

Mel Thomas

Advocate for Violence Prevention and Women's Empowerment

A dynamic force for change, combining lived experience, martial arts expertise, and corporate leadership to empower individuals and organisations to tackle domestic violence and champion personal safety.

Mel Thomas is the founder of the KYUP! Project, a groundbreaking, evidence-based initiative that confronts the alarming rates of violence against women and children in Australia.

Mel has touched the lives of over 30,000 young people across Australia, from remote communities to urban centers, delivering workshops that sell out time and again. Her message? Self-worth is the foundation of safety—and everyone deserves to know how to protect it.

A two-time Australian Hapkido Woman of the Year and Australian of the Year nominee, Mel's journey is fueled by her personal history of overcoming family violence and her 20 years of expertise in Hapkido, a Korean martial art specializing in self-defence. Under her leadership, the KYUP! Project partners with major organizations like NSW Police, PCYC, and the NSW State Government to deliver trauma-informed, evidence-based programs addressing violence prevention.

Mel's corporate expertise is equally powerful, having guided industry leaders on how to protect the dignity and privacy of employees affected by domestic violence. Her work has saved lives by creating supportive environments where individuals feel safe to disclose abuse and seek help.

Leading a team of 50 female black-belt martial artists, Mel transforms self-defence into social change. Her programs blend practical skills with emotional empowerment, providing women and girls with the tools they need to overcome trauma and regain control of their lives.

A sought-after media voice featured in ABC News, Sydney Morning Herald, Channel 9, Mamamia, and more, Mel sparks vital conversations around the intersection of domestic violence, policy, and sports culture.

Mel will inspire, educate, and ignite action. Her energy is contagious, her message unforgettable, and her impact long-lasting.



What Mel Talks About

- education
- gender equality
- self worth and self defence
- domestic violence
- family violence
- personal safety
- women and leadership
- regional and remote communities and safety justice indigenous / at risk and marginalised groups
- martial arts / sporting achievements
- NGOs collaboration and partnerships

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