



UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES PROJECT

THURINGOWA PERI-URBAN RESIDENTS AND BUSHFIRE

→ DO PEOPLE LIVING ON DIFFERENT BLOCK SIZES HAVE DIFFERENT VALUES, KNOWLEDGE, PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS?

→ This bulletin summarises results from the Thuringowa Bushfire Survey 2005, which randomly sampled residents living outside the Thuringowa metropolitan area, within the jurisdiction of a Rural Fire Brigade Group (RFB). The survey response rate was 28%, with 263 surveys returned. Bulletin No. 6 provides the background to the Thuringowa Bushfire Survey, and this bulletin.

→ BLOCK SIZE AND PROPERTY TYPE

Residents living on less than one acre mostly categorised their block as suburban, those living on one to approximately 50 acres as rural, and those living on more than 50 acres as farming. A majority of residents who participated in this survey (67%) lived on rural properties, followed by suburban (24%) and farming (7%). It should be noted that the largest proportion (42%) of residents lived on one to five acre blocks.

→ PROPERTY AND LOCATION VALUES

A majority of residents indicated that they value the peace and quiet, space, and trees and bushland afforded by their property and location. Residents living on suburban blocks also highly valued the small community in which they live, while those on larger blocks tended to more highly value space.

Reasons for moving to their current property were related to property type. Residents on farming properties were more likely to have moved there to operate a

farm, whereas residents on rural properties had moved for a rural lifestyle, and those on suburban properties had moved for work and affordability of houses.

→ HAZARD PERCEPTION

The hazard of primary concern to residents was cyclone, flooding was also of concern (see Figure 1). Both are common events in the area and are thus realistic hazards. The cyclone hazard was of equally high concern to residents from all block sizes, however flooding concerned more rural residents and storm surge concerned more suburban residents. A significant number of suburban residents lived very close to the coast, therefore storm surge was a realistic threat.

Bushfire was also a major concern (see Figure 1), and the overall perception of the bushfire hazard was generally high. There were significant differences in perception between residents who live on different block sizes.

Residents on rural and farming properties were more concerned about the bushfire hazard in their locality than those on suburban blocks. Similarly, rural and farming residents considered the bushfire hazard to be more important than suburban residents when they were deciding to purchase or rent their current property.

Furthermore, in rating the bushfire hazard in their locality a clear pattern emerged: farming residents were most likely to rate the bushfire hazard as high; rural as moderate; and suburban as low. There were no differences in rating the bushfire hazard to their house; most residents considered the hazard to be moderate to low. This indicates that residents, particularly on farming properties, perceive the bushfire hazard to their house as lower than their locality.

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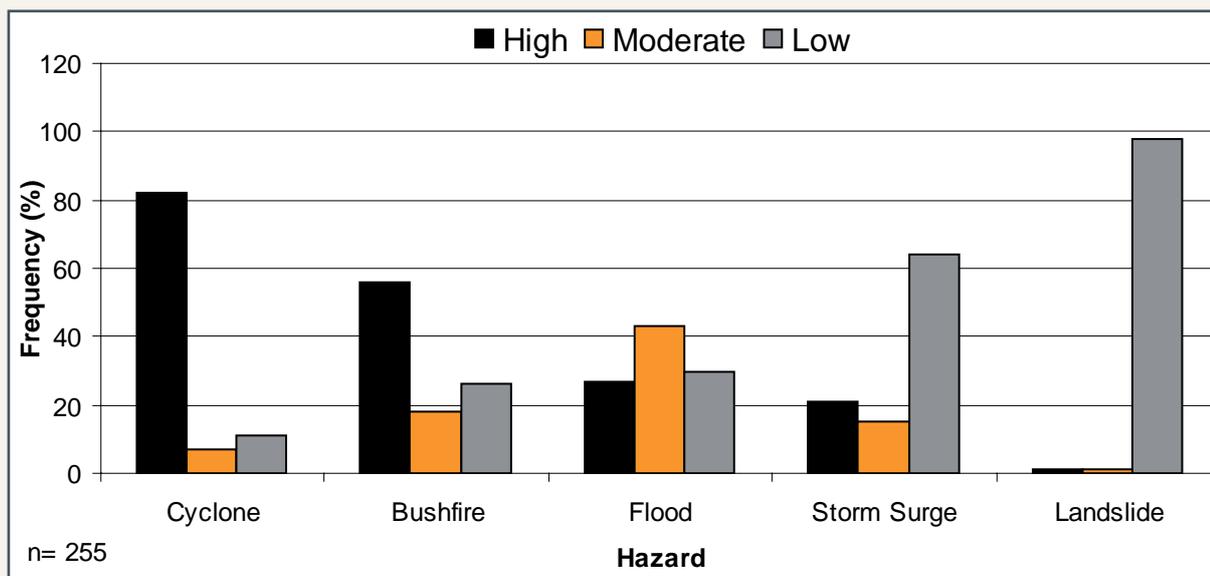


FIGURE 1. HAZARDS OF CONCERN TO RESIDENTS IN THEIR LOCALITY.

→ KNOWLEDGE, PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

Residents' knowledge and perception of service providers were very similar across different block sizes (see Bulletin No. 9). However, there were some differences in expectations of whose responsibility it is to undertake a number of maintenance activities. Although most, particularly rural property residents, agreed that it is the property owner's responsibility to maintain a firebreak around their property, suburban residents were more likely to expect the local council to take responsibility for this task, and farming residents the RFB.

Most residents, particularly farming, agreed that it is the property owner's responsibility to maintain fire brigade access to properties. However, suburban residents were more likely to expect the council to take responsibility, and rural residents appeared to expect everyone other than the council to take responsibility (i.e., the RFB, property owner and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service).

Responsibility for keeping overgrown bushland and creek beds clear was undoubtedly viewed as the council's task by suburban and rural residents. Suburban residents were least likely to expect the property owner to take responsibility.

Farming residents on the other hand were most likely to expect the property owner to take responsibility, and least likely to expect the council to take responsibility.

These results suggest that urban (i.e., suburban) people may have a tendency towards dependency, thus expecting others to take more responsibility for bushfire maintenance activities, more so than rural and farming people.

Residents did not differ in their expectation of who is responsible for clearing overgrown properties and removing rubbish from public areas, a majority indicated that it is the property owner's and the council's responsibility respectively.