



Innovation,  
Applicability and  
Transferability

## Research Update/Outcome

### Emergency preparedness and resilience: an older person's perspective

#### *Doctoral Research Scholarship*

In 2010, Resthaven funded a doctoral research scholarship in emergency management and older people at Flinders University. Working under the supervision of Professor Paul Arbon, the successful recipient of the scholarship was **Victoria Cornell** (pictured).

#### Research aim

- To explore the meaning, for older people, of being prepared with regard to emergency events
- To explore how the lived experience of older people influences their perception of being prepared for emergency events
- To consider whether the variety of experiences that older people have had throughout their lives changed them or their understanding of being prepared.

Anecdotally, older people are considered to be under-prepared for emergency events.

To properly explore their understanding and experience of emergencies, and their feelings regarding emergency preparedness, Victoria undertook a qualitative, interpretive study.



It involved undertaking in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with eleven people aged 77 - 90 years, who all lived in their own homes.

In her thematic analysis, Victoria found that participants felt that being prepared for an emergency is an ongoing process, built over many years.

While they might not define themselves as 'being prepared', the people Victoria interviewed certainly considered themselves to be resilient; they accepted their limitations, but did not feel vulnerable and felt confident they could cope in an emergency.



## Innovation, Applicability and Transferability

*'Being prepared is a process, not a one-off activity.'*

Older people living at home should not be approached as a 'vulnerable' group; rather a group that has specific needs, and has a wealth of positive attributes in terms of knowledge, experience and sense of community.

These findings are critical in terms of how older people may be engaged in the future.

In conclusion, Victoria says,

*'By understanding what influences older people living in the community to prepare for emergency events – indeed, understanding that for this group of older participants being prepared is less important than being resilient - the sector can establish how best to assist them in their emergency preparedness planning; rather than making assumptions about what this target group wants or needs.'*

