How new modes of storytelling engage Australians in disaster preparedness and long-term resilience

Emma Morris
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

In 2020, the ABC launched Your Planet, a season of stories exploring the environment and climate challenge. The ABC TV three-part series Big Weather (and how to survive it), presented by Craig Reucassel, is a centre piece of content.

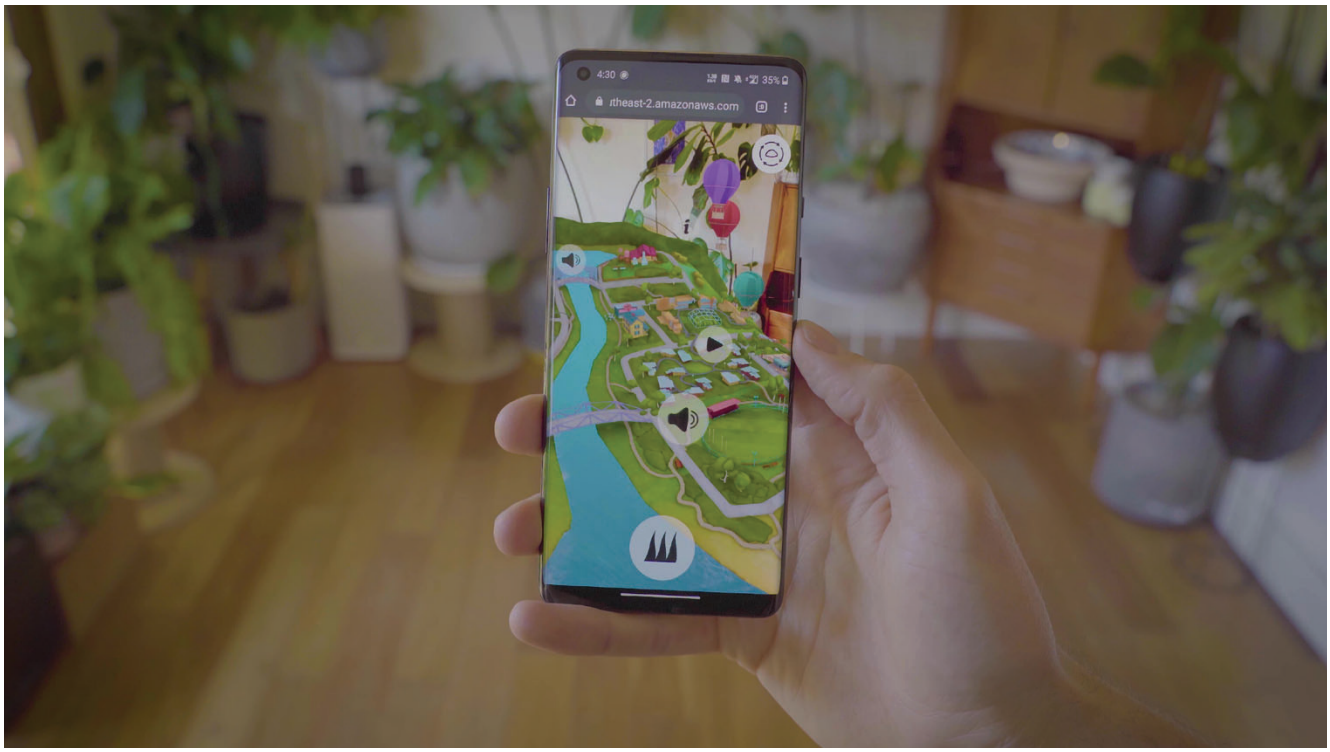
The series highlights how people can prepare for and survive frequent extreme weather events. Mt. Resilience is an augmented reality (AR) experience developed to accompany Big Weather as part of the impact strategy.

Mt. Resilience entices audiences to explore a vibrant regional town in AR via their mobile phones. Intricate 3D modelling brings the town to life as you discover how its residents survive and adapt to bushfires and severe storms.

Augmented reality is an experiential storytelling medium that layers digital content over a real-world environment. The use of webAR skyrocketed in 2020, emerging as a popular tool for marketing campaigns. WebAR makes AR experiences more accessible to mainstream audiences as the experience is delivered instantly to mobile devices through a web browser rather than via an app. Audiences can open Mt. Resilience via a live link or QR code.

Mt. Resilience illustrates complex concepts in engaging, colourful and fully immersive AR sequences. A 2018 study found that AR experiences delivered almost double

Image: Australian Broadcasting Corporation



Mt. Resilience is an augmented reality experience developed to accompany *Big Weather.*

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(1.9 times) the levels of engagement compared to their non-AR equivalent.[1] As the ABC team pitched the project at the start of 2020, Google had measured a 25-times increase in the use of WebAR.

The ABC team and XR studio PHORIA developed Mt. Resilience to combine creative and scientific approaches to experiential storytelling. The full team included CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Indigenous organisations, over 35 experts from various fields and people who had experienced extreme weather firsthand.

The ABC consulted extensively with the BOM to ensure the stylised AR experience was scientifically correct and reflective of real-world weather events and weather phenomena. Indigenous artist Blak Douglas helped the team visualise Indigenous concepts and also played Yidaki[2] on the sound track.

The overall story of Mt. Resilience and the solutions presented for individual extreme weather events were rigorously interrogated by leading experts and a core team of CSIRO scientists. Resilience is a complex problem, which was why it was imperative to include a broad range of opinions and real-world experiences in the overall narrative. Throughout the development process, workshops and consultations were held to inform the direction of the content, the design of the town and the stories to be told.

Using immersive media to tell the Mt. Resilience story was paramount to the team. The biggest challenge was tackling a nuanced story about complex topics while pioneering a relatively new form of experience in WebAR.

The team hopes the experience will be a relatable and positive conversation starter that provides insight into a world where we have learnt to adapt to extreme weather and have made the necessary changes to live with a changing climate.

End notes

1 Andrew H 2018, www.zappar.com/blog/how-augmented-reality-affects-brain/.

2 Yidaki is an Aboriginal word for didgeridoo in eastern Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

