

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Responding to Catastrophies

**Professor Beverley Raphael from the Disaster, Response and Resilience Research Group is researching the responses and perceptions of people when their society is subject to large scale catastrophic events. This research is funded through grants provided through the Research Support for National Security program, which is managed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.**

'There have been numerous public health surveillance tools developed to understand how the public deal with terrorist attacks, pandemic influenza and other major disaster events' explains Professor Raphael. 'In order to determine how a population will react to a tragic event, it is important to understand various factors such as the socio-demographic, socio-economic make up of the population and community resilience. If these factors can be understood and anticipated, response agencies can better guide needed resources and recovery efforts within communities.'

Population surveys (supported with funding from Emergency Management Australia and NSW Health) from 2007 have been used to establish a baseline of information and enable a more thorough statistical analysis over time. A second population survey will be conducted in 2010 and will determine the key changes over time in risk perception and behaviour as it relates to disasters and terrorism. A combined analysis of the 2007 and 2010 data will allow for the assumptions from the initial modelling to be tested, leading to the development of a strong set of indicators to be used in the future.



If response/emergency agencies and government departments are aware of how the public will react during large scale catastrophic events, this will lead to a more effective use of resources for planning and recovery. This research may assist our ability to support people within the community and could be helpful during an emergency to mitigate the negative social, mental and physical health consequences of catastrophies.

**Project Title:** Modelling Hazard Perceptions and Response

**Funding has been set at:** \$96,600

**Contact Details:** [disasters@uws.edu.au](mailto:disasters@uws.edu.au)  
<http://www.uws.edu.au/drr>

**March 2010**