

## Participant Information Sheet

**Project title:** The Australian National Bushfire Health and Wellbeing Survey

**Researchers:** *'The Australian National Bushfire Health and Wellbeing Survey'* is being conducted by researchers at ANU, led by Professor Iain Walker in the Research School of Psychology.

**Funding:** The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research (EPCDR) Initiative.

### General outline of the project

- **Who can participate?** We encourage all persons, whether or not affected by bushfire, to consider being involved in this research. The survey is open to all persons who:
  - a) are aged 18 years or older;
  - b) have lived in Australia since August 2019; and
  - c) can read and write English well enough to complete the survey.
- **Research description:** This research aims to improve our understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of individuals in bushfire- and smoke-affected communities across Australia. In this survey, we investigate people's experience with bushfire and bushfire-smoke and how this interacts with physical and mental health, lifestyle, and connection to community and land. Information gathered from this survey will inform the ongoing mental health needs of individuals and communities, with practical implications for directing local and national resilience strategies for bushfire recovery. This research will have broad impact by delivering outcomes to diverse communities across the nation, with potentially wide-ranging implications for responding to other forms of natural disaster.
- **Use of data and feedback:** It is intended that the outcomes of this research appear in scientific publications and be communicated by methods such as conference presentations, student research theses, media updates, or similar. A report of the research findings will be made available to the public and posted at on our project website listed below.

### Participant involvement

- **Voluntary participation and withdrawal:** Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time. When completing the online survey, your responses will automatically be saved each time you move to the next page. You can stop by closing your internet browser. If you'd like to delete answers you have submitted up to that point, click the "Exit Survey" button and select "delete my data". Once you have submitted the online survey, or returned the postal survey, you will not be able to withdraw your responses as your information is anonymous. You may select the "prefer not to say" option for any question you do not feel comfortable answering.
- **What's involved in the research?** In this survey, you will be asked questions about the thoughts, feelings and actions you experience in daily life and your experience with bushfire. You will be asked questions that may be sensitive to you, including: a) demographics, such as living arrangements and employment; b) past and recent experience with bushfire and bushfire-smoke, such as damage to home and property; c) lifestyle activities, such as exercise and alcohol use; d) physical health symptoms, such as breathing difficulties; e) mental health, including panic attacks and thoughts about harming yourself; f) injury or death of a loved one, and g) relationships with your community and land, including access to health services. While national in scope, some of these questions align to a western conceptualisation of mental health and wellbeing. Following completion of the survey you will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the survey and may be asked if you are interested to participate in follow-up research (which you can decline).

- **Location and duration:** The survey takes 25- to 40-minutes, depending on bushfire experience. The survey can be completed online by visiting the research website listed below, or you can visit this website to register for a postal version of the survey that you can complete and return. If you need a break while completing the online survey, your responses will be saved and you can return to it by using the original survey link. Once you have started the survey, please complete it within 7 days.
- **Risks:** People have unique stories, emotions and experiences with bushfire and bushfire-smoke. Some people may feel higher levels of distress when recalling their experience. It is important to remember that you may skip questions by selecting the '*prefer not to say*' option or stop the survey at any time. If you begin to feel distressed at any point, we encourage you to discontinue the survey and contact your local GP or a mental health support service to discuss your experience. Nationally available support services include: [Lifeline \(lifeline.org.au or 13 11 14\)](http://lifeline.org.au), [Lifeline's dedicated Bushfire Recovery Crisis Support line \(13 HELP or 13 43 57\)](http://lifeline.org.au), [Beyond Blue \(beyondblue.org.au or 1300 22 4636\)](http://beyondblue.org.au), and the [Suicide Call Back Service \(1300 659 467\)](http://1300659467). Links to further supports can be found here on our project website listed below.
- **Prize draw:** As a thank you for participating, people who take part in the survey can enter a prize draw to win one of four \$50 Prezzy cards. To enter the draw, people will provide their contact name and an email address as well as consent to have their names published on the study website if they win. The prize will be drawn by a study team member using random number generation when the survey is closed. Participants will be notified via email if they have won. Name and email details for the prize draw will not be linked in any way to survey data. Entering the prize draw is optional. The conditions of the prize draw comply with the legislation governing the operation of exempt lotteries in the ACT. See: [https://www.gamblingandracetracing.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/790251/Exempt-Lotteries-Information-and-Conditions.pdf](https://www.gamblingandracetracing.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/790251/Exempt-Lotteries-Information-and-Conditions.pdf)
- The prize draw is not open to participants who are participating via Sona for course credit, or to those who are participating via an online Qualtrics survey panel for an alternative incentive offered by Qualtrics.
- **Benefits:** This research aims to further our understanding of the mental health impacts of bushfire on individuals and their communities. The knowledge gained from this research will inform the ongoing mental health needs of a diverse range of individuals and communities across Australia following bushfire disaster. It will also inform the needs of individuals to prepare mentally and physically for future risks and to promote long-term mental well-being following bushfire disaster. It is intended that these outcomes be of practical use to health professionals, communities and policy makers to shape local and national strategies for bushfire resilience and recovery.
- **Participants recruited via Sona only:** Eligible students from the Research School of Psychology at ANU can participate in the survey for course credit to the value of 0.5. The deadline for completion of this survey for course credit is 1 April, 2020. Credits will be assigned within 48 hours of completing the survey. To participate in the survey for course credit, students must access the survey via Sona at [anupsych.sona-systems.com](http://anupsych.sona-systems.com). You may choose to be contacted about opportunities to participate in future research but course credits may not be available for future participation.
- **Participants recruited via Qualtrics only:** Participants who are invited to participate in the survey via their membership to a Qualtrics online panel will be offered an incentive to complete the survey. The type and value of the incentive will be based on membership profile and will take into account the length of the survey. Details about the incentive and when it will be provided to you are included in your survey invitation.

- Please note that, given your membership to the Qualtrics online research panel, you may be contacted to participate in follow-up research. It is your choice whether you participate in future research and your decision regarding future research will not affect your receipt of an incentive for participating in the current survey. Qualtrics uses a unique code to match participants for an invitation to future research. Researchers can see this code but are unable to identify participants.
- Qualtrics provides a secure, confidential service to collect survey responses from an online research panel, on behalf of the researchers. Once data collection that is managed by Qualtrics is complete to the researchers' satisfaction (estimated up to 1 month), Qualtrics will hand over ownership of the dataset to the researchers listed on the ethics application, and the following confidentiality and storage information will apply. Further security information can be found on the Qualtrics website: <https://www.qualtrics.com/security-statement/>

## Confidentiality

**Your responses:** Your confidentiality will be protected as far as the law allows. This includes in accordance with The ANU Privacy Policy (ANUP\_010007) and the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). Your responses will be uniquely coded (identifying details removed) and only made available to the research team. New team members will be approved by an ethics board and limited to conducting research activities that are consistent with the original aims of this survey. The collected data will be reported in group format only and therefore individual data will not be able to be identified.

**Contact details:** If you choose to participate in follow-up studies, only then will you be asked to provide your contact details (first name and phone number). These details will be coded and stored separately to your survey responses. Your details will only be used to schedule follow-up research, as agreed at the time, and will not be used for any other purpose. Once you have completed your participation or have withdrawn from the research, your details will be destroyed.

## Data Storage

**Online survey:** Data will be collected online using the Qualtrics platform, then extracted and stored on a secure server at the ANU. The data will only be accessible to the approved research team. Data storage is required for at least 5 years following all publications arising from the work. After this, deidentified data will be archived indefinitely on the Australia Data Archive ([www.ada.edu.au](http://www.ada.edu.au)) (accessible to the broader research community for re-use).

**Postal survey:** Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in: Room 134, Building 39, Research School of Psychology. Only researchers working on the project will have access to the room.

## Privacy notice

In collecting your personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at [https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP\\_010007](https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_010007) and it contains information about how a person can: Access or seek correction to their personal information, complain about breach of an Australian Privacy Principle, or how ANU handles complaints.

## Questions or concerns

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the research team on the contact details below. This research has been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Protocol number 2020/591). If you have concerns or complaints about this research or its conduct, please

email The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee ([human.ethics.officer@anu.edu](mailto:human.ethics.officer@anu.edu)), or call +61 2 6125 3427.

### Contact Details

Dr Emily Macleod, Research School of Psychology, The Australian National University

Website: [psychology.anu.edu.au/research/projects/bushfire-study](http://psychology.anu.edu.au/research/projects/bushfire-study)

Email: [bushfirestudy@anu.edu.au](mailto:bushfirestudy@anu.edu.au)

Phone: +61 2 6125 1664

Please call and leave a message with your best contact number and a team member will get back to you as soon as possible.