Expressions of Interest Open for a New Research Project

Dear Researchers,

The Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) funds a suite of projects through its Tactical Research Fund (TRF). The TRF provides an avenue of funding for short term research projects that fill a need for CRC partner agencies. The CRC is seeking Expressions of Interest (EoI) for one such project.

**Maintaining Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing for Young Adult Emergency Service Volunteers**

Details of this project and instructions on the requirements of the EOI are outlined in the attached documents. Responses are required by **11:59pm 3 February 2020** and a decision on preferred supplier will be made shortly thereafter.

The Call for Expression of Interest will be placed on our web page under the heading ‘Opportunities’. In the event of a consortium approach being adopted we expect that one of the parties would be nominated as the lead research organisation and have overall responsibility for project delivery.

Attached are the CRC’s standard Terms and Conditions, 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 / amendments should your organisation be selected to undertake this piece of work. These Terms and Conditions are based on the CRC’s obligations to deliver research according to our agreement with the Commonwealth of Australia.

I look forward to seeing your responses to this Call for EOI and look forward to working with you on the project in the coming months.

If you have any questions regarding this Call for EOI, please contact David Boxshall (david.boxshall@bnhcrc.com.au).

A copy of this Call for EOI has also been placed on the CRC website and any interested parties are welcome to put forward a proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Dr John Bates
Research Director
Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC
Attachments

1. Call for expression of interest
2. CRC Terms and Conditions
Project: Maintaining Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing for Young Adult Emergency Service Volunteers

Background

The aim of this project is to:

- understand the current state of knowledge and practice in minimising the psychological impacts of potentially traumatising events
- provide a framework and guidance for fire and emergency services agencies that help them support positive mental health and wellbeing of early career volunteers, with a particular focus on volunteers aged 16-25.

In 2018, Bushfire and Natural Hazards (CRC), in partnership with BeyondBlue released the ‘Answering the Call’ report – providing a national dataset that explored the mental health of Australia’s police, fire and emergency services agencies. Key findings from the study\(^1,2,3\) are that:

- One in three employees experience high or very high psychological distress, compared to just over one in eight of all Australian adults.
- Almost two in five employees and one in three volunteers had been diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point, compared to one in five of all Australian adults.
- Employees and volunteers are more than twice as likely to report having had suicidal thoughts than adults in the general population and are more than three times more likely to have a suicide plan, despite comparable rates of suicide attempts.
- Employees who had worked more than 10 years were almost twice as likely to experience psychological distress and were six times more likely to experience symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Research Question

What can be done at an individual, local and organisation-wide level to minimise the short and long-term impacts of potentially traumatising events, and promote good mental health and wellbeing for young adult (16-25 year old) volunteers in emergency service organisations?

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Research Overview

This project has three parts.

Part 1 is focused on understanding what is already known from the research literature that can provide guidance or insights into the mental health of young adults, including:

- responses to potentially traumatising events by young adults,
- potential impacts of volunteering in emergency service activities on the mental health and well-being of young adult volunteers,
- reducing the impacts of potentially traumatising events,
- protective actions for maintaining good mental health and well-being in individuals, groups and organisations,
- trauma management strategies,
- engaging families and friends in the management of mental health and well-being,
- signs, symptoms and triggers of trauma-related mental health impacts in young adults,
- other relevant factors as agreed in the development of the project plan

Part 2 focuses on understanding what is already being undertaken by emergency service organisations within Australia, and internationally (through published literature), to provide mental health and well-being support that includes:

- safe environments
- safe practices
- effective interventions
- monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the work being done.

Part 3 is expected to use the knowledge from Parts 1 & 2 to develop a framework and guidance for promoting and supporting good mental health and well-being in young adult volunteers that will:

- Assist agencies to determine whether a volunteer is psychologically ready to attend, or assist in operational response activities
- Assist agencies to review (and if required enhance) the mental health and well-being programs that they provide to their volunteers
- Identify protective strategies that minimise the impact of potentially traumatising events and improve coping skills of individuals and groups, including during deployments when individuals may be away from home
- Provide guidance on how to identify when a young adult is displaying signs, symptoms and triggers of a trauma-related mental health condition
- Allow agencies to develop and make alternative roles available for young adult volunteers if they are not able to respond to an incident or be a part of an Incident Management Team
- Allow agencies to support young adult volunteers and their families through the recovery process
- Build a mental health and well-being framework that is appropriate for young adult (16 – 25 year old) emergency services volunteers
The research is intended to:

1. Develop and document an evidence base that describes the current research and clinical knowledge on minimising the psychological impact of potentially traumatising events on 16 - 25 year olds, particularly as it applies to emergency services volunteers (a literature review).

2. Document Australian (from AFAC member agencies) and international (where published) mental health and well-being programs; and report on understanding of safe environments, practices and effective interventions (desktop review, with input from AFAC member agencies).

3. Develop a framework with guidance information and materials that will support the development and implementation of good mental health practices in 16 – 25 year old volunteers.

Proposed Research Program

Part 1: Literature Review: Current knowledge on minimising psychological impact in 16-25 year-olds

Undertake a literature review that:

- Builds from data in ‘Answering the Call’
- Provides an understanding and interpretation of current clinical and population data on the mental health of 16 - 25 year olds
- Understands and explains the forms of potentially traumatising events that young adult volunteers can be exposed to and how these exposures may impact their psychological health and well-being
- Can serve as a basis for identifying approaches that can be used by AFAC member agencies
- Where relevant, will include international evidence
- Where relevant, will develop exemplar case studies (reflecting both good and poor practices)

Part 2. Safe environments, practices and effective interventions (environmental scan with AFAC [and other] agencies)

Work with the fire and emergency services organisations supporting this research, to

- Understand programs and approaches being used to minimise psychological impact on young volunteers
- Understand features of safe environments
- Understand practices that create and maintain safe environments
- Understand programs that have been demonstrated to positively support young adult volunteers recovering from trauma
- Identify gaps in clinical research and in available programs
- Where feasible, use case studies to illustrate environments, practices and interventions
Part 3. Framework and guidance (implementation and practice support)

Prepare a suite of information that can be used by fire and emergency services organisations to develop new and enhance existing approaches to good mental health well-being, and implementation and evaluation of these approaches:

- Develop and undertake an initial desktop assessment (with selected AFAC agencies) of a framework that supports the development and maintenance of positive mental health for young people in operational roles in emergency service agencies
- Identify signs and symptoms common in young people at risk of negative psychological impacts, and approaches to identifying and managing at-risk individuals and groups
- Develop and evaluate (with relevant AFAC group) a monitoring and evaluation framework for assessing the effectiveness of implementation of the framework
- Develop plain English guide to safe and healthy psychological mental health in workplaces for young people

Supporting organisations

The research project is supported by emergency service organisations from across Australia who engage, or have oversight of volunteers who are exposed to potentially traumatising events as part of their operational roles:

- ACT Emergency Services Agency
- Council of Australian Volunteer Fire Associations
- Country Fire Authority, Victoria
- Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA
- Fire and Emergency New Zealand
- Fire and Rescue NSW
- National SES Volunteers Association
- Northern Territory Emergency Service
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- NSW State Emergency Service
- Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
- South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SAFECOM)
- Tasmania Fire Service
- Victoria State Emergency Service

Intended study population

The research project is intended to study 16 - 25 year old emergency services volunteers, and to be relevant to paid emergency service employees of the same age.

In this document, the term ‘young adult’ is defined as people aged 16 – 25 years of age.

Funding

This project will be funded through the CRC’s Tactical Research Fund. The CRC will contribute a maximum of $100,000 (ex-GST) to the project.
Financial and in-kind contributions from external parties will be looked on favorably by the CRC’s Tactical Research Fund proposal review committee.

**Project Timeline**

As per Tactical Research Fund guidelines, the project has a maximum timeline of 12 months. The project should be scheduled to commence in February 2020.

**Quality Control & Reporting**

**Final report and other project reports for external dissemination**

It is the expectation of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC that the material delivered as part of this project will meet the highest scientific standards and will be suitable for publication on the CRC website.

It is a requirement of the project, that reports (and any supporting material) are submitted to the satisfaction of the CRC. To ensure all reports meet the CRC’s expectations, they will be subject to CRC review. Research organisations are required to ensure an internal peer review process is undertaken and end-user approval has been sought prior to any draft report submissions to the CRC.

Before the final report is submitted to the CRC 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 and costed as part of the 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.

**Milestone Submission**

The project team must report all milestone deliverables into the CRC’s Project Management System. This will include sufficient justification and end-user (Sponsor) approval for the completion of milestones to the satisfaction of the CRC.

**Communication**

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

- The project team will utilise a consultative approach as part of their engagement strategy with end-users and sponsor throughout the life of the project.
- The research team leader will give periodic updates and/or presentations (e.g. monthly, quarterly) to key stakeholder groups (for example, AFAC Work Health and Safety Group) 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 CRC as part of the planning process.
Contractual Arrangements

This project will be delivered under an Agreement between the research organisation and the Bushfire and Natural Hazard CRC. A copy of the ‘Terms and Conditions’ the CRC will contract to the successful research organisation is provided with this document. The ‘Terms and Conditions’ should be reviewed as part of the EOI process.

These are standard ‘Terms and Conditions’, 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’, details of the proposed changes and the reason for changes must be included with the submitted response. In considering the ‘Terms and Conditions’ and proposed changes, please note the CRC are subject to the requirements of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC Commonwealth Agreement and that ownership of all project IP vests with the CRC. We advise that (i) no changes to provisions relating to the ownership of Intellectual Property will be considered by the CRC and (ii) no changes can be made to the publication approval processes.

Submission Requirements

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

- A project proposal (4 - 6 pages) clearly addressing the requirements of the specifications set out in this document and the proposed approach.
- Clearly articulated project objectives
- Description of what is both in and out of scope
- Assumptions and constraints
- Proposed outcomes and description of the deliverables
- 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 Outputs

The project team must provide a quarterly report detailing project progress for the quarter, any risks and issues emerging and an end-user (sponsor) statement.

It is required that the project:

- produces a CRC Hazard Note (a CRC Research Publication) on the outcomes of the project.
- prepares a poster for the CRC Research Forum at the AFAC Conference.
The CRC may request a paper and presentation for the CRC Research Forum at the AFAC Conference 2020.

The CRC may request that the project team attend and present at one or more of the CRC’s Research Advisory Forums (RAF). The presentation at the forum will include an update on the outcomes of the project and its utilisation potential.

**Additional Opportunities**

There is an opportunity for the Research Provider (where they are a university, or have close affiliation with a university) to have access to partial scholarship funding ($18,000 per year for 3.5 years) to support a PhD student undertaking research to complement this project. Relevant research topics include:

- Evaluation of the effectiveness of current programs used by emergency services organisations to support young volunteers exposed to and impacted by potentially harmful or traumatic psychological injuries.
- Understanding and minimising trauma in 18 – 25 year old emergency services volunteers.

**Additional Information**

Any research proposal once submitted will be treated as commercial in confidence.
Applications must be submitted to: office@bnhcrc.com.au by 11:59pm 3 February 2020.
1. DEFINITIONS

1.1 “Background IP” means any IP that exists prior to or is created independently of this Agreement that a party has agreed to contribute to the Services;

1.2 “Contract Material” means all material, documents, equipment, software, information, data and the deliverables created by the Contractor as a result of or in connection with or otherwise arising from the performance of the Services;

1.3 “Delivery Dates” means the dates for delivery of Contract Material as set out in the Service Details;

1.4 “Fee” means the service fee set out in the Service Details;

1.5 “Intellectual Property Rights” or “IP” means confidential information, copyright, computer layouts and programs, discoveries, inventions, patents, registered and unregistered trademarks, registered and unregistered designs, trade secrets and know-how;

1.6 “Moral Rights” has the meaning ascribed to it under s189 of the Copyright Act 1968 as amended;

1.7 “Service Details” means the document preceding and attached to these terms and conditions;

1.8 “Services” means the goods and/or services to be provided by the Contractor to Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC described in the Service Details;

2. SERVICES

2.1 The Contractor will or will procure the Contractor Specified Personnel to carry out the Services and provide all Contract Material in accordance with the Service Details and these Terms and Conditions.

2.2 In providing the Services the Contractor guarantees that the Services:

(a) will be carried out with due care and skill;

(b) will be fit for the purpose that Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC has made known to the Contractor; and

(c) will be provided by the Delivery Dates or as agreed in writing.

2.3 The Contractor will:

(a) liaise with the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC Contact in relation to the performance of the Services;

(b) comply with any reasonable directions given by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC Contact;

(c) comply with all policies, procedures and directives of Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC so far as they are made known to the Contractor;

(d) comply with all applicable standards, laws and regulations.

2.4 Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC agrees to make available to the Contractor any information, materials or Background IP necessary to carry out the Services.

2.5 Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC reserves the right at any time, to alter, qualify or reject upon written notice to the Contractor any Contract Material which is not to Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC’s satisfaction, but shall not exercise its discretion unreasonably. Rejected Contract Material shall be promptly corrected by the Contractor at the Contractor’s expense. Where the Contractor fails to remedy or resupply the Services within the time specified in the notice Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC may terminate this Agreement immediately by notice in writing to the Contractor.

2.6 The Contractor may not sub-contract the Services or any part thereof without the prior written approval of Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

3. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

3.1 Any material or Background Intellectual Property provided by Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC or the Contractor for the Services shall remain the property of the contributing party. The parties shall return all such material or Background IP to the other party upon completion or termination of the Services.

3.2 The Contractor grants to Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC a non-exclusive, permanent, royalty free, worldwide licence with the right to sub-licence to use, adapt, alter, copy and reproduce the Contractor Background IP to the extent required for Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC to use in the Services and with the Contract Material.

3.3 The title to and Intellectual Property Rights in the Contract Material shall vest immediately upon its creation in Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

3.4 The Contractor shall:

(a) do such things as may be required to effect the vesting of such title in Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC; and

(b) execute or procure the execution of any document or do or procure the doing of anything requested by Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC to assign to Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC absolutely and unconditionally ownership in Intellectual Property Rights derived from the Contract Material or resulting from the Services throughout the world including copyright in all reports, plans, sketches; drawings, designs computer programs or any of those reproduced or created by the Contractor in performing the Services.

4. MORAL RIGHTS

The Contractor will grant on behalf of itself and will and will procure from its personnel any consents relating to their Moral Rights that are required by Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC to allow Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC to use or modify the Contract Material without any obligation for attribution of authorship.

5. INSURANCE

The Contractor agrees that it will at its own expense effect and maintain during the term of this Agreement appropriate insurance cover that a responsible entity would put in place to cover the risks associated with the Services including cover for public and products liability, workers compensation and professional indemnity insurance.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

6.1 Each Party will keep confidential and only use for the purposes of the Services the other party’s confidential
information unless written approval is obtained. Each Party may disclose such confidential information to its employees and agents as necessary for the performance of the Services provided that such employees and agents are instructed as to the confidential nature of the information.

6.2 The Contractor will keep the Contract Material confidential and will not publish or present in written form or orally the Contract Material without the express written permission of Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

7 PUBLICITY

Neither Party shall use the name or logo of the other Party as a consequence of or in connection with this Agreement without the prior written permission of the other Party.

8 FEE AND PAYMENT

8.1 Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC’s obligation to pay the Fee shall be contingent upon the satisfactory performance of the Services and Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC’s acceptance of the Contract Material where applicable.

8.2 Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC will pay the Contractor upon receipt of a correctly rendered tax invoice and in the manner set out in the Service Details.

8.3 If the Services provided by the Contractor are not satisfactory to Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC the Contractor will either provide the Consultancy Services again at its own cost and expense or refund the Fee paid or payable for the provision of the Services.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 The Contractor warrants that in providing the Services it will not infringe the Intellectual Property Rights of any person and that no Intellectual Property of any third party will be used or incorporated in the Contract Material.

9.2 The Contractor releases and indemnifies Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC from and against any loss or damage cost and expense (including the cost of defending or settling any action, claim or demand) arising from any negligent act or omission by the Contractor in the provision of the Services or any breach of the warranties, terms and conditions of this Contract except to the extent that any loss, damage, cost or expense is caused by any negligent act or omission by Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

9.3 The Contractor shall be responsible for all costs, damages, loss or liability and other matters relating to any of its employees, agents or sub-contractors including claims arising by virtue of injury, death or disability suffered by such employees, agents or sub-contractors.

10 TERMINATION

10.1 If either party commits a breach of this Agreement, the other party may request in writing that the breach be remedied, and if this is not done within 30 days of the request then the other party may terminate this Agreement immediately by notice in writing.

10.2 Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC may terminate this Agreement immediately by notice in writing if:

(a) the Contractor becomes insolvent or a receiver, receiver-manager or liquidator is appointed over the affairs of the Contractor;

(b) in the opinion of Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC a conflict of interest arises for the Contractor in performing the Services; or

(c) any of the Specified Personnel become unavailable to continue work under this Agreement and the Contractor is unable to secure a replacement acceptable to Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC;

10.3 Where this Agreement has been terminated under clause 10.1 or 10.2 the Contractor shall be entitled to pro rata payment for performance of Services undertaken and accepted by Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC up until the date of termination.

10.4 The Contractor shall not be entitled to compensation for any loss of prospective profits or other income or consequential losses.

11 UNAVOIDABLE DELAY

No party will be responsible for performing an obligation under this Agreement where performance is prevented due to any circumstances beyond the reasonable control of that party. If such circumstances continue beyond 14 days either party may terminate this Agreement. Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC shall be entitled to pro rata payment for performance of Services undertaken up until the date of termination.

12 CONCLUSION

12.1 If there is a dispute between the parties concerning this Agreement the disputing party shall give written notice specifying details of the dispute to the other party.

12.2 If the dispute is not settled by agreement within 14 days of service of the notice the dispute will be referred to the Chief Executive Officer of Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, who will attempt to resolve the dispute by formal or informal mediation.

13 GENERAL

13.1 This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties, and may only be varied by written agreement signed by both parties.

13.2 Should any provision of this Agreement be held by a Court to be unlawful, invalid or unenforceable the validity and enforceability of the remaining provisions shall not be affected.

13.3 The Contractor and its Specified Personnel shall not by virtue of this Agreement be deemed to be employees of Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

13.4 The provisions of Clauses 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10.3, 13.4 and 13.5 shall survive and be of full effect after expiration or termination of this Agreement.

13.5 This Agreement will be governed by law of State of Victoria and the parties submit to the jurisdiction of the Courts of Victoria.

13.6 Any notice to be given by either party will be in writing and forwarded to the other party either by post, facsimile transmission or electronic mail to the address indicated in the Service Details or such other updated address provided by a party.
13.7 The parties may sign and deliver this Agreement by electronic or facsimile transmission. Each party agrees that the delivery of the Agreement by electronic or facsimile transmission shall have the same force and effect as delivery of original signatures and they may use such electronic or facsimile signatures as evidence of the execution and delivery of the Agreement by all parties to the same extent that an original signature could be used.