

## Asking for Additional Resources for Male Family Violence Work

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The male family violence sector has evolved considerably since reforms commenced to establish integrated family violence service systems. NTV is aware however of evidence from a number of sources that while these initiatives have assisted the integration of engaging men within family violence service systems, further work remains to meet the objectives of the reform process in relation to men.

NTV has identified seven funding priorities as part of an integrated package of proposals for additional funding for the sector. This package has been made available to state government, and in the lead-up to this year's state election we have also written to all state MPs summarising the proposals and making the case for why additional resources are required.

To be transparent to our members and to the family violence sector as a whole, we describe here the major features of our funding asks. Copies of the document outlining these proposals in full can be obtained by contacting Rodney Vlais, NTV Policy Co-ordinator on [rodney@ntv.net.au](mailto:rodney@ntv.net.au).

NTV is very grateful of all program providers who had responded to our current survey (our second of the year) in time for us to use the data to assist in compiling the package of funding asks. We drew heavily on the results in some of the proposals.

There are several potential areas of need and gaps in service delivery that were not included in the package. These were omitted only because they required more consideration and consultation than the time we had available to compile the package in order to make use of the opportunity for pre-election advocacy.

The seven proposals outlined in the package of funding asks are summarised below.

### **Enhance access for men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**

This proposal focused on three fully costed components:

- Training and support for program providers in the provision of culturally competent services in family violence, and the skilled use of interpreters in men's behaviour change program group work.
- Recruitment, training and support of bicultural male family violence workers.
- Development of demonstration men's family violence programs in languages other than English (LOTE).

We noted in our proposal that these three streams have been trialled recently by the North West Metropolitan Men's Consortium Group in partnership with Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service and Foundation House. This has included the piloting of a Vietnamese Men's Family Violence Group program, of which NTV has been a reference group member. The lead agency (Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service) and the project's partners have been committed to addressing as many of the NTV minimum standards as possible, including partner contact and mixed gender facilitation. Furthermore, the project partners are committed to a process of shaping the program over time so that it can adhere to the entirety of the minimum standards, and therefore progress towards becoming a men's behaviour change program.

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This development process serves as a model for other potential efforts to develop men's family violence programs in LOTE. NTV therefore recommends that the state government funds further demonstration projects to re-create the pioneering work of the Vietnamese Men's Family Violence Group program in other cultural contexts.

### **Increase funding to respond to service demand**

NTV is aware that many men's behaviour change programs are working with significantly more men than for which they are funded through their service targets. We are aware that some programs have needed to cease taking referrals for a period of time, in order to respond to their existing referrals including those on their waiting list.

Preliminary analyses of data obtained from our current survey of program providers – based on responses from the 55% of providers who had completed the survey by mid-October – indicate that:

- In three months programs saw approximately the same number of men for assessment that they are funded to service over six months. While not all of these men would have commenced the group work component of the program, this nevertheless demonstrates that programs are servicing a significantly greater number of clients than what they are funded to work with.
- Thirty-five percent of programs ceased accepting new referrals at some point during the year due to a lack of capacity to accept any further referrals.
- Approximately 40% of programs operate a waiting list of men who have been assessed as ready to start a program.
- Of the 14 DHS funded program providers who had responded to the survey at that time, half reported that DHS funding meets less than 60% of the costs of running the program, and another 28% that this funding meets between 60 and 80% of these costs.

NTV therefore recommends that the service targets for each funded agency be revisited, to reflect each program's current and projected levels of demand.

### **Provide minimum/floor funding for small programs**

Some men's behaviour change programs, particularly in rural areas, are funded to work with a relatively small number of men. However, all men's behaviour change programs, regardless of size, have some base costs that are somewhat similar across programs (in program management, supervision, administration, quality assurance, marketing and promotion, etc).

In this context, programs that are funded to work with only 15 or 20 clients per year are at a significant disadvantage than those in larger population centres with significantly higher targets. NTV therefore recommends that men's behaviour change programs be provided with no less than a minimum or floor level of funding, an amount greater than that currently received by the relatively smaller programs (further details are outlined in our package of funding asks).

### **Rethink the unit cost of men's behaviour change work**

NTV is concerned that the unit cost per client used to base program funding is insufficient to cover the full costs of running a men's behaviour change program. Based on an analysis of findings from our two surveys and other feedback, we recommend that the unit cost used to fund men's behaviour change programs be modified to:

- Increase the average number of hours associated with partner contact per client, to better fund this essential component of the work.

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- Provide (more) opportunities for program providers to offer individual one-to-one sessions to supplement groupwork.
- Provide more time for staff co-ordination and planning, and networking and liaison with stakeholders.
- Introduce an element that enables program providers to participate in community education and primary prevention work.
- Introduce an element that enables program providers to strengthen their focus on non-violent parenting for program participants.

### Extend telephone-based intake work in response to active referrals

The establishment of enhanced intake services and the Men's Referral Service After Hours Service to respond to active referrals from police have been important initiatives to support the 'front end' of efforts by integrated family violence service systems to engage men. NTV believes there is possible value in reconceptualising this work to focus on the multiple windows of opportunity in the 2-3 weeks following police attendance, particularly: (i) 1-3 days following police attendance; (ii) 1-3 days after appearance at court; and (iii) 1-2 weeks later.

Extending the enhanced intake process could, in some instances:

- Provide limited, telephone-based case coordination during this 2-3 week period.
- Continue a conversation that might result in the man taking small steps towards responsibility for his behaviour.
- Reinforce the message that his use of violence is not acceptable and is a serious issue.
- Provide further opportunities to identify risk indicators concerning the safety of affected family members.
- Increase the proportion of men referred by police who are willing to engage in men's behaviour change or case management services.

The current evaluation of the three men's initiatives (enhanced intake services, MRS After Hours Service and men's case management) represents an ideal opportunity to incorporate an additional component that explores the potential and feasibility of extending enhanced intake in this way. NTV therefore recommends that state government considers a moderate extension of this evaluation project to conduct this feasibility research.

### Update the minimum standards

The NTV minimum standards for running men's behaviour change programs are due for review. An update would:

- Enable the standards to more fully reflect the current nature of integrated family violence service systems.
- Address new developments, service elements and issues that have emerged over the past five years.
- Redefine some practices as minimum standards that were previously conceptualised as good practice guidelines (given how the field is evolving).
- Potentially enable the development of additional standards to guide mandated men's behaviour change programs such as those located within the Family Violence Court Division.

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- Translate the standards to guide one-to-one counselling work with male users of family violence who are not undertaking a group program. Without this there is little to guide safe and effective practice in individual counselling settings.

We therefore recommend that state government funds NTV, as the peak body, to project manage a process to update the minimum standards.

**Fund NTV to provide training and professional development**

Male family violence work is very specialised, complex and challenging, and requires high and continuously improving levels of skill in a range of areas. There is also an extensive need for training allied community sector workers in health, welfare and social services settings, to assist their ability to recognise and effectively respond to men who use family violence.

Currently, NTV employs a Professional Development Co-ordinator, however this is a new, part-time position with very limited tenure as it is funded solely through temporary internal cost savings. NTV has therefore requested recurrent funding for the co-ordination and provision of training and professional development opportunities, as we cannot continue to provide this unfunded.

For further information on any of the above funding proposals, or to obtain a full copy of our package of funding asks, please contact Rodney Vlais, NTV Policy Co-ordinator, on [rodney@ntv.net.au](mailto:rodney@ntv.net.au).

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