

**Examining the experiences and support needs of first responders’
spouses and families: a qualitative study.**

Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for your interest in this study. This study is being conducted by a team led by Dr. Fiona Cocker at the Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please contact the researchers by email at Fiona.Cocker@utas.edu.au if you would like more information.

1. What is this study about?

First responders (police, fire, ambulance, SES and emergency management personnel, including volunteers) have higher risk of poor mental health than employees in other jobs due to the stressful nature of their jobs. As stress from their jobs can be brought home, it can also affect relationships with spouses, partners and family members. There is very little information on how the jobs of first responders and stress from work affects their families. A better understanding can help provide information for programs to support first responder families. With this research we are trying to get initial information on the issues faced by first responder’s families to help inform further research focused on meeting the support needs of first responder families.

2. What will I be asked to do?

Once you have consented/agreed to participate, a member of the research team will contact you to arrange a time to meet at an agreed upon location. This can be at a time suitable to you (i.e. during work hours or after hours). During this meeting a member of the research team will conduct an interview with you, asking questions about you and your lived experiences of being spouse, partner or family member of a first responder as well as your perceived support needs. We will ask questions about the emotional health of you and your spouse, partner or family member. The interview will take around 30 minutes to complete.

Following the interview, you will also be invited to attend a focus group with other first responder spouses and family members who have participated in the interview stage of the study. During the focus group a member of the research team will lead a discussion informed by the interview responses of all participants to brainstorm how best to support families. This information will be used to inform the development of interventions and programs to support first responder families. It is important you understand your involvement in this study is voluntary. If you decide to stop participation, you can do so at any time.

Any information recorded prior to your decision to withdraw from the study will be destroyed. If after completion of the interview or focus group you wish to withdraw your responses completely, you can email the lead researcher Dr Fiona Cocker (Fiona.Cocker@utas.edu.au) at any time and request your

information to be removed from the study. There are no negative consequences from withdrawing from the study for you or your first responder.

3. Where will the data be kept? How will it be kept secure?

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participants will be provided with a copy of the transcription, to check the accuracy of the transcription and to allow for any amendments/clarification to be made. Direct quotations will not be attributed to any individual, nor will any individual be identified in any published material. Recordings and transcriptions will be stored electronically without any identifying information. We will use an individual code for each participant, which does not link to any identifying details. All information will be stored in a secure database with access restricted to authorised researchers. Consent forms will be stored separately in a locked cabinet.

4. How and when will the data be destroyed?

After seven years, all survey data will be deleted, following secure data destruction processes.

5. Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?

It is unlikely there will be any immediate benefits to you. However, over time, the intention is that results from this study will lead to increased support interventions and programs for first responder spouses and families.

6. Are there any possible risks involved in participating in this study?

The survey contains questions about your general wellbeing (happiness and health), and how your physical and mental health, and the physical and mental health of your first responder family member, impacts on your family relationships. This may cause distress or discomfort for some people. If this happens to you, you can contact:

- The 24 hour, 7 day per week Lifeline counselling service on 13 11 14;
- The Tasmanian Department of Health's Mental Health Service helpline, a free call within Tasmania, on 1800 332 388; or
- Lead researcher, Dr Fiona Cocker by email Fiona.Cocker@utas.edu.au or call 0417 333 491.

You may also be able to access the Employee Assistance Package via your spouse's employer (Ambulance Tasmania, Tasmania Police, Tasmanian Fire or State Emergency Services) and the research team will explore this possibility for you.

8. What if I have questions or concerns about this pilot research?

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of this study, please feel free to contact the researchers by email Fiona.Cocker@utas.edu.au or call 0417 333 491. If you would like to view the results



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of this research, this can occur at the conclusion of this research. We will provide the results via the Menzies Institute for Medical Research website.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (number H0017630). If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, you should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on +61 3 6226 2608 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote H0017630.

9. How do I participate?

By checking the first box below, you indicate you have read the information on this page and you are agreeing to participate in this research study.

If you do not wish to participate, we thank you for your time.

I _____ **consent** to participate in this study

Print full name here

Signature: _____

Consent for focus group follow-up

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand it is voluntary to participate in a focus group, and I may participate in the one-on-one interview without consenting to be contacted for a focus group. I understand I may be contacted to participate in a focus group in October or November 2018. I understand I will not be contacted for any other purpose than this.

I **consent** to a Menzies researcher contacting me for a focus group.

Signature: _____