

Engaging Men & Boys for the Prevention of Violence Against Women in Melbourne's Outer East 2018-20 Health Promotion

Benjamin Brewin & Josette O'Donnell, Health Promotion

easternhealth

Healesville Hospital and Yarra Valley Health

easternhealth.org.au



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Executive Summary

The Eastern Health, Health Promotion Team has a longstanding history of efforts to prevent violence against women (PVAW) in the Yarra Valley and Yarra Ranges region. Since 2016 these efforts have included a greater emphasis on engaging with men and boys for the prevention of family violence. The Our Watch, Change the Story framework clearly outlines the root cause of violence against women and its basis in gender inequality. The Health Promotion team aligned their PVAW efforts with the key actions described in the Change the Story framework document below (Our Watch, 2015) and the subsequent tool kit – *Putting Prevention of Violence Against Women into Practice (2017)*. This toolkit clearly outlines the need for engagement with boys and men as a clear prerogative alongside work in settings with girls and women.

Health Promotion has sought to engage men with a particular focus on three aspects of the Change the Story framework (Our Watch, 2015):

- To challenge the condoning of violence against women.
- To challenge of gender stereotypes and roles.
- To strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships.

Eastern Health has provided leadership in the Eastern Region to intensity efforts to engage men adequately in our efforts to prevent violence against women. Our early investment in this work, involved literature reviews, research and informal consultation with men in the Yarra Valley communities. The establishment of the Eastern Metro Region Steering Group to Promote Healthier Masculinities for the Prevention of Violence Against Women has been a clear and intensive effort to build capacity in our sector to engage with men.

In 2018 and 2019 Vic Health and Our Watch released new policy frameworks that clearly outlined the evidence and approaches needed to engage with men: *Promoting Healthier Masculinities* (Vic Health, 2018) and *Men in Focus – An evidence review* (Our Watch, 2018). There has been a shift in focus around engaging with men and boys in violence prevention, as Flood describes:

“There is a growing consensus in violence prevention circles that to end this violence, we must involve and work with men. While men have long been addressed in secondary and tertiary based interventions as perpetrators, now they are also being addressed as ‘partners’ in prevention.”
(Flood, 2005-2006).

To guide our work, Health Promotion at Eastern Health has sought external supervision and advice from Associate Professor Michael Flood from Queensland University of Technology and Ann Taket, retired professor - Deakin University.

This report aims to provide an update on the progress made by the Health Promotion team to engage with men and boys for the prevention of family violence. This includes efforts to promote healthier masculinities, engage with fathers and to support respectful relationships within key community settings. The key interventions and efforts are summarized under five different strategies that have been the focus of Eastern Health:

1. Engaging men to challenge condoning of violence against women.
2. Promoting healthier masculinities in boys and teenagers.
3. Engaging men in key community settings to promote healthier masculinities.
4. Building capacity to engage men and promote healthier masculinity in the PVAW sector.
5. Re-orientating services and settings to increase father engagement to promote respectful relationships and challenge gender stereotypes.

The following report summarises the interventions achieved under each strategy and their evaluation results. More detailed infographics and reports on the projects can be found on the Eastern Health – Health Promotion website: <https://www.easternhealth.org.au/a-z-service-directory/health-promotion-in-the-outer-east/item/267>

1. Engaging men to challenge condoning of violence against women.

“Men are a significant part of the problem {Violence against women...it is primarily men who perpetrate violence against women. Efforts to prevent this violence must include both a specific conceptual focus on men and masculinities as well as a practical focus on engaging men.” Our Watch, Men in Focus- An evidence review (2018).

“There are growing efforts to involve boys and men in various capacities associated with the prevention of violence against women: as participants in education programs, as targets of social marketing campaigns, as policy makers and gate-keepers, and as advocates and allies.” Michael Flood, Engaging Men and Boys in Violence Prevention (2018).

The Health Promotion team has focused on creating opportunities within settings to hold face to face discussions that build support for gender equality and challenge peer-based cultures and attitudes that condone violence against women. Challenging the acceptability of violence and sexism or the minimisation of harm to women that sexism causes is delicate but necessary work. The Health Promotion team has sourced external partners that have skills and capability in this area from 2017. In 2018 we invited SALT, Sport and Life Training (www.sportandlifetraining.com.au), to develop content that would engage male football teams in a conversation about gender equality, sexism and the use of violence. The *Equality is the Game* session was developed and trialed in several clubs in 2018. In 2019, the number of sessions delivered expanded and a new SALT mobile quiz was developed. This quiz encouraged the confidential disclosure of past use of abusive behaviours or violence towards women as well as asking participants if they knew of someone that had been abusive towards a woman/women. Nine sessions were held with football clubs. The quiz results from 100 men showed startling results, that just under half of all participants knew someone who had been abusive towards a woman and 10% had used a form of violence towards women in the past. This data mirrored the results shown in the women’s session in the *Leading the Change* Program, that just over half of the women knew someone who had been abused. However, 31% of the women involved in the *Crossing the Line* session, focused on increasing understanding of family violence, had disclosed a past experience of an abusive relationship.

The Health Promotion team has advocated for ongoing opportunities to challenge condoning of violence through conversations and program development with the Eastern Football Netball League. The *Leading the Change* model was considered by the partners during 2019 but the model of delivery was not agreed to within the EFNL at this time. Health Promotion has strongly advocated for the use of multi-session program formats, where men have more than one opportunity to discuss, learn and process the challenging notions that are presented in work that promotes healthier masculinities to prevent violence.

The AFL Outer East also trialed a new approach to challenging violence in 2019 in partnership with Eastern Health and the Bendigo Bank, through a social media campaign called #Expect Respect and the selection of an #Expect Respect Award receipt at the at the 2019 Presentation night. The AFL Outer East media manager and Game Face produced several videos, showcasing men and women in the league talking about the importance of respect and equality between men and women. 6 posts were produced with an average of 3500 views per post. At the presentation night, a male and female were awarded the #Expect Respect award, sponsored by the Bendigo Bank, for their contribution to promoting respect and equality in the sporting communities of the AFL Outer East.

2. Promote Healthier Masculinities in boys and teenagers

“That governments, philanthropy, business and community group’s partner in developing, testing and evaluating new interventions focused on: engaging young men in settings where they are (education, work, sport, community) and provide activities/interventions that support them to live positive alternatives to the Man Box norm – The Man Box, Recommendation 2 (2018).

There has been much focus on the harmful impacts of stereotypical masculinities or “toxic masculinities” in the last few years on men’s mental health and wellbeing, risk taking behavior and use of violence. The Man Box study completed by Jesuit Social Services in 2018 found that young men in Australia who strongly agree with traditional forms of masculinity are at an increased risk of engaging in violence against women and others, engaging in risk taking behaviors such as alcohol and drug use and have poorer mental health and wellbeing than those who don’t agree with the traditional norms of masculinity (The Men’s Project, 2018). Health Promotion has focused on finding opportunities to engage with boys, teenagers and their teachers in face to face dialogue that deconstructs the ‘man box’ and creates the potential for dialogue about what healthier masculinities look like.

Supporting the Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationships Framework at Schools

Engaging with boys and teenagers to foster healthier models of masculinities which support respectful relationships is seen as a key action to prevent violence against women. A significant number of schools completing the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRR) program within the Outer East have requested support from the Health Promotion team to promote healthier masculinities to their boys and teenagers.

Health Promotion has sought to increase the understanding and capacity of local schools in the region, by providing two education sessions to Healesville High School and Yarra Hills Community of Practice. These sessions were well received. Four schools requested further assistance to promote healthier masculinities: two secondary and two primary schools in the region. Schools were also interested in trailing external facilitators. In 2019 Health Promotion observed sessions facilitated by The Man Cave (<https://themancave.life>) at Upper Yarra Secondary College and SALT at Yarra Glen Primary School to Grade 5/6 students in our pilot program *Unstoppable*.

3. Engage men in key community settings to promote mental health and wellbeing and Healthier Masculinities.

“Develop positive ways to engage men and boys in the change process, encouraging them to challenge restrictive and rigid gender roles and identities for both men and women.” Our Watch - Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice. (2018).

Health Promotion has supported interventions that promote mental health and wellbeing in men, as a part of our approach to prevent violence against women and challenge gender stereotypes. In the *Leading the Change* Program, the first stage of the project was the delivery of 10 Men’s *Mental Health and Wellbeing* sessions. These sessions were preparation for holding a grounded and constructive conversation that would encourage active bystander behavior, challenge sexism and promote respectful relationships in the second session: *Equality is the Game*. It is estimated that over 500 men attended these sessions in 2019 in the AFL Outer East region. In the confidential mobile quiz 28% of male participants reported that they had experienced a mental health issue in the past, 9% disclosed that they are currently living with a mental health issue and 51% know someone who has experienced a mental health issue. In the sessions, the participants openly reflect and discuss the challenges and pressure felt to conform to being an Australian “man” and they identify masculine stereotypes that inhibit men from seeking help when it is needed. Overwhelmingly the sessions were met with a positive response. Club representatives reported incidences of help seeking behaviour, changes in club culture and more openness to vulnerability amongst the men in their club community after the sessions.

Health Promotion has also sought to encourage and include conversations about men’s health and healthier masculinities in the multiple settings in which we work and play. For example, at the time of writing Health Promotion is involved in the development of a place based approach with partners in the Upper Yarra Service Provider Network to promote healthier masculinities in one of the regions that has shown significantly higher rates of family violence. During the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Health Promotion coordinated wellbeing check-in phone calls, with over 140 club presidents (the majority of whom are male) to encourage clubs to continue to promote mental health in their community, check in on each other and ensure they are connected to mental health and wellbeing supports in their local area. Health Promotion also participated in the MORE: Modelling Respect and Equality Project facilitated by Yarra Ranges Council. 18 community leaders were trained in 2019 with the intent to build their capacity to run community initiatives and demonstrate healthier masculinities in the Yarra Ranges community.

4. Building capacity to engage men and promote healthier masculinity in the PVAW sector.

“That organisations working with boys and men come together to share knowledge and build capability in undertaking work that promotes positive alternatives to the Man Box. This could include practitioner networks and forums, as well as new tools for working with boys and men.” - The Man Box, Recommendation 4 (2018).

Promoting Healthy Masculinities - A New Steering Group to Prevent Violence Against Women

In May 2019, the Eastern Health, Health Promotion team instigated a pilot regional steering group to promote healthy masculinities for the prevention of violence against woman with key stakeholders in the Eastern Region. The partners involved with the initial steering group agreed that the group’s objectives were the following:

- Stimulate investment in new initiatives that will promote healthy masculinity for the prevention of violence against women in existing settings or with new approaches.
- Provide a forum by which regional stakeholders can discuss, collaborate and reflect on their opportunities to promote healthy masculinity within existing programs, structures or settings.

- Develop initiatives that will engage high priority/influential groups and settings within the Eastern Region of Melbourne that may influence the prevailing attitudes towards healthy masculinity in the general population.

The group expanded in size over the course of the year with new and interested partners requesting to be involved. Academics and experts in the engaging men space were invited at various stages to provide a presentation and to support the group with idea formulation and project design. Over the course of 2019 and 2020, the steering group met a total of 8 times, engaging with 15 organisations across the Eastern Metropolitan region. It was estimated that the engagement activities seeded by the steering group reached an estimated 3260 community members across the EMR during the 2019-2020 IHP period.

Communities of Practice

The Health Promotion team was requested to support the development and provide presentations at two Communities of Practice events in the Eastern and South Eastern regions of Melbourne. Both of these Communities of Practice events were hosted by women's health organisations, showing an increased commitment to the need to partner with men and boys to end violence against women. These Communities of Practice events provided a unique ability for the Health Promotion team to share their learnings in delivering interventions that engage with men and boys for violence prevention – particularly within the *Leading the Change* program. Both of these events combined reached approximately 86 practitioners in the prevention of violence against women across the East and South Eastern region.

Development of Engaging with Resistance Guide

A small working group has been convened consisting of the Health Promotion team at Eastern Health, EDVOS and Professor Michael Flood to identify and develop a draft guide to support practitioners to handle everyday forms of backlash and resistance when engaging with men. This guide will assist in increasing practitioner's confidence to engage with men and boys through both program or event design and face to face education sessions.

Training Support for Community Leaders.

The Health Promotion team has an interest in increasing the number of community leaders who have the capacity to provide education and role model healthy masculinity and respectful relationships in the EMR. As part of the 2019-2020 Integrated Health Promotion plan, the team committed to completing an investigation into the feasibility of implementing a Healthy Masculinities EMR community leader's project. The Health Promotion team completed a review of current best practice evidence around community mobilisation programs and academic advice on how to facilitate engaging with men as role models. The investigation revealed that the need for community mobilisation projects that involve men as role models is seen as a key action in the effort to prevent violence against women. A number of considerations need to be part of the program planning cycle and suitable supervision and accountability measures must also be developed by the planning partnership to ensure that any community mobilisation project of this nature is completed at a high standard. The Eastern Region Steering Group is currently looking for partners to pilot and initiate this proposal in 2020.

5. Reorient services and settings to increase father engagement to promote respectful relationships and challenge gender stereotypes.

"To build a safe future for our children, we must address what happens in the home and our family relationships. We are working with men as dads to play their part and help reduce family violence in Australia." - Support for fathers Project – Relationships Australia, (2019).

The Health Promotion team is invested in building new parents' capacity for respectful relationships and gender equality. In 2018, Relationships Australia launched its Support for Fathers Project and professional toolkit and website. The project, funded by the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, calls for a reorientation of services to increase quality father engagement. The toolkit invites services to assess how they are reaching fathers, the relevance of their marketing and communication initiatives and to examine institutional barriers to father engagement. Furthermore it also invites our services to broaden and challenge our gender stereotypes about fathers, using the framing of the *Seven Types of Fathers* to involve and support fathers in conversations about their roles as parents.

Father engagement was supported in several settings:

- Primary and secondary schools, through promoting the Support for Fathers toolkit at our Health Promoting Schools Network Forum (2018).
- Encouraging schools to run father specific engagement events, through our one on one site visits, professional development for schools on father engagement and school communication.
- Through leading the Engaging Fathers Quality Improvement Project in the Child and Family Team at Community Health.
- Supporting the Yarra Ranges Gender Equality in the Early Years working group, to submit an application to the Vic Health Healthier Masculinities grant to trial new ways of engaging with fathers in the Yarra Ranges.

Father Engagement in the Child and Family Team

In 2017, the Health Promotion team commenced an internal gender equality initiative to review our father engagement using the Eastern Health Quality Improvement Process. In 2018 the Child and Family Team decided to narrow its focus to looking at father engagement in child health appointments, as an indicator of both our service accessibility and the level of involvement that fathers are having with their children's health and wellbeing. Most children that attend our paediatric allied health appointments are pre-school age. The team contributed to a benchmark survey of father engagement, over a 2 week period. 212 families were seen by our service within the 2 week period, however on average, only 14% of these consults involved engagement with the father (by phone, text, face to face or email). Furthermore the project uncovered a systematic barrier to father engagement via our intake system, which does not request the recording of father's contact details if it is not provided by the caller (which is currently in most cases the mother or guardian). After reviewing and adjusting our intake process, the next step of this project is to complete further diagnostics through both an internal client father engagement survey and an external father engagement survey where we can gain more insight into the barriers and opportunities for supporting for father engagement in child health appointments in our Child and Family Team.

6. Discussion

It is clear that the Eastern Health, Health Promotion team should continue their focus on engaging with men and boys for the prevention of violence against women. The Health Promotion team has successfully engaged in with men in multiple community settings – including schools, sporting clubs and in the community. The demand for support to promote healthier masculinities in boys and teenagers continues to increase. The field of engaging with men and boys for violence prevention is growing and there is opportunity for Health Promotion to continue to lead, innovate, trial and evaluate prevention based programs that successfully engage with men and boys, within the Yarra Valley and across the EMR. These efforts to engage with men and boys for violence prevention must be accompanied by suitable efforts to support and empower women's and girl's independence and decision making and to promote respectful relationships to all genders.

7. Recommendations

- That the Health Promotion team continues to invest in the engagement of men and boys for the prevention of violence against women with key settings and community groups for the following strategies:
 - Engage men to challenge condoning of violence against women.
 - Promote healthier masculinities in boys and teenagers.
 - Engage men in key community settings to promote healthier masculinities.
 - Build capacity to engage men and promote healthier masculinity in the PVAW sector.
 - Reorient services and settings to increase father engagement to promote respectful relationships and challenge gender stereotypes.
- That the Health Promotion team considers ways to expand upon the existing work they have been able to implement with men and boys for violence prevention such as:
 - Development of education content and materials that will enable the Health Promotion team to deliver face to face education sessions with key settings in the Yarra Valley and EMR on request.
 - Identifying suitable opportunities to partner with a university to enhance the evaluation of projects that engage with men and boys for the prevention of violence.
 - Supporting the EMR partnership to increase and build the capacity of male leaders in the region that can assist in our efforts to promote healthier masculinities and prevent violence against women.

8. References

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5 Arnold Street, Box Hill, Victoria 3128
1300 342 255