

# CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR ERP 30 – SAFER TOGETHER JOINT RESEARCH STRATEGY

Proposals due **9 December 2020** to [office@bnhrc.com.au](mailto:office@bnhrc.com.au)

## INTRODUCTION

The Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (hereafter the CRC), in conjunction with our client, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Victoria) (DELWP) is seeking expressions of interest for the following project.

### **Safer Together Joint Research Strategy**

## PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Clearly articulate the knowledge and evidence gaps that pose a risk to the delivery of sector obligations in bushfire management
2. Develop a Safer Together Joint Research Strategy that:
  - a. Includes recommendations for prioritised research that will address these evidence gaps over the short, medium and long term (i.e. 1-, 3- and 10-year horizons)
  - b. Includes recommendations on options and timelines to deliver the research priorities
  - c. supports decision making for research investment budget bids, collaboration, and leverage of other research project/programs or initiatives that can resource or support the delivery of the Strategy's research recommendations.

## CONTEXT

### *Safer Together 2015-2019*

1. In November 2015, the Victorian Government released the Safer Together policy platform, setting out the future direction for bushfire management in Victoria. Safer Together is part of broader government reform to Victoria's emergency management sector and sees land and fire management agencies working together, in partnership with local communities to combine fire expertise with local knowledge.
2. A key pillar to Safer Together is science data and technology. The policy specifically states "we use the latest science, data and technology to make sure our actions are targeted at reducing bushfire risk and protecting those things we care about. It also notes under "what we do:" "Commission bushfire science research" (p. 9), "What we will do: continue to invest in new science to address knowledge gaps and reduce uncertainties in our bushfire modelling." (p. 17) and "Risk is dynamic and constantly shifting, so we need to keep building on our evidence base. We will continue our

investment in science, and in partnership with research institutions, to build knowledge of the relationship between fire and the environment and to better manage risk.” (p. 18)

3. In May 2017 \$23m was announced to fund a two-year Safer Together program. In part these funds were allocated to ensuring that Victoria’s significant investment in bushfire preparedness and response is supported by a systematic and ongoing investment in developing scientific evidence.
4. The implementation of Safer Together is being improved by applying a systematic approach to understanding what some of the key sector knowledge gaps are, the resulting risks they may pose to the achievement of Safer Together objectives, and determining how these risks can be mitigated by specific pieces of research.
5. Through being able to clearly articulate what existing research delivers, and where the priority knowledge gaps occur, the sector will be able to respond quickly and consistently in answering questions about resource requirements, in accessing external, collaborative or partnership opportunities, or in leveraging off existing programs.

## BACKGROUND

1. This project aims to develop the Safer Together Joint Research Strategy and will emphasise a consultative and collaborative approach, building on existing work by fire agencies, stakeholder consultation and strategic thinking.
2. Safer Together (ST) is Victoria’s [policy](#) approach to reducing the risks of bushfire across the state. The program involves fire and land agencies working together with communities, combining in-depth local knowledge with the latest science and technology to reduce bushfire risk on both public and private land. There are four key priorities:
  - a. Community first
  - b. Land and fire agencies working together
  - c. Measuring success
  - d. Better knowledge = better decisions.
3. Effectively managing bushfire risk requires science-based knowledge and evidence to inform the development and implementation of efficient and effective management. There are a range of evidence gaps for fire management agencies in managing risk across multiple fields, including but not limited to:
  - a. fire behaviour and prediction
  - b. climate change
  - c. fuel hazard reduction practices
  - d. operational safety and effectiveness
  - e. communicating risk
  - f. building resilient communities.
4. Many of these gaps can likely be mitigated or resolved through science-based research, however this necessitates a transparent and robust identification process, undertaken across the wider emergency management sector.
5. Costs and benefits also need to be considered to prioritise gaps, as resource constraints mean they cannot be addressed immediately in their entirety.

6. This project aligns to the following short-term outcomes identified in the Safer Together Better Knowledge program logic:
  - a. Better alignment of research and knowledge products with strategic needs.
  - b. More cost-effective investment in research, knowledge products and knowledge sharing.
7. This project also addresses the following activity/output in the Safer Together Better Knowledge program logic:
  - a. Develop and establish a process to identify and prioritise knowledge needs.
8. The ST Research Modelling and Knowledge Application (RMKA) Partnership Group will provide the governance for this project.

Auxiliary Documents

9. Available documents for the EOI include:
  - a. [Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning \(DELWP\) Science Statement](#)
  - b. DELWP Bushfire Science Strategy 2013-17 (Attachment 2)
  - c. DELWP Bushfires and Knowledge: FFRG Science Catalogue 2019-20 (Attachment 3).
10. On appointment, the consultant will also be provided with the following documents:
  - d. DELWP Forest and Fire Science Strategy 2019-24 (in draft)
  - e. DELWP Research Investment Guide 2018
  - f. Country Fire Authority (CFA) Strategic Research Plan (in development).

SCOPE	
<i>INCLUSIONS</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct a review of relevant documents to understand the current research context of Victorian fire agencies. This includes science catalogues, research management guides and science strategies (or drafts) from DELWP, Parks Victoria (PV), the CFA, Forest &amp; Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) and Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV).</li> <li>2. Develop a project plan (in consultation with the Project team, for endorsement by the ST RMKA Partnership Group) that includes:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A consultation plan outlining proposed engagement (one-on-one and small group workshops) with identified stakeholders.</li> <li>2. A research prioritisation process that includes an assessment of anticipated costs and benefits, together with consideration of feasibility to address knowledge gaps and over what timeframe. The plan will:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Be inclusive of all representative organisations.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Identify knowledge gaps across thematic areas that could be addressed by science- based research.</li> <li>c. Elicit information about the relative risk of each knowledge gap to deliver Safer Together priorities.</li> <li>d. Articulate the science development that could be used to address the knowledge gap in sufficient detail to provide clear advice on investment and priority.</li> </ul> <p><i>Please note:</i> of particular importance is understanding knowledge gaps of field practitioners across all agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Deliver the consultation, and any other cited process, against the approved consultation plan and collate findings.</li> <li>4. Deliver a quality-assured final report (the “<i>Safer Together Joint Research Strategy</i>”) that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A clear articulation of the knowledge and evidence gaps that pose a risk to the delivery of sector obligations in bushfire management.</li> <li>b. Recommendations for prioritised research that will address these evidence gaps over the short, medium and long term (i.e., 1, 3 and 10-year horizons), including a brief outline of the methodologies to be used for respective work streams.</li> <li>c. Recommendations on options and timelines to deliver the research priorities within the framework of existing sector policy and strategy guidelines.</li> <li>d. Compilation of evidence gathered through consultation around non-research knowledge needs.</li> <li>e. An overview and brief evaluation of the project process, including recommendations for improvement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Provision of up to five presentations on the final project outcomes (format and content to be defined by the Project Managers) and recommendations to the CFA, DELWP, PV and other key sector partners and groups that may be able to use and/or facilitate the research.</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXCLUSIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultation with the wider research sector on recommended project ideas or intent</li> <li>2. Delivery of identified research priorities</li> <li>3. A whole of fire sector research strategy (i.e. the strategy is restricted to Safer Together areas of activity and participant agencies)</li> </ul>

## PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

### Key Steps

In developing the project proposal to be submitted in response to this Call for Expression of interest researchers should be mindful of the following project requirements.

Key Steps	Lead	Due Date
1. Project planning to ensure adequate delivery of the project and strategy, on time and to budget including a consultation plan with safer together key stakeholders.	Researcher	January 2021
2. Implementation of the consultation process (including one-on-one meetings and small group workshops) and research prioritisation process to ensure relevant information is captured.	Researcher	March 2021
3. Development of the draft and final Joint Research Strategy, to ensure prioritised investment in research is used to alleviate knowledge gaps and affect process improvements.	Researcher	May 2021
4. Presentation of the Joint Research Strategy to key stakeholders, to ensure it supports better decision making on research investments.	Researcher	31 May 2021

In your application, please describe the method you will undertake to deliver the key steps above.

### Expected Outputs

1. Project plan – endorsed by the Project team that includes a:
  - a. consultation plan, including identification of subject matter experts and other key stakeholders.
  - b. research prioritisation process.
2. Summary report of consultation activities undertaken, and research themes and knowledge gaps identified
3. Draft and final quality-assured Safer Together Joint Research Strategy
4. Presentations (up to five) of the Joint Research Strategy to key stakeholders, including sector partners and groups that may be able to use and/or facilitate the research

## Quality Control

### Final report and other project outputs

It is the expectation of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and our client DELWP that the material delivered as part of this project will meet the highest scientific standards and will be suitable for internal and external distribution.

It is a requirement of this project that the final report (and any supporting material) be submitted to the Project Control Board's satisfaction. To ensure the final report meets this expectation, it will be subject to up to two rounds of review (with a minimum of two weeks for each review) by DELWP. Research organisations are required to ensure an internal peer review process is undertaken prior to the draft final report being submitted for DELWP consideration.

Before the final report is submitted to the Project Control Board for approval it must also have been:

- Through an independent peer reviewer approved by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC Project Manager
- Professionally proof read and copy edited.

These steps must be arranged by the research organisation costed as part of project budget and completed within the project timeframe.

**Reports that have not been independently peer reviewed, and professionally proof read and copy edited will not be considered final.** A copy of the independent peer review and the researcher response to any comments must be provided to the CRC.

### Communication

To further assist with the quality assurance it is expected that:

- The project team will utilise a consultative approach when developing the overall framework and data management processes/criteria, and will demonstrate this by documenting engagement activities within the relevant reports. This will involve seeking input from DELWP subject matter experts to ensure development of a framework and processes that are fit for purpose.
- The research team leader will give periodic presentations (e.g. annually) to key stakeholder groups to gain critical feedback on project milestones.

Any further quality control processes that are required for this piece of work, as well as key success measures, will be agreed with the DELWP Research Lead as part of the planning process.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PROCESSES

### **Contractual Arrangements**

This project is being delivered under an Agreement in place between the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre and the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP) in the State of Victoria. Under this Agreement the CRC is responsible for the delivery of a number of bushfire, ecological and compliance related research projects. The contract put in place between the CRC and the research organisation selected to undertake this work will reflect the terms of the Agreement between DELWP and the CRC.

A draft copy of the contract between the CRC and the successful research organisation is provided with this document. This contract should be reviewed as part of the EOI process. This is a standard agreement, and any changes will be at the sole discretion of the CRC. If you would like to request amendments to any of the terms and conditions set out in the proposed contract, details of the proposed changes and the reason the changes are requested must be included with the submitted response. In considering this contract and proposing changes, please note the CRC has been advised by DELWP that (i) changes to provisions relating to the ownership of Intellectual Property will only be varied to take account of substantial in-kind contribution from the successful research organisation/s, and (ii) no changes can be made to the publications approvals processes.

### **Project Governance**

Each project is carried out under the supervision of a Project Control Board (PCB) and in accordance with the governance arrangements agreed between CRC and DELWP.

While the contractual relationship for the delivery of this project will be between the research organisation and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, there will also be a strong relationship between the research team and DELWP staff. Communication is an important element of the success of this project and Researchers will be required to maintain strong links with both the DELWP Research Lead and the CRC Project Manager throughout the project.

A governance plan has been prepared which shows the roles and responsibilities of each of the participants. The successful research team will be required to comply with the processes and expectations as set out in that document.

### **Project Planning**

The project overview included in this document describes the way the DELWP subject matter experts believe the project can most successfully be undertaken. Alternative approaches can be considered. Any alternative approaches must ensure the delivery of the required outputs including any intermediate outputs identified in this document.

Following acceptance of a project proposal the successful research organisation must prepare a detailed project plan and risk treatment plan using the DELWP template. This plan must be approved by the DELWP Research Lead and will become an attachment to the contract. The project plan must be approved within three months of the notification of the acceptance of the project proposal.

## Reporting

The successful research organisation will be required to make at least one presentation (and possibly two) annually to the Project Control Board or other nominated DELWP group during the life of the project.

Research organisations will also be required to:

- provide a poster for the annual AFAC/BNHCRC conferences;
- provide a fact sheet within three months of signing the contract between the research organisation and CRC (DELWP/Safer Together template);
- provide detailed progress reports on a quarterly basis; and
- contribute to the Project Evaluation Report.

Dates for submitting Quarterly Progress Reports:

Period covered	Report required
1 July to 30 September	24 October
1 October to 31 December	24 January following calendar year
1 January to 31 March	24 April
1 April to 30 June	24 July

## SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

### Submission Requirements

Research teams responding to this Call for Expression of Interest are required to submit their response, including:

- A draft project proposal (4-6 pages) clearly addressing the requirements of the specifications set out in this document. Proposals must include achievable timelines, which will be used to monitor progress. A statement of capability demonstrating the ability of the proposed project team to undertake the work. This statement of capability should include the names and experience of key team members and their proposed contribution to the project (The capability statement should not exceed 4 pages).
- Project budget including details of any in kind contribution from the research organisation. A statement of acceptance of the terms and conditions of the proposed contractual arrangements. If such arrangements are not acceptable details of any changes must be included with the submitted response.

### Additional information

- Research bids from a consortium of research organisations with expertise in the relevant fields are specifically encouraged.
- Attached is a draft contract which we ask your organisation to review. In your response to the EOI you should identify any items in this contract that will require attention

/amendment should your organisation be selected to undertake this piece of work. This contract is based on the Head Agreement between DELWP and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and as such there is very limited scope to make changes to the draft contract.

**The total maximum budget for this project is \$50,000 (excl. GST) and all work must be completed by 31 May 2021.**

Any research proposal once submitted will be treated as commercial in confidence. Applications, must be submitted to: [office@bnhcrc.com.au](mailto:office@bnhcrc.com.au) by 9 December 2020.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

After the closing date the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC along with the DELWP Research Lead will review proposals against the evaluation criteria below and make a recommendation to the State's representative on the most appropriate organisation to undertake this work. The evaluation criteria provide an indication of those matters that should be included in the project proposal and associated documentation – details are provided in the table below.

You will be advised by **December 2020** if your application has been accepted and it is expected work on the project will commence upon signing of the contract.

The decision of the BNHCRC and our client DELWP will be final. The BNHCRC reserves the right not to offer the work, or only allocate a proportion of the available funding, if a proposal does not meet the client's needs. The Project Control Board reserves the right to invite any other specific researchers as it sees fit to submit proposals before or after the closing date.

Evaluation Criterion	% weighting
<b>Research Capability</b> The capacity and capability to deliver an excellent applied research project in a Victorian environment.	15
<b>Project Proposal</b> A clear demonstration that the research team has an understanding of the project scope through the proposed research approach  The proposal must also include an indicative timetable of work and interim milestones/project outputs as described in this document  <b>Quality Control</b> Clear documentation of quality control processes including proposed internal and external reviewers. Identification of copy editors and proof readers.	50
<b>Industry Engagement</b> Strong Track record of industry engagement with the ability to support and influence bushfire management in Victoria through interaction with land and fire agency personnel  <b>Victorian Focus</b> Ability to undertake research in Victorian environments individually and/or in cooperation with land and fire managers	15
<b>Value for Money</b> Delivery of required outcome within available budget along with the ability to leverage the funds provided with in-kind contributions or supplementary opportunities.  The evaluation team will consider the membership of the project team and the proposed roles and time commitment.	20

## ATTACHMENTS

2. *DELWP Bushfire Science Strategy 2013-17*
3. *DELWP Bushfires and Knowledge: FFRG Science Catalogue 2019-20*
4. Draft Contract including Project Plan and Evaluation Report Template
5. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC /DELWP Governance Arrangements
6. Final Report Template
7. Quarterly Reporting Template.