

# AMTA 2019

AUSTRALIAN MUSIC THERAPY ASSOCIATION

## 45TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE & PDS

MELBOURNE, 29 NOV–1 DEC 2019



Australian  
Music  
Therapy  
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**‘Doing things together  
is what it’s about’ –  
Supporting partnerships &  
building connections  
through group therapeutic  
songwriting with people  
living with dementia and  
their family caregivers**

—  
Dr Imogen Clark

Ms Phoebe Stretton-Smith

**Baptcare**





## **Our study:**

Data collection &  
analysis, TSW  
groups



## Research Questions

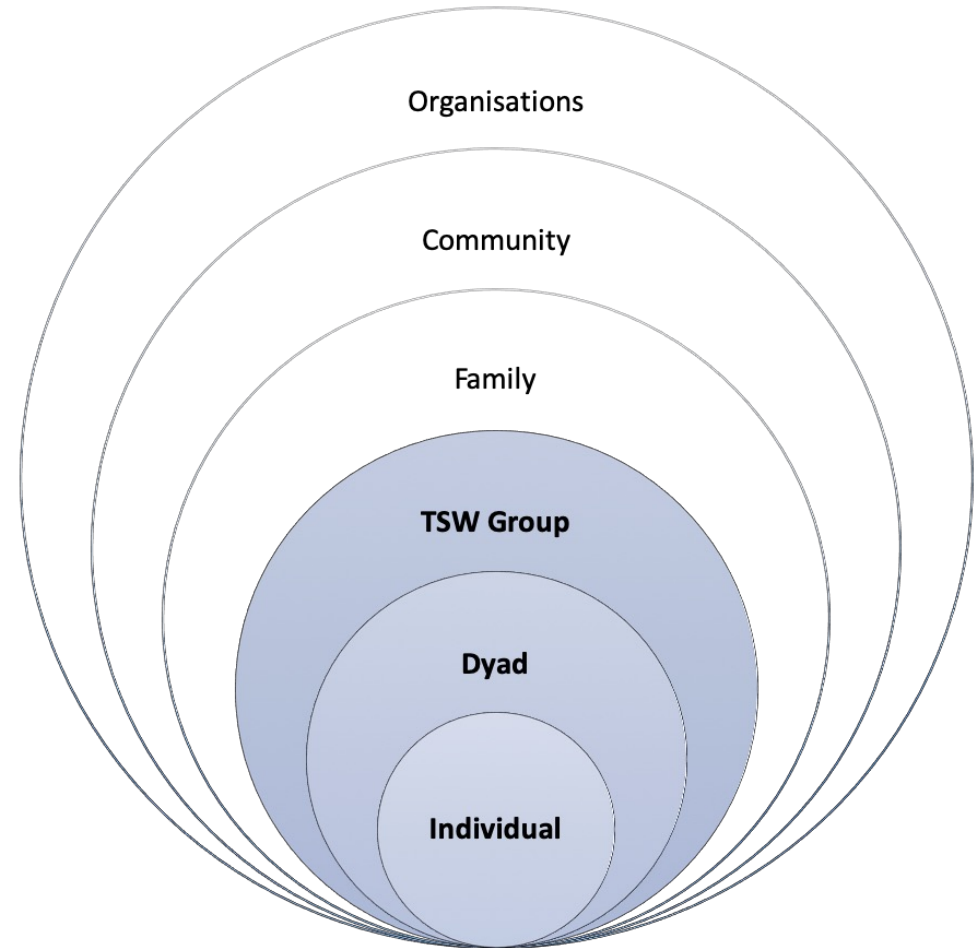
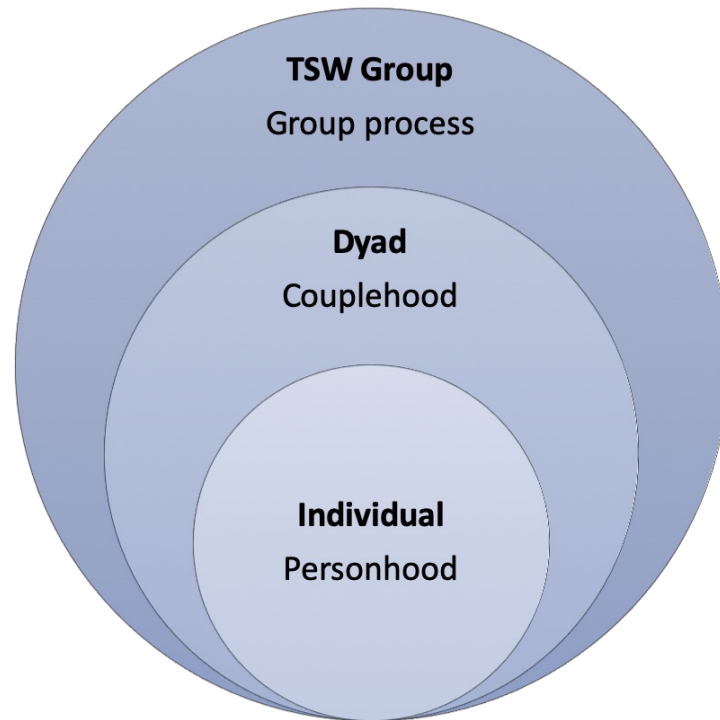
**Does group TSW impact self-rated relationship quality between people living with dementia and their family caregiver?**

- Does group TSW impact self-rated and/or observational changes in:
  - social connectedness, quality of life, symptoms of depression, caregiving experience (FCG)
  - quality of life, symptoms of depression (PwD)
- How do dyads experience group TSW and what meaning (if any) do they derive from participating in the program?





# Our approach

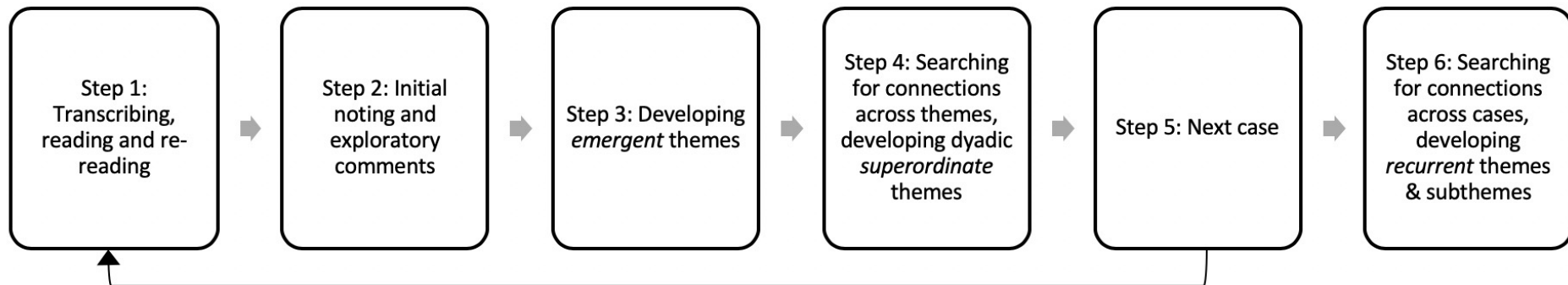


# Interview data collection & analysis




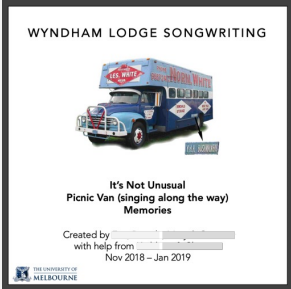

## Interviews with dyads

- Semi-structured interviews with music therapist
- Approx. 2 wks post-sessions at either dyads' homes or same location as sessions
- Analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis





# TSW Groups

Group 1 (n=6)	Group 2 (n=4)	Group 3 (n=6)	Group 4 (n=4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>3 spousal dyads living together</b></li><li>- 2 songs: song parody ('Yellow Submarine' &amp; 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas')</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>2 spousal dyads living together</b></li><li>- 2 songs: song parody, collage, original poetry ('Rock Around the Clock', 'Love Me Tender', 'Yellow Brick Road')</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>3 spousal dyads living separately</b></li><li>- 2 songs: song parody ('Waltzing Matilda', 'Country Roads')</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>2 family dyads living separately</b></li><li>- 3 songs: song parody ('It's Not Unusual', 'Morningtown Ride', 'Edelweiss')</li></ul>
			



# Participants Demographics

	Dyad	Age	Gender	Country of Birth	Occupation	
Living together	Ali	62	Male	Lebanon	Linguist, pharmacist	Spousal dyads
	Julia*	61	Female	Lebanon	Maternal health nurse	
	Lindy	71	Female	Australia	Computing Instructor	
	Dave*	72	Male	Australia	Police Officer	
	Tom	84	Male	Australia	Electrical engineer/proprietor	
	Jan*	77	Female	Australia	Proprietor	
Living separately	Neil	66	Male	Australia	Computer programmer	Spousal dyads
	Mei*	62	Female	Malaysia	Computer programmer	
	Isabella	65	Female	Italy	Secretary	Family
	Carlo*	66	Male	Italy	Mechanic	
	Janet	75	Female	Australia	Pay clerk	
	George*	73	Male	Australia	Engineer	
	Alan	80	Male	Australia	Butcher, plant operator	
	Elizabeth*	72	Female	Australia	Telephonist/admin assistant	
	Tom	92	Male	Australia	School teacher/principal	
	Ellen*	92	Female	Australia	Secretary	
Ann	86	Female	Australia	Kindergarten teacher, counsellor		
Michelle*	59	Female	Australia	Integration Aide		
Dawn	90	Female	Australia	Grocery store computing leader		
Ian*	65	Male	Australia	Project management (IT)		

- Family caregivers (6 female, 4 male; mean age = 67.1 (SD=10.1; range = 54-92)
- People living with dementia (5 female, 5 male, mean age = 77 (SD = 11; range = 62-92)
- Session attendance was 5.3/6 sessions across all participants (88%)

\*Family caregiver



## Qualitative findings:

Recurrent themes across interviews



## Theme 1:



**Overwhelmingly *positive shared experience* of TSW benefitted both members of the dyad, emphasising the value of such groups & motivating further engagement with music**

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Group TSW was a source of enjoyment and fun, which influenced mood for some participants in a meaningful way

Dyads appreciated opportunity to share the experience of TSW as 'doing things together is what it's about'

Both members of the dyad experienced benefits from TSW, despite initially being motivated to attend for the family member living with dementia

Positive experience of group TSW highlighted its value, motivating dyads to pursue similar opportunities and use music as a resource outside of sessions

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## Theme 1: Positive Shared Experience

“[The group] was good, it was good! We really enjoyed it. You enjoyed it – the music. [Janet: Yeah, I like being with you]. You enjoyed the music though, the singing of the songs and writing the music [Janet: Yeah, the music’s good]. You loved it. I loved it, too” (George)

“[It was worthwhile just] to make Mum happy [...] You don’t always have a lot of things that make you happy. So it was nice to see you enthusiastic about doing something and coming back feeling good in yourself” (Michelle)

“It takes you back and you think [of happy times]. And especially for us now, our times. You know, we don’t know how long we’re going to be around [...] and being in a place like this, [the TSW group] helps me to sort of forget about all this. Because this is not where I want to be, of course. And I’m going to be in here for the rest of life. But that’s why it helped me as much as going back [...] It’s very special” (Ann)

“I haven’t really attended many groups with FM since she’s been ill, so it’s really been a unique experience, this one” (Carlo)

“I loved it [...] as a thing we could do together, that’s all I’m interested in [...] I mean, just doing things together is what it’s about. We’ve always done everything together and that’s the way I want to keep it” (Jan)



## Theme 1: Positive shared experiences

“Well, yeah, so first I thought, well I’m here for FM’s benefit [but then] I thought, aw, it’s not about FM, it’s about me [laughing] [...] but once we got into it, I really enjoyed it. I think it was very well worth doing” (Carlo)

“I liked watching MS when she was singing at the end. She was just so happy, you could just see it in her face” (Michelle)

“It certainly made me think about maybe looking at something else to do in relation with music [...] I think it’s probably a good pastime to think about. I think it does open up that area for people that, it might be very good for them” (Dave) “We’ll do that again” (Lindy)

“It’s a fun thing to do, which we can even try at home. I never thought you could do it like that [...] I didn’t know I could do, like, more with the music. I thought it was just a listening process. But now after this experience, I find that we can do a lot more [...] [and] you can find out more about me, isn’t it? What music I like. ‘Cause normally we don’t concentrate so much on what we like, we just play the music. That’s it” (Mei)

“Yeah, I personally did [think it was worthwhile for Janet] [...] I’d like to not just to play [the song recordings], but I’d like to put it on the PowerPoint presentation with the music in the background and just matching the words with the music and the timing [...] They’d all play, they’d all sing – the whole group” (George)



## Theme 2:



**TSW was engaging & valuable as it stimulated mental processes, including creativity & reminiscence, which reignited participants' interests, skills and memories from their earlier adult years**

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Group TSW stimulated thought processes, reminiscence, creativity & communication within and beyond sessions

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Group TSW reignited and connected participants with their past interests and abilities

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Value and enjoyment in the new, creative and stimulating aspects of TSW, which sparked interest and engagement

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## Theme 2: Stimulated mental processes

“... after the first [session], I could see he had his thinking cap on, and he was writing. [Reading poetry] *I like to climb mountains and marvel at the views of this vast land called Australia with its emus and cockatoos. We like to explore Australia and visit the Cocklebiddy Caves. Everybody that goes there comes back and raves.* He wrote that” (Jan)

“I liked it because it takes you back, you know, and it stays with you. And that’s what I like about it, too. That I keep it in here [...] Yeah, it brought out all of that” (Ann)

“[TSW was] creative plus difficult. I *enjoyed* it, so it didn’t mean that I, I couldn’t do it [...] It did something to me, I can’t quite say. It set me going. It made my brain everything...think about, all about what was and what might be and all this. It just made it move [...] I didn’t think I would [enjoy the challenge], but I did” (Ann)

“For us, yes [it was worthwhile] because it was a new experience” (Tom)

“I suppose for the three couples that were there, it was something that we hadn’t done before. I thought it was terrific from that point of view. That it got people sort of motivated and thinking, [something we] might now have normally done and probably never would have done” (Dave)



## Theme 3:



**The shared aim of writing a song stimulated interaction and collaboration among group members, leading to social connections, empathic relationships and experiences of inclusion**

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Positive social opportunity to build connections with others, which sometimes continued outside of the group

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Group TSW stimulated interaction and collaboration as group members worked together towards 'one goal', which was different to other group experiences

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Group TSW involved sharing something of yourself and accepting others as they were, fostering empathic relationships and experiences of inclusion

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## Theme 3: Interaction & collaboration

“It was enjoyable working with the others. You know, sort of got to know, well I had met Ellen and George before, but I sort of got to know them a little bit better” (Elizabeth)

“It built a bit of a relationship with the other two couples, too [...] It takes more effort [to write songs in a group] because you have to really make room for the others to get their ideas and all that [...] But it’s nice! It’s nice to express a group, to express other people’s ideas, to listen, to be listened to, to share” (Julia)

“In the [song]writing group, you tended to [interact more with other dyads] because of the context of what you were trying to achieve, the one goal [...] I think the music allowed you to sort of interchange with other people [...] I thought that was one of the big pluses. [And the songs were] all of everyone” (Dave)

You feed off each other [and you’re] listening to other people’s experiences and take that in. Sometimes we’re caught up in our own little world and we don’t really think about others and what they may go through” (Carlo)

“It was good having the others there, too. Because you could see they’ve all got their challenges too, didn’t they? So you’re not sort of like, you’re the odd one out type of thing. And everybody just accepted everybody as they were, which was lovely” (Elizabeth)



## Theme 4:



**Group TSW included diverse challenges, however, the TSW process & facilitation supported participants to engage, highlighting abilities, challenging doubts, and leading to feelings of pride & achievement**

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Participants experienced diverse challenges in participating in TSW but were able to ‘connect’ and engage in different ways, which made it worthwhile

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The facilitator’s approach, effort, musical skills & leadership contributed to the achievability and success of the TSW process

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Participants contributed meaningfully, highlighting ability of self & others and challenging initial doubts

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Pride and achievement in both the songwriting process and product

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## Theme 4: Challenges & Achievement

“With people who are fairly advanced with the illness, the lyric writing probably isn’t beneficial for them [...] but FM certainly connected there for a couple of sessions [especially] when [the RMT] showed her the photos of the artists of the songs [...] I think the group was [worthwhile], listening to [the RMT] playing the guitar and singing, she was very intrigued and very connected when that was happening” (Carlo)

“I thought it would be difficult but the way it’s done, it makes it quite easy for us to compose the songs” (Mei)

“I don’t think I believed that we could write any words. I honestly didn’t think we would come up with anything that was vaguely acceptable. But it’s acceptable [...] And it was a surprise to me that I actually came up with a few ideas. So yeah, it was a big surprise to me. A big surprise” (Jan)

“Even though [Mum] probably found it hard to rhyme the words or whatever else, the ideas that they gave made it all come together. Because without their ideas, we wouldn’t have been able to do it” (Michelle)

“I just thought we did, the group did, an exceptional job. I didn’t really expect it to turn out like it did” (George)



## **Discussion:**

Building  
partnerships &  
connections



# Partnerships & collaboration in group TSW

## Overview of emergent themes:

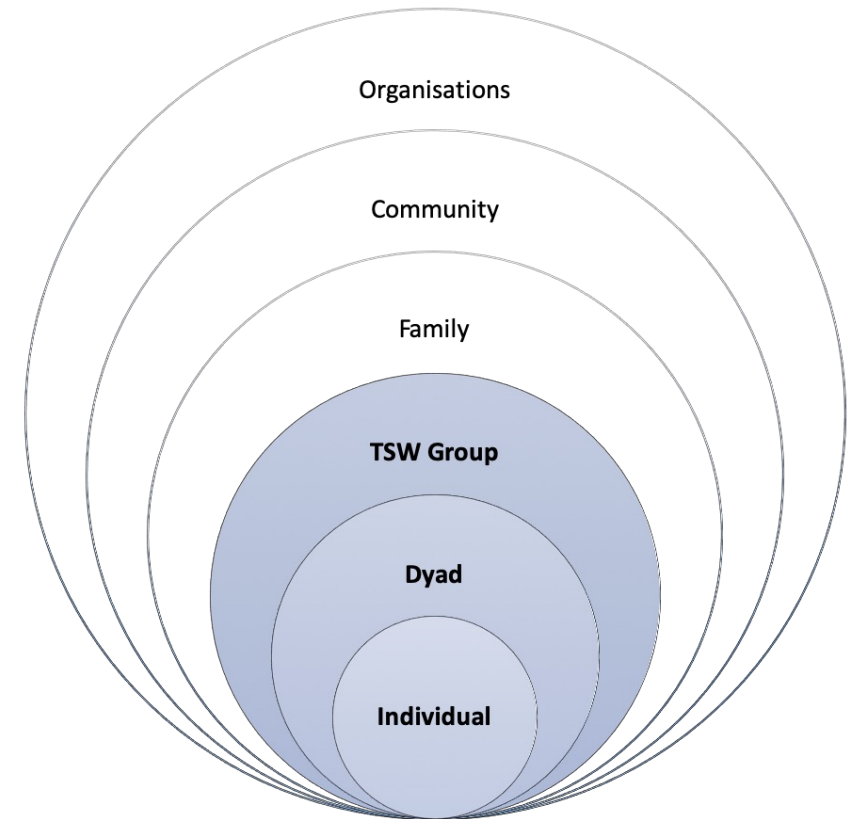
- TSW in relation to selves, the dyad, the TSW group, family, and broader communities
- Individual challenges balanced by broader benefits
- Role of the group in contributing to a feeling of social inclusion

## Facilitators

- Facilitation approach supported participants to connect, engage and interact in different ways
- Opportunity to participate together and share meaningful experiences and memories
- Empathic “understanding” and “acceptance” among group members

## Barriers and limitations

- Diverse challenges experienced (impact of dementia on lives of participants + within TSW process)
- Initial perception of TSW as too challenging (although also contributed value and led to feelings of satisfaction/pride)





# Partnerships & collaboration in research & practice

## Supporting partnerships between dyads

- TSW sessions focused on lives together and shared experience
- Valued opportunities for challenge, mental stimulation, thought and creativity
- Impact outside of sessions
- Interviews with dyads offered perspectives about long-term relationships & ecological perspectives, which may not have been captured in focus group interviews
- Music therapists conducted group sessions and interviews, thereby building on existing rapport and connection

## This project challenges commonly held views:

- People living with dementia as “a problem” and “in need of care”
- Family caregivers and the “burden” they experience.

## Conclusions

- TSW is a valid method for people with dementia and their family caregivers living in the community and residential care
- Our approach to TSW supported contribution and engagement regardless of dementia stage, relationship or prior musical abilities.





# Memories



Memories, memories

Take me back to the moments

The music swells, the choir sings

It touches me in many ways

We laughed, we cried, remembering those times

The people, the places, the feelings

Memories, memories

Take me back to the moments

Memories, memories

light & shade  
soft feeling

Chorus  
[ Memories, memories  
Take me back to the moments  
The music swells, the choir sings  
It touches me in many ways ]


music  
[ we laughed, we cried,  
remembering those times  
- the people, the places,  
the feelings. ]

[ Memories, memories  
Take me back to the moments ]

C Dm :||  
Em Dm :||  
G C :||

? Brass section/parts/flourishes  
Intro/Outro  
Arranges.

Guitar  
Mon 7th  
3:30-  
4:30





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