Plain Language Statement:
Individual interviews with teachers and school staff

Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Project: Teacher Climate Superpowers: Co-developing and testing climate change related resources and strategies to support teacher mental health and wellbeing (Phase 1)

Project supervisor: Professor Lisa Gibbs (Lead Researcher), Tel: +61 03 0439 393 917, Email: lgibbs@unimelb.edu.au

Additional researchers:

- **Dr Katitza Marinkovic Chavez (Main Contact), marinkovick@unimelb.edu.au**
- **Phoebe Quinn (Main Contact), phoebeq@unimelb.edu.au**
- Jane Nursey, jnursey@unimelb.edu.au
- Professor Mehmet Ulubasoglu (Deakin University), mehmet.ulubasoglu@deakin.edu.au
- Associate Professor Sean Cowlishaw (Monash University), sean.cowlishaw@monash.edu
- Professor Erdal Tekin (American University, USA), tekin@american.edu
- Robyn Molyneaux, robyn.molyneaux@unimelb.edu.au
- Dr Rebecca Patrick, rebecca.patrick@unimelb.edu.au
- Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick, dianne.Vella-Brodrick@unimelb.edu.au
- April Harrison, april.harrison1@unimelb.edu.au
- Nathaniel Barker, lnbarker@student.unimelb.edu.au

Introduction

Thank you for considering participating in this study. We have invited you to participate in this study because of your role teaching climate change lessons in schools in Australia (or preparing to do so) for grade levels 4 and 10.

This document provides information about the Teacher Climate Superpowers project we are undertaking at the University of Melbourne in collaboration with the Teachers Health Foundation. Please take the time to read this information carefully. You may ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about. **Participation is voluntary: there is no obligation to join this study and you can decide to withdraw from the project at any time.**

This project is being conducted by Professor Lisa Gibbs, Dr Katitza Marinkovic Chavez, Phoebe Quinn, Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick, April Harrison, Robyn Molyneaux, Jane Nursey and Dr Rebecca Patrick from the University of Melbourne. Our team also includes Professor Mehmet Ulubasoglu (Deakin University), Associate Professor Sean Cowlishaw (Monash University) and Professor Erdal Tekin (American University, USA).

What is this study about?

The Teacher Climate Superpowers project is the continuation of Your Climate Superpowers, an interactive website co-developed with young people between 12 – 25 years old on how to identify and use their strengths to navigate climate change.

In the **Teacher Climate Superpowers** project we want to **collaborate with teachers to create a website to support their wellbeing in the context of climate change and enhance their role as climate change educators.**

Co-developing the Teacher Climate Superpowers website is the first stage of a larger project. Once the website is complete, we plan to carry out a small pilot of the combined teacher and student resources (2025) and then a multi-school exploratory trial (2026-2027). We will ask you for your permission to contact you when these next stages take place.

What will I be asked to do?

Should you agree to participate, we will invite you to participate in an **online interview** led by a member of our research team. The interview will last approximately one hour. The place and time of the activity will be determined based on what suits you.

During the interview, we will ask you about your experiences and ideas on what works to support teachers in learning about, acting on and teaching about climate change in a way that is positive for their own wellbeing and their relationships with students. We will also ask you about your ideas for creating a website that is useful and engaging for teachers.

During the interview, you can choose to keep your camera on or off, and we will only keep the audio recording of the activity. The activity will be audio recorded using Zoom and transcribed using an Australian professional transcription service or Microsoft Word's automated transcription function. We will also save contributions that you make during the interview through the chat. Information captured in the interview recording will be subject to Word's Services Agreement and Privacy Statement, and all information will be stored I the University of Melbourne's servers.

Based on everyone's ideas, we will work with an artist and web developer to create the Teacher Climate Superpowers website, which will be connected to the current Your Climate Superpowers resource for young people. It is unlikely that we will be able to include all the ideas expressed during the project in the new website. Because of this, at the end of this project we will invite you to complete a **15-20 minute survey** to give us your feedback on the website and your experience in this project. Based on your feedback, we will continue making improvements to the website and our approaches to collaborating with teachers and schools in doing research.

We truly appreciate teachers' interest in taking part in this project and aim to work with a diverse group of teachers in terms of aspects like gender, cultural background, location, teaching role and career stage. Due to time and resource limitations, it may not be feasible for everyone to take part in one of the interviews if we receive a very large number expressions of interest or if we have too many people representing one particular group. If this happens, **we will get back to everyone who signed the consent form to confirm whether or not we can invite them to an interview. Additionally, all teachers who provide their signed consent will receive a link to the survey to provide their feedback on the website.** If you do not feel comfortable or are not available to take part in a interview, you may also prefer to only respond the survey.

What are the possible benefits?

We hope that this project will lead to better support for teachers to deal with the challenges of climate change. We will share our findings with policy makers and practitioners for this purpose. The Teacher Climate Superpowers website will also be freely available online.

If you participate in an individual interview (approximately 1 hour) you will receive a $50 gift voucher as a token of appreciation. There may be opportunities for further participation (e.g. taking part in a co-design workshop) – where this would involve significant time outside your regular teaching role and hours, details of gift card reimbursement will be communicated to you in advance.

What are the possible risks?

We will not ask you any questions that may bring back distressing memories related to your work or experiences dealing with climate change. Instead, we will focus on what strengths and resources can help teachers navigate the challenges that climate change presents to their wellbeing and profession. For example, we may ask you about what helps you feel safe, connected, effective and hopeful about your role as a teacher.

There are no likely risks from participating and we are experienced in supporting people through difficult emotions. If during the interview you feel uncomfortable or distressed, you can choose to stop at any time or skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you are experiencing high levels of anxiety or stress in relation to work, climate change or other experiences that may be related to the topic of this project, we advise you not to participate. We are aware that talking about climate change in contexts where it is still a highly controversial and sensitive topic may result in backlash. If this situation applies to your life, and you are highly concerned about experiencing any backlash from participating in this project, we also advise you not to participate. At the end of this letter, we have also provided information about support services which may be useful if you are experiencing any distress.

Do I have to take part?

Not at all. Participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time before or during the interview. Participating on withdrawing from this project will not affect your relationship with school you work at or the Teachers Health Foundation.

Please note that if you withdraw from the study after the interview, it may be difficult to withdraw any contributions you have made that have already been combined with other responses and de-identified in the analysis and reporting.

Will I hear about the results of this project?

Yes! We are keen to let you know the results. We will share a summary with you via email. We will also develop scientific and media articles and presentations and share these outcomes with all the teacher co-developers in this project.

What will happen to information about me?

You can choose to be acknowledged as one of the co-developers of the website using your real name, a pseudonym or to remain anonymous. We have several procedures to keep information about you

and what you say during the interview and survey in a way that is safe and confidential, subject to any legal requirements. For example, we may include in our reports some quotes from what you said during the project but will not publish them with any information that may help identify who you are. During the interview, we advise you to connect from a place that is private and use headphones.

However, because this is a small study and there will be few participants, there is a possibility that someone who knows you may recognise your comments. If you say something during the interview that you don't want included in reports, you can let us know immediately afterwards that you need it to be deleted from the records, but if this is a concern to you, we recommend that you do not participate.

We will keep information from the project on the servers of the University, in line with legal requirements, for 10 years. During that time, data from this project may be used for future projects related to people's experiences of navigating eco-distress and/or climate and sustainability education by members of our team.

Who is funding this project?

This project is funded by the Teachers Health Foundation.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about the project, please contact Dr Katitza Marinkovic Chavez to +61390357595 or katitza.marinkovic@unimelb.edu.au

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

This project has human research ethics approval from The University of Melbourne (ID 25818). 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 **Research Integrity Administrator, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity,** University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 1376 or **Email: research-integrity@unimelb.edu.au.** All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team and/or the name or ethics ID number of the research project (ID 25818).

Where can I get support if I want counselling for myself?

There are several ways in which you can get one-off or multi-session counselling for yourself. These are all independent of this project. We are more than happy to talk about these options.

In general, good places to start for **one-off support** (all free of charge) are:

- Lifeline (https://www.lifeline.org.au or phone 13 11 14)
- Beyond Blue (https://www.beyondblue.org.au or phone 1300 22 4636)
- 13YARN (phone 13 92 76, available 24 hours/7 days) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping.

For **multi-session support**, a general practitioner (GP) can provide you with a mental health treatment plan to get a Medicare rebate and refer you to a mental health professional. You can also search for

these yourself via Find a Psychologist and Find a Social Worker (you can insert key words to search for specialisations). Finally, your organisation may have an independent Employee Assistance Program.

Some services are also available specifically for feelings of **distress relating to climate change**. A good place to start is Psychology for a Safe Climate, a not-for-profit which provides:

- An online directory which can help you find Climate Aware Practitioners
- Support for people wanting to run Climate Distress Workshops
- Resources