Are we prepared for catastrophic disasters?

The ethical premise of leading through adversity: how a change in thinking might change the outcome

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We cannot solve catastrophe but we can get better at it!
Understanding our point of limitation

Figure 1: Correlation between risk, consequence and intensity.

[A] Level of consequence

[B] Intensity of event

- Risk treatment effectiveness
- Actual consequence
- Potential consequence

[C] Risk treatment effectiveness

[D] Limitation of conventional risk treatment effectiveness (prevention, preparation, response)

[E] Rules change

Significant consequence

Low consequence

Low-moderate
High very high
Severe
Extreme
Catastrophic

2013 Tasmanian bushfires
2013 ex-tropical cyclone Oswald
2013 Blue Mountains bushfires

2013 Tasmanian bushfires
2003 Canberra bushfire
2009 Victorian fires
2010-11 Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi

“Think differently” before, during and after (beyond knowledge, skills, experience and imagination)
Consequence management
Leadership
Professional development
Governance
Resource management
Intelligence
Communication

“Getting better” before, during and after (within knowledge, skills, experience and imagination)
Risk management
Risk mitigation
Leadership
Education
Governance
Resource management
Planning
Communication

Close the gap of residual risk (actual consequence) by “getting better” and “thinking differently”
Thinking differently

- Accepting inevitability

- Changing the way we think about residual risk
  - Least likely/most consequential – little thought/a lot of thought!
  - Rarity might reduce risk but it does not reduce consequence

- Establishing an ethical premise for leadership
  - Trust (the ultimate measure of success)
  - Unity
  - Humility
  - Compassion (the ultimate mission)
  - Forgiveness
Thank you!

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