

# INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

## You are invited to participate

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You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “Future Proofing the Frontline: Strategies to support frontline healthcare workers and leaders during times of crises”.

This project is being led by Prof Karen Willis at Victoria University and A/Prof Natasha Smallwood at Monash University. The project has been funded by the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation.

## Project explanation

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The aim of this project is to design practical and sustainable policy and practice recommendations to support the mental health and wellbeing of healthcare workers and leaders in future crises. We wish to work together with frontline healthcare workers to assist us in developing the mental health supports that healthcare workers need and value.

## What will I be asked to do?

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You will be asked to take part in two focus group sessions via videoconference at times that are convenient to you. Each session will take about one hour. There will be approximately 6 people in each focus group, and as much as possible, the focus groups will be made up of people who are similar in terms of occupation and seniority.

In the first session the group will be asked to discuss on potential scenarios. This will involve reflecting on supports needed during the COVID-19 pandemic; with a particular focus on what worked well and what was needed. The second session will occur around 8 weeks later. In this session you will be presented with some initial findings from all the focus groups and asked to consider what else is needed; how you would prioritise the range of responses; and the barriers and opportunities that might affect uptake of strategies.

Prior to the focus groups you will be asked to read and sign a consent form.

## What will I gain from participating?

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By taking part in this project you will be contributing to the co-design of solutions to ensure the mental health and wellbeing of frontline healthcare workers and leaders is addressed and prioritised in future crises.

You will be offered a \$50 gift voucher (e.g. grocery voucher) for each focus group session you attend, in recognition of your time in participating in the study.

## How will the information I give be used?

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Information provided by participants in this project will be organised into themes which will then inform the development of policy recommendations and occupational strategies to support the mental health and wellbeing of frontline healthcare workers and leaders.

Project learnings will be accessible via the project website (<http://covid-19-frontline.com.au>), and you may also request that we email or post copy of the project report to you. Reports of project progress will be accessible to health organisations and other frontline sector organisations via written reports, conference/seminar presentations, and social media. Findings will be distributed via Black Dog Institute’s national industry media and

policy channels that include Federal and state policy-makers and peak health agencies. Findings will also be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

No personal information that could identify you will be included in the write up of results.

### **What are the potential risks of participating in this project?**

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Whilst we perceive minimal risks participating in this project, we acknowledge that for some participants reflecting on experiences during the pandemic may be distressing.

If you feel that one or some of the questions are stressful, then you do not have to answer. You may also stop participating in the focus group at any time. We will inform you about how to privately message the facilitators if you are feeling uncomfortable in the group, and if we perceive that you may be uncomfortable, we will check in with you using the private message function.

Due to the nature of the focus groups, we cannot guarantee confidentiality within the group. At the commencement of the session, facilitators will remind participants not to share information that may be private/confidential to hospital operations.

If you have any questions or concerns following involvement in the study, you may contact the Principal Investigators (Prof Karen Willis and A/Prof Smallwood) at any time.

A list of support options is provided below.

### **How will this project be conducted?**

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If you choose to participate in this project, we ask that you please get in touch with our Project Manager (Dr Jaimie-Lee Maple) and she will answer any questions you may have about the project. You will be asked to complete a statement of informed consent. You will be given a list of possible focus group times and asked to select the most suitable time.

Researchers will then connect with you via videoconference at the previously arranged time and conduct the focus group (approximately one hour per session).

The focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Information from these focus groups will then be organised into themes to inform the development of policy and practice recommendations.

### **Who is conducting the study?**

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#### **Principal Investigators**

Prof Karen Willis, Institute for Health and Sport, Victoria University.

[karen.willis@vu.edu.au](mailto:karen.willis@vu.edu.au)

A/Prof Natasha Smallwood, Monash University.

[natasha.smallwood@vu.edu.au](mailto:natasha.smallwood@vu.edu.au)

#### **Project Manager**

Dr Jaimie-Lee Maple, Institute for Health and Sport, Victoria University.

[jaimie-lee.maple@vu.edu.au](mailto:jaimie-lee.maple@vu.edu.au)

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Principal Investigators listed above.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

## **Support Services – Contact Information**

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If you need support, access to the Employee Assistance Scheme is available through most healthcare organisations, and many have other supports such as hotlines that are available to support staff.

We have a list of resources on our project website: <https://covid-19-frontline.com.au/>; and links to support organisations are also listed below. Either visit their webpage to access the resources, or contact them via phone if you wish to talk to them about how you are feeling.

### **Lifeline**

131 114

[lifeline.org.au](https://lifeline.org.au)

### **Beyond Blue**

1300 22 4636

[beyondblue.org.au](https://beyondblue.org.au)

### **Black Dog Institute – TEN: The Essential Network for Health Professionals**

Resources and support to manage burnout and maintain good mental health. Including free psychology/psychiatry services.

[https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/the-essential-network/?utm\\_source=Homepage&utm\\_medium=Banner&utm\\_term=TEN](https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/the-essential-network/?utm_source=Homepage&utm_medium=Banner&utm_term=TEN)

### **Hand-n-Hand Support**

Free, confidential peer support service for health professionals.

<https://www.handnhand.org.au/>

### **DRS4DRS**

A 24/7 confidential support service for doctors and medical students.

<https://www.drs4drs.com.au/>

### **Nurse & Midwife Support**

A 24/7 national support service for nurses and midwives providing access to confidential advice and referral.

<https://www.nmsupport.org.au/>