

Group Psychotherapy Program for Male Perpetrators of Domestic Violence and Female Partners

QUT Ethics Approval Number 2000000007

Research team

Principal Researcher: Mr Dave Misso Doctor of Philosophy candidate
Associate Researchers: Prof Robert Schweitzer Principal Supervisor
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Why is the study being conducted?

This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Philosophy program by Dave Misso.

The purpose of this project is to develop, run and test a 12-week group psychotherapy program for men who perpetrate domestic violence.

Potential participants will be males and their female partners, aged 18 years and over who report issues with domestic violence involving an intimate partner.

You are invited to participate in this project because you are currently involved in an intimate relationship where domestic violence is an issue.

While your partner will be involved in the treatment program, you will not receive treatment. Your involvement is a key aspect in this research in helping us assess the outcome of the proposed group program.

You will not be able to participate in this study if:

- You are under 18 years of age;
- You are in an existing relationship with any member of the research team;
- If you have any sense of feeling coerced or forced to participate in this project;
- If your partner is currently involved in criminal justice processes;
- You turn up for a session drunk from alcohol or high on drugs. You will not be permitted to participate. Participants who engage in recurrent episodes of intoxication will be excluded from the study;
- If there is a current Domestic Violence Order which does not allow for counselling or contact between you and your partner.

What does participation involve?

If you choose to volunteer, your participation will involve an initial interview, for approximately one (1) hour, to discuss the program and what your participation will entail. Following this, at a later date, six (6) weeks before the treatment program begins, your participation will involve a group session, for approximately two (2) hours. At this group session you will meet the other female partners of the

male participants who will be attending the proposed group program. At this group session you will also be provided with information on domestic violence, the aims and objectives of the proposed group program, complete a brief questionnaire of your experience of domestic violence in your current relationship, and answer any questions that you might have. You will also be introduced to a women's advocate who will maintain regular contact with you for the duration of the program. The women's advocate will conduct regular assessments to ascertain your level of safety throughout the program. Following this, in weeks 1, 6, & 12 weeks of the group treatment program, and at follow-up 6 weeks following completion of the treatment program, at a time that is suitable to you, you will be invited to participate in four individual interviews with one of the research team, and complete brief questionnaires asking for your experiences of your male partners. These individual interviews will be audio recorded and will be for approximately one (1) hour each. The interviews and group session will be at the QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic, Kelvin Grove. The information obtained from your individual sessions and questionnaires will be used in assessing the outcome of the proposed group program.

As part of your involvement you will be provided with information about the factors associated with domestic violence. Your male partner will be aware of the information that you will receive in your group session and that you will be asked about your experience of your male partner as he progresses through the group.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY INFORMATION THAT YOU PROVIDE DURING THE COURSE OF THE PROGRAM WILL NOT BE PROVIDED TO YOUR MALE PARTNER. YOUR INTERVIEWS AND GROUP SESSION WILL BE CONDUCTED SEPARATELY TO YOUR PARTNER'S ATTENDANCE AT THE GROUP PROGRAM.

If your male partner withdraws from the group program, you will be informed of his withdrawal from the program. If this situation arises you will be given the choice of continuing in the research or be provided with an exit interview and referral session.

If you withdraw from the program, you will be provided with an exit interview and referral session and your male partner will have the option of withdrawing or continuing for the remainder of the program. If your partner decides to withdraw in this circumstance, he will be provided with an exit interview and referral session. This session will involve discussing options that might be available to you at that point and answering any questions that you might have given your particular situation. We will also assess any risk that might be present for you and apply the principles as outlined in the Risk section below.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate you can withdraw from the research without comment or penalty. Your decision to participate, or not participate, will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with the QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic. Your participation will involve between eight (8) to ten (10) hours of your time over a 24 week period.

What are the possible benefits for me if I take part?

The program has been designed with a view to reducing the potential for perpetrating domestic violence in intimate relationships. The project aims to improve the quality of current programs aimed at helping men to reduce acts of violence against women and children.

HOWEVER, PLEASE NOTE, AS THIS IS A NEW PROGRAM, AND IS BEING TESTED, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE ANY BENEFIT TO YOU OR YOUR PARTNER DIRECTLY.

PLEASE NOTE ALSO: THIS PROGRAM WILL NOT BENEFIT YOU OR YOUR PARTNER IN ANY LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

The program is being directed by a registered Counselling Psychologist with over 30 years' experience in assisting men and women in dealing with issues relating to domestic violence.

The twelve (12) week program is provided at no cost to you or your partner. Free parking will be available and light refreshments will be served during the break at your group session. At the completion of the project you will receive a café voucher to the value of \$10 as a token of appreciation.

What are the possible risks for me if I take part?

The research team has identified the following possible risks in relation to participating in this study:

- Given the nature of what we are researching, you may experience some level of discomfort in answering some of the questions, either in the questionnaires, or face-to-face with the researcher. It is not unusual, in this type of situation, for people to feel a level of discomfort, and even distressed, by sharing sensitive personal material, relating to yourself, your partner and your particular experiences with others. The research team is trained to support you in being able to deal with any of these experiences if they arise.
- There may be a risk of violence continuing in your relationship in spite of your partner's attendance in the group program. The research team can provide you with support in accessing the most appropriate services in this regard.
- If, in the course of the research, you disclose any behaviour that may be considered to be illegal or a threat to yourself, or to another person/s, then the researcher may be obligated to report that behaviour to the appropriate authority. We are required by law to report issues of child abuse. The priority of this research is the safety of the participants, research team, and community. Any behaviour that may be deemed to be harmful to another or where safety is at immediate risk, either to yourself or other, will be discussed with you and your partner. If necessary, you will be referred to the most appropriate service for assistance. Depending on the nature of risk, these services might include the police and other mental health agencies.

In case you experience any discomfort or distress, you can access support from the following sources:

QUT provides for limited free psychology, family therapy or counselling services (face-to-face only) for research participants of QUT projects who may experience discomfort or distress as a result of their participation in the research. Should you wish to access this service please call the Clinic Receptionist on **07 3138 0999** (Monday–Friday only 9am–5pm), QUT Psychology and Counselling Clinic, 44 Musk Avenue, Kelvin Grove, and indicate that you are a research participant. Alternatively, Lifeline provides access to online, phone or face-to-face support, call **13 11 14** for 24-hour telephone crisis support.

Support for women is available at 1800 RESPECT on **1800 737 732**, DVCONNECT on **1800 811 811**, and Brisbane Domestic Violence Service on **07 3217 2544**.

Support for men is also available 24/7 through MensLine Australia on **1300 789 978** (please see <http://www.dvconnect.org/mensline/> for more information).

Other options for seeking assistance can be provided at your request and these may involve a fee for service.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses. Information gathered during the course of participating in the intervention will be kept confidential and will only be released under the following conditions:

- With your consent, or
- Where there is a legal obligation to do so, or
- If there is an immediate and specified risk of harm to an identifiable person or persons, that can be averted only by disclosing information.

Any data collected as part of this project will be stored securely as per QUT's Management of Research Data Policy.

Your one-on-one interview sessions that will be audio recorded will be used solely by the research team and will not be used for any other purpose. The recordings will be saved using codes to protect your privacy and to maintain confidentiality. The recordings will also be password protected, with only the research team having access to the password. All data will be stored indefinitely. The audio recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the project.

Please note that **non-identifiable** data collected in this project may be used as comparative data in future projects or stored on a selection of databases in different subject areas that are freely available on the internet for secondary analysis.

At the completion of the project, you will receive a summary report of the findings from this research. No identifying information will be included in the report. The report may include quotations from people's accounts of their experiences. These quotations will not contain any information that might lead to a particular quote being attributed any particular person.

How do I give my consent to participate?

If you are interested in participating, please contact Dave Misso on 07 3342 1838. An initial interview will be arranged to discuss the program with you and your partner, separately, prior to you giving your consent.

What if I have questions about the research project?

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact one of the listed researchers:

Dave Misso	dd.misso@hdr.qut.edu.au	07 3342 1838
Robert Schweitzer	r.schweitzer@qut.edu.au	07 3138 4617
Patricia Obst	p.obst@qut.edu.au	07 3138 4931

What if I have a concern or complaint regarding the conduct of the research project?

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. If you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, particularly in relation to matters concerning policies, information or complaints about the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Advisory Team on 07 3138 5123 or email humanethics@qut.edu.au.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.