

Home sweet home at risk of bushfire

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Home is where the heart is - and reminding yourself how much you love your home might ensure you prepare it for bushfires.

PhD candidate Charis Anton, from The University of Western Australia's School of Psychology, has found that people who live in the Perth Hills or rural areas are often reluctant to cut down trees and remove [native vegetation](#) close to their house - as recommended by [emergency services](#) - because the bush is what attracted them to live in those places.

Ms Anton, who is supervised by former Western Australian Premier Professor Carmen Lawrence, interviewed 600 people in WA urban and [rural areas](#) and found that those living outside Perth usually chose to do

so and were strongly attached to their homes and environment despite being further from amenities and at risk of bushfire.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services recommends that people in bushfire-prone areas take certain actions to prepare their homes, such as clearing out gutters, installing sprinklers and shutters and clearing the zone nearest the house of vegetation.

Ms Anton said some of these actions, such as clearing gutters and raking leaves, had to be done regularly and were time-consuming, while others, such as installing sprinklers, required money. Other actions, such as clearing vegetation, took time and money but also came into conflict with people's affection for their home.

"In my survey I listed 36 actions recommended by FESA and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and found that about 62 per cent of any applicable actions had been taken," Ms Anton said. "People sometimes had unrealistic ideas about [bushfires](#), in some cases saying they would cut down a tree only if a fire was approaching."

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, some of the fastest-growing regions of the State were tree and sea-change areas such as Margaret River, where people went for a lifestyle change or to enjoy retirement. "People new to these places may not have much knowledge of bushfires," she said. "Yet bushfires are happening more often."

Ms Anton recently published a journal article on this topic and, more broadly, on the effect of attachment to place on [community participation](#). "Home is where the heart is: The effect of place of residence on place attachment and community participation", co-authored with Professor Lawrence, is in the international Journal of Environmental Psychology.

More information: Charis E. Anton, Carmen Lawrence, "Home is

where the heart is: The effect of place of residence on place attachment and community participation," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Volume 40, December 2014, Pages 451-461, ISSN 0272-4944, [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2014.10.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2014.10.007).

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