

2022 HAZELWOOD ADULT SURVEY FOLLOW-UP – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHO IS BEING INVITED AND WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?

Who is eligible and being invited to participate?

All people who lived in Morwell at the time of the mine fire and previously participated in Hazelwood Health Study surveys conducted in 2016-2017 and 2019-2020 are eligible to participate in this follow-up survey.

Who should participate in the survey?

It is critically important that as many invited people as possible participate in this follow-up survey, regardless of whether or not they believe their health was impacted by the smoke event. This includes adults who are young or old, well or unwell so that we can better understand the impacts of the smoke event across the entire community.

What if the mine fire didn't affect my health?

It is important that we assess people who believe they have few or no health effects from the smoke, as well as people who believe they have moderate or severe health effects. Speaking to people with different health outcomes will enable us to better understand the range impacts of the smoke event across the entire community.

I have moved away from Morwell since the mine fire – would you still like me to participate?

Yes. We are interested in your ongoing health and wellbeing, regardless of where you live now. Your responses are just as important to us as those from people who still live in Morwell.

I have a current health concern, what should I do?

The study is not about providing medical assistance. Residents with current concerns about their health are encouraged to seek assistance from their local general practitioner. In addition, completing the study will ensure that your experience is included in our analysis.

PRIVACY / CONFIDENTIALITY

How will my privacy be protected?

The Hazelwood Health Study protects the privacy of participants in a number of ways including keeping participant responses separated from identifying details, storing data in secure environments, and requiring staff to undertake training and sign confidentiality agreements as part of their employment.

How did the study get my details?

When you completed the previous surveys you provided your contact details so that we could invite you to participate in future follow-up activities like the current survey.

WHY ARE WE DOING A FOLLOW-UP SURVEY?

Why is a follow-up survey being conducted, more than seven years after the mine fire?

The previous surveys you have participated in have provided a snapshot of people's health and wellbeing approximately 2.5 years and 6 years after the mine fire. We are interested in whether there are any ongoing impacts now that more time has passed. In addition, we are interested in whether there are broader impacts on factors like social support, and community wellbeing as well as whether there have been positive impacts, such as posttraumatic growth.

What is the focus of the survey?

The aim of this follow-up survey is to explore the ongoing health and wellbeing of people who were living in the exposed area at the time of the mine fire. The survey explores the impact of the mine fire on personal and community wellbeing, and on social support, as well as looking at the influence of other factors like recent life events and general health. The survey is presented in sections that address each of these areas.

Is the survey different from the previous surveys I have completed?

This follow-up survey is focused on wider health and wellbeing impacts, so it repeats some core measures of distress and general wellbeing. The research team are also interested in factors which were not included in the two previous surveys, such as posttraumatic growth and the impacts of more recent events such as the 2020 Black Summer bushfires and the current COVID-19 pandemic. Other components of the Hazelwood Health Study are looking at ongoing physical health and health service use outcomes.

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

How long does it take to complete the survey?

You are being asked to answer a questionnaire about your ongoing health and wellbeing. Most people will take 20-25 minutes to complete the survey. However, for some people with more detailed responses etc, the survey may take a little longer to complete.

How do I complete the survey?

The fastest and easiest way to complete the survey is online. People invited to participate will receive a dedicated link to the survey which can be completed on a computer, tablet or smart phone (though we recommend larger screens where possible). You can also complete the survey over the phone by calling us on 1800 985 899. If neither of these options are suitable for you, we can mail you a paper copy of the survey.

If I can't finish the survey in one session, can I get back to it later on?

Yes. If completing the survey online, you can stop at the end of any section and come back at a later point. The link provided in your invitation will return you to the same point in the survey so that you can complete it. You can also complete part online and then call us to complete the rest over the phone, or vice versa. In the unlikely event that considerable time passes between when you started the survey and when you return to complete it, you can ask us to delete your previous responses to the survey and start again.

Can I change a response to an item?

If you are still completing the survey online or over the phone you can go back and change your responses. If you have completed and submitted the survey you can call us on 1800 985 899.

QUESTIONS REGARDING SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE SURVEY

Why are there different timeframes for some questions, e.g. in the past week or past month?

The survey is made up of standard scales that have been used in other studies, which enables us to compare results with those from other populations. These may focus on current health and wellbeing (e.g. in the past week), or may have a longer-term focus such as in the past month or year, depending on the focus of the questions.

Why does the survey ask about other recent life events?

Research indicates that our current health and wellbeing is due in part to whether we have experienced any major events or disruptions in the previous year. The survey includes a standard list of such events like the death of someone close to you, loss of a job, etc. It also includes questions about the 2020 Black Summer bushfires and the current COVID-19 pandemic. This information on other major factors will help us to understand the additional impact of exposure to the Hazelwood event.

Why does the survey ask personal health questions that don't look to have anything to do with the mine fire?

We are interested in the general health and wellbeing of people exposed to smoke from mine fire. To do this, we need to understand what else people are experiencing. The survey includes a standard list of health-related symptoms, including some personal questions to do with menstrual issues and pain during sexual intercourse. While we think this information is important, we understand that you may prefer not to answer these questions.

What if there are particular questions that I would prefer not to answer?

The questions in the survey have been carefully selected to provide the core information needed to explore the ongoing health and wellbeing impacts of exposure to the Hazelwood event. While we would like you to answer all questions if possible, we understand that some may be personal and that you would prefer not to respond. In the online and written versions of the survey you can do this by selecting the "Prefer not to respond" option. If doing the survey over the phone, you can tell the interviewer that you prefer not to answer a particular question.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE SURVEY AND THE WIDER HAZELWOOD HEALTH STUDY?

What is the benefit for me and my community?

Most importantly, responding to the survey will help us to answer important questions about the ongoing health impacts of the Hazelwood event. The data that we collect will inform future health service and emergency response policy and planning, which we expect will benefit local communities as well as rural Australia more broadly. We understand that people are busy and we recognise that completing the survey will take a little time so we are pleased to be able to offer participants a \$25 voucher.

How will I hear about the outcomes?

A core aspect of community engagement for the Hazelwood Health Study is our commitment to providing regular updates to the community. We will provide regular newsletters, hold community briefings, as well as keep people updated through our website and social media.

How do I find out about findings of the Hazelwood Health Study and future research plans?

Details of all findings to date and the directions of the wider research team are provided on the study website at <https://hazelwoodhealthstudy.org.au>