



SHELTERING IN PLACE DURING FLOODING: A CASE STUDY OF EX CYCLONE *DEBBIE*

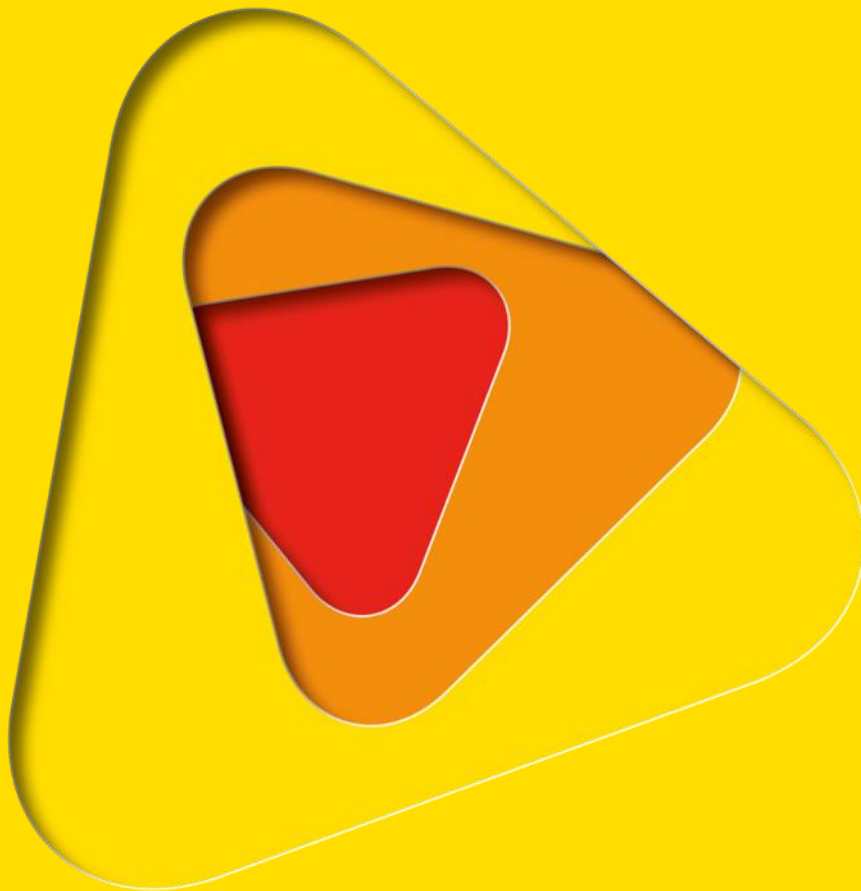
Non-peer reviewed research proceedings from the Bushfire and Natural
Hazards CRC & AFAC conference
Sydney, 4 – 6 September 2017

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Version	Release history	Date
1.0	Initial release of document	04/09/2017



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 Department of Industry,
 Innovation and Science

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Publisher:

Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC

September 2017

Citation: Haynes, K., Tofa, M., Gissing, A., Coates, L. & Roche, K. (2017) Sheltering in place during flooding: a case study of ex Cyclone Debbie. In M. Rumsewicz (Ed.), *Research Forum 2017: proceedings from the Research Forum at the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC & AFAC Conference*. Melbourne: Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.



ABSTRACT

Some anecdotal evidence of the dangers and challenges that residents face when sheltering in place during flooding exists; however, little detailed research has been conducted documenting peoples' actual experiences. The March / April 2017 flooding in Northern NSW presented an opportunity to investigate the experiences of those who had sheltered in a home or business. The research methods included in-depth interviews and a questionnaire conducted online, over the phone and in-person with residents and business owners in the Richmond, Brunswick and Tweed river catchments. The research was conducted between April and July 2017. This paper will present findings about preparation and intentions, responses to warnings, factors influencing sheltering or evacuation behavior and the risks and challenges faced. Although early evacuation will remain the safest option in many flood situations, the research has identified that a culture of sheltering exists in the Northern Rivers area. This research provides insights into the challenges and risks of sheltering, but also to the diverse motivations and reasoning that influence how people respond to floods. This work will begin to inform how emergency services can better prepare communities, where sheltering is commonplace, for the physical and emotional realities they may face.