

# Speak Out Loud:

## Stories of Strength from the Southern Downs

**EPISODE:** KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

**GUEST:** Liz Fama'aea

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### SUMMARY OF EPISODE

Liz Fama'aea joins me on the podcast to share the value of being connected with your community. Liz grew up in Stanthorpe and was motivated to move back with her family a few years ago so they could reconnect and benefit from the support of the community. She has a really interesting story to share about the damage her home and property sustained during the September 2019 bushfire as well as the incredible recovery journey of the landscape and the community which was reflected in the recent Hope and Growth Photo Exhibition.

Listen to the podcast conversation to hear Liz share:

- her family connection with the Stanthorpe community on the Southern Downs
- the value of reconnecting with the community of people who had been an important part of their earlier lives
- one of the things she loves about being a photographer is bearing witness to and recording personal and community events
- the Hope and Growth Photography Exhibition was an opportunity for people to share memories and feelings about the 2019 bushfire
- her own experience of the 2019 bushfire which damaged her home and property, and the remarkable story of what saved it
- the importance of being conscious of your fire risk and preparing your property
- the actions her family has taken since the fire and their plans for ongoing fire risk mitigation
- the amazing recovery of the bush with explosions of growth and greater diversity
- witnessing the recovery of the bush helps everyone feel better
- the creatures that survived the fire and became visible when the vegetation cover had gone
- her sense of hope for bush recovery as plants flower and provide food for wildlife
- the things she's learned from being impacted by the fire including:
  - nurture your community links and actively engage with your community
  - introduce yourself to your neighbours – it can be lifesaving!
  - community can respond faster than governments in times of need

- encourage a culture of mutual support – when you ask for help, it gives others “permission” to ask for help too
- “survivor guilt” can be a barrier to people acknowledging the challenges and asking for help
- balancing personal space and community engagement is important
- the value of taking on the role of official photographer for the Hope and Growth Photography Exhibition Openings
- the exhibition was an opportunity to talk with others who had shared the bushfire experience and thank the emergency services workers
- immediate mental health support is vital during crises, but there is enormous value in community events even several years later that offer opportunities to creatively express yourself, take steps along your healing journey and celebrate the good
- getting to know the bush around you helps you understand it and prepare for fires
- the burn-off by the authorities in the nearby State Forest prior to the 2019 bushfire saved the local community
- broad-scale community fire management strategies are vital
- more education is needed to protect and support communities in fire-prone areas including the sharing of knowledge by older generations, trained personnel and Indigenous land management workers

## VIEW THE HOPE + GROWTH 2019 EXHIBITION ONLINE (PHOTOS AND POETRY)

W: <https://www.srag.org.au/hope-growth>

## RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THE PODCAST

Southern Downs Regional Council <https://www.sdrc.qld.gov.au/>

Southern Downs Disaster Management Dashboard  
<http://disasterdashboard.sdrc.qld.gov.au/>

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/>

Queensland Rural Fire Service  
<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/about-us/frontline-services/rural-fire-service>

Make your Bushfire Survival Plan <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/bushfires>

Prepare for Bushfire Season <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/prepare/bushfire/prepare-for-bushfire-season>

Know Your Risk

<https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/prepare/bushfire/know-your-risks>

Southern Downs Disaster Management Dashboard

<http://disasterdashboard.sdrc.qld.gov.au/>



**Kathryn Walton  
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The Speak Out Loud: Stories of Strength podcast has been produced by Kathryn Walton Consulting [www.kathrynwalton.com.au](http://www.kathrynwalton.com.au)



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