



## Plain Language Statement

Melbourne School of Population and Global Health,

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### Introduction

You may remember that in 2012 you took part in a research project called **Beyond Bushfires**. At the time, you completed a survey (either over the phone or online) and answered questions about your relationships with people in and around the community, how you were feeling, your experiences of the bushfires, and your feelings about the community. Most people also completed a second survey for us in 2014. After completing the survey, you gave us permission to contact you again for more data collection, to see how things have changed over the past few years.

What we have found from that research has been incredibly important – the findings are being used to improve emergency recovery services across Australia and internationally. A summary report can be found on the website at [www.beyondbushfires.org.au](http://www.beyondbushfires.org.au). The research has been so useful that State Government and Australian Red Cross have provided funding for another round of surveys. We now invite you to join us in the Beyond Bushfires research again to see how you are going after 10 years has passed. It is really important that we involve the same people in the surveys. It is only by coming back to the same people over time that we can get a good picture of what is working – and what doesn't – when it comes to recovery.

The University of Melbourne are working once again with the Social Research Centre (an independent agency) to carry out data collection. We checked our records with the Victorian Electoral Commission to confirm your current address. The VEC has made this information available under section 34 of the Electoral Act 2002 because of significant public interest in this research. The University of Melbourne and the Social Research Centre are required to only use this information to follow up with past participants of the study, and will not give it out to any third party.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. You can ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

We need to know about a range of bushfire experiences. If you were less impacted by the Black Saturday bushfires you may feel this study is not relevant to you. We still would really value your insights. It was the inclusion of people with many different experiences that made the Beyond Bushfires research findings so strong and influential.

### What's this research about?

This current research project, **10 years Beyond Bushfires**, is a continuation of the original Beyond Bushfires study, to learn about disaster recovery in the long term, which is not as well-understood and well-

researched as short-term recovery. The following few pages will provide you with further information about the project, so that you can decide if you would like to take part in this research.

### What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey, as you did before. This can be done over the phone or online. This survey should take 30-40 minutes and will mostly repeat the questions from the original survey. However, questions about bushfire exposure that were in the first survey will not be repeated this time.

As part of the questions about you and your community, we will ask you to give the details (e.g. full name, street and town) of some people to whom you are especially close. This will not be as long as in the previous surveys. This information helps us work out how people are connected to one another across your community as part of a big “social network,” and how this may shape how people recover. All names and contact details will be removed from the analyzed data and will not be included in any reports. Further, as your answers are confidential, the people you list will not be told that you have mentioned them.

### What are the possible benefits?

Findings from the original Beyond Bushfires surveys have shown us that the vast majority of participants were glad they took part in the study. Community visits by our researchers also revealed that many people participated because they were keen to pass on their experiences so that lessons could be learned about recovery. We can confirm that the Beyond Bushfires findings have been used by governments, Red Cross and other emergency management agencies across Victoria, Australia and internationally. They have even been shared by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The 10 years Beyond Bushfires study will give us new information about longer term recovery experiences to help planning for services after major emergency events.

### What are the possible risks?

It is possible that you may find certain questions in the survey distressing. That is why there is always a choice to not answer a question or complete part of the study. To help if you feel distressed at any time, we have provided a list at the end of this letter of names and telephone numbers of health professionals and organisations that can help you.

### Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary. You are able to withdraw at any time and there is always a choice to not answer a particular question or section of the survey.

### Will I hear about the results of this project?

We will email a link to the summary results to everyone who has provided their email address. We will also post the results on our website (<https://beyondbushfires.org.au>) and announce their release via social media.

### What will happen to information about me?

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details are only used to match your responses to your past surveys, and to understand who is connected to each other within the community. At all other times, your name and contact details will be kept entirely separate from your survey responses. You will not be identified in any publications or reports arising from the research.

A code will be used to store your study material. All electronic files will be protected by a password. Only the University of Melbourne researchers and the data collectors at the Social Research Company will have access to this data and you can request to access your own data. Information provided through communications other than research processes, e.g. emails, blogs may also contribute to the research findings unless you request otherwise. The information and data will be retained for 7 years after the last publication or release from this study.

Due to the extremely high value of this data, when we have finished working with the data a de-identified record of the dataset will be kept indefinitely at the Australian Data Archive in Canberra which stores many important study collections for future research. There will be strict controls over who can see that data and what it can be used for, and of course you can choose to not have your data stored in this way.

#### Who is funding this project?

This project is being funded by Australian Red Cross, Emergency Management Victoria and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

#### Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about the project, please contact:

Professor Lisa Gibbs: (03) 8344 0920; [lgibbs@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lgibbs@unimelb.edu.au)

Phoebe Quinn: (03) 8344 3097; [phoebeg@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:phoebeg@unimelb.edu.au)

#### Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: [HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au). All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the study name (10 years Beyond Bushfires) or ethics ID number (HREC 1852721.1) of the research project.

Thank you very much for considering this invitation to take part in the 10 years Beyond Bushfires study.  
Best wishes,



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[www.beyondbushfires.org.au](http://www.beyondbushfires.org.au)

*If you feel distressed at any time, the following services are available:*

<b>General support</b> available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.		
<b>Mental Health Line</b>	1300 280 737	<a href="http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mhal">www.health.vic.gov.au/mhal</a>
<b>Lifeline</b>	13 11 14	<a href="http://www.lifeline.org.au">www.lifeline.org.au</a>
<b>Beyondblue</b>	1300 224 636	<a href="http://www.beyondblue.org.au">www.beyondblue.org.au</a>
<b>MensLine</b>	1300 78 99 78	<a href="http://www.mensline.org.au">www.mensline.org.au</a>
<b>SuicideLine</b>	1300 651 251	<a href="http://www.suicideline.org.au">www.suicideline.org.au</a>
<b>Kids Help Line</b>	1800 551 800	<a href="http://www.kidshelp.com.au">www.kidshelp.com.au</a>
<b>Assault or Family and Domestic Violence</b>		
<b>National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Service</b>	1800 737 732	<a href="http://www.1800respect.org.au">www.1800respect.org.au</a>
<b>Safe Steps</b>	1800 015 188	<a href="https://www.safesteps.org.au/">https://www.safesteps.org.au/</a>
<b>Victims of Crime Helpline</b>	1800 819 817 (8am-11pm)	<a href="http://www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au">www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au</a>
<b>Men's Referral Service</b>	1300 766 491 Mon-Fri: 8am-9pm Weekend: 9am-6pm	<a href="https://www.ntv.org.au/">https://www.ntv.org.au/</a>
<b>Alcohol and Drugs</b>		
<b>Direct Line</b>	1800 888 236	
<b>Alcoholics Anonymous</b>	9429 1833	