

Mother and Child 2020 Newsletter

Dear MC2020 participants,

Thank you to all the mothers who joined the MC2020 study! We are excited to share this update and some early results.

The first three MC2020 surveys have closed and your responses will help us answer important questions on your and your baby's health and wellbeing! We have begun analysis and will share some results with you early next year. Please bear with us, it takes time to conduct good, reliable research.

The next MC2020 survey is now out – please check your email! This survey will ask you about the 18 months following the bushfires and your recent experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey focuses mostly on the impact of the continued COVID-19 pandemic on your day-to-day life with a young child. Make sure to check your inbox for your survey link, it will come from mc2020study@anu.edu.au. If you have not received the survey, please check your junk box or send us an email!

Come talk to us! You may get an invitation to take part in an interview. We are randomly selecting participants who have agreed to receive information about other MC2020 studies to take part in interviews. Our current interviews are asking about the early and ongoing impacts of the bushfires and/or COVID-19 on your family and healthcare. We hope that this opportunity to share your thoughts with us can help to highlight key aspects of care and help improve healthcare for women during times of crisis.

Some early results from interviews of mothers experiences during the 2019/20 bushfires

We talked with parents in 2021 about smoke, air quality and pregnancy in the ACT and Southeast NSW. We also talked with experts in public and maternal health, air quality, and housing. The stories and images provided by participants are rich and insightful. Some key findings include:

- Many women who were pregnant or had newborn babies experienced high levels of stress during the bushfire smoke event, including anxiety about



Participant photograph 1 of their environment during the 2019-20 bushfires

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protecting their babies/children from the smoke and disruption to daily life.

- Parents were uncertain about the possible impacts of smoke exposure on their yet to be born or new born baby. Almost all parents would have liked more information about smoke exposure and how they could protect themselves and their children.
- Many mothers experienced disruptions to their pre- and post-natal services (often made worse by COVID-19 restrictions).
- Usual social support networks were disrupted over this period for many parents, who drew on a range of other supports (including, for example, online mothers' groups). Disrupted social support was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Many parents expressed concerns about climate change and their children's future.



Participant photograph 2 of their environment during the 2019-20 bushfires



Participant photograph 3 of their environment during the 2019-20 bushfires

We are feeding back to government and health services that there is a need for...

- Time and place specific air-quality information and advice.
- More detailed information about the effects of smoke exposure on infants and pregnant mothers and advice about what to do.
- Better planning for future smoke events to ensure less disruption of maternal and infant care services.

The team thank you for joining MC2020. We look forward to hearing about the journey of you and your family so far in the next MC2020 survey!



Until next time,
MC2020 team