

PROFESSOR KEVIN RONAN  
 THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPAREDNESS  
 BUSHFIRE AWARENESS WEEK SPECIAL PODCAST

**What is the importance of preparedness?**

When we're talking preparedness, we're talking preparedness for various sorts of hazardous events, and typically hazardous events are more often known as disasters of some sort or some sort of traumatic event. One of the reasons that preparedness is important probably relates to what I do as a clinical psychologist and that is that, when we look at a range of problems that human beings have, that across those different kinds of problems and as we know as a general idea that prevention, often times, is the best cure, so if we can prevent problems from happening, that oftentimes allows us then to cope more effectively when particular stressors in life arise. And the kinds of stressors that we're talking about now are various sorts of say natural hazards or those sort of events and the idea of preparedness really is around the idea of both prevention and preparedness so that being prepared, that's going to prevent problems from occurring. Plus it's also going to help equip them with various sorts of resources, both internal and external resources, that they can call on at the time of some sort of event where, not only will they know better what to do, but they will also have that sense of control that they're better able to carry out some steps to help protect them and their families. So it's about both, when we talk about preparedness from our end, we certainly believe in the idea of physical preparedness like having emergency plans for households and the like, but certainly in doing that sort of planning and various other forms of preparedness, that physical preparedness also, quite directly, has links to psychological preparedness so that when we are doing things to help us be in more control at the time of an event, that very much then helps then confer an

increased sense of control. So we want to have people feeling more in control as well as then having those steps available to them once something happens.

**This is bushfire awareness week and from all reports we are expecting another difficult bushfire season, whilst flooding and storms are predicted in some Australian states. What can people be doing now in terms of preparedness?**

I think there are a variety of things that people can do to prepare and there is a plethora of resources out there that people can draw on. And, oftentimes, when we have so many resources available to us, particularly via the web, it becomes hard to discern or to decide 'what's the best place to go to get information for myself and my family that's going to be the most credible or the most useful'. And there are quite a few very credible, very useful kinds of websites here in this country that would include state emergency management organisations – Emergency Management Australia. There's also another plan that has been developed by the Australian Red Cross. I've been in some discussions with them and, in fact, have their plan in front of me and their plan has some features that I would back. One of the features that I would back is the fact that it is really quite simple. It's a four step process that covers a range of the general kind of activities that you need to tick off to be more prepared for an event – whether it's a bushfire, whether it's flooding, whether it's a range of events that can happen here in this country. So if I were to give one good exemplar of a plan that I would



back it would be what's called the 'Emergency REDiPlan' from the Australian Red Cross. That's readily available from the Australian Red Cross website which is [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au) and the name of the plan, if you go to that website, it's over in the low right hand panel under 'Emergencies – Prepare, Respond and Recover' and what you're looking for is something called the 'Emergency REDiPlan' and in the 'Emergency

REDiPlan' they talk about four steps to prepare your household, and again, having done quite a bit of research in the preparedness area, this is a simple but also comprehensive way to make sure that you've got your major bases covered in terms of getting ready for the next bushfire season, or for floods or whatever.



Professor Kevin Ronan is Chair in Clinical Psychology in the Department of Behavioural and Social Sciences and the Institute of Health and Social Science Research, CQUniversity in Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia.

Dr Ronan, PhD (Temple University), MA (Temple University), BA (University of Minnesota) has published and researched extensively in the area of psychological preparedness, disasters, children and communities.

Click [here](#) to view a comprehensive list of research papers and articles by Professor Ronan.

