bushfire risk. The participatory approach represents a significant manoeuvre away from previous attempts to disseminate CFA knowledge in the form of brochures (not available in the Karen communities language), or education sessions, one arising from a prosecution of a community member. Crucially, the findings proffered here indicate that the project galvanised relationships between project partners and set the groundwork for future collaborations.

The evaluation advises that additional effort is needed in the following areas.

- A need exists to further track the 'reach' of the film across Nhill and Victorian Karen communities.
- Further evaluation of the film is required. In particular, the film's persuasiveness, impact on bushfire prevention information recall and adoption of the film's key messages and influence on behaviour change. These evaluation components were beyond the remit of the present evaluation.
- Using the CBPR approach, information resources using different communication modalities (e.g. pictorial brochures) need to be developed and evaluated.
- A more thorough and systematic approach to policy, planning and funding is required to abridge large communication gaps between CFA and many other CALD communities across Australia.

# Appendices

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