

PATHWAYS INTO OUR SECTOR

Growing the domestic and family violence, sexual assault, women's health and wellbeing workforce.

Igniting a career in men's behaviour change.

Michael

Specialist Counsellor and Team Leader, Qld Human Services Organisation
Bachelor of Electrical Engineering,
Masters of Counselling

Michael's career path has been unconventional. By reinventing his career several times, Michael has found great satisfaction in the domestic and family violence sector, specialising in intervention programs aimed at men.

"The sector offers opportunities to try out different roles."

Currently, he is a Specialist Counsellor and Team Leader for a large human services organisation. His role encompasses individual counselling, as well as group facilitation for an 18 week men's behaviour change program. He is also Secretary for SPEAQ (Services and Practitioners for the Elimination of Abuse Queensland).

After leaving school, Michael completed a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering. Not finding this work satisfying, and looking for new challenges, Michael then enrolled in a telephone counselling course with

Lifeline, which ignited an interest in the field. Following completion of a Masters of Counselling through QUT, Michael volunteered with the Men's Information & Support Association, and Sandbag. Both not-for-profits provide counselling and support services. At Sandbag, many of the clients were women impacted by domestic and family violence. Providing counselling to those women is an uncommon role for a male counsellor but was an invaluable start to work in the DFV sector.

Michael then commenced work as a men's domestic violence counsellor and has remained in the sector for 17 years. He recognises the many challenges and also the rewards.

"I appreciate the opportunity to unlock some understanding or awareness in the men in my programs. It's very satisfying when the light bulb goes on."

Another highlight for Michael is when he receives feedback from a partner's advocate saying behaviours and attitudes

had changed for the better as a result of the work he has carried out.

"My advice to new male workers in the sector is to be prepared to undertake a lot of personal reflective work and to hear uncomfortable feedback—for example, look at what you're carrying in terms of male privilege. If you're not up to hearing the feedback, don't stay in the game. That openness to reflection and growth is critical," Michael said.

Michael encourages men to gain broad experience in the sector, especially to understand the experience of women impacted by violence, so as to have a balanced perspective about men's stories.

"The sector offers opportunities to try out different roles. Appreciate and learn from the different approaches and frameworks."

Into the future, Michael will continue to fulfil his broader aspirations to contribute to the development of policy and practice.

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