

# Notes from the Field

## Mercury Rising replay available

**The unexpected elements of a bushfire and the community's decision-making were explored in an interactive live event in September.**

The Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC teamed with South Australia's Country Fire Service and the South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources for *Mercury Rising: Extreme Bushfires*, which was hosted by RiAus in Adelaide on 23 September 2014.

Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC researchers Dr Mika Peace (Bureau of Meteorology), Associate Professor Jason Sharples (University of New South Wales) and Dr Josh Whittaker (RMIT University) examined the unexpected ways that weather, terrain and vegetation affect bushfire behaviour, as well as how communities react to extreme bushfire threat.

An audience of emergency management practitioners and the general public watched from the studio at the Science Exchange in Adelaide, with the event simultaneously streamed online, seeing hundreds of people join in the discussion via the RiAus smartphone or tablet-based audience voting system. By voting on the scenarios presented, the audience and online participants could choose the direction of the discussion in a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' style storyline.

CFS Project Manager of Partners in Bushfire Safety Peta O'Donohue said the forum helped to get the message out that when it comes to bushfires, people must expect the unexpected.

'Bushfires are dangerous and it is critical that bushfire preparation is taken seriously.

'People must take responsibility for their safety and ensure they have a Bushfire Survival Plan in place.

'It was great to have the involvement of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC researchers to hear about the science of fire weather, extreme bushfire behaviour and community behaviour,' Mrs O'Donohue said.

The full replay of the live stream is available on the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC website<sup>1</sup>.

The event was promoted widely throughout regional areas in South Australia. Many of those tuning in were watching as part of group meetings for rural fire brigades and land management offices.



Dr Paul Willis from RiAus and Dr Mika Peace from the CRC and the Bureau of Meteorology discuss extreme fire weather.



Dr Josh Whittaker explained how communities react to bushfire, and why they do or don't prepare.

<sup>1</sup> BNHCRC website. At: [www.bnhcrc.com.au/events/2014-extremefire](http://www.bnhcrc.com.au/events/2014-extremefire).