

Social workers and disaster management across Australia

Key dates	June 2025 – June 2026
Participants sought	Qualified social workers who have worked directly, or indirectly, in a climate change-accelerated disaster impacted context in Australia.
About	Social workers are undervalued within the disaster sector across Australia. While social workers absolutely do make significant contributions across Australia in a range of disaster contexts within and alongside strong multidisciplinary team, the explicit social justice, human rights-based, trauma-informed and anti-oppressive expertise and practice that social workers bring is often under-recognised. Disasters emerge out of the deeply imbalanced power relations and systems enmeshed within our social and environmental fabric, and social workers, already working in long-term roles alongside marginalised communities, have expertise which can help communities shift power and resources in these contexts. In this phase of the research project (Phase 4) the participant, with the researcher (Dr Lisa Ewenson), will co-produce a case study about their professional experiences as connected to climate change-accelerated disaster across Australia. The criteria for participation in this phase of the research project is eligibility for membership as a social worker with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), and to have undertaken work as related, in some way (directly or indirectly, at the micro, meso, or macro levels), to climate change-accelerated disaster.
What is involved	In order to co-produce the case study, the participant and the researcher will have a recorded structured conversation (either online or in-person). Together the social worker's professional experiences in a climate accelerated-disaster context will be explored, as guided by the following questions: What was the climate change-accelerated disaster (brief description)? How were people affected and who were particularly marginalised? What did you do as a social worker in this situation? What social work skills and knowledge did you use? What worked, and what did not work, in terms of skills and knowledge? What 'lessons learned' or recommendations do you have regarding social work practice in this type of context? What recommendations do you have for other professionals, e.g. Defence, Army, Reconstruction Authority etc, about social work as connected to climate change-accelerated disaster? If the participant has been involved in multiple disasters events/contexts, or has had different roles, they may wish to engage in more than one structured conversation, so that more than one case study is developed. To ensure clarity about the case study, the researcher and social worker will try to focus on only one experience at a time. It is expected that these conversations will take around one hour. Once the conversation has been recorded, Dr Lisa Ewenson will use the information to write a draft case study. Participants will then have the opportunity to edit or adjust the case study to ensure it is a correct representation of the experience and conversation of the participant. The authors of the case study will be Dr Lisa Ewenson as the researcher and the participant, unless the participant wishes to remain anonymous. Prior to the recording of the structured conversation the participant will read and sign a consent form indicating their understanding and agreement for their case study to be used: for teaching purposes in tertiary programmes; in the training of disaster management professionals; and for dissemination in a range of publications.

How to get involved	Please contact Dr Lisa Ewenson of UNSW, Sydney, by email: lisa.ewenson@unsw.edu.au or through LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/lisa-ewenson/
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