Changing attitudes is not enough
Engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence against women

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Study questions

• What is the effectiveness of existing approaches, strategies and projects that aim to prevent violent behaviour of men and boys throughout Australia?

• What are the characteristics of good practice in men and boys’ primary prevention and early intervention?

• What strategies and programs should be developed to build on existing good practice?

• What exemplar or demonstration projects could be implemented in NSW to advance practice? How would this be evaluated?
Conceptual framework

Two broad areas of primary prevention work
• Reducing gender inequality
• Changing norms and values

Why engage boys and men?
• Buy-in and support for gender equality initiatives
• Attitudinal change at individual and collective level

Without a ‘two dimensional’ approach:
• Changes in attitudes and behaviour minimal/not sustained
• Risks backlash including increased violence
Methodology

• Stage 1: Literature analysis and program review (men and boys’ violence prevention, early intervention evidence, conceptual frameworks and practice standards)

• Stage 2: Consultation with relevant national stakeholders
  • Data collection
    • 26 online surveys
    • 37 stakeholders (2 focus groups, 26 interviews)
  • Thematic data analysis

• Stage 3: Evaluation of best practice/exemplar programs

• Stage 4: Recommendations

Study funded by NSW Government (Women NSW)
Insights from the field

• Twenty six interviews and two focus groups, involving thirty seven stakeholders in total.

• Twenty five participants were from Victoria, seven were from NSW and one was from the Northern Territory.

• Interviews were conducted with program developers and implementers as well as experts in the field of men and boys violence prevention.

• A range of programs and activities represented, addressing diverse sub-populations and settings, but evident focus on youth and disadvantaged populations.
Strategies for engaging boys and men

- Negotiating masculinity
- Recognising disadvantage
- Framing prevention for boys and men
- Peer to peer approaches
- Ensuring accountability
Negotiating masculinity

We had an understanding of gender that was not purely about hegemonic masculinity but was about the ways that masculinities might run in parallel within a particular person. So one of the guys … was a really tough player. Fearsome player in the day. I remember watching him. He was just hardcore. Extraordinarily gentle guy off the field, and really articulate about the way he played and why he played like he did. People aren't one aspect of their gender.

Sports club prevention program facilitator
I think the ethics of education are really interesting, because you are - you're messing with people, especially around this stuff [violence]. It's very fundamental identity stuff. There were also victims and survivors of sexual assault in the groups too. People from families with lots of trauma. Lots of people disclosed to us and - or told us stories of friends and sisters and so on, who had experienced violence. What that was like for them, or their mothers or - and so it was - they - there was no sense in which it didn't resonate with them.

Prevention program facilitator
Recognising disadvantage

And the challenge with that too, is that there are men and boys who are disenfranchised. Who - for whom power is not an experience they actually have, unless it's maybe lauding it over somebody else. But in the grand scheme of things, are profoundly disenfranchised.

Research and policy expert

The first thing they see is they've got to give up something and they've got to give up a lot. They're already unemployed, they already can't find work, their role in the family has been trashed in their way of thinking - and you want me to give up this?

Prevention program facilitator in refugee communities

That's constantly at the forefront of our minds that these young people walk around carrying a lot of shame already. So how do we correct this or support them to challenge that thinking without shaming them?

School based program coordinator
“[W]hat kind of father do you want to be, what kind of father, what kind of husband, what kind of man do you want to be?” Now I've sat in on sessions where those questions have been asked in the introduction of the program – “these are things that we're going to be exploring” and instantly the men will hear that, it's recognisable. …

I've seen the hardest, hardest most brutal-looking men reduced to tears in that very moment because everybody, I think, wants to be good.

Community-based educator
Peer to peer approaches

When you have the peer led approach where they [male participants] say something which is not consistent with our program, usually their peers actually respond the right way, like “So what do you think about what Johnny said, like saying that so and so is a slut for doing that?” Usually their peers, they come up with alternative responses like “Yeah no that’s not cool”. So instead of being authoritative and telling them what's the right or wrong answer, the peer led approach is just engaging discussion, getting them to come up with the answers and drawing out responses from them. Which is - nine times out of ten it works like that.
In many cases, the young men might be much - might be engaging, for example, with their female partners in a much more egalitarian way, than the coaches or the CEOs are. Or [they] might have many more women friends than the older men have. The older men might be socialising in all-male groups, whereas the young guys have always had a mixed friendship group. They kind of - but the older men can't necessarily see that the younger men have, in fact, a kind of very different approach to gender than they do.

Program facilitator
Ensuring accountability

The blokes who are actually running the [men’s] programs are domestic violence and sexual assault offenders … if behaviours [like] violence against women and kids comes up [in the men’s programs], it's absolutely excused.

Service manager
Two-dimensional programming

• Community & organisation level interventions can incorporate normative and structural interventions.
• The efficacy of face-to-face programming can be enhanced by changes to policy and practice that ameliorate gender inequality.
• Communities and institutions particularly appropriate sites of intervention:
  • Enables the tailoring of interventions to local contexts and needs.
  • ‘Mid level’ of the social ecology impacts in both individuals and macro-level factors.

Figure 1: An ecological approach to understanding violence against women
Source: Y-Care (2007)
Strong Aboriginal Men (ECAV)

• Integrates direct participation with whole-of-community approach:
  • **Consultation**: Once invited, SAM workers begin consulting with community leaders and members as well as services and stakeholders
  • **Building networks of support**: SAM workers introduce themselves via doorknocking and community events to discuss community histories and concerns
  • **Workshop delivery**: Three workshops for men and boys are held in consecutive months
  • **Developing an action plan**: The workshop participants scope and implement community-based prevention activities with ECAV support

• **Building stronger communities**:
  • Integration with Strong Aboriginal Women and Weaving The Net
  • Focus on connecting community members with available services
  • Further training via Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health and Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Trauma Specialist Counselling, and articulation into tertiary education.
Respectful Relationships (NRL)

- Initiated in 2004 following a series of high profile sexual assault and domestic violence allegations against NRL players.
- Part of broader Welfare and Education program targeting the health and welfare of players, including mentoring and support of Indigenous and Islander players.
  - Two/three hour sessions delivered over six weeks to young players by current and former players alongside experienced sexual assault experts.
  - Content focused on mutuality and respect in relationships and bystander intervention in ‘risky’ situations.
  - Six month post-program evaluation found 100% of participants (n=29) reported using the skills they learnt in the program.
- Former players have a prominent role as prevention program developers, trainers and mentors. Good links between NRL and sexual assault/DV agencies and representatives.
- Considerable flow-on effects into the community given the profile of the code and players.
Key learnings: Engaging boys & men

• Programs should engage men and boys in discussions about masculinity and violence, recognising the ambiguities of gendered identities and experiences.
• Programs should be sensitive to the intersections of gender inequality with other forms of inequality, including poverty and racism.
• Prevention should frame violence against women as an obstacle to the goals and aspirations of boys and men.
• Peer to peer approaches enable boys and men to lead and drive prevention programs in partnership with prevention workers and facilitators.
• Men and boys programs are best situated within networks of accountability where there is dialogue with women’s services and relevant communities.
Key learnings: Two dimensional prev.

- **Common themes in ‘best practice’ community and organisational level interventions:**
  - **Iterative and flexible:** build prevention capacity by supporting members to identify contributing factors to violence against women and implement solutions.
  - **Mutually reinforcing components:** Normative changes (via face-to-face programming) potentially sustained by structural changes (changes to policy, services, social infrastructure) and vice versa.
  - **Identify and nurture talent:** Community/org members develop skills and then take active role in prevention initiatives.
  - **‘Web of prevention’:** Violence prevention linked to social determinants of health and wellbeing.

- **Not just norms/attitudes/beliefs:** In a coordinated prevention approach, community/organisational interventions interlinked with individual (e.g. early intervention, treatment) and macro-social (e.g. social marketing, policy and law reform) approaches to maximise impact.