



9. The Latrobe Early Life Follow-Up (ELF) Study – Marita Dalton

Why study infants and young children?

- Babies and infants are a recognised vulnerable group for being adversely affected by air pollution.
- The aim of the Latrobe ELF Study is to find out whether the smoke from this fire affected the health of babies and children in the years following the fire.
- No studies like this have been done before and it is not known if there will be any longer term health issues identified.
- Finding out about this will help the management of future severe smoke episodes from bushfires or other fires.

Who is conducting study?

- Funded by Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Chief Investigator is Dr Fay Johnston from the Menzies Institute for Medical Research at the University of Tasmania
- Co-investigators from University of Tasmania, Monash University, University of Melbourne, University of Sydney, Edith Cowen University and CSIRO.

Target Group

Children who were born between 1 March 2012 and 31 December 2015 from the towns of Morwell, Moe, Churchill, Traralgon, Newborough, Yallourn and surrounding towns.

- Group 1 (born between Feb 2014 and Nov 2014) will enable us to study the effects of the mother's exposure to the fire smoke during pregnancy.
- Group 2 (born before Feb 2014) will enable us to study the effects of the fire smoke on babies and toddlers.
- Group 3 (born after Nov 2014) will provide a comparison group who were not exposed to the fire smoke at all.

What does the study involve?

The study has five main parts:

1. Completing a survey
2. Collect dust and soil samples from the home
3. Completion of an online monthly child health diary
4. Permission for linkage of survey data to health and education-related datasets
5. Participating in simple lung, heart and blood vessel checks in later years

Benefits?

- This research will not have any direct benefits for individual participants. In some cases, the clinical testing may identify conditions such as asthma earlier than may have otherwise been detected.
- Overall, this research will serve to address the wider concerns of the Latrobe Valley community following the severe smoke event.
- The research will help planning of public health and emergency management response for future events.

Results

Findings from all aspects of the Hazelwood Mine Fire Health Study will be shared with the community through the community advisory group and other community organisations, as well as on the study website.