TAKING ACTION FOR MEN’S HEALTH

STILL DYING YOUNGER

MEN OF GOOD HEART

BEATING MALE CANCER

PREVENTING MALE SUICIDE

CREATING A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR MEN AND BOYS

THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

DYING TO WORK

DAD’S THE WORD

IMPROVING BOYS’ EDUCATION

DEVELOPING MALE-FRIENDLY SERVICES

BUILDING MEN’S ECONOMIC SECURITY

STRATEGIC SUPPORT FOR MEN’S HEALTH

WORKING TOGETHER FOR MEN’S HEALTH

REFERENCES

THIS REPORT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN JUNE 2019 BY THE AUSTRALIAN MEN’S HEALTH FORUM, THE PEAK BODY FOR MEN’S HEALTH. AMHF IS SUPPORTED BY FUNDING FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.
In April 2019 the Federal Government published the National Men’s Health Strategy (2020-2030).

The Strategy calls on all levels of government to take action to address the unique needs of men and boys in the policies they develop, the programs and services they deliver and the initiatives they fund.

One of the guiding principles that underpins this Strategy is that the actions we take to improve men and boys’ health must address the “gender inequality issues faced by men”.

According to researchers at the University of Canberra, the majority of Australians support equality between men and women, but are concerned that men and boys are increasingly excluded from measures to improve gender equality.

The solution to this problem is not to stop working to improve the lives of women and girls, but to increase our efforts to tackle the issues facing men and boys.

One of the barriers to improving men’s health is that there is very little research highlighting the gender inequality issues that men and boys face.

The 2019 Men’s Health Report Card series is a first attempt to bring some of these issues together and measure how well each State and Territory is doing for men and boys.

The facts are compelling.

Our sons are less educated than our daughters. Our brothers die younger than our sisters. Our fathers are more likely to die at work than our mothers. Our male friends are more likely to die by suicide than our female friends.

The 2019 Men’s Health Report Card for Victoria highlights 10 key areas where men and boys are not faring as well as women and girls.

The intention of this report is to inspire key stakeholders across Victoria to focus more time, money and energy on improving the lives and health of men and boys in alignment with the National Men’s Health Strategy (2020-2030).

By taking collective action on the gender issues that impact men and boys, we can create a healthier future for men and a healthier future for everyone.
STILL DYING YOUNGER

Australia is one of the world’s healthiest countries, yet men die six years younger than women on average.

In 2017, the median age of death for men in Australia was 79.1 years, with women living to 85.1 years on average.

Men in VIC are living longer than men in every other State and Territory in Australia.

Victorian men are also dying 5.2 years younger than women across the state, whose average age of death is 85.7 years (compared with 80.5 for men).

The good news is that the average age of death for men in VIC has risen by nearly two years in the past decade, from 78.2 years in 2007 to 80.5 years in 2017.

Looking to the future, the life expectancy of boys born in VIC in 2015-2017 is 81.3 years. This varies from area to area with boys in Melbourne Inner East expected to live 6.5 years longer than boys in Shepparton (84.9 years compared with 78.4 years).

MEN OF GOOD HEART

Heart disease is the biggest killer of Australian men. In VIC, 13 people a day die from heart disease.

Four out of five people who die of heart disease before the age of 65 are men. In total, eight men aged under 65 die from heart disease every week in VIC.

Men also account for more than 80% of the years of life lost to heart disease in VIC every year.

When compared with women of the same age in VIC, heart disease kills:

• 4.7 times more men aged 35-44
• 6.9 times more men aged 45-54
• 4.5 times more men aged 55-64
• 1.7 times more men aged 65-74

For people aged 75 and over, the number of men and women who die from heart disease in VIC is almost equal.

Overall, the rate of heart disease in men is 76 per 100,000, which is lower than the national average of 78.7.

Men in VIC are less likely to die from heart disease than men in the NT, TAS, QLD, NSW and SA, but more likely to die than men in the ACT and WA.

In terms of our league table of male heart disease, men in Victoria are currently in third place.

LONGEVITY

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Table 01: Median age at death by sex, State and Territory (2017). Source: ABS

HEART HEALTH

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Table 02: Standardised death rate for ischaemic heart disease per 100,000 population (2017). Source: ABS
BEATING MALE CANCER

Cancer is a leading cause of poor health in Australia. One in two men will be diagnosed with cancer before their 85th birthday and in Victoria, nearly a third of men (31.9%) and a quarter of women (26%) die from cancer every year.

Nationally cancer kills nearly 500 men and 400 women a week. Closing that gap would save the lives of around 5,000 men a year.

In VIC, cancer kills 120 males and 100 females every week with men and boys accounting for 55% of all cancer deaths.

Bowel cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in VIC, killing around 600 men and 500 women each year. Bowel cancer can be detected and treated early through the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

Screening rates vary from region to region. In general, screening programs are better at reaching women, with 43.2% of women aged 50-74 accessing screening compared with 39.4% of men.

In VIC, 41% of men and 45.4% of women access screening for bowel cancer. The number of people accessing screening increases with age, with only three in 10 men (30.1%) aged 50-54 in Victoria being screened, compared with one in two women (53.9%) aged 70-74.

In terms of our league table of male cancer, based on the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, men in VIC are currently in fifth place.

PREVENTING MALE SUICIDE

Suicide is the leading killer of men under the age of 55 in Australia. It takes the lives of eight people a day, six men and two women.

Nationally, three in four suicides are men.

This pattern is repeated in VIC. In 2017 there were 621 deaths by suicide, 445 male suicides and 176 female suicides.

Every week an average of nearly nine men die by suicide in VIC, with men accounting for 71.7% of suicides.

Overall the rate of male suicide in VIC is 15.3 deaths per 100,000 people, which is lower than the national average of 18.5 per 100,000.

Men in VIC have a lower rate of suicide than men in every other State and Territory.

In our league table of male suicide prevention around Australia, VIC is currently in first place.

**MALE SUICIDE**

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Table 04: Standardised death rate for intentional self-harm per 100,000 population (2017). Source: ABS

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**CANCER PREVENTION**

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Table 03: National Bowel Cancer Screening Program participation for people aged 50-74 (2016-2017). Source: AIHW
Creating a Healthier Future for Men and Boys

A Conceptual Framework for Taking Action to Improve Men and Boys’ Health

Framework for a Healthier Future

When tackling a complex social issue, such as improving men’s health, a conceptual framework can help us to create a map of the many different factors that are at play. Most people understand that having a detailed and accurate map can help us plan the best route to a chosen destination.

In a similar way, creating a conceptual framework around an issue like men’s health, helps us to understand the territory we are operating in and map out a range of pathways we could take to try and tackle the issue.

Our Framework for a Healthier Future builds on the work of existing conceptual frameworks and introduces two additional features that are generally overlooked:

- It places a specific focus on the factors that are known to shape men and boys’ health;
- It acknowledges the fact that there are many different views about gender issues.

Actions

Advocacy for Men & Boys

- Develop narratives and messages that make the case for action on men’s health
- Give voice to the health and social needs of men and boys
- Make the case for more resources for men’s health

Strategic Partnerships

- Develop men’s health policies / put men’s health in all policies
- Promote theories on sex, gender and health that translate into best practice
- Build strategic partnerships, frameworks and networks

Community Development

- Build community awareness of the social factors that shape men’s health
- Develop community support for action on men’s social issues
- Work to expand the availability of male-friendly services

Health Promotion / Health Care

- Identify risk factors in men for targeted health promotion
- Identify links between social factors and individual factors
- Identify opportunities for advocacy work, partnerships and men’s health campaigns

Research / Evaluation

- Identify specific outcomes for targeted intervention (e.g. male suicide rates)
- Undertake gender impact assessments to ensure resources reach both men and women
- Evaluate interventions to help identify best practice
THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

Transport accidents kill around four people a day in Australia and three of them are men and boys.

In VIC, transport accidents kill four men and boys every week.

There were 280 road deaths in VIC in 2017 (199 male and 81 female).

In VIC, men and boys account for:
- 2 in 3 pedestrian deaths (26 of 39 fatalities)
- 2 in 3 car occupant deaths (108 of 166 fatalities)
- 8 in 10 cyclist deaths (8 of 10 fatalities)
- 9 in 10 motorcyclist deaths (36 of 39 fatalities)

In total, 71.1% of people who die in transport accidents in VIC are male, with men and boys accounting for 72.3% of the years of life lost to transport accidents in VIC every year.

Road deaths are the second biggest killer of boys and young men in VIC after suicide. Transport accidents kill three young people (aged 15-24) a month in VIC and 68.6% are boys and young men (24 of 35 fatalities in 2017).

Men and boys in VIC are less likely to die on the roads than males in all other States and Territories.

In our league table of road safety, VIC is currently in first place.

ROAD SAFETY

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Table 05: Standardised death rate for transport accidents per 100,000 population (2017). Source: ABS

DYING TO WORK

The world of work has a major impact on everyone’s lives and health and can promote and prevent good health.

Research shows that while work can impact everyone’s health, the health risks and health benefits of work have a more profound impact on men. The reasons for this include the fact that men are more likely to be employed, work full time, be their household’s main earner and work in high risk environments.

Men spend twice as many hours in paid work as women, doubling their exposure to the risks and benefits of work. For example, men account for 72% of work-related disease and two in three serious claims for workers’ compensation.

In 2017, 36 workers were killed at work in VIC and 91.7% (33 fatalities) were men.

The rate of workplace fatalities in Victoria is 1.1 fatalities per 100,000 people. This places VIC second in our league table of the safest places to work.

“3 IN 4 ROAD DEATHS ARE MEN”

“92% OF WORKPLACE DEATHS IN VICTORIA ARE MALE”

SAFEST PLACES TO WORK

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Table 06: Work-related traumatic injury ‘worker’ fatalities by state/territory of death (2017). Source: Safe Work Australia
The first measure is the number of births in 2017 where the biological father was not acknowledged on a child’s birth certificate. In VIC, 1.9% of children born each year have a father who isn’t acknowledged on their birth certificate. This is the second lowest level in Australia.

The second measure is the proportion of children born outside of marriage, which is now around one third of births nationally. In VIC, three in ten births (30.1%) occur outside of marriage, with only the ACT recording lower rates.

The third measure is the proportion of children living in lone-parent families in each State and Territory, as a majority of these families are headed by mothers. In VIC, between one in six and one in seven children (15.5%) live in lone-parent families. This is the second lowest rate in the country after the ACT.

In future, we may look to compare how much parental leave fathers are taking, how many dads are primary carers, how many hours dads spend on childcare and how involved separated dads are in their children’s lives.

Based on the data we’ve used this year, VIC is currently placed second in our table of fatherhood involvement nationwide.

Education is one of the key social factors that shape our lives and our health. Lower levels of education can be linked to shorter life expectancy, poorer physical and mental health, lower wages, higher risk of unemployment and greater exposure to crime.

In general terms, the better your education the better your health (and the longer you stay at school, the longer you’ll live). As far as boys are concerned, the education system across Australia delivers better results for girls at every stage.

In VIC, the latest NAPLAN results for Year Five students found that boys are:
- 1.8 times more likely to be below minimum standards reading
- 2.5 times more likely to be below minimum standards writing
- 1.5 times more likely to be below minimum standards numeracy

Boys in VIC are also 76.4% more likely than girls to drop out of school before the end of Year 12. The latest data on the number of men working in VIC found that just one in four (26.9%) teaching staff are male.

Overall, we placed VIC second in our boys’ education league table behind the ACT.

15% OF CHILDREN LIVE IN LONE-PARENT FAMILIES

75% MORE VIC BOYS FAIL TO COMPLETE YEAR 12
DEVELOPING MALE-FRIENDLY SERVICES

The statistics outlined in this report portray an alarming landscape in the state of men and boys’ health. The good news, however, is that Australia is a world leader in developing male-friendly approaches to working with men and boys.

The National Men’s Health Strategy supports this approach by making the provision of “male-centred information, programs & services” its guiding principle.

But what does a male-friendly approach to men’s health look like? Some of the common ingredients that have been shown to make services more accessible to men are listed below:

- they target men directly – not patients, not parents, but men!
- they go where men already are
- they make use of male-friendly activities
- they use male-friendly language
- they take a strengths-based approach that is positive about men.

You’ll find some or all of these characteristics built into the design of male-friendly services around Australia. Here we provide eight examples of good practice representing every State and Territory in Australia.

The Men’s Health Educational Rotary Van (MHERV)

MHERV is custom-built caravan with two consulting rooms and a dedicated registered nurse who travels around the state of New South Wales. It targets regional and rural men directly, offering free health screenings to cover approximately 2,000 men a year in over 50 communities. It goes where rural men are, often targeting male-friendly events like country shows.

Prick ‘n A Pint

What could be more male-friendly than a pint down at the pub with your mates? Prick ‘n A Pint is a Victorian project delivered to male-only groups over a pint (or non-alcoholic drink) in a pub. The 10 weekly sessions are guided by a GP in line with RACGP guidelines. The Prick (in case you wondered) is a blood test that is referred to throughout the program.

MATES In Construction

MATES In Construction is a workplace suicide prevention project that started in Queensland and has expanded all over Australia.

By focusing on a male-dominated industry, it takes its services where men already are. MATES is designed around the principle that providing help is a male strength. A central plank of the MATES’ model is training and encouraging construction workers to offer support to co-workers who show signs of suicide risk.

Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) in South Australia launched a male-friendly health prevention service in 2017. The service targets men directly by sending medical teams to outback events like rodeos, that attract a large male crowd. As well as being on hand to deliver first-aid, medical teams offer health checks to men which include measuring blood pressure and glucose levels. They also promote cancer awareness by providing guidance on how to check for testicular cancer and skin cancer.

First Track Pit Stop

The ‘First Track Pit Stop’ program is a classic example of a program that uses male-friendly language to improve men’s health. Delivered by The Regional Men’s Health Initiative, the program is built out of the back of a branded Ute that travels around regional WA. The service offers health awareness, a listening ear and a number of services themed around the servicing of a vehicle including waist measurement (‘chassis’), blood pressure tests (‘oil pressure’) and coping skills (‘shock absorbers’).

The Blokes Book

The Blokes Book is a male-friendly guide to support services that have been doing the rounds since 2005, when it was developed by a network of men’s workers in Western Sydney. There are now various versions of the book in circulation in Australia and New Zealand with the latest upgrade being created by Men’s Resources Tasmania. The Tasmanian Blokes Book provides an extensive directory of information to help men deal with a range health issues and life crises.

StrongBala

The StrongBala Justice Program based at the Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service in the Northern Territory recognises the fact that men’s health is shaped by a broad range of social and cultural issues. StrongBala, which is based in Katherine, aims to give Indigenous men regular access to culturally appropriate holistic health, justice and drug and alcohol counselling services. It provides educational sessions through a personal development program and refers men to internal and external health providers and other agencies as required.

OzHelp

OzHelp is a leading provider of workplace well-being programs, based in Canberra and delivering nationally. It targets male-dominated workplaces and specialises in mental health and suicide prevention. The fear that revealing mental issues to an HR department could have career-limiting implications is very real and so OzHelp provides male-friendly tools such as its Workplace Tune Up, which are both personalised and private.
Our health is closely linked to our economic wellbeing. Broadly speaking, the better your economic status, the better your health.

Men also account for 51% of those who are unemployed, with 56% of those looking for full-time work and 39% seeking part-time roles being male.

The number of men who are not in the labour force (NILF) rose by more than 160% from 277,000 to 731,000 between 1978 and 2019. In the same period, the number of NILF women rose by just 33%.

As of March 2019, the male trend unemployment rate in VIC was 4.5%, the third lowest in the country. Over half of unemployed people (51.4%) and the majority of unemployed people looking for full-time work (56.2%) are men.

Based on the male trend unemployment rate, we placed Victoria third in our league table for economic security.

All levels of government in Australia place greater focus on improving the lives and health of women and girls, than men and boys.

There is a comprehensive framework of activity at federal, state and territory level that ensures time, money and resources are focused not just on women’s health, but on the social issues that shape women’s health.

At a national level, the Office For Women works on three priority areas: women’s economic security and workforce participation; women in leadership positions and preventing violence against women and children. The Office for Women funds six women’s alliances representing women’s organisations across Australia.

Other Government initiatives include a women’s health strategy, a national plan to prevent violence against women, the Workplace Gender Equality Alliance and the Australian Human Rights Commission, which address sex discrimination against women.

Women Victoria has developed a Gender Equality Strategy that drives statewide action by strategic alliances and partnerships in six settings: education and training; work and economic security; leadership and participation; health, safety and wellbeing; sport and recreation; media, arts and culture.

Our league table on strategic support places WA in first place because of its comprehensive Men’s Health and Wellbeing policy, with NSW a close second because of the development of its Men’s Health Framework.

The NT is third because of the work of its Men’s Health Strategy Unit since 2011. VIC comes fourth because its Gender Equality, Health and Wellbeing Strategy does place some focus on men and boys, and VicHealth has launched programs targeting men such as its ‘men’s risky drinking’ initiative.
There are many areas of life where men and boys in VIC are not faring as well as women and girls.

Men die 5.2 years younger than women; four in five heart disease deaths under 65 are men; three in four suicides are men; transport accidents kill four men and boys a week; more than 90% of workplace deaths are male; 75% more boys fail to complete Year 12 and the number of men who are not in the labour force has risen by 160% since 1978.

At the same time, we continue to invest less time, money and resources into improving the lives of men and boys, than women and girls.

The intention of the report card is to inspire key stakeholders across VIC to take collective action to tackle the gender issues that impact men and boys in alignment with the National Men’s Health Strategy (2020-2030).

When compared with other States and Territories, the 2019 Men’s Health Report Card ranked VIC second behind the ACT.

By working together to improve the lives and health of men and boys, we can build on this position and help create a healthier future for everyone in Victoria.

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**RATING THE STATE OF MALE HEALTH IN VIC**

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**REFERENCES**

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**MEN’S HEALTH REPORT CARD**

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Table 11: 2019 National Men’s Health Report Card. Source: Australian Men’s Health Forum
A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR MEN AND BOYS

A HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR EVERYONE

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