

2017 Mary Fran Myers Award

This award recognises Debra Parkinson and the late Claire Zara, as well the Victorian Gender in Disaster Collaboration, Susie Reid WHGNE, Helen Riseborough WHIN, Frank Archer MUDRI, Craig Lapsley EMV and Carmel Flynn DHHS.



As one nominator said of the nominees, “(they) have made significant and sustained contributions to the body of knowledge on gender and disasters and have advanced gender-sensitive policy and practice” and are “contributing to a worldwide network promoting women’s opportunities in disaster-related professions”. Another nominator writes “their sustained line of research was impressive—first, for examining gender-based violence in the context of affluence, where it is so often denied; and secondly, for stretching “gender” to consider diversity among men and

masculinities in response, recovery and other disaster contexts”. The three organisations that form the GAD Pod now carry these actions forward.

Debra Parkinson is a social researcher in the field of gender and natural disaster. She is a long-time researcher and advocacy campaigner for both Women’s Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) and Women’s Health In the North (WHIN) and currently an Adjunct Research Fellow with Monash University Disaster Resilience Institute (MUDRI). Over the past two decades, she has researched gender inequity and gendered violence. From 2009 to 2014, her research with Claire Zara focused on environmental justice and the gendered impacts of disaster. The first was with 47 disaster recovery workers and 30 women after Black Saturday. This led to the first conference in Australia on domestic violence and disaster: *Identifying the Hidden Disaster* (2012) and was the topic of Debra’s PhD thesis. This was followed by research with men and disaster, and conference, *‘Just Ask’: Experiences of men after disaster* (2013). Both conference were enriched by keynote speaker, Elaine Enarson. The 3-year Gender and Disaster Taskforce followed the Men’s Conference and took gender issues in disaster and emergency management to the highest levels, with the Emergency Services Commissioner, Craig Lapsley sharing the Chair of this taskforce with WHGNE CEO, Susie Reid. It was whole-heartedly supported by its more than 20 members.

The establishment of the Gender & Disaster (GAD) Pod formalised the partnership of the three founding organisations (WHGNE, WHIN and MUDRI) with the full and energetic support of the three leaders, Susie Reid, Helen Riseborough and Professor Frank Archer. Designed to promote an understanding of the role played by gender in survivor responses to natural disaster, the GAD Pod seeks to embed these insights into emergency management practice and community understanding.

In 2015/16, national Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines were developed with federal funding, and involved 350 stakeholders. The same year, the focus shifted to the emergency management sector itself, with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) commissioning the GAD Pod to research the barriers to women taking on

fire and emergency roles. To its great credit, DELWP has enthusiastically progressed the recommendations to include more women at all levels.

Current funding from the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet has allowed the team to complete research into *The needs and experiences of LGBTI communities in emergencies in Victoria*. This project was in partnership with Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV@ARCSHS, La Trobe), and again positions gender as a key determinant of disaster experience, bringing it to the attention of emergency management leaders in Victoria.

Over almost a decade, Debra and Claire have had the support of the founding organisations as well as champions in government and community, including Carmel Flynn from Department of Health and Human Services, Macedon Ranges Shire Council and the Municipal Association of Victoria. Over this time, Debra, Claire and the team, with unstinting organisational support, developed a range of resources for emergency management practitioners and first responders, including four piloted and evaluated training packages, checklists for disaster prevention agencies, 'snapshots' and postcards, a series of short films, as well as writing journal articles and book chapters. A diverse range of co-authors has deepened our understanding and extended our reach.

It is with immense sadness that we note the death of Claire in January 2014, and honour her legacy to the emergency management field. It is a great loss to those who knew and worked with her, and to the field of gender and disaster.

Claire Zara

Researcher, journalist and published author, Claire held degrees in the arts, education and in children's literature. As an interviewer, Claire was tenacious, incisive and perceptive, and her warmth and unique sense of humour characterised every interview. She was driven by her sense of justice and fairness with a goal of system change and societal change.

In the wake of Black Saturday in 2009, Claire turned her research skills to considering how gender is central in the ways women and men experience disaster. She used this to build a growing body of knowledge and literature on gender and disaster and, critically, to advance gender-sensitive policy, practice and research in emergency management.

Her work was pivotal in a 2013 VicHealth Award for 'Family violence after natural disaster research: breaking new ground', in the category of 'Knowledge and Understanding'. The same year, Claire and her co-researcher were honoured with an invitation to present the 6th Annual Professor Frederick 'Skip' Burkle Jnr Keynote Lecture at Monash University on the topic of 'Risky Research'. In 2014, Claire travelled to Canberra with her co-workers to receive a Resilient Australia Award, sponsored by the Attorney-General's Department, for 'Gender & Disaster: Leading the Change', in the category of 'Projects of National Significance'.

Claire authored and co-authored multiple articles, book chapters, reviews and media releases on the subject of gender and disaster and presented at numerous conferences and events. International audiences were reached via inclusion in the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction's publication, *Women's Leadership in Risk Resilient Development: Good Practices and Lessons Learned*, a conference presentation in Japan, and a webinar on family violence after disaster that was broadcast to women in the Asia Pacific.

In addition to her research, Claire led the development and piloting of training tools and resources for emergency services agencies. She played a central role in the establishment of the Victorian Gender and Disaster Taskforce in January 2014.

Up until weeks before her death in early 2015, Claire was still heavily engaged in advancing initiatives for men and women in the area of gender and disaster. As a testament to her contribution, the 15th Annual Emergency Management Conference (7 July 2015) hosted the Inaugural Claire Zara Memorial Oration. The Oration was given by Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, Air Chief Marshall Sir Angus Houston and ACT Emergency Services Commissioner Dominic Lane, who all spoke of the significance of Claire's work in this field. It continues each year, with orations given by leading women who excel in their work for gender equity.