



WRITTEN CONSENT for Participants

The underlying causes of psychological distress in young Canberra Women:

A focus group study

I have read and understood the Information Sheet you have provided me about the focus group study. I understand that disclosure of serious issues, including sexual or physical abuse, may be subject to mandatory reporting to the relevant authorities (under to the Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT), ss356) by the facilitator of the focus groups. I have had all questions and concerns about the project (listed below) addressed to my satisfaction.

_____)
_____)

I agree to participate in the project.

YES NO

I agree for my parents/guardians to be contacted to be included in a separate focus group for parents.

YES NO

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent /Guardian Signature (if participant is under 18 years of age): _____

Date: _____

Contact details (if agreed above) :

Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Project Title: The underlying causes of psychological distress in young Canberra women.

Participant Information Sheet

Researcher: This project is led by A/Prof Alison Calear from the Centre for Mental Health Research, Research School of Population Health, Australian National University.

General Outline of the Project:

- **Description and Methodology:**

The study involves focus groups where participants will be asked what they believe contributes to young Canberra women aged 15 to 19 years being nearly twice as likely to report high psychological distress compared to males, and why their rates are 10% higher than the National rates for women in this age group.

- **Participants:**

Approximately 45 people representing four targeted groups will be recruited to participate in the focus groups. These groups include young women aged between 15 to 19 years that do not have a clinical diagnosis for depression, anxiety or other major mental health disorder (maximum of 5 people per group), parents of young women between the age of 12 and 25 years, college and university educators, and allied health professionals who work with young women between the ages of 15 to 19 years (maximum of 10 per group).

- **Use of Data and Feedback:**

A paper survey will be used to collect demographic data. A condition of participation requires audio recordings of the focus group discussions for data collection. Recordings are transcribed for the researchers to analyse the data. All data will be aggregated and findings will be used to write a report to the ACT Office for Women, and to produce published academic articles and conference presentations. All data will be de-identified so that individuals cannot be identified by the data. No identifying information will be published or revealed for any reason.

A summary of the research findings will be sent to the email address you originally contacted us on when they become available.

- **Project Funding:**

This project is funded by the ACT Office for Women.

Participant Involvement:

- **Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal:**

Participation in the focus group study is voluntary. Completion of the questionnaire is also voluntary and you may choose not to answer any question. You may withdraw before or during the focus group session. You may also withdraw your consent after the focus group session up until the data is prepared for report and publication. Every effort will be made to identify your focus group data and remove it, however it should be noted that isolating and destroying individual contributions after the focus groups may not be possible given the nature of group discussions.

- **What does participation in the research entail?**

If you volunteer for this project, you will be contacted by the research team and invited to participate in a focus group session. Prior to the focus group those in the young women group will be asked to fill in a brief questionnaire that accompanies this information pack, and bring this to your focus group session along with a signed consent form. All other participants will be asked to only fill in a consent form.

Focus groups will contain between five and ten participants and will last for approximately 90 minutes (1 ½ hours). Focus groups for the young women groups will contain a maximum of five participants. The focus group will be run by a clinically trained registered psychologist (the primary facilitator), along with one

other person from the study's research staff who will record the focus group's responses. In the focus group, the primary facilitator will ask you to share your ideas, insights, experiences and perspectives on depression and anxiety in young Canberra women. There will be a series of questions to help prompt your ideas and thoughts. The following are examples of the type of questions that will be used to start discussions. It is worth noting that these questions are starting points only and may be drilled down upon by the facilitator to elicit more personal responses.

- Why do you think females in the 15-19 year age group are twice as likely as males to have psychological distress, anxiety and depression?
- What help is available for young women when they feel stress, anxiety or depression? How accessible is this help?
- If you could change one thing to reduce depression and anxiety amongst young women what would it be?
- What examples of psychological distress, anxiety or depression have you seen amongst women aged between 15 and 19?

The purpose of the focus groups are to get your ideas on causes and risk factors for psychological distress in young women. Sharing your experiences, perspectives and observations are an important part of this process. However, you should be aware that disclosure of serious issues, including sexual or physical abuse, may be subject to mandatory reporting to relevant authorities (under to the Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT), ss356) by the facilitator of the focus groups.

- **Location and Duration:**

Focus groups will be conducted at either the Centre for Mental Health Research, Building 63, Eggleston Road, Australian National University or at your school premises. You will be advised of the location after you contact us with your interest in being involved in the study. It is expected that the focus groups will take between 1 hour and 90 minutes.

- **Risks:**

Due to the nature of the topic it is possible that participating in the focus groups could trigger discomfort or psychological distress. To support participants the groups will be run by a registered psychologist who is trained in supporting people who experience distress. Contact details of supports and resources, such as Lifeline Australian and Headspace, will also be provided for all participants.

- **Benefits:**

We hope that the experience of participating in the focus group study is a positive one for you, and that it provides you with the opportunity to discuss ideas and opinions on the topic that is important to you. Your insights into the factors that contribute to the high rates of psychological distress in young Canberra women will inform a report to the ACT Office for Women, thereby providing the ACT Government with information that can help in the development of prevention and intervention strategies and policy to reduce these alarming rates.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. All data that is gathered through the demographic questionnaire and focus groups will be kept confidential. The data will be de-identified so that individuals cannot be identified. The data will not be released to anyone outside of the study. All publications will only include statistical summaries so that individuals cannot be identified.

As a focus group member, you agree to maintain the confidentiality of the group discussions, and that individuals in focus groups should refrain from making statements of a confidential nature or that are defamatory of any person.

Privacy Notice:

In collecting your personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_010007 and it contains information about how a person can:

- Access or seek correction to their personal information;
- Complain about a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint.

Data Storage:

- **Where:**

All hard copy documents with personal information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the Centre for Mental Health Research. Electronic data will be stored in password protected files that are only accessible by the Study's research team.

- **How long:**

All data will be stored for at least five years from the date of any publication arising from the research.

- **Handling of Data following the required storage period:**

At the end of the five year period hard-copy data will be destroyed. Electronic data will be archived *in a de-identified format*.

Queries and Concerns:

- **Contact Details for More Information:**

If you have any questions or concerns relating to this study please contact A/Prof Alison Calear on 02 6125 8406 or alison.calear@anu.edu.au.

- **Contact Details if in Distress:**

If you experience any distress related to this study please contact

- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Beyondblue - 1300 22 4636
- Youthline – 135 247
- Kids helpline – 1800 55 1800
- HeadSpace (Canberra) - 6201 5343 - <https://headspace.org.au/headspace-centres/headspace-canberra/>
- ACT Mental health services - Mental Health Triage – 1800 629 354 / 6205 1065
- eMHprac – online mental health resources - <http://www.emhprac.org.au/>

An excellent online resource to help prevent and manage symptoms of depression or anxiety can be found at MoodGym. This self-help resource – developed by researchers at the ANU – is free by registering for an account at <https://moodgym.com.au>.

Ethics Committee Clearance:

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol 2017/652). If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee
The Australian National University
Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au