

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

PROJECT CFA15 – POST-BUSHFIRE SOCIAL RESEARCH: LESSONS FOR IMPROVING INFORMATION SHARING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST DUE 5:00PM AEST, 12 SEPTEMBER 2025 TO
research@naturalhazards.com.au

OVERVIEW

Natural Hazards Research Australia (hereafter the Centre), in conjunction with our client, the Country Fire Authority (CFA), is seeking Expressions of Interest from project teams for the following project:

CFA15 – Post-bushfire social research: Lessons for improving information sharing and community safety

Project aims and objectives	The project will focus on three communities that were or are impacted by bushfire and/or grassfire between 2024 to 2026. The aim is to understand how information was shared between actors as well as understood and used by community members to inform decision-making before, during and after the fire. This project aims to: • understand the roles of government personnel at state, regional and local levels as well as community members in the sharing of information before, during and after a bushfire/grassfire. • understand how community members responded to bushfires/grassfires and what information and support informed their decisions. • use the understandings gained from this project to identify opportunities for improvements to policy and practice.
Estimated duration	24 months
Maximum available budget	\$272,278(ex GST)
Centre contact	For any questions regarding this Call for EOIs, please email research@naturalhazards.com.au .
Submission of EOI	EOIs are to be submitted to research@naturalhazards.com.au by 5:00pm AEST, 12 September 2025.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

There is currently limited data collected by fire agencies to understand the impact and effectiveness of communication and engagement with community members before, during and after a specific bushfire/grassfire incident. A lack of quality data creates challenges for evidence-based improvements to current public-facing communication, education, engagement and warnings.

Post-event social research was conducted in Pomonal after the February and December 2024 fires. Valuable lessons were learnt from that research regarding community preparedness, response and recovery, as well as how well information was shared across different levels of governance and why.

This project aims to enable similar studies by creating a responsive post-event social research program that can quickly mobilise after a fire event to enable timely data collection that provides community support as well as encourages learning from fire events that can feed into improvements to community engagement for community preparedness, the Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS), the Australian Warning System (AWS) and post-event communications.

This research will inform future post-event social research by refining the data collection and analysis process to improve internal reporting systems and practices that allow for continued data collection into the future.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project will focus on three communities that are impacted by a bushfire and/or grassfire incident between 2024 to 2026. The selection of the communities will depend on where fires occur and the requests of CFA members for social research over the next two fire seasons. By providing a structured and responsive approach to post-event social research, CFA is better able to efficiently and effectively respond to research requests and future fire events.

Social research methods are well placed to understand how information was shared between state, regional and local actors before, during and after a fire and how this information influenced the decisions taken by members of the community and, therefore, the consequences of a fire by:

- understanding the roles of government personnel at state, regional and local levels as well as community members in the sharing of information before, during and after a bushfire/grassfire.
- understanding how community members responded to bushfires/grassfires and what information/support informed their decisions.
- using the understandings gained from this project to identify opportunities for improvements to policy and practice.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Regular knowledge-sharing meetings throughout each individual case study to provide project updates, discuss project design, recruitment, fieldwork and findings. Fortnightly 30-minute meetings are expected. Longer meetings may be required to discuss the implications of the findings and co-define the practical considerations for improvement that will be documented in the final report.
- A final report for each case study will be endorsed by the fire agency working group for the specific case study, outlining the research findings and considerations for improvement of fire agency practice. The report must explicitly include:
 - the approach used to discuss the research implications and develop a list of evidence-based considerations for improvements to agency practice in partnership with the fire agency working group
 - the list of endorsed considerations for improvements to fire agency practice reflections on project methodology, limitations and improvements for future studies.

Inclusions

- Three locations will be selected over the 24-month duration of the project based on requests from CFA members.
- The locations that are impacted by bushfires and/or grassfires 2024-2026.
- Interviews with fire agency staff and residents of the 3 locations selected for study.

Exclusions

- Interview with stakeholders not connected to events related to each of the study locations.

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

The project will provide:

- A reflection on the project methodology to inform future post-event social research studies/agency data collection.
- Facilitated opportunities for knowledge sharing and developing a shared understanding of problems and solutions across the sector.

Implementation

Regular 30-minute fortnightly meetings between the research provider and the fire agency working group will provide opportunities for discussion and feedback and to discuss project-related updates from the research team and the fire agency working group, research design, the project's findings, as well as identify implications and opportunities for practical improvements to current practice. The collaborative engagement approach will be captured and reflected on in the project report.

COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

The funding for this project is **not a grant**. Researchers are expected to undertake the research using a collaborative approach to assist in the translation and transfer of knowledge to end-users and to ensure the project meets their needs. Researchers are encouraged to outline their approach to ensuring effective collaboration, which could include embedding researchers within CFA for a period of time. An engagement plan in line with the project milestones is expected, in which the specific input required from the fire agency working group and other stakeholders is clearly presented for each milestone (i.e., milestone – updated project plan, engagement – feedback and endorsement of the updated project plan is sought at the working group meeting/s [including dates]).

TIMELINES AND MILESTONES

Key steps for research provider	Lead	Due date
STAGE 1		
1. Inception meeting	The Centre	September 2025
2. Project plan signed by agency working group, i.e., those who have requested and will benefit from the findings of the research	Research Provider, CFA	October 2025
3. Fieldwork – interviews with agency staff and residents. <u>N.B. there may be staggered fieldwork periods based on timing of identified case studies.</u>	Research Organisation	To be negotiated in project plan
4. Presentation of preliminary results of key agency stakeholders/project working group	Research Organisation	To be negotiated in project plan
5. Agency working group to review draft report	Research Organisation	To be negotiated in project plan
6. Workshop between research providers and agency working group to identify research implications and considerations for improvement based on the research findings	Research Organisation	To be negotiated in project plan
7. Final report delivered which includes research findings, implications and considerations for improvements to fire agency practice that is endorsed by the agency working group	Research Organisation	To be negotiated in project plan

Timelines and milestones for these projects will be dependent on the occurrence of fires and requests of CFA members. The timeline of milestones will be negotiated with the research provider once the project has been activated.

QUALITY CONTROL AND REPORTING

Final report and other project outputs

It is the expectation of the Centre and our client CFA that the materials delivered as part of this project will meet the highest standards and will be suitable for internal and external distribution.

It is a requirement that all reports (and any supporting material) be submitted to the satisfaction of the agency working group for each case study area (see under Project Governance). To ensure the final report meets this expectation, it will be subject to up to two rounds of review (with a minimum of two weeks for each review) by CFA. Project teams are required to ensure an internal peer review process is undertaken before the draft final report is submitted for CFA consideration.

Before the final report is submitted to the agency working group for each case study for approval, it must also have been professionally proofread and copy-edited.

These steps must be arranged by the project team and be costed as part of the project budget and completed within the project timeframe. **Reports that have not been professionally proofread and copy-edited will not be considered final.**

Project teams should ensure that sufficient time is included in the proposed project timeline for review of the draft final report by CFA, revision, and completion of the final report. This may take up to two months.

Communication

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

- The project team will utilise a consultative approach and demonstrate this by documenting engagement activities within the relevant reports.
- The project team will work collaboratively with CFA and the Centre in developing any public communications about the project.
- The project team leader will give periodic presentations (e.g., annually) to key stakeholder groups 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 upon with the CFA Research Lead as part of the planning process.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND PROCESSES

Contractual arrangements

This project is being delivered under an Agreement in place between Natural Hazards and Disaster Resilience Research Centre Ltd, t/as Natural Hazards Research Australia (the Centre), and the Country Fire Authority (CFA). The contract put in place between the Centre and the Lead Provider Organisation selected to undertake this work will reflect the terms of the Agreement between CFA and the Centre.

[A draft copy of the contract between the Centre and the successful Lead Research Provider Organisation can be found here.](#) This contract should be reviewed as part of the EOI process.

This is a standard agreement, and any changes will be at the sole discretion of the Centre. If you would like to request amendments to any of the terms and conditions set out in the proposed contract, details of the proposed changes and the reason the changes are requested must be included with the submitted response. In considering this contract and proposing changes, please note the Centre has been advised by CFA that (i) changes to provisions relating to the ownership of Intellectual Property will only be varied to take account of substantial in-kind contribution from the successful Provider Organisation/s, and (ii) no changes can be made to the publications approvals processes.

In the case of consortiums, the Centre requires one consortium member be nominated as Lead Research Provider Organisation for contractual arrangements.

Project governance

Each case study will likely require its own agency working group, depending on where they are located. While the state-based staff may remain the same, the regional staff may change depending on the case study location. Whether the case studies can run concurrently will depend on fire activity and requests from regional staff.

Fortnightly meetings between the research team and the fire agency working group for each case study will be held to build relationships, provide updates and discuss project-related decision and research, results and implications. A monthly meeting between the research team and the project team will be held to discuss the project's progress, planning for working group meetings and ensure that the project remains on track for producing practical outcomes for agency use.

Each project is carried out under the supervision of a Project Control Board (PCB) and in accordance with the governance arrangements agreed between the Centre and CFA.

While the contractual relationship for the delivery of this project will be between the Lead Provider Organisation and the Centre, there will also be a strong relationship between the project team, CFA staff and staff from CFA's partner agencies. This group will be formed after the project's inception meeting and will be referred to as the fire agency working group.. Communication is an important element of the success of this project and providers will be required to maintain strong links with the CFA Research Lead, the agency working group for each case study, and the Centre Project Manager throughout the project.

This project will require a series of at fortnightly meetings with the fire agency working group (in addition to monthly governance meetings) provide project updates, discuss research design, the research findings and co-develop a list of practice-relevant considerations for improvement for CFA and its partner agencies. These meetings are of great importance to ensure that the results of the research are made sense of and translated during the project in collaboration between researchers and agency staff, to avoid a situation where a report is shared and no further action is taken.

A governance plan has been prepared which shows the roles and responsibilities of each of the participants: the fire agency working group, Natural Hazards Research Australia, and the Provider Organisation/s. The successful research team will be required to comply with the processes and expectations as set out in that document.

Project planning

The project overview included in this document describes the way the CFA subject matter experts believe the project can most successfully be undertaken. Alternative approaches can be considered. Any alternative approaches must ensure the delivery of the required outputs, including any intermediate outputs identified in this document.

Following acceptance of a project proposal, the successful research organisation must prepare a detailed project plan and risk treatment plan using the CFA template. This plan must be approved by the CFA Research Lead and will become an attachment to the contract

Reporting

The successful project team will be required to make at least one presentation (and possibly two) annually to the Project Control Board or other nominated CFA group during the life of the project.

In addition to the Expected outputs listed above, the project team will also be required to:

- provide a fact sheet within three months of signing the contract between the research organisation and the Centre (CFA template)
- provide detailed Quarterly Progress Reports
- contribute to a Project Evaluation Report.

Dates for submitting Quarterly Progress Reports:

Period covered	Report required
1 July to 30 September	5 October
1 October to 31 December	5 January following calendar year
1 January to 31 March	5 April
1 April to 30 June	5 July

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS EOI

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

- A project proposal of up to eight pages, clearly addressing the requirements of the specifications set out in this document, including a governance approach. The proposal should include an introduction, a project plan for delivery, a detailed project budget and a summary of staff and skills. Proposals must include achievable timelines, which will be used to monitor progress.
- Statement of capability, no longer than 4 pages, including previous client referees and/or testimonials, demonstrating the ability of the company and proposed project team to undertake the work.
- 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 INFORMATION

In responding to this Call for Expressions of Interest, advice should be provided on any known or anticipated impacts of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions or human resource risks on the timely delivery of the project. Where appropriate, risk management for the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions should be incorporated into the EOI.

Any proposal, once submitted, will be treated as commercial in confidence.

Applications must be submitted to: research@naturalhazards.com.au by 5:00pm AEST, 12 September 2025.

Frequently asked questions

Additional information provided to individual respondents will also be published on the Centre website to ensure access to all interested parties. Respondents are encouraged to check the website for any additional information via these published FAQs, prior to the closing date.

Evaluation criteria

After the closing date, Natural Hazards Research Australia and the CFA Research Lead will review proposals against the evaluation criteria below. At that stage they may invite shortlisted applicants to do a brief presentation and/or interview before recommending the State's Representative to the most appropriate organisation/s to undertake this work. The evaluation criteria indicate those matters that should be included in the project proposal and associated documentation – details are provided in the table below.

You will be advised **by late September** if your application has been accepted and it is expected work on the project will commence upon signing of the contract.

The decision of the Centre and our client CFA will be final. The Centre reserves the right not to offer the work or only allocate a proportion of the available funding if a proposal does not meet the client's needs. The Project Control Board reserves the right to invite any other specific providers as it sees fit to submit proposals before or after the closing date.

Evaluation criterion	% weighting
Research capability and capacity: The research provider must demonstrate they have the capacity and capability to deliver an excellent collaborative and applied research project in a Victorian environment and deliver the required outputs within timelines. If the project requires a specialist development activity (e.g. electronics, instrumentation, non-production software), the provider has the appropriate skills to provide this.	25
Project proposal: A clear demonstration that the project team understands the project scope and desired project governance via the development of a feasible approach that meets defined objectives. The proposal must include an indicative timetable of work and interim milestones/project outputs as described in this document. Relevant outline of a collaborative approach to assist in the translation and transfer of knowledge to CFA and to ensure the project meets their needs.	35
Industry engagement: Track record of industry engagement with evidence of providing findings and outputs that have been utilised by government agencies.	15
Value for money: Likelihood of delivery of required outcome within available budget along with the ability to leverage the funds provided with in-kind contributions or supplementary opportunities, including demonstrated ability to leverage co-funding and partners for technology development, use and evaluation. The evaluation team will consider the membership of the project team and the proposed roles and time commitment. A plan for the production of academic research publications will be considered as additional value.	20
Social and environmental values: Evidence that the research provider promotes and prioritises socially and environmentally responsible approaches within their organisation.	5