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STUDY INTO WOMEN DEFENDANTS IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT FOR INTERVIEW

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study that will look at the experiences of women defendants in Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) cases. We are concerned that women defendants in DFV cases are poorly supported by the police and the Courts and we want to change this by establishing first, whether this is in fact the case and if it is, how we can improve the system so that it works better for women defendants.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a woman defendant charged in a DFV case. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. If you do not want to take part, you don't have to.

By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described below.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

Professor Rita Shackel, University of Sydney and Ms Anna Kerr, Principal Solicitor Feminist Legal Clinic (FLC) Inc. Ms Anna Kerr also provides services (usually once a month) as a solicitor to women defendants in DFV cases through Legal Aid and Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service NSW Inc. (WDVCAS).

This study is principally funded by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) which is a non-profit organisation aimed at advancing women and based in Washington DC. AAUW funds global research which challenges public policies that bias and discriminate against women.

(3) What will the study involve for me?

If you decide to take part in the research study you will be interviewed face to face by a researcher at a public location that is convenient for you. If you would like, the interview can be conducted at The University of Sydney. The interview may also be conducted via telephone if you prefer. The interview is expected to take around 45 minutes and you will be asked questions about your experience as a woman defendant in a DFV case, how the charge/s against you has affected you and your experiences with the police and at Court. If you require an interpreter for the interview we will provide one over the phone using a professional translation service.

During the interview, we will audio record what is said using a digital recorder with your permission. The purpose of recording the interview with you is to ensure we record what you say accurately. These recordings will be given to a professional transcription agency and will not be shared with anyone else. Any mention of your name or any details that may identify you (eg. where you live or the number of children you have), will be removed from the transcript. Following transcription of your interview your comments will become anonymous and we will not be able to remove your interview data from the study.

During the interview, if you become upset or feel like you need a break, please let the researcher know. You can stop the interview at any time. At the end of the interview, we will give you a sheet or in the case of a telephone interview provide you with details of organisations you can contact if you feel any distress as a result of participation in this study.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The interview will take around 45 minutes.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

We are inviting women defendants in DFV cases who are or have been summonsed to appear before a participating Local Court to be part of this research study. You must be 18 years or older to take part in this study.

(6) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. If you participate in this research study or choose not to it will not affect your dealings with the police, any assistance you may receive from WDVCAS, Legal Aid, Aboriginal Legal Services and/or Community Legal Centres and it will not affect your case at Court.

If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage up until your interview has been transcribed (i.e. up to 3 days after your interview). You can do

this by emailing us or completing a 'Withdrawal of Consent Form' which will be provided to you before the interview. Alternatively you can ring Professor Rita Shackel and let her know you no longer want to participate. Your decision to withdraw will not affect your dealings with the police, any assistance you may receive from WDVCS, Legal Aid, Aboriginal Legal Services and/or Community Legal Centres and it will not affect your case at Court.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. If you do stop the interview early, unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

If you participate in this study there is a risk of you experiencing distress as the interview may trigger upsetting memories. Your interviewer will be aware of this risk to you and will pause or stop the interview if you are upset by the questions asked. The research project is focused on your experiences of the justice system. We will ask you about your experience of police and courts. We will not ask you direct questions or details about any violence you may have experienced. We will ask you before the interview starts not to disclose any illegal activity during the interview as the researchers may have legal obligations to act upon such disclosure.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

We cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(9) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

The audio recording of your interview will be transcribed by a professional transcriber to ensure that we have an accurate written record of what you have told us. After your interview has been transcribed into writing the audio recording will be destroyed. The written record of your interview will not contain your name or any individual specific information (for example the number and ages of your children or place of residence) that could identify you.

We will store the non-identifiable hardcopy of information collected in your interview in locked filing cabinets at The University of Sydney.

At the end of this study we intend to publish the findings of this research including in a report and journal articles so that our findings are widely available to practitioners in the justice system (including solicitors, police and the courts), policy makers, researchers and scholars. If we refer to what you have told us in any publication, your name and any other details that could identify you will not be published.

(10) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(11) What if I would like further information about the study?

If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact:

Rita Shackel T 02 9351 0368 E rita.shackel@sydney.edu.au

(12) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by [providing your contact details on the Participant Consent Form](#) or emailing us at any time. This feedback will be in the form of a one page lay summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished. Feedback can also be accessed on the Project website at <https://feministlegal.org/feedback/#.XPigUdMzbOS> which will be available towards the end of 2019.

(13) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [*Ethics Approval Reference Number: 2019/024*]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep