



Charles Sturt University
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Participant Information Statement

Sirens to Silence - Examining the experiences of firefighters transitioning into and living in retirement.

Chief Investigator - Nicholas Gahan MEmMan MSW(Prof Qual) GradCert(Fire Investigation) GradCertBus(PSM) BBus(Man) BSci(Psych) DipFire CDec GIFireE MAASW MACN MAPS

Principal Supervisor – Professor Wendy Bowles PhD. Acting Head of School, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Charles Sturt University.

Co-Supervisor – Dr. Heather Boetto PhD. Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Charles Sturt University.

Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the experiences of firefighters transitioning into and living in retirement.

The study is being conducted by Nicholas Gahan from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Charles Sturt University. Nicholas is being supervised by Professor Wendy Bowles and Dr Heather Boetto from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Charles Sturt University. Aside from being a doctoral candidate at Charles Sturt University, Nicholas is also a Senior Firefighter with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services based in Brisbane.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

What is the purpose of this study?

This project seeks to explore the lived experience of firefighters (both paid and volunteer) who are transitioning into or living in retirement.

Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a firefighter transitioning into or currently living in retirement and have expressed interest in the study.

In order to participate in this study, you must be over the age of 18 (as per age requirements of operational firefighters in Australia), have been a firefighter in an urban or rural fire service and willingly agree to participate in the study. There is no minimum experience as a firefighter required to participate in this study.

If you know other people who may wish to participate in this study, please pass Nicholas' telephone and email details to them.

What does this study involve?

If you agree to contribute to this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview regarding your personal experiences transitioning into or living in retirement. The interview will be conducted at a time convenient to you and may be conducted face to face, via telephone or via an electronic medium (such as zoom). COVID-19 protocols regarding social distancing, wearing of masks (if required) and hand washing will be adhered to if interviews are conducted face to face.

The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. Interviews will be audio recorded on two recording devices to allow the researcher to transcribe into a word document post-interview.

The information the researcher seeks to obtain from you as the participant relates to your experiences on retiring from a firefighting role. No other information will be sought (for example medical records).

Only the chief investigator (Nicholas Gahan) will have contact with the participants to conduct the research interviews.

What are the risks and benefits to me taking part in this study?

The information being gathered is focused on personal experiences and hence there is an understanding that emotional risk may be heightened as a result of participants reflecting on their firefighting careers and subsequent retirement from their profession. If you experience emotional discomfort as a result of your participation in this research, mental health support is available. If you experience emotional discomfort or need to debrief after the interview, the

names and contact telephone numbers of respective mental health support services are listed on the final page of this document

How is this study being paid for?

This research is being funded via a scholarship from Charles Sturt University. No other funding is being supplied for this research.

Participation in this study will cost you no more than your time and any expenses you incur travelling to interview sites should you elect to conduct interviews in public places (rather than your place of residence). You will not be paid to participate in this study.

What if I don't want to take part in this study?

Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed consent will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate is your decision and will not disadvantage you in any way.

What if I participate and want to withdraw later?

You may withdraw your participation up to four (4) weeks post-interview. To withdraw, contact Nicholas and advise him that you wish to withdraw from the study. You can withdraw without giving a reason or censure.

Will I be able to view, retract, add to or change what I said in my interview?

Yes. The information collected in your interview will be transcribed into a word document and can be provided to you post-interview if you wish. If you wish to alter your statements, simply contact Nicholas on the information below.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

Nicholas will promote confidentiality as a condition of participation; however, confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed. To maximise confidentiality, participant's names, gender and respective fire agency will not be included in the reported data. This information will only be recorded to enable the researcher to contact you for the purposes of confirming responses to interview questions.

Storage of the data will adhere to university regulations and be kept in secure storage for five (5) years. All aspects of the study, including raw data, will be strictly confidential and only the researcher will have access. Policy and other documents produced by organisations as a result of this research project are not considered research data and will not be retained or analysed by the researcher or used in any publications.

If there is a possibility that you report incidences of criminal behaviour during your participation, the researcher may be obliged to report the information to the police.

What will happen to the information that I give you?

The results of this study may be published in a research or professional journal, however individual responses will not be identifiable as only aggregated/group data will be reported. The results from the research may be used to inform a future, larger scale project.

What should I do if I want to discuss this study further before I decide?

Contact the Chief Investigator - Nicholas Gahan on 0407221694 or via email – ngahan@csu.edu.au

Who should I contact if I have concerns about the conduct of this study?

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Ethics and Compliance Unit via the following contact details:

The Governance Officer

Human Research Ethics Committee

Ethics and Compliance Unit

Locked Bag 588

Wagga Wagga NSW 2678

Telephone: (02) 6933 4213

Email: ethics@csu.edu.au

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Thank you for considering this invitation. This information sheet is for you to keep.

Support Services

If any part of this research study adversely impacts you, counselling and mental health support services are available through:

Fire and Emergency Services Support Network (FESSN) – Phone 1800 805 980

Lifeline – Phone 13 11 14 or <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

(This service is for crisis counselling only).

Beyond Blue – Phone 1300 22 4636 or <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>