

Tell 'em they're dreamin'

Is stay or go a good policy
response to the wildfire risk?

Alan Rhodes

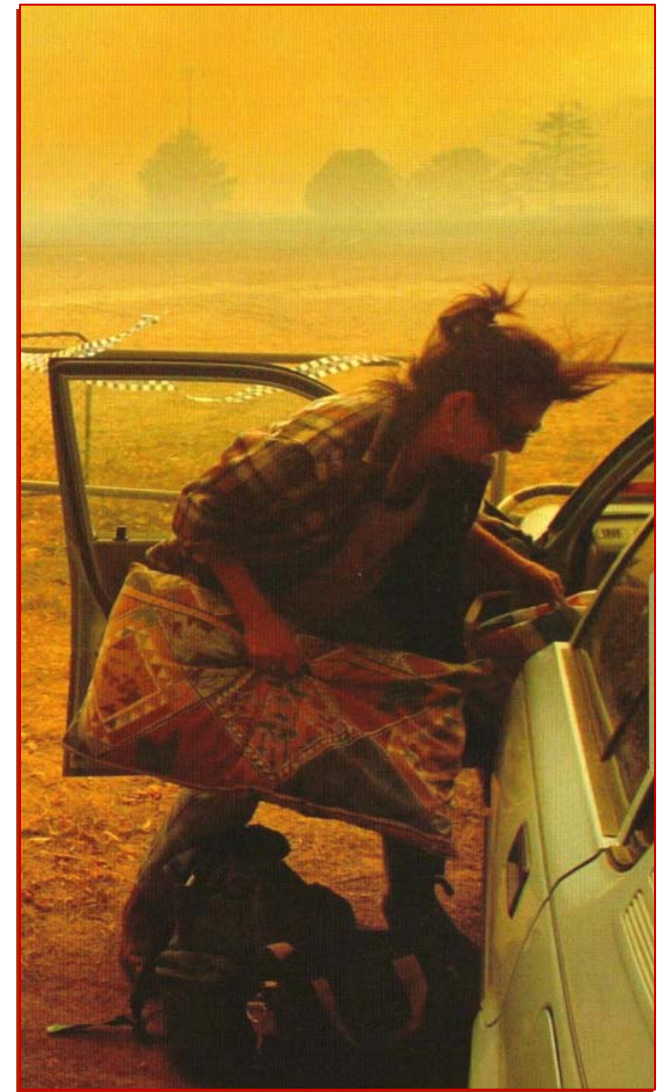
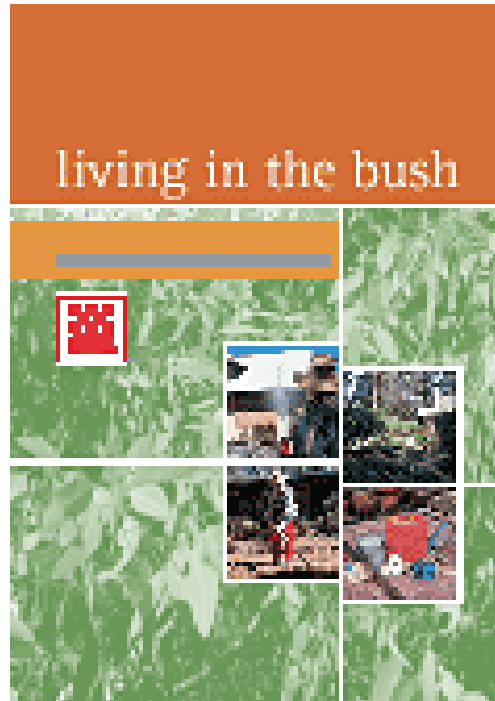



Tell 'em they're dreamin'

bushfire
prepare to survive



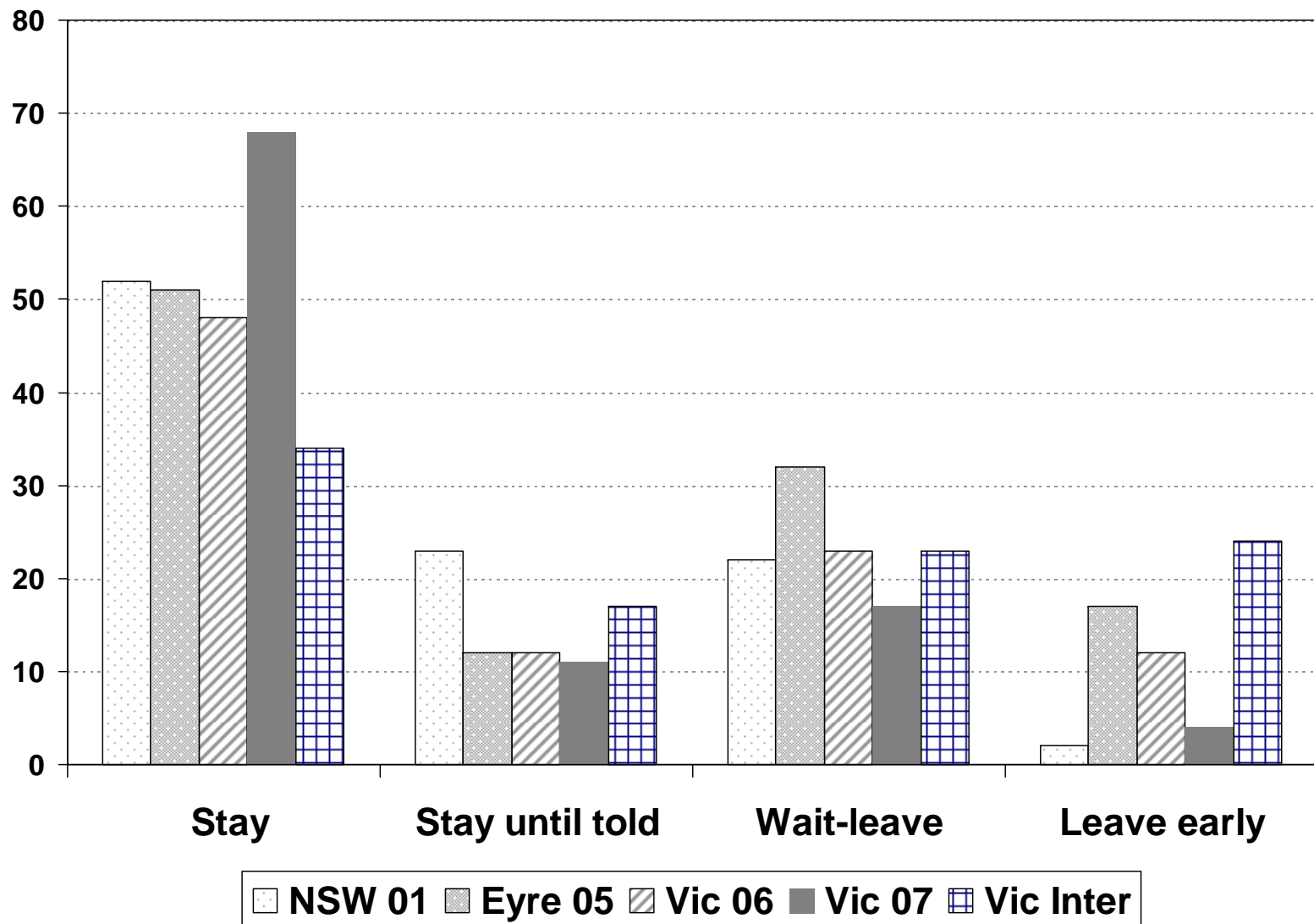
living in the bush



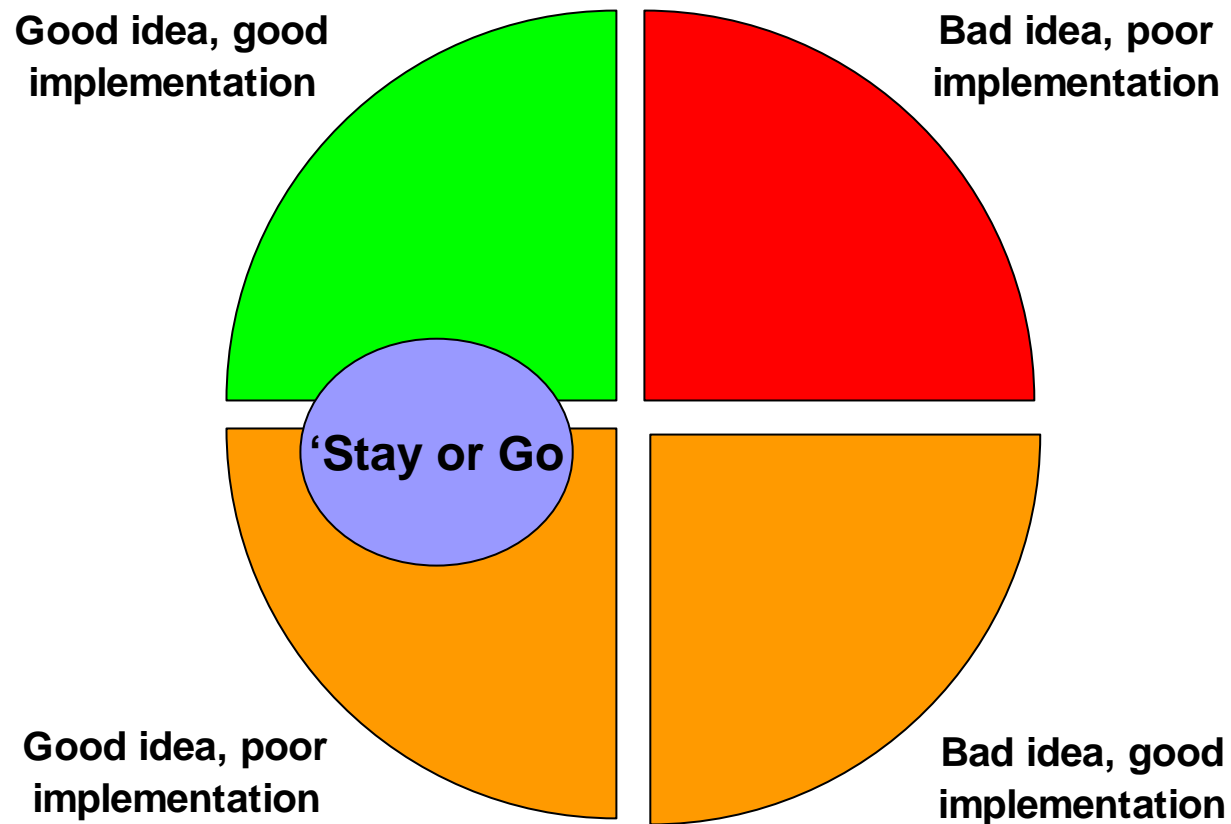


'I think that's a nonsense thing, a nonsense thing, ... that was a very hard thing, either make a decision to stay or make a decision to go? Do you realise how silly that is? I mean you look at the house and you think okay, it's fully insured, don't worry about it, but okay, what's in the house, [you can] never replace these [things] or ... store it somewhere. ... All that runs through your head, and you think, okay I'll stay, it's scary but I'll stay. I have to stay for those reasons, ...but then you think, what happens if this gets so bad, and things turn the wrong way...you know, shutting yourself in the house until the fire front passes. What happens if that theory isn't correct? And I thought oh no, it'll be alright, no, it'll be fine. But it wasn't fine, because I don't think that theory really [is correct]... I cannot understand how all of these houses up [there] survived.'

Intended response



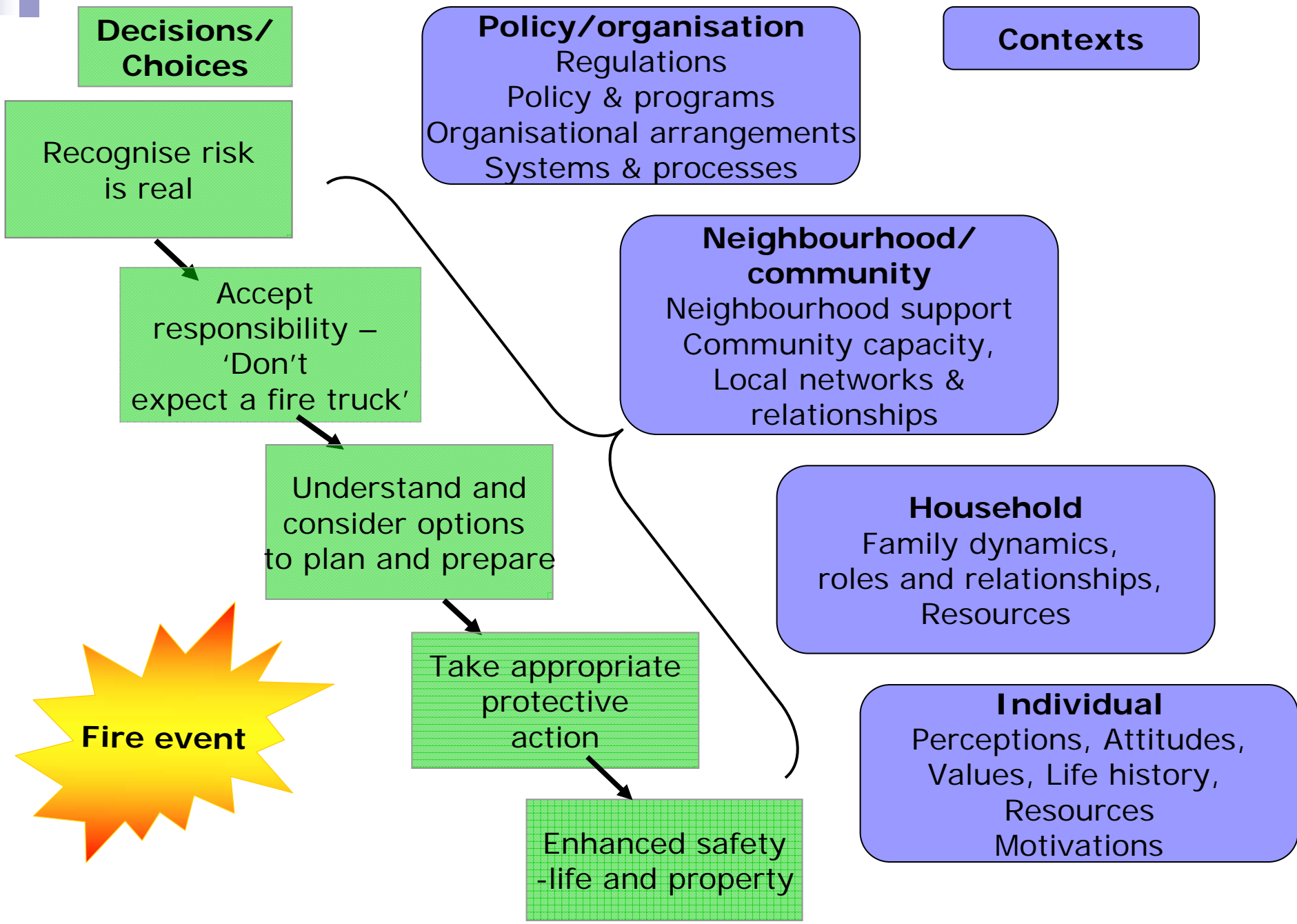
Is stay or go a good policy response?



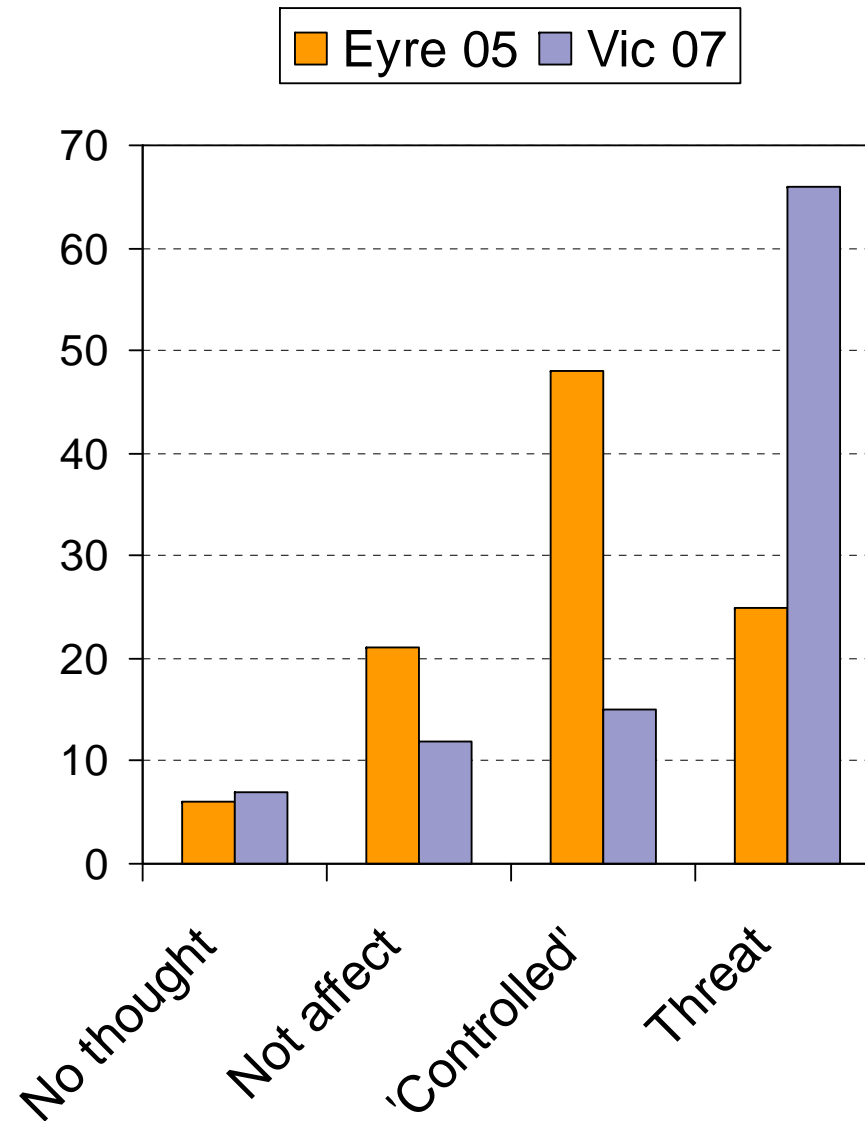



Is 'stay or go' good policy response?

- Policy is advice intended to encourage safe behaviours
- Policy is a 'good idea'
 - Well researched and documented
 - Sound logic
- Implementation issues
 - Recognise influence of different context factors
 - Different understandings and interpretations



Recognising the threat





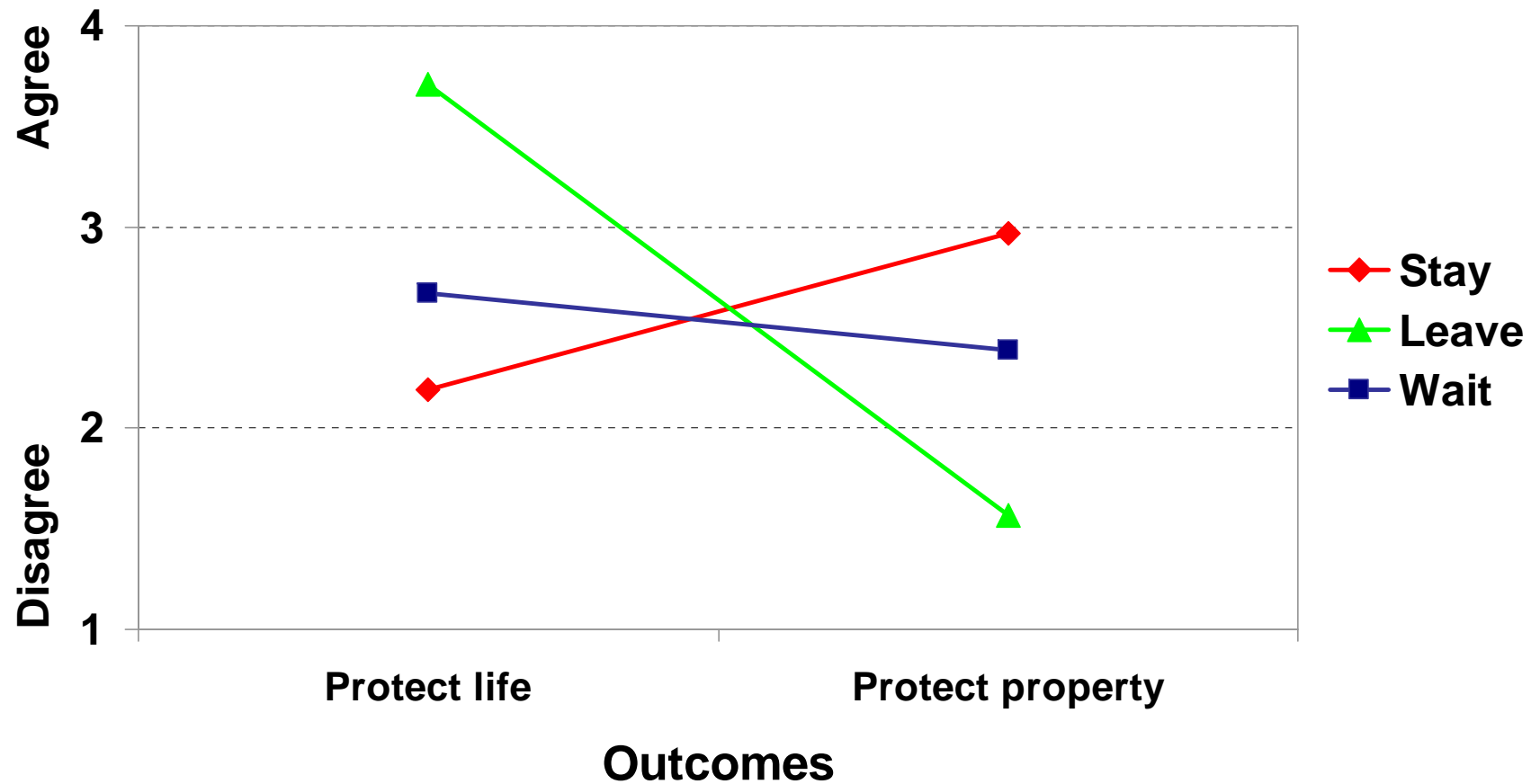
'I honestly thought ...if something's going to happen to those two [husband and brother] I can't let my kids not have their Mum...so I thought well, I've got to go. So as I left the flames were coming ... [and] when I got to the top of the hill it was just all dark and smoky ... and I couldn't see what was in front of me so I drove down the road and ... I saw the fire coming up over the hill like the big orange fireball ...[and I] was thinking oh well I can beat it so I just accelerated ... just like a movie where you just drive through a fireball ...'



Expectations and responsibility

- *“We didn’t expect any help or other people to be here”*
- *“We have great admiration for them (fire fighters) and we are very grateful”*
- *“We could have been dead for all they (fire agencies) knew - we saw no one.”*


Understanding the 'options'



Preparedness for bushfire

- Preparedness is complex
- Only do 'easy to do', or preparation is inadequate for risk
- Many not psychologically ready or physically capable
- Planning - often only partial



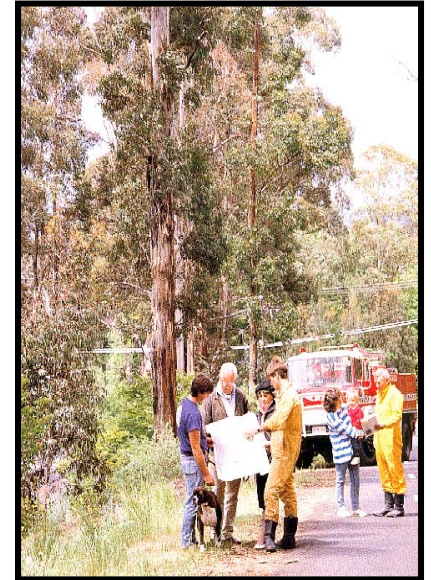


' One thing I will say, when that fire hit there was this almighty wind, oh god, it was just ... We'd been defending, we'd been running ... we were winning, we were happy, you know. If it hadn't been for that wind change or ...whatever that thing was that hit...and then the hayshed caught on fire, that was the decider that I'd leave. Then we were driving through smoke and nearly suffocating and you think, we've done the wrong thing here, oh no, it's terrible, it's just stupid, we're gonna die.'

Households and neighbourhoods

Influences on decision making:

- Gender
- Roles of household members
- Occupation/work situation
- Role of brigades and volunteers
- People with special needs and their carers
- Community involvement





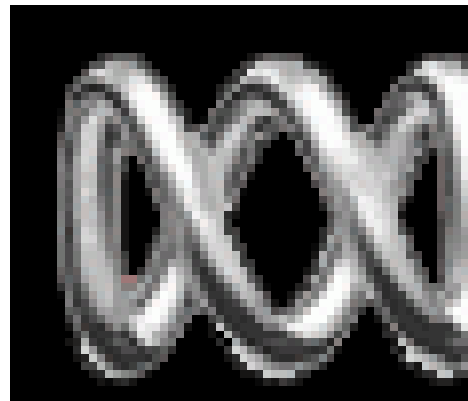
Information during fires

% receiving information	Eyre Peninsula 05	Victoria 06
Fire location and spread	17	85
Stay or leave advice	17	69
Personal safety advice	8	71
Advice about where to go	12	65
House protection advice	7	72

Bushfires ...and bushfires




Communication & engagement



How much do we spend on communicating the message?

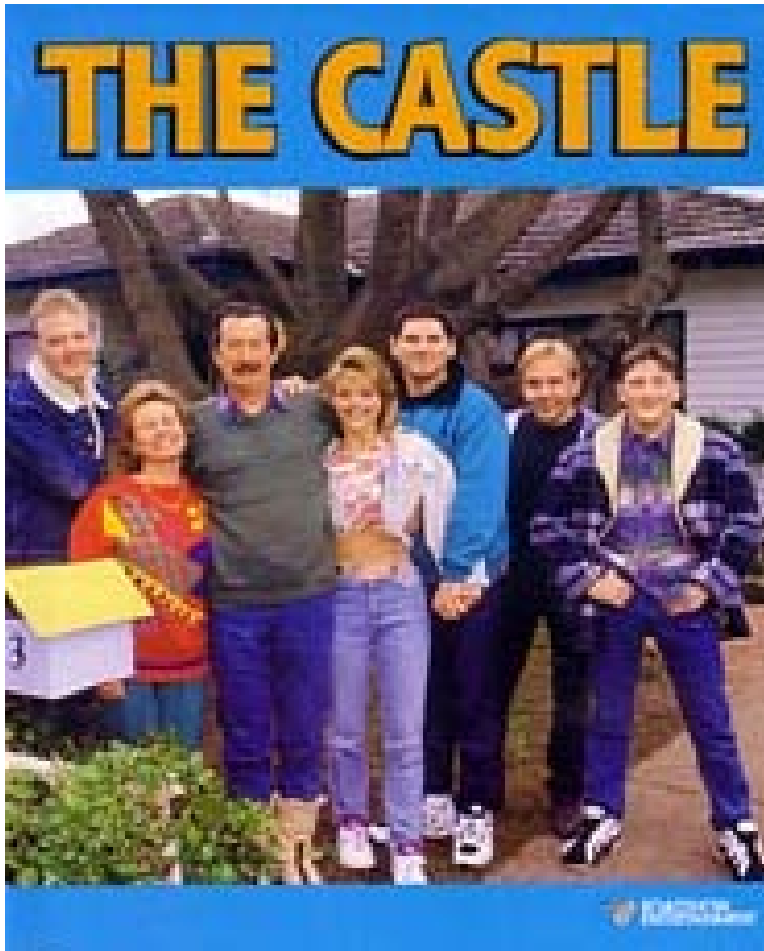




Is stay or go a good policy response to the wildfire risk?

- 'Stay or go' sound, evidence-based policy
- Significant number 'not complying'
- Complex and difficult decision making
- Implementation context not well understood or acknowledged
 - Individual decision making
 - Household and neighbourhood influence
 - Organisational systems e.g. warnings, communication not sufficient

Are we dreamin'?



- 'Stay or go' not a panacea
- Work for some people in some circumstances
- Assess variations to policy
- Need to maintain and recommit to effective implementation