

Actions for Government in Engaging Men and Boys in Violence Prevention

Notes by Professor Michael Flood, June 4 2025

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These notes may be circulated and cited.

The following describes initiatives and strategies that can be adopted by Government that will build capacity in Australia to effectively engage men and boys in violence prevention. Note that these initiatives are focused on primary prevention rather than initiatives aimed at men and boys at risk of using violence (secondary prevention / intervention) or already using violence (tertiary prevention / intervention).

- Contribute to the national coordination of work with men and boys for violence prevention
 - In particular, to ensure that:
 - This work is evidence-based, and
 - Work across diverse areas of practice (in relation to family support and parenting, health and wellbeing, alcohol and other drugs, and other areas) is mutually reinforcing and synergistic.
 - The strategies below contribute to national coordination. In addition;
 - National coordination might include identification of how various government-funded initiatives related to men, boys, and domestic and sexual violence fit together and how these are intended to contribute to outcomes in the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 and [National Outcomes Framework](#).
 - National coordination may require a mapping of existing ‘healthy masculinities’ work around the country.
 - See comments on this in [this Our Watch report](#).
 - An example of a stocktake of 15 ‘healthy masculinities’ programs in one state in Australia is in [this journal article](#) (Flood *et al.*, 2024).
- Identify, or support the development of, best practice standards, minimum standards, or principles for violence prevention work with men and boys and disseminate them.
 - Draw, for example, on existing guides, such as these:
 - [Supporting Best Practices: Guidelines For Funding Programs that Engage and Mobilize Men and Boys in Violence Prevention](#) (Wells *et al.*, 2020)
 - [The Warwick Principles: Best Practices for Engaging Men and Boys in Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls in the Pacific](#) (Regional Pacific Women’s Network Against Violence Against Women and UN Women, 2020)
 - [Men in Focus practice guide](#) (Our Watch, 2022)
 - [Effective practice in violence prevention education with boys and young](#)

[men](#) (Flood, 2024)

- Ensure that efforts engaging men and boys and/or addressing masculinities are guided by Australia’s existing violence prevention framework *Change the Story* and done in collaboration or partnership with women’s and violence prevention organisations and networks.
- Increase knowledge sharing on existing healthy masculinities / male engagement projects and their findings, including by both governments and other organisations, and collective improvements in practice:
 - Encourage dissemination of findings from relevant state government initiatives
 - Such as the Victorian Government project addressing consent, pornography, and gender that began in 2023, that includes a stream of work focused on “Engaging men and boys in conversations about masculinity and gender equality” (Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing).
 - Develop mechanisms for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and practice development: communities of practice, learning exchanges, a healthy masculinities network, and statewide consultations and events (and not just among practitioners and programs directly funded by government). Draw on existing collections on practice and scholarship (such as [this one](#) on the website XY).
 - Support the translation of research evidence into practice.
 - This might use resources such as the ANROWS Evidence Portal, but if so, should involve far more development of practitioner-focused resources.
 - Support the development of materials intended to guide or improve practice: short, accessible tools for use across settings, guides to messaging, videos, infographics, and so on. (See the [Our Watch report](#), Appendix 8, and the [Jesuit Social Services report](#) (2024), for relevant suggestions.)
- Increase secondary school curricula on healthy masculinities, gender, and power.
 - For example, shape the Australian Curriculum (a national framework for all primary and secondary schools) by setting strategic directions through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).
 - Encourage approaches in which such curricula are embedded within best practice approaches to respectful relationships education (RRE) more broadly, drawing e.g. on guidance to RRE policy ([Our Watch, 2021](#)) and implementation ([Our Watch, 2025](#)).
- Support professional development initiatives aimed at increasing professionals’ and practitioners’ capacity to work effectively with men and boys and at building a healthy masculinities workforce.
 - This could take place through a partnership with a university, funded to develop a course or training program aimed at practitioners. See for example the undergraduate unit I developed at QUT, “[Engaging Men](#)”. However, an entirely online, asynchronous course might be appropriate, modelled for example on my

university's [Graduate Certificate in Domestic Violence Responses](#).

- Also draw e.g. on recent Our Watch work on building capacity to engage men in violence prevention (such as its stakeholder meeting in May 2024 and the [resulting report](#)).
- Mandate and support impact evaluations for all prevention programs, with a focus on long-term behavioural change rather than short-term awareness. For example;
 - Ensure that programming includes a 10% budget for robust impact evaluation.
 - Support impact evaluation at the levels of both settings (e.g. schools, workplaces, sporting clubs, faith institutions, etc.) and at a community or population level.
 - Provide guidance on impact evaluations, including e.g.
 - Guides to relevant measures related to violence, gender norms, healthy masculinities, etc.
 - Shared or collective impact evaluation frameworks
- Fund Blueprint programs and/or curricula on healthy masculinities.
 - (Note that the [Healthy MATE trial](#), launched in October 2024, may go some way towards this.)

There are other strategies that address key risk factors for men's and boys' perpetration of violence or that represent important but under-utilised prevention strategies. For example;

- In the name of sexual violence prevention, seek to lessen boys' and young men's exposure to pornography and particularly violent pornography, through:
 - Age verification (cf the eSafety Commission's roadmap to age verification)
 - Greater regulation of pornography's content
 - Social media regulation of social media platform's pornographic content
- Support intensive intervention into violence-supportive and misogynist online spaces ([Flood, 2023](#)), and the provision of evidence-based information and education for boys and young men. (A recent example of the latter is this '[Ask a Mate](#)' app.)
- Address risk factors e.g. for sexual violence perpetration that have been largely neglected thus far.
 - For example, develop or support social norms campaigns aimed at addressing the notions of sexual entitlement that some men endorse and that shape their sexual violence perpetration.
- Encourage the mobilisation of men as violence prevention advocates, in partnership with women, by supporting or funding community mobilisation initiatives.
 - Community mobilisation is a promising, but under-utilised, prevention strategy ([Flood, 2023](#)).
 - An obvious vehicle for such initiatives is White Ribbon Australia, given the international White Ribbon Campaign's defining focus on engaging men to take action against men's violence against women. However, in the Australian

context, WRA would need to do considerably more than it has done in recent years oriented to community mobilisation and the development of networks of advocates.

- Support the broadening of the strategies used to engage men and boys, beyond educating boys in schools about respectful relationships and sexual consent (while this is important), to strategies, for example:
 - Building egalitarian cultures in workplaces and sports
 - Using communications and social marketing to shift violence-supportive masculine norms of masculine entitlement
 - Involving male community and faith leaders
 - Mobilising men alongside women in advocacy networks
 - Holding male policy-makers and male-dominated institutions and governments to account.
- Support the development of innovative prevention strategies aimed at key drivers of domestic or sexual violence, such as male peer support, parental socialisation, and other factors. Invest in and scale up promising, novel approaches (see Wells *et al.* 2022, p. 18).

Guidance and resources

The following resources are particularly relevant for government action:

- *Our Watch Policy Brief*: A key piece of guidance will be the forthcoming Policy Brief to governments currently being produced by Our Watch, due in June – July. This will be targeted at state, territory and Commonwealth governments, with recommendations which focus on policy, legislative and regulatory opportunities to prevent violence against women by working with men and boys and addressing masculinities.
- This recent document offers key guidance: [Strengthening national approaches to addressing masculinities and working with men and boys to prevent gender-based violence](#) (Our Watch, 2024)
- This Canadian document represents an interesting framework for government action on engaging men and boys: [Building a movement of men and boys committed to violence prevention and gender equality in Alberta](#) (Wells *et al.*, 2022)

More generally:

- An international assessment of work with men and boys for gender equality, including its evidence base and future directions, can be found in this [report](#) and [policy brief](#) (Greig and Flood, 2020, 2021).
- A wide range of resources on ‘healthy masculinities’ work with men and boys can be found [here](#).

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