



ARC Communities Project 2020-2022

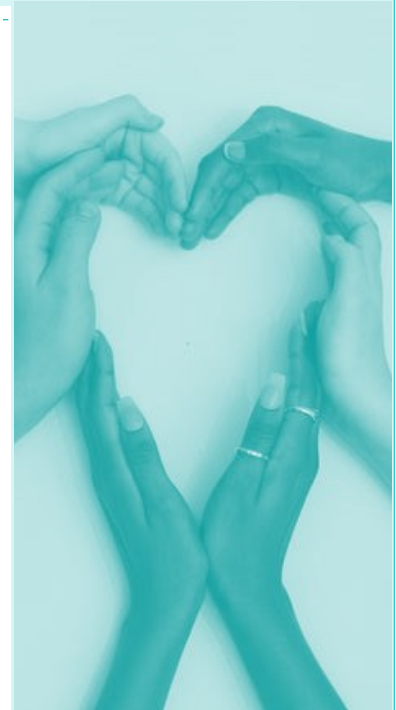
ARC GENDER RELATIONS

The ARC Gender Relations project was funded through Women NSW as part of the DFV Innovation Funds. It works to challenge the gendered attitudes, beliefs and social systems that enable men's violence against women. ARC has delivered workplace development and training; established an ongoing community of practice for community sector/mental health workers who work with men; developed group programs and facilitated these group programs for men; and coordinated a community development, violence prevention and allyship project with male-identified people in the region. The ARC team emphasise personal self-reflection and organisational development as a core part of their efforts to prevent men's violence against women.

The funding for the ARC Gender Relations Project is ending in March 2022.

This multi-level approach is strongly informed by the Our Watch national framework for the primary prevention of women in Australia (involving gendered drivers of violence), and a socio-ecological model for understanding men's violence against women, which identifies factors and opportunities for change across the individual, community, institutional and societal levels. ARC works from an intersectional feminist perspective, and within gender transformative frameworks.

Across each initiative, ARC recognises the different experiences and intersecting forms of inequality inherent to the local area. In practice, this has led to an intentional focus on developing relationships with and listening to First Nations elders and leaders from the Bundjalung Nation, and the recognition of colonisation as a key context for domestic and family violence within all group work and training. ARC has also focused on tailoring inclusive approaches with LGBTQIAP+ communities that do not reinforce homo-, bi- and transphobia or binary concepts of gender. For example, ARC has developed specific workplace training about understanding LGBTQIAP+ people's experiences of violence. ARC found that forming relationships with people in different communities begins to build trust and brings voices forward that have been marginalised. Part of this intersectional approach is also about understanding that men are not all the same, and hold different relationships to power, privilege and violence. In this way, ARC recognises that power operates in multiple and compounding ways across society, which includes, but is not limited to, gendered power.



ARC Gender Relations (ARC) is a multi-tiered violence prevention project that was established in 2018 by the Men and Family Centre, an organisation which works to address domestic and family violence in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, on Bundjalung Country.



THE ARC COMMUNITIES PROJECT

The ARC Communities Project was fundamentally a grassroots violence prevention project with a focus on allyship. Local men were trained and supported to develop their own prevention projects, which they then delivered within their own communities. The project was guided by the [HealthWest Partnership](#)

resource, developed by Shelley Hewson-Munro: [Working Together with Men: How to create male allies for gender](#)

[equity in your community.](#)

The ARC team found people who were already interested in working towards the prevention of DFV, and tried to build on their passion and interest.

Once the group was established, the allies participated in 15 hours of training which covered the key areas of defining violence; gender inequality; unpacking the drivers of violence; exploring the socialisation of men and constructs of masculinity; and exploring how men can use their power and influence to become allies in the prevention of violence.

“I found all aspects of the training challenging and eye opening. These issues should be raised in areas of the community such as schools, clubs and places where male privilege is prevalent. Facilitators were professional and knowledgeable.”

WOMEN'S ACCOUNTABILITY PANEL

“Courageous conversations and deep thinking and doing. Being part of such important work.”

“Men and Family Centre-values, and walking the talk- this process has really done that masterfully.”

“Was empowering to have a voice in that- as a woman and an Aboriginal lesbian and be able to feel comfortable saying what I want. It helped me be visible.”

“I really loved it and appreciated it. I have loved being part of the process from the start. I thought it was really great today and such a sense of solidarity. We were a unified team and really having an impact.”

WOMENS' ACCOUNTABILITY PANEL AND PROJECT ACCOUNTABILITY ALLIANCE

A core component of this project was establishing a Women's Accountability Panel (WAP), as accountability to women is the central component of the model. The panel was composed of a representative from the Men and Family Centre, alongside local women who identify as LGBTQIAP+ and Indigenous. All members were very knowledgeable and experienced in DFV work.

The WAP listened to the individual project ideas and gave individual feedback. The WAP met with the ARC team several times before the allies pitched their project ideas, and so were very prepared to step into the role. Feedback about this process from the WAP members was that they felt safe, respected and listened to. They enjoyed being able to give feedback and raise questions about how the projects were including the voices of women, LGBTQIAP+, and First Nations peoples.

Throughout the process, the WAP members provided valuable guidance which supported the accountability of the whole project and each of the men's projects. The WAP also functioned to challenge gender stereotypes and relations around men's assumed authority and was therefore part of a holistic gender transformative approach.

Another structure that was integral to the ARC Communities Project was the establishment of the Project Accountability Alliance. This was set up to support and guide the ARC team to remain accountable in their roles. This Alliance was made up of two local Aboriginal elders, a men's health worker, and a very well-respected former mayor of Lismore.



Stew Prins (L) and Uncle Garry Kafoa (R) - "A Better Way"

PROJECTS DEVELOPED

For many and varied reasons, not all participants who completed the training were able to complete projects. The skills and knowledge gained throughout the process of the training has created many ripples out into the lives of these allies and their allyship work continues.

A Better Way

One participant explored the power of positive role models around masculinity through media articles and a podcast. His aims were to promote a positive view of male role models who embody a more expansive version of masculinity. He hoped to encourage men to think about the type of role model they want to be – and how they can contribute to the development of versions of masculinity that are more empathetic, caring and respectful- and less violent. He explored how rigid constructions of masculinity and gender stereotypes can be passed on through male role models. This project aims to challenge men to think about the way they have been socialised, their role in setting an example for younger men and boys, and the way they will act as a role model in the future.

<http://www.thebugle.org.au/2021/09/08/294/>

Respectful Conversations

One project ally developed a respect workshop and delivered it to all the Year 8 boys at a local regional high school. Some really great conversations came out of this, and the Year 8 participants were highly engaged. The feedback and participation highlighted the need for these conversations to be occurring, and that young boys are open to the conversations and ready to engage.



FEEDBACK FROM YEAR 8 BOYS "RESEPECTFUL CONVERSATIONS" PARTICIPANTS

"Liked talking about stuff we don't usually talk about."

"Think about how I make others feel when I am in a conversation."

"What I think might be a joke might not be to others."

"We have never really talked about respect and consent"

"Enjoyed this. We don't learn about this at school."

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

“Our culture won’t change by itself, but if enough men are prepared to show leadership, and prepared to care, then together we can do something really special. That’s the feeling I have gained from being part of this project - feeling that I have, in some small way, contributed to building a better society, and of being part of something special.”

“I thought of myself as an ally prior to taking part, however it has given me so much more knowledge, theories and tools to apply.”



ARC GENDER RELATIONS

MEN AND FAMILY CENTRE

Lismore: (02) 6622 6116

1 Club Lane, Lismore 2480

Tweed: 0422 195 003

46-48 Wharf Street, Tweed

Heads NSW 2485

Opening Hours

9.00 – 5.00pm Monday to Friday

<https://menandfamily.org.au/>



Men & Family Centre
Building safe respectful relationships

PROJECTS DEVELOPED (CONT)

To Be A Man?

Another ally created a podcast exploring and expanding concepts of masculinity and looking at the impact of rigid gender stereotypes in one person’s life. Specifically, this project hoped to facilitate and record conversations with individual Australian men about how they have been negatively affected by traditional definitions of what it means to be a man. Through this project, it was hoped that cultural norms around what it means to be a man would begin to be dismantled and the idea that there is no fixed model of masculinity that needs to be adhered to would be promoted. Provoking thought through the facilitation of conversation and storytelling was a key component of this project.

https://open.spotify.com/episode/0dsYPBW4WlQPbNhNJAibke?si=5GzxEeZPRNmsX65Xckf0A&dl_branch=1

“This podcast has had thousands of listens now, Michael Flood (a leading academic in working with men) has added it to his website (<https://xyonline.net/content/podcasts-men-and-masculinities>) and I have received such great feedback from people who wouldn’t normally engage in conversations like that about gender.”

Listen Up!

One ally created a podcast 'Listen Up' that explores the experience of trans and gender diverse community members. This project has been directly informed by, driven and curated from within the local Northern Rivers LGBTQIAP+ community. It's focus has been to explore and challenge rigid gender stereotypes through centring and amplifying the voices and experiences of gender diverse and First Nations folks, who are too often missing from the current conversation about gendered violence. The podcast invites four inspiring gender diverse folks, whose experiences span eight decades, to share their intriguing and powerful stories about how rigid gender roles and binaries have shaped their lives, through the lens of domestic and family violence and discrimination. This project was also partly funded by the Regional NSW LGBTQIA+ DFV Interagency

<https://soundcloud.com/user-955572101/listen-up>

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“It was the best experience, I’ve just learned so much from watching how ARC has organised this project and the way it’s been rolled out. So much thought, accountability, transparency.”

“It was such an enjoyable and positive experience for me. I felt so well supported and it was underpinned by theory as well. In terms of professional development it gave me a lot, and it also impacted my personal life as well. Great to connect with people and link with community.”

“It is inspiring that these projects are going on. We can try to make some change here. Great to be part of it and it felt accessible for me to come and be involved.”

“We are not standing up for women but with women and people of other genders.”

“It has opened my eyes further again to see how deep this stuff runs and how prevalent it is in society and recognising your own white male privilege.”

“I really enjoyed the Women’s Accountability Panel and I enjoyed the uncomfortableness of the process. I thought the WAP was a really important part of it.”