

**INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM**

<b>Project Title:</b>	ONLINE DATING AND RISK AMONGST ONLINE USERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SEXUAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTION
<b>Chief Investigator:</b>	PROFESSOR PRANEE LIAMPUTTONG PERSONAL CHAIR IN PUBLIC HEALTH, SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
<b>Investigator:</b>	PROFESSOR MARIAN PITTS DIRECTOR, AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH CENTRE IN SEX, HEALTH AND SOCIETY, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
<b>Researcher:</b>	Your interviewer ( <a href="mailto:onlinedating@latrobe.edu.au">onlinedating@latrobe.edu.au</a> ) SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

This research will be primarily concerned with the experiences of online dating and its implications for sexual health among people in Australia aged 18 years and over.

We aim to explore the perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, and risk-taking of online daters, any health risks they may be encountering and how they manage this risk.

Specifically, we seek to examine:

- How do people engage and interact with those they meet online, particularly in a sexual context?
- What public health risks and opportunities does online dating present?
- What do online daters do to protect themselves from sexual health problems?

Online daters will be invited to participate in the project via advertisements placed on online dating and social networking websites. People who agree to participate will be interviewed online using instant messaging (e.g. Windows Live Messenger or Yahoo Messenger). We will also ask people we interview if they can recommend any of their online contacts who might also like to be interviewed about their online dating experiences. To do this we will not be ask participants to provide the names or contact details of their contact, but we will be ask them to provide our details to potential participants, or alternatively to invite them into a shared instant messaging conversation if researcher, participant and potential participant are all online at the same time.

If you agree to participate in this project:

- i. you will be asked to take part in a in-depth online interview via instant messaging (such as Windows Live Messenger or Yahoo Messenger) at a time convenient to you;
- ii. you will have the opportunity to shape the research by highlighting your online dating experiences and what is important to you; and
- iii. you will be able to access the final research report as the completion of the project.

In this chat interview you will be asked questions relating to your use of online dating, resulting interactions – both online and offline, sexual interests, behaviours and health. The interview will be similar to a normal chat, and it will offer you a chance to tell your story and reflect on your online dating experiences. The amount of time the interview will take could be anywhere between 30 minutes and a couple of hours, depending on how much you would like to share and if you are doing other things online whilst being interviewed.

There will be key areas that the interview will cover, but you will also have the opportunity to openly respond and reflect on experiences and issues important to you.

The benefits of undertaking an interview this way mean that:

- you have an opportunity to talk about your experiences with someone without meeting them in person, and hence your anonymity is maintained;
- you will be able to take part in the interview at a time convenient to you;
- you may be doing other things whilst involved in the interview;
- you do not have to answer all the interview questions in one chat session;
- it gives you time to consider your responses; and
- you may find the process less intrusive than a face-face interview.

Advising your consent via the chat program at the commencement of the in-depth interview is taken as your agreement to release this information to the researchers.

The results of this project and the information from your in-depth interview record will be kept on a secure computer. Although the researchers will know who you are during this study, neither your screen name nor name (if you were to divulge it) will be included on any documentation relating to the results of the project. In addition, any descriptive information or details which could be used to identify you will be changed or omitted to protect your privacy. You will therefore remain anonymous to everyone apart from the researchers. During the research and after the project has been completed your interview responses will be kept on a secure computer. No-one apart Professor Liamputtong, Professor Pitts and the interviewer will have access to these records.

The results of this project may appear in papers, books chapters, journal articles and in presentations at conferences, but you will not be identified in any of these reports.

You may not directly benefit from participating in this project, but your participation will help in furthering the understanding of the use of online dating and the internet for seeking sexual partners, and how this may impact on individual's sexual health and on public health. You will also have an opportunity to discuss your experiences with an experienced sexual health researcher with your anonymity maintained.

You have the right to withdraw from active participation in this project at anytime and, further, to demand that data arising from your participation are not used in the research project provided that this right is exercised within four weeks of the completion of your participation in the in-depth interview. You are asked to complete the "Withdrawal of Consent Form" or to notify the investigator by e-mail, instant messaging or telephone that you wish to withdraw your consent for your data to be used in this research project.

Any questions regarding this project titled 'Online dating and risk amongst online users: Implications for sexual health promotion and public health intervention may be directed to the Co-chief investigators:

- Professor Pranee Liamputtong, of the School of Public Health at La Trobe University on the telephone number (03) 9479 1760 or via her email: [pranee@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:pranee@latrobe.edu.au); or
- Professor Marian Pitts, of the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University on the telephone number (03) 9285 5382 or via her email: [M.Pitts@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:M.Pitts@latrobe.edu.au)

If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Secretary, Faculty Human Ethics Committee, Faculty of Health, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, ph: (03) 9479 3573, e-mail: [n.humphries@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:n.humphries@latrobe.edu.au)



**School of Public Health**

Faculty of Health Sciences

To participate in this research please read the paragraph below and advise your consent in line with this in the instant messaging window at the commencement of the interview.

*I (the participant) have read and understood the participant information sheet, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the project, realising that I may withdraw from the study at any time and may request that no data arising from my participation are used, up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither my screen name, name nor any other identifying information is used.*

Your consent will be recorded under your instant messaging screen name and associated email address.