

# Working With Men's Network

## A Tasmanian Initiative in Understanding

Hosted by the Onesimus Foundation • Risdon Vale, Tasmania

## What is the Working With Men's Network?

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The Working With Men's Network (WWMN) is a monthly professional networking event for practitioners, researchers, students, and volunteers who work with men who use violence. It is a Tasmanian initiative established to build a stronger, more informed sector — one grounded in evidence, connected in practice, and oriented toward continual improvement.

The Network operates from a simple but important premise: those who work daily with men who use violence need regular access to current research, emerging practice frameworks, and each other. Isolated practitioners working in silos are less effective. WWMN creates a structured context in which shared knowledge becomes shared capacity.

The Onesimus Foundation provides the meeting space and administrative support. Each month, a researcher, practitioner, or specialist organisation presents their current work, followed by facilitated discussion. The format is deliberately accessible — breakfast sessions held at the Foundation's premises at 550 East Derwent Highway, Risdon Vale.

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## Why the Network Exists

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Men who use violence against family members present complex challenges across the justice, health, housing, child safety, and community sectors. Effective intervention requires practitioners to navigate contested research, rapidly evolving practice frameworks, trauma-informed approaches, and system-level gaps simultaneously.

No single organisation or sector holds all the answers. Effective responses to men who use violence emerge from cross-sector collaboration, honest evaluation of what works, and the willingness to interrogate assumptions. WWMN was formed to create the relational infrastructure that makes this possible in Tasmania.

Tasmania's relatively small population presents both challenge and opportunity. The challenge is limited local research capacity. The opportunity is that key practitioners across government and non-government organisations are accessible to one another in ways uncommon in larger jurisdictions. WWMN capitalises on this — creating a monthly gathering that brings together the breadth of the sector.

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## Who Attends?

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The Network is open to anyone whose professional or voluntary work brings them into contact with men who use violence, or with the systems designed to respond to that violence. Attendees include:

- Practitioners from specialist men's behaviour change programs
  - Family violence frontline workers and case managers
  - Police, corrections, and justice sector professionals
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- Child safety and child protection workers
- Counsellors, psychologists, and allied health professionals
- Housing and homelessness support workers
- Researchers and academic staff
- Students on professional placement
- Volunteers working in relevant programs

The cross-sector composition of the Network is a deliberate design feature. Family violence and men's behaviour change do not sit within a single portfolio. Responses to men who use violence require coordinated work across systems. WWMN creates the relational conditions for that coordination.

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## Format and Structure

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WWMN meets monthly, typically as a breakfast event. Sessions run approximately two to three hours and follow a consistent structure:

### **Presentation**

A researcher, clinician, or specialist organisation delivers a presentation on current research, an emerging practice framework, or a specific issue relevant to working with men who use violence.

### **Facilitated Discussion**

The presentation opens into structured discussion. Participants are invited to reflect on how the material connects with their own practice context, raise questions, and identify implications for the sector.

### **Networking**

The informal exchange that surrounds the formal program is an integral part of the Network's value. Practitioners who rarely encounter one another within their daily roles build collegial relationships that support ongoing collaboration.

The accessible format — no registration barrier, no fee, no formal membership — is intentional. The Network is designed to lower the threshold for participation and maximise the breadth of the sector it draws together.

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## Presentations and Topics

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WWMN presentations span a broad range of subjects connected to men's use of violence and the practitioner response. Past presentations have addressed:

## **Narratives of Responsibility, Forgiveness, Change, and Hope — Ron Frey**

Dr Ron Frey previewed an upcoming keynote commissioned for Queensland family support workers, exploring the kinds of conversations that support men who have caused harm to hold themselves genuinely accountable while remaining open to change. Drawing on a wide historical perspective and contemporary psychotherapeutic practice, Ron examined the shame-to-guilt pivot as the neurological precondition for moral reasoning, and developed the concept of Reasonable Hope — goal, agency, and pathway — as a methodology practitioners and the system must actively hold on behalf of the men they work with.

## **Complex Family Violence Intelligence: The Safe Family Coordination Unit — Phillip Shanahan**

Phillip Shanahan, Investigator with the Department of Justice Safe Family Coordination Unit (SFCU), outlined the Unit's role in collating and analysing complex family violence incidents using perpetrator and victim data from DoJ databases to identify families at elevated risk. Operating under the Family Violence Act 2004, Sentencing Act 1997, and Corrections Act 1997, the SFCU translates cross-agency data into coordinated early intervention. Phillip brings direct practitioner experience from years delivering criminogenic programs at Risdon Prison, grounding the Unit's analytical work in an informed understanding of individual behaviour and desistance.

## **Family Violence and Behaviour Change**

Dr Ron Frey and Dr Romy Winter of the Lifeline DV Alert program presented the irradiation model of family violence, examining the question of choice in violent behaviour and the impacts of family violence on child attachment. Their session explored the theoretical underpinnings of contemporary intervention and challenged practitioners to consider the relational and developmental consequences of violence in the home.

## **Restorative Practice**

John Lennox, an experienced practitioner who developed restorative practice applications within Tasmania Police and later with Youth Justice and the Education Department, presented on resolving conflict through restorative practice. The session covered Affect Script Psychology and practical questioning techniques that build understanding between parties in conflict. Participants engaged with scenarios to practise their learning.

## **Perpetrator Identification and Victim-Perpetrators**

Alina Thomas, CEO of Engender Equality, presented research and practice experience regarding perpetrators who identify as victim-survivors. Her session examined the challenge of predominant aggressor identification and Engender Equality's guidelines for practitioners determining whether victim-survivor services are appropriate for men who claim victimhood within relationships where they are the predominant aggressor.

## **Research Translation: Vandalism and Youth Offending**

Dr Romy Winter presented findings from a City of Launceston research project examining vandalism in northern suburbs. Drawing on Tasmanian Police and Council data, the research identified key preconditions for vandalism, explored the role of motivation and gender, and highlighted case studies of effective intervention. The session modelled how local research can inform practitioner response to specific offending behaviours.

## Trauma-Informed Fatherhood Programs

Dave Taylor presented the evolution of the DIY Dads program from a structured program model to a trauma-informed approach centred on individual strengths and needs. The presentation addressed the intersection of housing instability and fatherhood, exploring how chronic "churn" between housed and homeless status disrupts men's capacity to engage in their children's lives, and how trauma-informed practice interrupts that cycle.

## Engagement Tools: No to Violence

Tori Cook, Head of Workforce Development at No to Violence (NTV), presented engagement tools for working safely and respectfully with men who use family violence. The session addressed practitioner awareness of grooming and collusion within this client cohort, and modelled discussion techniques designed to orient men toward the change journey without compromising the safety and accountability focus of intervention.

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## The Role of the Onesimus Foundation

The Onesimus Foundation is a Tasmanian not-for-profit organisation working with people in the justice system, their families, and the communities affected by imprisonment. Based at 550 East Derwent Highway, Risdon Vale — adjacent to Risdon Prison — the Foundation is embedded in the justice context that informs the work of many WWMN participants.

The Foundation hosts the WWMN not as a program proprietor but as a sector servant. Hosting responsibilities include providing the physical meeting space, coordinating presenters, communicating with participants, and ensuring the Network remains accessible, non-bureaucratic, and responsive to the sector's needs.

The Foundation's broader work — supporting families of prisoners, delivering training for professionals, and engaging in research and policy — positions it as a credible and contextually grounded host. Its commitment to practitioner development and cross-sector collaboration reflects the same values the Network is designed to embody.

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## How to Participate

Participation in the Working With Men's Network is open to all professionals, students, and volunteers whose work connects with men who use violence. There is no formal registration process, no membership requirement, and no fee.

To receive meeting notifications and presentation updates, contact the Onesimus Foundation:

**Onesimus Foundation @ [info@onesimus.org.au](mailto:info@onesimus.org.au)**

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Practitioners and researchers interested in presenting to the Network are also welcome to make contact.