



COMMUNIQUÉ

Healthy Masculinities Roundtable

Convened by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)

Melbourne, May 2026

Interest in ‘healthy masculinities’ – and in how boys and men can be supported to live healthy, connected and respectful lives – is growing rapidly across Australian Government portfolios, including the prevention of gender-based violence, men’s health, education, online safety and social cohesion and others. Yet there is currently no shared understanding of what the term means, how it should be measured or how effort should be coordinated across government.

Without a shared foundation, government’s ability to coordinate effort, avoid duplication and demonstrate what works is limited, increasing the risk of fragmented or ineffective investment. To help address this, AIFS – an independent, family-focused research entity within the Australian Public Service – convened a Healthy Masculinities Roundtable this year, bringing together senior officials from 7 Australian Government agencies and academic experts from a range of disciplines.

AIFS used the term ‘healthy masculinities’ as the organising term for the roundtable but recognised that related terms – including caring masculinities, positive masculinities and progressive masculinities – may be more appropriate in some contexts.

To ground the discussion in evidence, AIFS prepared comprehensive pre-event materials. These drew on input from government and academic experts, AIFS’ reviews of masculinities research, programs and interventions, a scan of existing frameworks and measurement tools in Australia and internationally, a mapping of current Commonwealth policies, and emerging research on issues such as the influence of the online environment. Informed by this evidence, the roundtable was structured around 4 focus areas designed to move from conceptual clarity to practical implementation.

The roundtable opened with addresses from AIFS Director Ms Liz Neville, as well as the Hon Ged Kearney MP (Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) and Mr Dan Repacholi MP (Special Envoy for Men’s Health).

What we heard

On **defining healthy masculinities**, participants saw value in a shared definition to build policy coherence but agreed its purpose must be clear; in the short term, shared principles, context-specific language or a positive vision may be more useful than a single universal definition. Deficit-based and binary framing should be avoided, while still recognising the aspects of masculinity linked to harm and inequality. Healthy masculinities are best understood as relational, contextual and structural – shaped by institutions, culture and social norms – and any framing must hold care, accountability, respect, connection and growth together.

On **policy, research and evaluation priorities**, participants stressed the need to clarify the outcomes sought – wellbeing, help seeking, connection, reduced violence, social cohesion and gender equality –



recognising these differ across policy areas. They supported a life-course and settings-based approach that includes often-overlooked cohorts such as mid-life and older men, alongside stronger workforce capability and a better evidence base.

On **transforming systems**, participants agreed that lasting change depends on more than shifting individual attitudes, because institutions, cultures and structures shape what is possible for men and boys. They supported mapping the policy, institutional, community and relational levers across settings – from schools and workplaces to health, justice and online platforms – to show where action is occurring, where gaps remain and who is responsible. Participants emphasised prevention and early intervention across the life course, and community-led approaches informed by First Nations strengths-based practice, alongside institutional and workforce reform.

On **communicating healthy masculinities**, participants agreed there is no single message for all audiences, with support for developing different strategies for audiences with differing views. Communication should be strengths-based but accountable – affirming men and boys without excusing harm – and should avoid simplistic slogans and correct misperceived social norms.

Cross-cutting themes included that language matters; that singular definitions or messages are likely insufficient; that strengths and accountability must be held together; that overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation mean some men find it harder to get help; and that coordination, evidence and evaluation need strengthening across key settings (education, sport, workplaces, health, justice and online spaces).

Areas for further consideration. Reflecting the discussion, participants identified matters for further work: governance arrangements to support coordination and expert engagement including with sector organisations, communities and people with lived experience; shared principles and common language, including considerations around a national definition and measurement; a life-course and settings-based approach; stronger evidence, measurement and evaluation; a national systems map and stocktake; a cross-sector workforce capability framework; and an evidence-informed communications approach.

This roundtable marked an important first step towards building a shared, evidence-informed understanding of healthy masculinities across Australian Government policy and beyond. It was, by design, an initial policy-focused discussion among select government officials and academic experts, grounded in current Commonwealth responsibilities and the available evidence. It did not capture all relevant disciplines, perspectives or lived experiences, and the themes and ideas summarised here are offered as a constructive basis for further engagement. Sustained collaboration of this kind will be essential to progressing healthy masculinities in ways that benefit all Australian families and communities.

Finally, this communique summarises AIFS' understanding of discussions and does not necessarily represent the views of all attendees, their organisations or the Australian Government.

The full roundtable proceedings and pre-event materials are available on the AIFS [website](#). For further information, contact enquiries@aifs.gov.au