

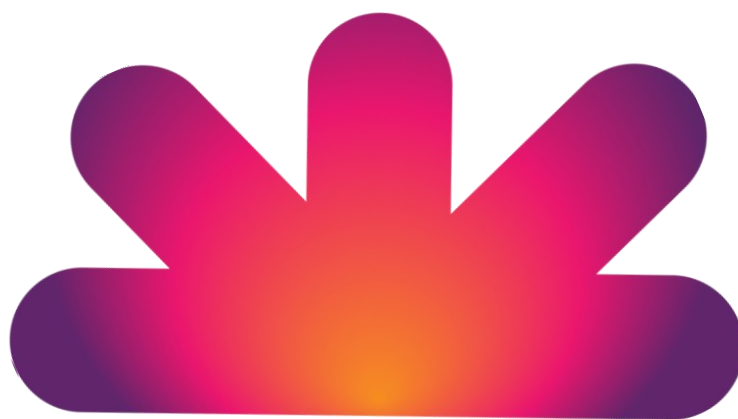


Australian Government
Australian Institute of
Family Studies



Healthy Masculinities Roundtable

Roundtable proceedings





Acknowledgements

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples, as part of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which this roundtable event was held. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present.

AIFS would also like to acknowledge and thank the individuals and organisations who contributed their time and expertise as part of AIFS' Healthy Masculinities Roundtable. The agencies and departments of the Australian Government and academic experts who participated in the roundtable are listed below.

AIFS attendees

Ms Liz Neville	Director
Ms Catherine Andersson	Group Head, Family Data, Studies and Society
Dr Sean Martin	Longitudinal Head, TTM, BNLA
Ms Elena Campbell	Theme Head, Child and Family Safety

Government attendees

The Hon Ged Kearney MP	Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence
Mr Dan Repacholi MP	Special Envoy for Men's Health
Ms Micaela Cronin	Commissioner, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission
Ms Anna Lutz	Group Manager, Family Safety, Department of Social Services
Mr Paul Clark	Executive Manager Education, Prevention and Communities, eSafety Commissioner
Ms Rhiannon Box	Assistant Secretary, Health, Disability and Ageing, Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
Ms Samantha Analytis	A/g Regional Director Victoria and Tasmania, Office for Multicultural Affairs Immigration Group, Department of Home Affairs
Ms Megan Leahy	First Assistant Secretary, Office for Women, Prime Minister and Cabinet
Ms Beth Wooldridge	Assistant Secretary Family and Community Safety, Attorney-General's Department

Academic experts

Professor Murray Drummond	College of Education, Psychology and Social Work, Flinders University
A/Professor Richard Fletcher	Faculty of Health and Medicine, Newcastle University
Professor Michael Flood	Faculty of Creative Industries, Education & Social Justice, Queensland University of Technology



Ms Jami Jones	Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University (on behalf of Prof Adam Bourne)
Professor Amanda Keddie	Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University
Professor Patrick O'Leary	School of Allied Health, Sport and Social Work, Griffith University
Professor Steven Roberts	School of Social Sciences, Monash University
A/Professor Zac Seidler	Global Director, Men's Health Research, Movember
Professor James Smith	College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University

Note on this document

This proceedings document was prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) following the Healthy Masculinities Roundtable. The roundtable was held under the Chatham House Rule to enable open discussion. For this reason, views expressed during the roundtable have not been attributed to individual participants or organisations. The document summarises AIFS' understanding of the key themes, areas of broad agreement and ideas for next steps arising from the discussion. It does not necessarily represent the views of all attendees, their organisations or the Australian Government.

Assistant Minister Kearney and the Special Envoy for Men's Health engaged in the opening session but did not participate in the subsequent roundtable discussions. References to discussion themes and areas for further consideration therefore reflect the roundtable discussion among participating officials and academic experts.



Background and context

Purpose of the roundtable

In May 2026, the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) brought together senior Australian Government officials and academic experts for a Healthy Masculinities Roundtable to progress a shared, evidence-informed approach to healthy masculinities across Commonwealth policy.

AIFS used the term ‘healthy masculinities’ as the organising term for the roundtable because it appeared to have growing policy traction across Australian Government portfolios, while recognising that related terms – including caring masculinities, positive masculinities and progressive masculinities – may be more appropriate in some contexts. The roundtable was deliberately scoped as an initial, policy-oriented discussion with government officials and academic experts, grounded in current Commonwealth responsibilities and the available evidence base. Broader engagement with community organisations, people with lived experience and other stakeholders would be important in informing any subsequent work.

Healthy masculinities work is expanding rapidly across multiple Australian Government portfolios (e.g. Expert Panel for the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches 2024, *Unlocking the Prevention Potential: Accelerating Action to End Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence* (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC)), *National Men’s Health Strategy 2020–2030* (Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA), *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (Department of Social Services (DSS))). However, there is currently no common conceptualisation or measurement of healthy masculinities to inform monitoring or evaluation and, coupled with emerging research challenges and limited cross-portfolio coordination, this presents barriers to evidence-based policy making.

Approach to the roundtable discussions

Prior to the event, AIFS prepared some pre-event materials to provide an evidence-informed foundation for roundtable discussions. These materials were informed by:

- input from government stakeholders and academic experts, including published and unpublished materials
- AIFS’ systematic and scoping reviews of healthy masculinities programs, masculinity research and related interventions
- a scan of existing healthy masculinities frameworks and measurement tools in Australia and internationally
- a mapping of current Commonwealth policies relevant to healthy masculinities across attending agencies (Attorney-General’s Department (AGD), Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (DFSVC), DHDA, DSS, eSafety, Home Affairs and the Office for Women)
- emerging research from key focus areas, such as the role of the online environment in shaping masculinities.

These pre-event materials are available on the AIFS [website](#) with these proceedings.



On the basis of input from both government officials and academic experts, it was agreed the structure of the Healthy Masculinities Roundtable was to work towards building consensus across 4 key focus areas:

1. Defining healthy masculinities in an Australian policy context
2. Policy, research and evaluation priorities
3. Transforming systems for gender equitable outcomes
4. Communicating healthy masculinities to the public.

The 4 areas reflected the main issues identified through the pre-event materials and input from government and academic experts. They were chosen to move from conceptual clarity through to implementation.

The following sections summarise the opening remarks, key themes from each focus area, cross-cutting themes from the discussion and areas identified for further consideration in relation to healthy masculinities in an Australian policy context.



Setting the policy scene: opening addresses

Prior to the roundtable discussions, opening addresses were provided by Ms Liz Neville (AIFS Director), The Hon Ged Kearney MP (Assistant Minister for Social Services, Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Federal Member for Cooper) and Mr Dan Repacholi MP (Special Envoy for Men's Health, Federal Member for Hunter).

Opening address of Ms Liz Neville (AIFS Director)

AIFS Director Liz Neville opened the day by warmly welcoming attendees and thanking them for their considerable efforts and generous contributions that had brought the roundtable to fruition. Following her acknowledgement of Country, Ms Neville drew in the theme of connection and gathering by noting the artwork by Yorta Yorta artists Luke and Siena Tieri as part of AIFS' reconciliation efforts. The title of this artwork (Nitel ('to gather')) reflected the spirit of respectful, connected engagement across diverse views and expertise that she encouraged participants to bring to the day's discussions.

The Director noted that AIFS was uniquely placed as an independent, family-focused research body within the Australian Public Service to convene leading academic experts and senior government representatives for an evidence-based discussion on emerging concepts related to 'healthy masculinities'. Further, as an agency, AIFS' work programs regularly intersect with these concepts across policy, evaluation and primary research (including *Ten to Men*, the largest longitudinal study of male health worldwide). Finally, Ms Neville noted, as AIFS approached its 50th year as a statutory body of the Australian Government, it had a long history with the social issues affecting Australian families.

Ms Neville emphasised the importance of getting public messaging on healthy masculinities right, cautioning that messaging can engage but can also reinforce stereotypes, create backlash or produce new rigid ideals. She recognised the contestability inherent in the healthy masculinities framing and expressed a desire to work towards a strengths-based framing offering boys and men a positive vision to collectively work towards. Critically, she was clear that such approaches must not dilute accountability for the safety of girls, women and communities, nor detract from the increasing gender equality from which all Australians benefit.

Ms Neville observed that public and political interest in this space was at an unprecedented level, and that healthy masculinities work was expanding rapidly across multiple government portfolios in Australia and worldwide, including gender-based violence prevention, chronic disease prevention, help seeking, education, online safety, legal frameworks, social cohesion and gender equality. Ms Neville framed the roundtable as a timely opportunity for a policy-relevant, future-focused discussion to use evidence to help inform 'real world' problems.



Opening address of the Hon Ged Kearney MP

Assistant Minister Kearney began by acknowledging that healthy masculinities and related matters are a clear priority for the Australian Government, reflected in the participation in the roundtable of 7 government agencies. This coordination should help avoid duplication in a rapidly evolving policy area and support an evidence-informed approach to developing and monitoring relevant policies and programs. She noted the impressive and diverse contributions of the assembled academic experts, and their importance to the government's understanding of the challenges and opportunities for healthy masculinities.

As Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Ms Kearney said it was important to include men and boys in conversations about family, domestic and sexual violence, while acknowledging that better engagement of boys and men extends to many other policy areas represented at the roundtable.

Assistant Minister Kearney acknowledged that rigid expectations of masculinity can be deeply harmful to boys and men across the lifespan. Evidence shows that adherence to traditional masculine norms can lead to adverse health behaviours and outcomes that affect the wellbeing and safety of women, men and communities. These norms are not applied universally across all Australian communities and careful cultural nuance is needed.

Assistant Minister Kearney noted intense public interest in healthy masculinities and the needs of boys and men, highlighting community expectations of policy makers and researchers.

The Assistant Minister concluded by restating the importance of events such as this roundtable in addressing contemporary policy challenges. She emphasised the need for solutions-focused, frank and fearless conversations, and noted the ongoing openness of parliamentarians to the issues raised by government, academic and other experts during and after the roundtable.

Opening address of Mr Dan Repacholi MP

The Special Envoy for Men's Health Mr Dan Repacholi MP opened by reflecting on the challenges facing men's health and access to services. His work is driven by the need to ensure men's voices – especially regional men's voices – are heard. He said the conversation around healthy masculinities feels increasingly urgent. A consistent message he hears from men reflects good intent and genuine care but also confusion; many are unclear about how to be a good father or partner, as ingrained ideas of masculinity no longer fit contemporary life.

Mr Repacholi emphasised that healthy masculinities must be grounded in real men and real lives, centred on relationships and help seeking. This work is not about blame but about recognising a mismatch of values and giving men better options. He framed the task as bringing together research, lived experience and policy. Because health, finances, family, relationships and mental health are all connected, he argued, the response should be too.

Mr Repacholi used fatherhood to show how these areas come together, describing it as a time of transition and a significant opportunity – yet one where fathers are not always included in the systems around them. New research reinforces that men's health matters even before children arrive, and that it shapes broader family and child outcomes. He linked this to healthy masculinities – how men see their roles not just as individuals but as partners, fathers and members of families and communities.



Mr Repacholi described the National Healthy Men Community Conversations ([National Healthy Men Community Conversations](#)), a national initiative he is co-leading with Assistant Minister Kearney launched on the day of the roundtable. This project is focused on listening first, understanding what is happening on the ground, before developing solutions across health, finance and justice. He acknowledged the pressures men and boys face, including online harms and a sense of being 'left behind', and stressed the need to engage, listen and show them what they can be.

The Special Envoy ended by identifying a key challenge: services across portfolios such as DSS, Health and Justice can feel fragmented. He called for a unified, coordinated system that shares the same goal and is context-responsive and culturally appropriate. He concluded that most men want simple things – to be healthy, to belong and to be there for their families – and that the task is to remove barriers. Healthy masculinities, he said, is not about creating new boxes but about opening things up for men and boys as a whole-of-community issue.



Roundtable discussion themes

Focus area 1: Defining healthy masculinities in an Australian policy context

Purpose and scope of a definition¹

- There was strong interest in whether and how a shared definition of healthy masculinities would help build policy coherence across sectors.
- Participants noted that any definition needs to be clear about its purpose: whether it is primarily focused on men's health and wellbeing, gender equality, gender-based violence prevention, social cohesion, parenting, help seeking or broader systems change. Alternatively, where there is intended overlap, this should be explicitly stated.
- Attendees noted recent calls for a single universal definition of healthy masculinities and the need for a cohesive measurement framework. The importance of this was acknowledged, as well as some of the practical difficulties in creating these measurement capabilities and limits to utility across all settings.
- Attendees were presented with a preliminary definition for healthy masculinities. This definition was designed to be strengths-based and aligned to contemporary notions of masculinities from a health perspective. Attendees noted there were requirements to ensure such a definition was sensitive to the notions of structural power and privilege that underpin much of the current literature in respect to masculinities and gender-based violence.
- An important practical approach in the short-term may be to develop **shared principles**, **context-specific language** or a **positive vision** that can be adapted across policy domains.

Avoiding deficit-based and binary framing

- A recurring theme was the need to avoid defining masculinity only in terms of risk, harm, violence or deficit, noting that most of the existing masculinities measures take this deficits-approach (i.e. more masculinity = worse outcomes).
- At the same time, participants emphasised that strengths-based framing should not ignore aspects of masculinity that mediate harmful behaviour, gendered violence or structural inequities.
- There was concern that the language of 'healthy masculinities' could unintentionally reinforce gender binaries if it is not carefully framed.
- Discussion highlighted the importance of recognising masculinities as plural, fluid, contextual and shaped by life stage, culture, community, sexuality, gender identity and social norms.

¹ At the outset, AIFS acknowledged that the roundtable could not cover all areas relevant to healthy masculinities. This included the significant First Nations-led and community-informed work on masculinities, culture, identity, connection and wellbeing. Given the importance and specificity of this work, AIFS noted that it would require dedicated engagement with appropriate First Nations experts, communities and organisations, and was not a focus of this initial roundtable discussion.



Masculinity as relational, contextual and structural

- Healthy masculinities were discussed less as a fixed set of traits and more as a relational and contextual process.
- There was support for framing masculinity around how men and boys navigate social pressures, relationships, expectations and systems, while needing to ensure this framing is not co-opted to pursue political or economic agendas or dilute accountability for gender-based harms.
- Participants emphasised that masculinities are shaped by institutions, policies, cultures and social structures – not just by individual attitudes or behaviours.
- Gender norms were discussed as affecting men and boys, women and girls and LGBTQIA+ communities, with homophobia, transphobia, racism, colonialism and heteronormativity identified as important intersecting forces often arising out of related societal structures.

Balancing wellbeing, equity and accountability

- A key tension was how to bring together a positive vision for men and boys with the need to address men's violence, coercive control, gender inequities and structural privilege.
- There was support for language that holds **care, accountability, respect, connection and growth** together.
- Participants noted that men and boys need space to talk about health, wellbeing, vulnerability, relationships, help seeking and identity, while also being part of broader work to advance gender equality, justice and harm prevention.

Risks of definition and measurement

- The group noted that defining healthy masculinities carries risks, including co-option, backlash, oversimplification or unintended reinforcement of gender norms.
- There was concern that measurement can narrow the concept if it focuses only on individual attitudes or behaviours.
- A more useful measurement approach may include social, structural, relational and institutional conditions that enable men and boys to live healthy and connected lives.

Focus area 2: Policy, research and evaluation priorities

Clarifying outcomes and policy goals

- The discussion highlighted the need to identify what policies and programs focusing on healthy masculinities are trying to achieve, noting that the absence of this will create the risk of ineffective interventions.
- Potential outcomes included improved personal and family wellbeing, help seeking, connection, care, reduced violence, stronger relationships, social cohesion, gender equality, community safety and reduced isolation.
- Participants reiterated that outcomes may differ across policy areas and that one approach will not suit all domains. This creates tensions for policy design and evaluation, highlighting



the need for collaborative approaches that reduce fragmentation, while still allowing responses to be tailored to different settings, communities and objectives.

Life-course approach

- A strong theme was the importance of understanding masculinities across the life course.
- Early childhood was identified as important because gender identity and norms begin forming early.
- Boyhood, adolescence, young adulthood, fatherhood, mid-life and older age were all seen as distinct stages requiring different engagement strategies.
- Participants noted that public discussion often focuses on boys and young men but can overlook men in mid-life and older men.

Settings-based opportunities

- Education was identified as a major setting for policy and practice development, particularly through schools, including respectful relationships education, teacher capability and whole-school approaches, and providing gender-sensitive education to improve educational outcomes.
- Sport, workplaces, health services, justice systems, family services, digital platforms, community organisations and peer networks were also identified as important settings.
- Participants noted that many programs exist across these settings but they are often fragmented, under-resourced or not well evaluated. There remain opportunities for a more coordinated approach across Australia.

Workforce capability

- A major discussion point was the need to build workforce capability across multiple sectors where considerations around healthy masculinities intersect.
- Teachers, health professionals, police, justice workers, community workers, sports coaches, youth workers and adjacent workforces may all encounter boys and men at key moments.
- Participants noted that these workforces need support, training, resources and referral pathways, rather than being expected to manage complex issues without appropriate systems around them.
- Capability was discussed not only as recognising risk but also as responding safely, relationally and without causing further harm to employees and their families.

Evaluation and evidence gaps

- There was a call for stronger evidence about what works in relation to healthy masculinities (and related work), for whom, in what settings and why.
- Participants noted a need to move beyond ad hoc programs and better understand implementation, scalability, sustainability and unintended consequences.
- Monitoring and evaluation should include both individual-level outcomes and broader system-level conditions.
- There was interest in developing a minimum indicator set but caution that indicators should not reduce healthy masculinities to narrow measures of attitudes or traits, along with ongoing deficit-based approaches or without regard to broader social indicators.



Digital and online environments

- Online spaces were seen as highly influential in shaping boys' and men's identities, aspirations and social norms.
- Discussion included the manosphere, social media, gaming, AI-enabled advice seeking and online harms.
- Participants also noted that online environments are not only harmful; they can include progressive, supportive and socially connected communities.
- More mapping is needed to better understand the scope of research, programs and interventions relating to masculinities, online spaces and wellbeing, and to help address the 'know-do' gap in this area.

Targeted versus universal approaches

- Participants noted that healthy masculinities work should not rely only on universal messaging or programs.
- Different groups of men and boys may experience different and cumulative pressures, vulnerabilities and opportunities depending on culture, age, geography, sexuality, class, disability, trauma history and other factors.
- A targeted approach may be needed for specific outcomes at specific life stages, such as gender-based violence prevention, trauma response, social isolation, radicalisation, help seeking or fatherhood support.

Focus area 3. Transforming systems for gender-equitable outcomes

Systems mapping and policy levers

- The discussion highlighted the need for a practical systems map identifying policy, institutional, community and relational levers.
- Such a map could help identify where interventions are already happening, where gaps exist and which sectors are responsible for action.
- Potential levers included schools, workplaces, sport, health services, justice systems, family law, parenting supports, community organisations, online platforms and industry.

Matching approaches to outcomes

- Participants noted that different goals require different approaches. For instance, gender-based violence prevention, gender justice, men's health, help seeking, social cohesion, parenting, shared care and workplace changes may each require distinct strategies within a healthy masculinities framing.
- Healthy masculinities may be one useful frame among several but it should not be expected to do all policy work in every setting.



Prevention and early intervention

- It was noted that the term ‘prevention’ can have different meanings and historical approaches across varying sectors and disciplines (e.g. in health promotion, chronic disease management, harm prevention).
- There was strong interest in identifying intervention points before harm or risk escalates.
- This included early childhood, school years, relationship formation, fatherhood, separation, trauma, social isolation, online radicalisation, grief, unemployment and contact with services.
- Participants highlighted the importance of understanding pathways into and out of harm, including protective factors such as attachment, connection, emotional regulation, relationships and community support.

Trauma, risk and protective factors

- Trauma was discussed as highly relevant to men’s wellbeing, violence prevention, help seeking and suicide prevention.
- Participants noted the need to distinguish between risk factors at a population level and risk indicators that may be useful for targeted interventions.
- There was interest in more holistic responses that account for trauma, coercive control, fixation, grievance, relationship breakdown and social isolation.

Community-level change

- Systems change was discussed as more than changing individual attitudes, given the reinforcing roles of institutions, cultural and social structures.
- Community-led and place-based approaches were seen as important, particularly where they strengthen connection, provide practical support and address broader conditions that contribute to harm.
- First Nations strengths-based, relational and community-led approaches were identified as offering important lessons for mainstream systems.
- Grassroots leadership and community trust were seen as essential alongside institutional action.

Institutional and workforce reform

- Institutions were discussed as gendered environments that can reproduce or challenge harmful norms.
- Schools, workplaces, sport, justice, health, financial services and online platforms were all identified as sites where masculinities are made and remade.
- Participants noted the importance of upskilling systems and workforces to recognise opportunities for positive engagement, not only risk management.
- Poorly designed responses can cause harm, so workforce capability needs to include safe, trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices.



Industry, workplaces and commercial influences

- Workplaces were identified as important settings for engaging men, promoting respect and influencing norms beyond the workplace.
- Examples discussed included parental leave, care policies, workplace harassment initiatives and industry-led responses to social issues.
- Participants also noted the influence of harmful commercial drivers, including gambling, alcohol and other industries that may shape masculine norms.
- Industry may be a partner in systems change but careful attention is needed in relation to accountability, evidence and unintended consequences.

Online, gaming and digital systems

- Online spaces, gaming and digital communities were discussed as both risks and opportunities, noting that adolescent boys and young men may be critically appraising online content.
- Participants noted the need for nuance, as some online communities can promote connection, identity development and wellbeing.
- Future work could highlight effective online interventions, coordinate research activity and provide opportunities to support prosocial digital engagement.
- AI was also raised as an emerging influence on how boys and men seek advice, support and identity cues.

Focus area 4: Communicating healthy masculinities to the public

Audience-specific communication

- A central theme was that there is no single message that will work for all audiences.
- Communication needs to be tailored by age, setting, cultural context, goal, channel and level of readiness to engage.
- Universal population-level messaging was viewed as limited unless supported by more targeted strategies.

Strengths-based but accountable messaging

- Participants supported positive, strengths-based communication that affirms men and boys, recognises their value and invites them into the conversation.
- Messaging should avoid suggesting that masculinity itself is inherently bad.
- At the same time, communication needs to be cognisant of the link to harm and avoid reinforcing grievance, victimhood or backlash narratives.
- Effective framing may combine empathy, respect, responsibility, connection, growth and care.



Avoiding harmful or simplistic slogans

- Participants were cautious about one-line slogans or taglines that may unintentionally reinforce rigid gender norms.
- 'Real men' style messaging and gender-exploitative approaches were seen as risky.
- Campaigns should avoid myths-versus-facts framing where it is likely to entrench misinformation.
- Messaging needs to be evidence-informed and tested with intended audiences.

Language, co-option and backlash

- Language was seen as central to the success or failure of public communication.
- Concepts such as freedom, authenticity, strength and care may resonate but can also be co-opted by bad-faith actors or ideological movements.
- Messages need to anticipate backlash and avoid creating 'own goals' that can be used to undermine gender equality, violence prevention and the advancement of men's health and wellbeing.
- Communication should be careful with statistics or claims that could stigmatise families, fathers, boys, men or specific communities if presented without context.

Tailor strategies to a spectrum of views

- Participants supported developing different strategies – and different goals – for audiences across the full spectrum, from those most resistant to those already supportive.
- Discussion highlighted the importance of engaging people who are open to good-faith conversations but may feel uncertain, defensive or alienated by current public narratives.
- Messaging should meet men and boys where they are, rather than assuming they already share the language of researchers, advocates or policy makers.
- Participants noted that many men and boys may privately hold more equitable views than they believe other men hold, suggesting a role for communications that challenge perceived norms.

Role models, relationships and community influence

- Role modelling was discussed as important but more complex than simply placing male role models in front of boys and men.
- Positive influences can come from fathers, mothers, peers, 'near-peers', mentors, coaches, teachers, partners, LGBTQIA+ communities and informal groups.
- Emerging evidence highlights the effectiveness of 'near-peer' programs (e.g. close age proximity, high relationality) for young men through use of shared language, reduced defensiveness and actioned vulnerability (e.g. redefining strength as emotional honesty rather than detached stoicism).
- Relational and community-based settings may create more authentic opportunities for change than formal campaigns alone.
- Informal spaces where men can speak openly and vulnerably may support shifts in attitudes, behaviours and wellbeing.



Inclusive and specific messaging

- Participants emphasised that inclusive communication does not mean vague or generic language.
- Messaging can remain specific while avoiding heteronormative assumptions and rigid stereotypes.
- LGBTQIA+ perspectives were seen as offering valuable language and practice insights for challenging binary and restrictive ideas of masculinity.
- Care is needed to ensure messages do not marginalise trans, gender diverse, queer, Indigenous, culturally diverse or other communities.

Platforming existing work

- There was recognition that strong communication and program work is already occurring across sectors.
- Future efforts could focus on identifying, amplifying and connecting existing campaigns, programs and community initiatives.
- A message-framing guide could help align communication with audience, setting, purpose and evidence.



Roundtable cross-cutting themes

During the roundtable, there were several themes that reoccurred throughout discussions on each of the focus areas in relation to healthy masculinities. These included:

- **Develop the 5 Ws for healthy masculinities:** *why* this work matters, *who* it matters for, *when* & *where* healthy masculinities is relevant, and *what* are the outcomes to be achieved requires further engagement with various stakeholders.
- **Language matters:** terminology needs to be purposeful, audience-appropriate and alert to unintended effects.
- **Singular definitions or messages will likely be insufficient:** shared principles, context-specific framing and tailored approaches may be useful in support of the important measurement work (both qualitative and quantitative) around healthy masculinities.
- **Strengths and accountability need to be held together:** positive framing should not erase violence, inequality or structural power considerations, and vice versa.
- **Healthy masculinities should be relational, contextual and structural.** while public health approaches offer potential to identify and reduce risks, pursuit of healthy masculinities is not just about individuals changing attitudes.
- **Systems change is essential:** institutions, policies, workforces and communities shape and reinforce what is possible and positive for men and boys.
- **Intersectionality is not optional:** gender, race, sexuality, class, disability, age, geography, trauma and culture shape experiences of masculinity.
- **Evidence and evaluation need strengthening:** especially around implementation, scalability, unintended consequences, system-level indicators and real-time syntheses as the evidence base continues to grow.
- **There is a need for coordination:** many initiatives exist but the field would benefit from mapping, shared learning and reduced duplication.
- **Education, sport, workplaces, health, justice and online spaces are key settings:** each offers different opportunities for intervention.
- **Public communication needs careful design:** messages must resonate with men and boys while avoiding backlash, co-opting or reinforcing stereotypes.



Proposed next steps

This roundtable brought together academic experts and senior Australian Government officials to progress a shared, evidence-informed approach to healthy masculinities.

In view of this objective, and the discussions held during and after the roundtable, the following areas are offered as matters for further consideration. While the roundtable drew together a diverse group of experts and officials, it did not fully capture all relevant disciplines, lived experiences and policy perspectives. Further engagement, including with community organisations, people with lived experience and other stakeholders, would be important before any governance arrangements, work programs or policy priorities are settled.

1. Consider options for governance arrangements to support coordination and expert engagement

Participants identified value in considering governance arrangements that could support coordination across relevant Commonwealth portfolios while maintaining structured input from external experts, organisations and communities. One option discussed was a cross-agency committee, supported by a Healthy Masculinities Expert Reference Group.

1a. Cross-agency Healthy Masculinities Committee

A cross-agency mechanism could be considered to coordinate policy, avoid duplication and align effort across relevant Commonwealth portfolios in relation to healthy masculinities. Depending on government priorities, such a mechanism could:

- provide a single point of coordination in a rapidly evolving policy area
- oversee a shared work program and agreed principles (including definitional and measurement considerations)
- draw on advice from the Expert Reference Group (see below)
- report periodically to relevant Ministers and the Special Envoy for Men's Health.

1b. Healthy Masculinities Expert Reference Group

An Expert Reference Group could be considered as one way to bring academic experts, key organisations, community perspectives and people with lived experience into future work in a coordinated and structured way. Depending on its purpose and scope, the group could:

- comprise a majority of members external to government, with Commonwealth representatives attending *ex officio*
- operate under clear terms of reference tied to a defined work program
- provide evidence-informed advice to the Cross-agency Healthy Masculinities Committee on definitional, measurement, research and communication questions.

This would respond to the recurring theme that coordination and shared learning may be useful in a rapidly evolving area, while recognising that the form, timing and remit of any governance arrangements would need further consideration.



2. Engage key organisations, communities and other experts in shaping the work

Building on the foundations established at this roundtable, further structured engagement could help broaden the evidence base and test emerging areas of interest. This could include engagement with community organisations, people with lived experience, service providers, First Nations and culturally diverse communities and those involved in related listening activities, including the Special Envoy's and AM Kearney's Community Consultation.

3. Explore shared principles and common language around healthy masculinities

Further work could explore whether shared principles, context-specific language and a positive vision for healthy masculinities would support coherence across portfolios, while remaining adaptable to different settings, communities and policy purposes. Any such principles could:

- be strengths-based while holding care, accountability, respect, connection and growth together
- remain sensitive to structural power, privilege and gender-based violence
- be tested for resonance with men and boys, and be 'backable' for both community and government use.

4. Consider a life-course and settings-based approach

- Future work could consider how healthy masculinities are shaped across the life course – from early childhood through adolescence, fatherhood, mid-life and older age – including cohorts that may be overlooked in public discussion.
- Settings such as education, sport, workplaces, health, justice, family services, community organisations and online environments could be considered as potential sites for policy, practice and evaluation activity.

5. Consider opportunities to strengthen the evidence base, measurement and evaluation

Participants identified several areas where further evidence, measurement and evaluation work may be useful. These could include:

- creating a synthesised and updateable evidence brief for policy in relation to healthy masculinities (and related research) across a variety of disciplines
- developing a minimum indicator set that captures social, structural, relational and institutional conditions – not only individual attitudes or traits
- embedding monitoring and evaluation in funded programs, with attention to implementation, scalability, sustainability and unintended consequences
- coordinating a research agenda to reduce duplication and build cumulative national evidence, including consideration of targeted research funding mechanisms.



6. Explore the value of a national systems map and stocktake

A practical systems map and stocktake could help identify existing policies, programs, research and levers across settings that directly or potentially relate to healthy masculinities. Such work could:

- identify where interventions are already happening, where gaps exist and which agencies are responsible
- reduce fragmentation and duplication across the Commonwealth, states and territories
- match approaches to intended outcomes, recognising that healthy masculinities is one useful frame among several.

7. Consider workforce capability needs across sectors

Further consideration could be given to the capability needs of workforces that encounter boys and men at key moments, including teachers, health professionals, police, justice and community workers, sports coaches and youth workers.

This may include consideration of supports, resources, referral pathways and training that enable safe, relational, trauma-informed and culturally responsive practice.

8. Consider an evidence-informed communications framework

A shared message-framing guide could be useful to support public communication that is tailored to audience, setting, purpose and evidence. Such a guide could:

- support strengths-based messaging that affirms men and boys while maintaining accountability for gender equity
- anticipate and mitigate risks of co-option, backlash and stigmatising framing
- create targeted strategies for boys and men across a disparate range of views (e.g. mobilising supportive views, persuading the 'moveable middle', engaging in behavioural change models for entrenched views)
- identify, amplify and connect existing, high-quality campaigns rather than duplicating effort.