

Community Impact Research Award, funded by the ACT Government

Please note: This information should be read in conjunction with the [Conditions of Award](#)

1. The Research Award

Mr Fluffy - impact on the ACT community.

A Research Award is being offered by the Population Health Exchange (PHXchange), ANU. This Award is funded by the ACT Government and was a recommendation of the Community and Expert Reference Group of the Asbestos Response Taskforce.

The successful applicant will conduct research that explores the impact of loose fill asbestos insulation (commonly known as 'Mr Fluffy') on the ACT community and society as a whole.

This is an opportunity for scholars to make a significant contribution to their chosen field of research. Applicants from all disciplinary backgrounds are encouraged to apply. Applicants have the freedom to outline a project and choose one or more disciplinary approaches, based on their own strengths and preferences. The Research Award provides an opportunity to undertake inquiry into aspects of the community experience other than physical health.

There are many aspects of the community experience of Mr Fluffy and the responses of government that merit research. The scholar may consider projects that research:

- historical accounts;
- policy responses;
- mental health effects;
- social responses;
- science and technology; or
- any other aspect that will advance learning and research.

For example, the candidate might propose:

- a sociological approach to explore the mental health, social and/or community impacts of 'Mr Fluffy';
- a political science approach to explore how government's decision making and subsequent policy development and implementation influenced outcomes for the community;
- a social history approach to explore a variety of community experiences; or
- a creative arts response to their research e.g. literary, visual, musical or other creative expression to represent the community impact.

Applications are encouraged from people with relevant lived experience with Mr Fluffy for example as a resident, as part of the policy response or private industry.

Applications are also encouraged from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disability, people with culturally diverse background and those who identify as LGBTIQ+.

The Research Award will support the application of creative approaches to research translation to ensure the findings are shared with the community. It is hoped that the research will record an aspect of the community impact of Mr Fluffy and hence contribute to the prevention, and/or optimal management of similar population health catastrophes in the future.

The prospective candidate will be provided access to information relating to the use and removal of loose fill asbestos insulation in Canberra homes in ACT Government administrative records. The

Asbestos Response Taskforce (the taskforce) is currently reviewing for release, relevant records created between 2000 and 2011. The Territory Records Office – ArchivesACT, already provides access to relevant records generated prior to 2000.

Stipend: A stipend of \$10,000 AUD per year is available for three years as long as the scholar remains enrolled full-time as a PhD Student at ANU.

Research costs: the Research Award includes up to \$5,000 (in total) to cover research costs incurred as part of the project, such as data access, travel, conference registration, thesis and publication costs.

**A high benefit PhD scholarship with a stipend of \$38,000 per year to support research on this topic is also open for applications. That PhD scholarship is separate from this Research Award, and they cannot be held in conjunction. Further information is available [here](#)*

2. Application process

Applications for 2021 open in February and will remain open until the Award is awarded. Applications will be reviewed at the start of each month, starting in March 2021.

To express your interest in applying and for more information about the Award please contact:
Dr Ginny Sargent | 02 6125 5546 | 0435 078 918 | phxchange@anu.edu.au

To apply for this Award, please provide the following:

1. CV
2. Academic transcript
3. Expression of Interest about your motivation and suitability for admission to an ANU PhD program (2-4 pages)
4. Research proposal (2-4 pages)
5. Contact details of 2 referees

Applications should be emailed to:

Student Office, Research School of Population Health, Australian National University,
study.rsph@anu.edu.au cc phxchange@anu.edu.au

3. Selection

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview with the selection panel. Selection will be made on the basis of:

- Significance of the proposed research proposal to address an important aspect of the legacy of the community impact of Mr Fluffy, and contribute to the field of research. Consideration will be given to how well the proposed research complements other research in the field;
- Applicant's research potential (based on CV, academic record and EOI);
- Applicant's background including relevant lived experience, such as with Mr Fluffy (this should be outlined in your EOI);
- Research feasibility and location in which the research will be undertaken;
- Referee reports; and
- Comparison with other applications received in the same scholarship round.

Following interview, further consideration will be given to:

- Performance at interview
- English language competency

Applicants will then be required to apply for Admission to the ANU.

4. Background

From 1968 to 1979 loose fill asbestos insulation was installed in more than 1000 homes across Canberra. In recognition of the health risks associated with asbestos, the Commonwealth and ACT Governments between 1988 and 1993 undertook a program to remove all visible and accessible loose fill asbestos which was raw asbestos, crushed and blown into roof spaces and allowed to settle across battens, ceilings, and behind cornices.

On discovery of the migration of residual asbestos fibres into living areas of homes, the ACT Government in 2014 established the Asbestos Response Taskforce (the taskforce) to deliver an effective and enduring response to assist homeowners and their families by removing once and for all, asbestos insulation from Canberra suburbs. The Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme (the scheme) was announced in October 2014. The scheme's principal elements were voluntary buyback and demolition programs designed to demolish each affected home surrendered to the government. The magnitude and complexity of this scheme to respond to the significant health risks posed by asbestos cannot be underestimated.

The vast majority of affected homes have now been demolished; blocks remediated and sold to former homeowners or the general public. New homes are now appearing on Mr Fluffy blocks helping to reinvigorate affected neighbourhoods.

The ACT Government is still delivering the scheme, maintaining a focus on targeted communications, personalised advice and assistance, and individual case management as a top priority so that those impacted by Mr Fluffy can access the support they need.

The Community and Expert Reference Group

The Community and Expert Reference Group (CERG), established in August 2014 by the taskforce, has been providing independent advice to the ACT Government since 2015 on the implementation of the scheme, based on the experience of the community, service sector and industry. In 2018-19, the CERG, being of the view that it is important to remember the legacies of Mr Fluffy in a tangible way and that the community should be consulted about how this is done, undertook together with the ACT Government, a community consultation process to identify the legacies and how they should be best acknowledged in a whole of community manner. The intention of this legacy project was to acknowledge the trauma resulting from a preventable disaster and to promote thinking and behaviour that will prevent any similar avoidable occurrence in the future.

The Mr Fluffy Legacy Project – Consultation Report and Recommendations made 13 recommendations under six headings. Under the heading 'Education' the report recommended the establishment of a PhD scholarship or coursework related to a theme resulting from Mr Fluffy, including, but not limited to:

- Public administration and decision making in responding to crisis;
- History or biographies;
- Architecture and design; and
- Treating ongoing and/or long-term mental illness and stress in people exposed to asbestos.

The ACT Government agreed to this recommendation to sponsor a PhD scholarship program, with the intention of progressing research that responds to the legacy of Mr Fluffy in the ACT. Further information about the scheme can be sourced from the ACT Asbestos Response Taskforce website <http://www.asbestostaskforce.act.gov.au>

For more information about the Award please contact:

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