



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

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Regarding Research Project:

The impact of flooding in the “Lismore floods” on women and their health and well-being and the helping response.

Dear potential research participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project noted above which is being conducted by researchers from the University of Newcastle.

This project has been funded by the University of Newcastle, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)-Related Research Fund program.

The information below provides more detail about the study and how you can participate, if you choose to do so.

1. What is the research study about?

The study aims to understand the impact of the 2022 flooding that occurred in Northern Rivers region and specifically, the impact on women’s health and well-being. The study aims to identify the experiences of women who were affected before, during and after the flooding. The research will also investigate the role that helping professionals, including social workers, had in responding to the floods, in their various organisations and identify any changes or improvements to disaster mitigation, responses and recovery.

2. Who is conducting the research?

This research is being conducted by researchers from the University of Newcastle’s Humanities, School of Creative Industries and Social Sciences. The research team is: Associate Professor Wendy Foote, Professor Margaret Alston and Dr David Betts. All three teach in the social work program.

Who can participate in the research?

We are seeking women over the age of 18 and over to participate in this research project who were living in the Northern Rivers during the floods and have been impacted by them.

We are also seeking participants who are over the age of 18 and over who responded to the floods in a disaster response recovery role. You may be a social worker or other sort of helping professional.

You may be reading this as a result of local services sharing this invitation with their clients and on social media platforms, or because someone has shared it with you.

The research study is not suitable for those who have come to the area after the floods or men or children. We will be conducting Zoom interviews which will require access to the internet, but if this is not possible, there will be an opportunity to meet with researchers in person.

What does participation involve?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in either an individual interview or in a focus group or both.

1. Taking part in semi-structured interviews

If you take part, we will ask you a few questions about yourself: your suburb of residence (during & after the flood event), age, level of education, employment status and salary range. We will also ask your opinion about the impact of the floods on your health and well-being, specific needs that arose, service responses that were provided, and improvements and changes that need to take place in future responses.

Women who have lived through the floods will also be asked about their experiences and any 'lessons to be learned' from this. The semi-structured questions will be used to discuss each issue with a member of the research team. This will take place online via Zoom (V.5) or by telephone and will take between 30-60 minutes. There will also be a limited opportunity to meet in person with the researchers in November if you would prefer that.

If you wish to take part in the interviews, contact the research team by email: FloodResilience@newcastle.edu.au

If you choose to take part, all data will be de-identified and reported in aggregate form (made anonymous), unless you have given us express permission to identify you. The Zoom audio record function will be used to generate transcripts. Any quotes to be included in published research will be anonymised and you will have the opportunity to veto or amend such quotes if you believe that material may inadvertently identify you.

2. Taking part in a focus groups

There will be focus groups for women who are residents of the area and also for social workers/helping professionals who were involved in responding to the floods. Each focus group will be between 5–15 women/professionals in size and will take approximately 2-3 hours. The focus groups will be facilitated by the researchers and will be confidential. The discussion will be recorded and transcribed before being used for analysis. All data will be de-identified and reported in aggregate form (made anonymous) unless express permission has been granted for us to report you in the data in an identifiable way. If you wish to take part in a focus group, contact the research team by email: FloodResilience@newcastle.edu.au

How many do I participate in?

You may participate in one or both activities. If you choose to participate in this research project by participating in a focus group, you are not obligated to agree to an interview. Associate Professor Wendy Foote and Professor Margaret Alston will be conducting the in person focus groups and interviews, (Dr David Betts will also conduct interviews on-line).

Both on-line and in person women residential participants will be offered a supermarket voucher to the value of \$50.00 to defray the costs of travel and participation. These will be handed to the women at the end of the focus group or interview or posted to them if they participate on-line. Please note due to the limitations of the budget paid employees, (ie social workers and helping professionals), will not be provided with vouchers.

Do you have to take part in this research study?

No. Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to. And, if you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from the research study at any time without giving a reason.

If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw from the project after undertaking an interview, without giving a reason. If you do participate you are under no obligation to answer every question or complete the interview. You may also withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason. If you have been interviewed, you will have the option of withdrawing your data up until **two weeks** after you receive a copy of your audio recording and transcript for review. (Please inform us in writing that you would like to withdraw, and any data collected from you will be shredded and/or deleted and you will receive confirmation of this in writing.)

If you are a participant in a focus group you may change your mind about participating prior to the group beginning, and you may leave the group at any time, however, your contribution to the discussion will not be able to be deleted from the group discussion as it will be recorded. However, you will not be identified in any research findings.

What is the benefit of participating in this research study?

By participating in this interview/focus group, you will have the opportunity to provide information about the impact of the flood event on you, and your thoughts about the responses that you have had to it.

Your involvement will help us to build Australian evidence about disaster mitigation, it will help to develop our knowledge and preparing and responding to extreme weather events. It will develop our knowledge about the experience and needs of women in regional communities. Your contribution will also shape future research directions of responses to disasters both during and the disaster and after it. It will also result in a report that will be shared with participants.

In addition, the research will also develop our knowledge on the role that social workers and other helping professionals had in responding to the floods, from their various organisations. It will identify any changes or improvements to disaster mitigation, responses and recovery.

Are there any risks associated with your participation in this research?

The research activities you are being asked to participate in may involve some sensitive issues, such as recalling the events of the floods that may be associated with difficult emotions. Should you find any of the activities upsetting, you can withdraw your participation at any time. You are also welcome to invite a support person (family member, friend, etc.) to accompany you to the in person interview, focus group or Zoom interview.

Should you need support regarding any of the issues raised in the research activities, you can also contact the following services:

- **Beyond Blue:** call, chat online or email 24/7 - 1300 22 4636, <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>
- **NSW Mental Health Line:** available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - **1800 011 511**.
- **Lifeline:** 24 hour phone service - 131114, chat facility-[text service](#), and email crisis-chat <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- **Northern Rivers Community Gateway** (a locally based service) - (02) 6621 7397.

How will your privacy be protected?

All information (data) collected by the project will be kept in a secure office, in a locked filing cabinet. Electronic data will be stored in the University's secure files via a cloud-based Sharepoint site which only the researchers will have access to. Important documents will be password protected. In addition, interviews conducted by zoom (V 5), will be protected by the confidentiality (see <https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/>).

Data will be retained securely for a minimum period of 5 years from completion of the research and managed/stored in accordance with the University's Research Data and Materials Management Guideline (see [policies and guidelines](#).) or any successor Guideline, and applicable University of Newcastle policy provisions (as amended from time to time). Access to any identifiable data will be limited to members of the research team, unless: you have consented otherwise, or except if required by law in order for us to comply with our regulatory obligations.

Information which might identify you will not be disclosed without your prior consent. Explicit consent would be sought before using any material that may be identifiable. Any Research Assistant used in the project will be bound by the same confidentiality agreement. Any notes of the semi structured interviews will be kept by participant number, rather than name, to ensure that the identity of participants is not accidentally shared. (The key to the identity of participants will be kept in a separate physical location).

Information provided by you will be treated in whole or in part on a non-attributable basis. All details that would identify individual participants will be removed at the time of the interview unless participants wish to leave those details in the notes.

However, researchers cannot guarantee full anonymity. Due to the small populations where this research takes place, outsiders may be able to still guess the identity of "anonymous" participants. You are of course under no obligation to participate in the focus groups or interviews and no adverse consequences will flow to you or your organisation if you decline to participate. Details of the study, the ethics approval for this survey and contact details if you have any concerns about the study are listed below.

Focus group discussions might explore personal or sensitive details and participants – you must maintain the confidentiality of the group discussion by not divulging information to outside parties

If you disclose information about criminal behaviour during their participation (e.g., in a focus group or interview), should you provide specific details (e.g., date, place, perpetrators, victims, etc) we will note this and may be obliged to report the information to the appropriate authority.

How will information collected by the research team be used?

The information will be collated and analysed and will be written into a report. The findings will also be presented in academic publications, at conferences or in journal articles.

You will be provided with the opportunity to review the recording and/or transcript of the interviews and focus group and edit or erase your contribution. This will not be possible with focus groups due to the difficulty with identifying the participant's contributions.

If you would like a copy of the report, please note this on the Consent Form provided or email the Chief Investigator, Wendy Foote at FloodResilience@newcastle.edu.au

Results will also be published on the Gender Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) website after February 2023. You can visit that site at: <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research/centre/glass>.

Individual participants will not be identifiable in any of the outputs generated from the research project, but individual anonymous responses may be quoted.

Non-identifiable data may be shared with other parties as part of a peer-review process to verify the robustness and integrity of the study, or to contribute to further research and public knowledge.

What you need to do to provide consent to participate

Read this Information Statement in its entirety and be sure you understand all of the information provided before agreeing to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you have questions, contact Wendy Foote at FloodResilience@newcastle.edu.au.

If you decide to participate, please complete and sign the Consent Form provided and return it to the Chief Investigator via email noted above.

What if you want to withdraw from the research study?

You may withdraw from the study at any time by contacting Jacqui Wright or Wendy Foote at FloodResilience@newcastle.edu.au. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect your relationship with the University of Newcastle or any of the other organisations involved in this research.

Do you need more information?

If you would like more information about this research project and your potential involvement, please contact Wendy Foote or Jacqui Wright at FloodResilience@newcastle.edu.au.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this information.

[signature goes here]

Dr Wendy Foote,
Associate Professor, Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences
University of Newcastle

Concerns or complaints about this research

This project has been approved by the University of Newcastle's Human Research Ethics Committee, one of the University's College-based human ethics advisory panels.

Approval No. H-2022-0274

If you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, please contact the Chief Investigator, Professor Wendy Foote at FloodResilience@newcastle.edu.au.

If you would prefer to contact someone independent of the research project, you can forward your concerns to:

Human Research Ethics Officer
Research and Innovation Services
University of Newcastle
University Drive
Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia
Phone: (02) 4921 6333
Email: Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au