

## Participant Information Sheet - Effects of bushfire smoke on health and wellbeing of the ACT and surrounding community

### Researcher:

My name is Dr Rachael Rodney Harris and I am a researcher at the Research School of Population Health at the Australian National University (ANU). Along with Professor Iain Walker from the School of Psychology, Dr Ashwin Swaminathan from the ANU Medical School and other colleagues at the ANU we are conducting this study to understand how residents of the ACT region have been affected by the recent period of bushfire smoke related air pollution and what can be done to minimise this impact in the future. This study also aims to capture a mental health snapshot of the ACT community.

### General Outline of the Project:

- **Description and Methodology:** This project invites you, as a resident of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) or surrounding region, to participate in an online survey about how the recent period of bushfire smoke has affected your physical and mental health, behaviours and lifestyle.
- **Participants:** All adults over 18 years living in the ACT and surrounding region are eligible to participate.
- **Use of Data and Feedback:** The information we collect will help us to understand the effects of prolonged bushfire smoke on the health and lifestyle of the community. After the survey has closed, general results will be shared through news articles or media releases. Aggregated/group results may also be included in a brief for policy makers and health professionals. Results may also be published in scientific journals and presented at conferences/seminars. A summary of the outcomes of this study will be published on the ANU RSPH website (<http://rsph.anu.edu.au>).
- **Project Funding:** This project has been funded by the Australian National University College of Health and Medicine. Participation in this study will not cost participants anything and participants will not be paid for their involvement.

### Participant Involvement:

- **Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal:** Participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose not to take part, or withdraw from the research at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence, any time up until you submit your survey response. You may also decline to answer any question within the study. After your survey has been submitted, if you chose to provide your email address, you may contact us to have this deleted from our records. Anonymous survey responses will be retained.
- **What does participation in the research entail?** Participating in this study will involve completing an online survey about your health and behaviours during the recent period of bushfire smoke in the ACT region. We will also ask you some questions about your age and medical history so we can determine who in the community may need extra support during these types of events in the future.
- **Location and Duration:** This survey will be available to complete online and takes most people about 20-25 minutes to complete. In places, you have the option to give us more information that you think may help us understand your experiences. Depending on the level of detail you provide, it may take you a bit longer to complete the full survey. You cannot come back to your entry later so the survey should be completed in one attempt. At the end of the survey we will give you the option to receive information about other studies that may follow on from, or complement the current study. You are not obliged to participate in any future studies, but if you indicate your interest, you may be invited to participate in future

studies, you can decide at that time if you would like to participate or not. This will not influence your participation in the current study in any way.

- **Risks:** There are minimal risks to you from participating in this study, however talking about your mental health or exposure to bushfire may contribute to uncomfortable feelings e.g., feeling distressed or sad. If this occurs, you can seek support from your GP or mental health professional, a support person or contact Lifeline or Beyond Blue (contact information is provided on the bottom of this information sheet).
- **Benefits:** There will be no direct benefits to you as a result of your participation in this study. However, your participation will give us important information about the impact of bushfire smoke on health and wellbeing of residents of the ACT region. We aim to use the findings from this study to inform how health information and resources are made available in future events.

#### **Confidentiality:**

- **Confidentiality:** Each researcher in this study will maintain strict confidentiality regarding all information obtained from participants. To maintain confidentiality, participants will be assigned a unique identification number which will be used to label all resulting data and identify participants across the study. Access to the data you provide will be restricted to the research team. No individual will be identified in the publication or presentation of results from this study.

#### **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 a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint.

#### **Data Storage:**

- **Where:** All information will be de-identified using a unique identification number and stored electronically on a password-protected server at the Australian National University.
- **How long:** Participant data will be stored for at least five years after any publication of this research, or 5 years after the publication of any follow-on research projects.
- **Handling of Data Following the Required Storage Period:** After the 5 year period, if data is not being used for follow on research projects it will be archived at ANU.

#### **Queries and Concerns:**

- **Contact Details for More Information:** If you have queries or questions about this research you can contact the study team via email: ([bushfiresurvey@anu.edu.au](mailto:bushfiresurvey@anu.edu.au)) or phone (+612 6125 6150).
- **Contact Details if in Distress:** If you would like support, please contact:

Lifeline Australia	Beyond Blue
13 11 14	1300 22 4636
Website: <a href="https://www.lifeline.org.au/">https://www.lifeline.org.au/</a>	Website: <a href="https://www.beyondblue.org.au/">https://www.beyondblue.org.au/</a>

#### **Ethics Committee Clearance:**

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol 2020/029). If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager  
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee  
Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427  
Email: [Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au](mailto:Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au)