

Plain Language Information Statement

Date: 10 December 2025

Full Project Title: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Project Number: 2XXXXXXXX

Principal Researcher: xxxxxxxx (Lecturer, Cairnmillar Institute)

- Email: xxxxxx
- Phone: (03) 9813 3400 (Monday to Wednesday)

Co-researcher: xxxxxxxx (Senior Lecturer, Cairnmillar Institute)

- Email: xxxxxx
- Phone: (03) 9813 3400 (Monday to Thursday)

Student Researcher: Student Name

- Email: xxxxxx

To Participant:

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project. This Plain Language Information Statement contains information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision regarding your participation.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The Cairnmillar Institute and will comply with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia, 2025).

Why is this research being conducted?

This study is exploring the experiences of seeking, developing, and maintaining romantic relationships among adults diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). ***We are also interested in exploring their experiences, if any, with rejection sensitivity dysphoria in the context of romantic relationships. Rejection sensitivity dysphoria is sometimes experienced as a sudden intense feeling of emotional pain when one perceives that they have been rejected, criticised, or teased.*** The results from this research may inform future research avenues and interventions, to improve the quality of relationships for people with ADHD.

Who can participate in the study?

To participate in the study, you do not need to be currently in a romantic relationship. You are eligible to participate if you are currently single and/or are dating or have previously engaged in dating. You will be asked to confirm that you have received a formal diagnosis of ADHD at some time in your life. However, you will not be asked to provide documentation (e.g., a diagnostic report or letter) to support your diagnosis.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you meet all of the following criteria:

- 18 years or older
- Reside in Australia
- Have received a formal diagnosis of ADHD by a psychologist, psychiatrist, or a paediatrician. *We acknowledge that many individuals with ADHD do not have a formal diagnosis. However, due to resource limitations, this research focuses solely on individuals with a formal diagnosis.*
- Be sufficiently proficient in English to **participate in an online interview.**

What does participation involve?

Interview: You will be invited to discuss your experiences of romantic relationships in a 60-90 minute interview conducted on Microsoft Teams, which you can attend using a personal electronic device. You will require a private personal space to speak comfortably without being overheard or interrupted.

Interview questions: At the beginning of the interview, you will be asked to provide some demographic details about yourself, including your age, occupation, relationship status, and brief details of your ADHD diagnosis (and any other diagnoses that you are happy to share).

The main part of the interview will involve discussing your personal experiences of romantic relationships, and any influences that you feel that ADHD has on your romantic relationship experiences. This section of the interview will be audio recorded using Microsoft Audio Recorder to ensure that your responses are noted accurately. The recording of your interview will be deleted after being transcribed into a Word document. Some examples of questions that might be asked include:

- *What do you look for in a partner?*
- *When you think about your own experience of ADHD, do you feel that ADHD has ever presented challenges for you in dating and relationships (if any)?*
- *What are your experiences navigating rejection in romantic relationships?*

The interview will conclude with an invitation to provide feedback to the interviewer, and a reminder of psychological and social support services available to you if you would like to explore these for yourself.

You will be provided with a copy of the interview questions at least 24 hours prior to your scheduled interview so you can make an informed choice about proceeding with your interview. The interview questions that we email to you will be used as a flexible guide for the interviewer during your interview.

Participation: During the interview, you can choose to decline answering any questions as you wish. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you can decline participation or withdraw without consequences up until your interview responses are de-identified. De-identification is the process of removing personal information (e.g., names) from data to protect privacy. After your data are de-identified, it cannot be removed from the dataset as it will be no longer possible to determine which interview data was provided by you.

Possible benefits:

By participating in this study, you will help to inform the research and practice literature around ADHD and romantic relationships in adulthood. The findings may provide insights which could be used to improve romantic relationships for people with ADHD and their partners. While there will be no material benefits in participating in the study, your interview may provide you with an opportunity to reflect on and share your personal experiences.

Possible risks:

Participation in this research is not expected to pose risks above those expected in everyday life. However, you may experience some discomfort or distress when discussing your experiences. Additionally, we ask that you reconsider your participation if distress is likely for

you, or if there is a high chance of court involvement regarding current or previous relationships (e.g., divorce or custody matters or intervention orders). This is because the researchers will have a duty of care to respond to concerns if made aware of significant imminent risks to yourself or others and may need to share the information you provide with someone else. There is a risk that important people in your life overhear your discussion during the interview. To protect your privacy, we ask that you find a private space to speak freely.

If participation does raise concerns about your wellbeing, you can access free, confidential counselling sessions with a provisionally registered psychologist from Cairnmillar Community Clinics. This service is available via phone and telehealth nationwide in Australia, and you can schedule an appointment by calling 1800 391 393 or emailing clinic@cairnmillar.org.au. You can also seek support from the following services:

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- ADHD Australia provide a list of support services in different states for adults with ADHD: <https://www.adhdaustralia.org.au/support-groups/>
- ADHD Foundation Australia is a charity which provide a helpline for seeking support with ADHD: <https://adhdfoundation.org.au/helpline>

If you have any concerns about the safety of yourself or others within romantic relationships, please consider accessing the below resources:

- 1800RESPECT <https://www.1800respect.org.au/> (Ph: 1800 737 732)
- Relationships Australia
 - Australian Capital Territory: <https://racr.org.au/>
 - New South Wales: <https://www.relationshipsnsw.org.au/>
 - Northern Territory: <https://nt.relationships.org.au/>
 - Queensland: <https://www.raq.org.au/>
 - South Australia: <https://www.rasa.org.au/>
 - Tasmania: <https://tas.relationships.org.au/>
 - Victoria: <https://www.relationshipsvictoria.org.au/>
 - Western Australia: <https://www.relationshipswa.org.au/>

Confidentiality and Data Handling

- **Collection of Personal Information:** Your contact details, such as name and email address, will only be used for scheduling interviews, and emailing you a copy of the research findings if you wish to receive this. This information is kept securely and separately from information that you provide in your interview.
- **Recording and Transcription:** To protect confidentiality, we recommend that you try to refrain from providing specific names (e.g., partner's name) during your interview. Interviews will be recorded using Microsoft Voice Recorder and securely saved on a password-protected local drive. During your interview, your interviewer will ask for some demographic information, such as your age, gender, and occupation, prior to beginning the interview recording. After the interview, the interviewer will move the recording to the researchers' password-protected working folders on the Cairnmillar Institute's secure cloud storage. The recording will then be transcribed into a Microsoft Word document using Otter.
- **Deidentification:** Any identifying data will be de-identified from your transcript prior to importing into Quirkos for data analysis. De-identification is a process through which we will change your name to a pseudonym and remove any identifying information that you provide during your interview, such as a partner and/or ex-partner's name.
- **Data Deletion:** Once your de-identified transcript has been checked for accuracy, your interview recording will be deleted from the cloud-based working folders on OneDrive used by the research team. Backups of the audio recording and transcript remain in a highly secure encrypted format for a period of up to 7 years, and these backups are only accessible by Cairnmillar information technology staff.
- **Access to Data:** Deidentified interview transcripts will be securely stored on password-protected folders within the research team's OneDrive cloud, accessible only to authorised personnel, including Cairnmillar Institute researchers and any staff involved

in data storage who will strictly adhere to Cairnmillar Institute's confidentiality protocols.

- **Limits to Confidentiality:** Please note that the confidentiality of your data has limitations, including: (a) if the data are subpoenaed, or (b) if the researcher determines that there is a need to share information with an appropriate service (e.g., emergency services) to prevent serious and imminent harm to yourself and/or another identifiable person. Please reconsider your participation if you believe that it may pose a risk to you or your situation, including if you are involved in any legal matters which might be connected with your experiences in relationships (e.g., divorce proceedings, child custody-related matters).
- **Use of Data:** This research forms part of a Master of Psychology (Clinical Psychology) thesis about ADHD and romantic relationships. The research team will use the information collected during the study for research purposes only. No identifying information will be included in any research outputs (e.g., thesis, journal articles, conference presentations). However, de-identified verbatim quotes from your interview may be presented in these research outputs.
- **Consent Form:** In the Consent Form, you can allow researchers, authorised by the Principal Researcher, to use your data in future research projects that aim to advance knowledge and understanding in this field. Alternatively, you can allow your data to be used only for the current project.

If I agree to participate, how do I get started?

To express interest in participating, please email <Student Researcher's name> at <student's Cairnmillar email address>.

By contacting the researcher via email, you understand that you will receive correspondence about the project to the email address you reach out from. Please ensure you are comfortable with your email account to be used for correspondence about this research project.

We aim to interview around twelve participants, but we may receive more interest in interviews than the current project resources allow. If that happens, we will contact people we

could not interview to ask if they are interested in being contacted for future research on ADHD that the Cairnmillar Institute undertakes.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?

If you would like further information or have any concerns regarding this project, or if you wish to withdraw your participation, please contact a member of the research team (see contact details provided above).

If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may also contact the Secretary to the Human Research Ethics Committee. Please ensure to include the project name, project number and the name of the Principal Researcher in any correspondence when contacting the Secretary of HREC. (You can find these details at the top of this document).

The contact details can be found below:

Secretary to the HREC
The Cairnmillar Institute
391-393 Tooronga Road
Hawthorn East VIC 3123
Phone: 03 9813 3400
Email: hrec@cairnmillar.edu.au

