

Controversial research looks at perpetrator views on domestic violence

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Brian Martin from Uniting Care Wesley Country SA with Dr Helen McLaren and Dr Ian Goodwin-Smith from Flinders at the launch of their paper.

New Flinders University research on domestic violence has taken the approach of interviewing both male perpetrators and women in the hope of understanding how to successfully intervene and keep women safe.

Conducted at Flinders University's Australian Centre for Community

Services Research by Director, Dr Ian Goodwin-Smith and Dr Helen McLaren, the researchers said that focussing resources on perpetrators can be unpopular and might be seen as a diversion of resources that should be used for victims.

The [research paper](#), titled 'Hearing their voices. Perceptions of Women and Men on Reducing Men's Perpetration of Domestic Violence' is being launched this Tuesday (26 April) at the Men's Shed in Port Pirie, South Australia.

It was funded by Uniting Care Wesley Country SA with input and financial support from the South Australian Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DSCI) Homelessness Strategy, and comes on the heels of Australian Bureau of Statistics family and [domestic violence](#) figures for 2014 showing that police recorded a total of 5,691 victims of family and domestic violence offences.

In Australia the number of women that will experience violence in their life time is 1 in 3 and 1 in 6 has experienced violence from a current or former partner.

The South Australian Domestic Violence Gateway Service, meanwhile, reported a 20% increase in the number of calls from 2014 to 2015.

"Our research explored the ways in which a successful approach to the prevention of domestic violence may include the men who use violence in their relationships," said Dr Goodwin-Smith.

"We interviewed 20 men and 20 women, who have experienced or been the perpetrators of domestic violence to understand their views on violence reduction."

Dr McLaren said the research balanced the views of both women and

men on enhancing the safety of women.

"Even with the significant profile of domestic violence, it is important for us all to work together to prevent this problem from continuing to grow," she said.

"The research project includes heartfelt stories of people with lived experience of domestic violence and uses their own words."

Patricia Rollins, Manager of SA Uniting Care Wesley Country SA's Yorke and Mid North Domestic Violence service, said her organisation had so far in this financial year worked with 240 women and children who had experienced domestic violence.

"Last night, 40 women and children were housed in crisis and transitional accommodation in the Mid North due to domestic violence," she said.

"Currently, 12 men have accessed our service to change their violent behaviours."

Quotes from men interviewed as part of the research:

"I heard about men's groups but I thought I could do it on my own. But I bottled it up. I come here and release instead of releasing in a dangerous way. Coming here keeps the children safe."

"Domestic violence creeps up on men too. You don't want to be a perpetrator and you don't even realise you are being violent until it is really violent – and then it's too late."

Other report quotes:

"Women do not see the early warning signs associated with domestic violence ... [women](#) have difficulty naming the men's behaviour as domestic violence ... men likewise did not recognise they were controlling or violent until their behaviour became physical ..."

"Prevention and early intervention, alongside intervention responses with perpetrators, is essential for breaking the intergenerational cycle of domestic violence. This is supported by a growing evidence base on the benefits of maximising opportunities for social change, which is critical for building a stronger future for Australia's next generations that is free from violence."

Provided by Flinders University

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