

Plain Language Information Statement

Faculty of Science and Technology and the Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation (CeRDI)

PROJECT TITLE:	Investigating the influence of volunteer characteristics on the quantity and quality of citizen science participation
PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER:	Dr. Birgita Hansen
OTHER RESEARCHERS:	Mr. Patrick Bonney, Mr. John Gooderham

Thank you for your interest in this research. The following pages will provide you with further information about the project, so that you can decide if you would like to take part. Please take the time to read this information carefully.

What is this research about?

The field of citizen science is making significant contributions to scientific research and public education, but its success wholly depends on an active and engaged volunteer base. This research project aims to better understand volunteer engagement and behavioural outcomes in a short-term, but ongoing, freshwater citizen science project, the National Waterbug Blitz (NWBB), funded by the Inspiring Australia Citizen Science Grant Programme. We are specifically investigating the effects of volunteer characteristics, including motivations, demographics and prior volunteer experience, and environmental contexts on the quantity and quality of citizen scientists' contributions.

What information will you collect?

Upon registration in the program, you will be invited to respond to a short questionnaire. Should you agree to participate, the online survey will be sent through to you via email and will ask for general information about yourself (age, gender etc.), any past experience with environmental volunteering organisations, and, finally, your motivations for participating the NWBB.

After each round of sampling (in Spring, 2019 and 2020), you will be again invited to respond to another short questionnaire about your satisfaction with the NWBB and whether it has improved your skills, knowledge of waterways, or changed your attitude regarding waterway conservation.

We will also be collecting information from the data you upload to the 'WaterBug App'. This includes non-identifying information about site location of sampling, the choice of program and the extent of app usage.

What are the possible benefits?

Your participation will contribute crucial information to help the planning and development of citizen science programs to maximise their potential for waterway research. Furthermore, the information you provide will contribute practical information that will be used to ensure the National Waterbug Blitz is enjoyed and valued by all participants.

What are the possible risks?

The focus of data collection is on the aggregated characteristics of program participants rather than on details specific to you personally. This approach ensures that you will not be identified in any research outputs. Please note aggregated and de-identified research data may be used in future data projects.

It is unlikely that you will experience any distress when completing the survey. However, if you are concerned about what has been asked we advise you to contact a medical health practitioner or access Beyond Blue information line (1300 224 636), Lifeline (131 114) or the Mental Health Advice Line (1300 280 737) for expert advice, support and information to deal with personal challenges and stress.

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Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free at any time up until and while completing the surveys to withdraw your participation, without explanation. There are no consequences for withdrawing from this research. The exception to this is if I withdraw after information has been aggregated – it is unable to be individually identified - so from this point it is not possible to withdraw your information/data, although you may still withdraw your consent to participate in following surveys.

You may also choose not to respond to all questions in the survey—just answer the questions you are comfortable with. If you choose to participate in this research, your consent is assumed through the completion and submission of each survey. If you agree to participate in follow-up surveys (i.e. after participating in the Blitz), we ask that you provide your first name and email contact, so we can invite you to respond to a follow-up survey.

Will I hear about the results of this project?

Yes. The information you share will be used in the preparation of research papers for publication, conference papers and presentations, and industry-based stories for general publication.

What will happen to information about me?

Disseminated results will not include information that identifies you (unless your specific permission has been obtained). All research data for this study will be retained, securely, for a minimum of five years. Thereafter it will be destroyed in accordance with the institutional requirements for data security. All named researchers for this study have extensive experience in conducting research and abiding by the associated ethical principles. Data confidentiality will be maintained, as only the named researchers will have access to the data.

Where can I get further information?

If you require further information, or require support regarding your participation in this project, please contact Dr. Birgita Hansen. Phone +61 432 673 054, or email b.hansen@federation.edu.au. If you wish to make a complaint regarding the conduct of the research please contact the Human Research Ethics Officer (details below) for attention.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Federation University with approval number A018-095. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Federation University Ethics Officer (details below). All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled 'Investigating the influence of volunteer characteristics on the quantity and quality of citizen science participation', please contact the Principal Researcher. Dr. Birgita Hansen of the Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation
EMAIL: b.hansen@federation.edu.au
PH: +61 432 673 054

Should you (i.e. the participant) have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Federation University Ethics Officers, Research Services, Federation University Australia,
P O Box 663 Mt Helen Vic 3353
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Email: research.ethics@federation.edu.au
CRICOS Provider Number 00103D