



Building Community and Bushfire Resilience

Friday 24 November 2023, 10.30am–12.00pm AEDT in person at ACU Melbourne, room 11, level 7, St Teresa building (421), 115b Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, and via Teams.

Each summer has been predicted to be the hotter than the last as government and policy makers grapple with what can be done to cope with climate change. This panel highlights community capabilities and decision-making to build resilience and recover from natural hazard events. **Associate Professor Jessica Weir** will be speaking about what Indigenous people are saying about cultural burning, how it is being heard by government agencies, and the consequences for responding to an escalating catastrophic bushfire context. **Ms. Celeste Young** will focus on community strengths and capabilities from the Black Summer Bushfires in East Gippsland in 2019/2020 to explore how new understandings are driving change in how we think about communities and their local knowledge in bush fire recovery. **Ms. Rhonda Ayliffe** will talk about her community and role as project lead in the creation of the Cobargo Bushfire Resilience Centre since the NSW bushfires in 2019. She will also discuss the recently completed Badja Forest Rd Oral History Project with the National Library of Australia and how creative practice informs her research, ‘Ash Alchemy: Art after Fire’.

CO-CONVENORS

Dr Anh Nguyen Austen (ACU)
Dr Jessica O’Leary (ACU)

CHAIR

Dr Anh Nguyen Austen (ACU)

PANEL

Ms Celeste Young (Victoria University)
Ms Rhonda Ayliffe (University of Canberra)
Associate Professor Jessica K. Weir (Western Sydney University)

ENQUIRIES ihss@acu.edu.au

See overleaf for bios.

Biographies

PANEL

Ms. Celeste Young is a Collaborative Research Fellow at Victoria University who specialises in high impact end user focused research. For the last 20 years her research and practice focus has been decision making for and management of systemic risks such as climate change, diversity and inclusion and natural hazards. Celeste has led numerous projects with State and Federal Government agencies and also advised into government on climate change communication and practice, and her end user led methodology “working from the inside out”. Her award-winning work is used by practitioners and policy makers here and overseas and has been featured in state and federal policy. Celeste has numerous publications and was also a contributing author for the 2014, IPCC chapter *Foundations of Decision Making*.



Ms. Rhonda Ayliffe is a creative practitioner and PhD candidate at the University of Canberra. Her PhD project is a creative exploration of disaster recovery projects she is undertaking in her fire-impacted hometown, Cobargo, NSW. Rhonda is Vice-Chair of the Cobargo Bushfire Resilience Centre, the lead rebuild and recovery project of the village, and is the project lead for the Badja Forest Rd Fire Oral History Project. Rhonda is currently a Research Associate at the National Museum of Australia and is a co-creator of DisasterWISE, a community-led emerging platform for sharing disaster knowledge.



Associate Professor Jessica K. Weir is a non-Indigenous white scholar who investigates the consequences of co-located Indigenous and non-Indigenous jurisdictions, including the plurality of situated expert knowledges about nature. Motivated by entwined social-ecological justice matters, her focus is with areas traditionally investigated by the natural sciences – natural hazards, land and water management, and climate change. She has worked in collaborative research contexts with Indigenous leaders for over two decades, most recently to document public sector engagements with Indigenous peoples’ expert fire knowledge and management. She is always learning about colonial and imperial privilege, and seeks to work within a decolonial ethic. Her substantive appointment is with the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University, and she also is a Visiting Fellow at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, the Australian National University.



CHAIR

Dr Anh Nguyen Austen is a historian and Research Fellow in the Centre for Refugees at the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences of Australian Catholic University. Her research and engagement include successful grant writing for the Cobargo Bushfire Resilience Centre. She is an Honorary Associate with Museums Victoria, the editor of the new *Digital Diasporas Book Series* with Routledge, and author of *Vietnamese Migrants in Australia and the Global Digital Diaspora*. Her research focuses on refugee art, activism, and entrepreneurship. She advocates for “Free to Feed”, a social enterprise for refugees and asylum seekers, and her projects include community publishing with Kid’s Own Publishing, archival activism with “Viet Nam Family Search”, and teaching game design and migration history.

