



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSES TO THE 2019-20 BUSHFIRES IN NSW

This is an invitation to participate in an interview conducted by the Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires at the University of Wollongong. The interview is part of a research project that explores community preparedness and responses to the 2019-20 bushfires in NSW.

METHODS AND DEMANDS ON PARTICIPANTS

If you choose to participate in a semi-structured interview (more like a focused conversation), an interview will be scheduled at a time and date that is convenient to you. Due to measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, interviews will be conducted via telephone or an internet platform such as Skype or Zoom (whichever you prefer). The interview will focus on community preparedness and responses to the 2019-20 bushfires in NSW. Examples of possible interview questions include: 'How did you first find out about the fire?', 'What did you do during the fire?' and 'How did the fire affect you and your family or household?'

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour and, with your permission, will be audio recorded and transcribed. Handwritten notes can be taken if you would prefer not to be audio recorded. The privacy of interview participants is assured (personal details such as names and addresses will never be disclosed in any published material).

POSSIBLE RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES

Reliving a bushfire experience can be emotionally distressing. You will not be pressured for details you feel uncomfortable talking about. Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation from the study at any time and withdraw any data have provided to that point. Withdrawal from the research will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong or the NSW Rural Fire Service. Please notify any of the researchers listed at the end of the Participant Information Sheet if you would like to withdraw from the study.

While discussion of sensitive topics is not anticipated, recollecting aspects of an emergency can be emotionally distressing. Should you require emotional support, Lifeline Australia provides 24 hours a day telephone crisis support during and after natural disasters: call 13 11 14 or see <https://www.lifeline.org.au/Get-Help/Facts---Information/Recovering-after-a-natural-disaster/>

FUNDING AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

This study is funded by the Bushfire & Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre and the NSW Rural Fire Service. Findings will be used to inform strategies to improve community preparedness and responses to bushfires. Findings from the study will be communicated to the NSW Rural Fire Service via a written report and will be published in scholarly publications (e.g. journals, conference proceedings). Reports and other publications will be publicly accessible at www.bnhcrc.com.au. *Interview participants are assured confidentiality* (personal details, such as names and addresses, will not be disclosed).

ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS

This study has been reviewed by the UOW Human Research Ethics Committee (ref. 2019/471). If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research is or has been conducted, you may contact the UOW Ethics Officer on +61 (02) 4221 3386 or via e-mail: rso-ethics@uow.edu.au

Thank you for your interest in this study. Please email bushfire-research@uow.edu.au or contact Joshua Whittaker on 0409 007 842 if you would like to arrange an interview, or if you have any further questions.

Dr Joshua Whittaker
Research Fellow
Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires
University of Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia
Ph: +61 (02) 4298 1164 / Mob: 0409 007 842 / Email: wjoshua@uow.edu.au

Dr Katharine Haynes
Research Fellow
Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires
University of Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia
Ph: +61 (02) 4221 3154 / Email: khaynes@uow.edu.au

Ms Carrie Wilkinson
Research Assistant
Centre for Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires
University of Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia
Email: carriew@uow.edu.au