

Funding Priorities for the Male Family Violence Sector

Rodney Vlasis
Policy & Practice Co-ordinator
No To Violence Male Family Violence Prevention
Association (NTV) Inc



Sector funding priorities

The past five to six years have seen a number of significant funding developments for the male family violence sector. These have included:

- The updating of the NTV minimum standards for running men's behaviour change programs in 2005.
- The establishment of men's services partnership groups within regional integrated family violence service systems.
- The Family Violence Court Division men's behaviour change programs.
- Enhanced intake services and the MRS After Hours Service.
- Training for indigenous male family violence services and for indigenous men's programs.
- Pilot men's case management services, both mainstream and indigenous.

Despite these important initiatives, funding gaps remain. A number of men's behaviour change programs, for example, are cross-subsidised from other programs or funding sources to supplement the core funding for the program. Furthermore, as the sector continues to evolve and new understandings develop about how to meet the needs of diverse men and families, there is pressure on the sector to do more with the same resources.

As part of our advocacy role on behalf of members, NTV is in the process of constructing an integrated and coherent package of priority funding asks to present to government, to work towards the sector being better resourced in ways that acknowledge the shortfalls and how the sector is evolving. The purpose of this article is to outline our current thinking concerning some of the funding priorities that could be included in this package, and to seek your feedback and comments. Our funding suggestions are presented briefly, and not in any order of importance or priority.

In terms of core funding for men's behaviour change programs, NTV would like to explore with program providers any particular aspects of service delivery that you are either struggling to sufficiently resource, or would like to enhance if the resources were available to do so. To obtain this information, we are currently conducting a second electronic survey for the year, this time for managers and co-ordinators only to complete.

For those managers / co-ordinators who are yet to respond to the survey, or who have made a start but are yet to complete it, your input would be greatly appreciated. If you cannot find the email containing your program's electronic link to the survey, or did not receive one, please contact me at rodney@ntv.net.au and I will send this out to you.

While some priorities will arise through the survey process and other feedback from members, there are particular issues which NTV is already aware that require priority attention. In particular, considerable work needs to be done to expand access to male family violence work for men with CALD backgrounds who have low proficiency in English. This work could include funding for men's programs in languages other than English, assisting these programs once trialled to build their capacity to become men's behaviour change programs, recruiting and training bi-cultural male family violence workers, and training program providers and male family violence workers more generally in culturally inclusive practice and in the use of interpreters in group work. The recent trial of a Vietnamese men's program through a collaborative effort involving a number of stakeholders (Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, Australian Vietnamese Women's Association, Foundation House, RAV Sunshine, Djerriwarrh Health Services, Kildonan Child and Family Services

Funding Priorities for the Male Family Violence Sector

and No To Violence) demonstrates that much can be achieved in this arena with a relatively modest injection of resources.

Another priority relates to the ‘front end’ of integrated family violence service system responses to men who perpetrate violence. NTV and MRS have been more than happy to participate in the evaluation of the enhanced intake services, MRS After Hours Service and the pilot men’s case management services. There have been very positive signs that the evaluators are willing to explore the various complexities involved in these new initiatives, and to approach the evaluation as a way to assist the sector to consider how these initiatives might evolve in the future. There is tremendous potential to bring enhanced intake and case management work closer together to make the most use of the key windows of opportunity in the weeks following police attendance at a family violence incident. NTV will watch with interest the outcomes of this evaluation process, and the implications of the findings in terms of ‘enhancing’ the enhanced intake and case management processes to the next level.

Finally, the minimum standards for running men’s behaviour change programs were last updated five years ago, and are (over)due for review. While these standards and good practice guidelines have continued to be robust and highly relevant throughout this time, the sector is evolving. Furthermore, there are significant gaps that need addressing, such as how the minimum standards translate for behaviour change work with men conducted in one-to-one counselling contexts (e.g. by psychologists in private practice), and standards for court-mandated programs. NTV therefore believes that a project to update the minimum standards is timely.

We wish to stress that these are not the only funding priorities that we perceive for the sector in the long-term. There are obviously others that might arise in the years to follow, or some that are still just a little before their time to prioritise now.

NTV warmly welcomes your thoughts on what should be the statewide funding priorities for the male family violence sector – priorities that have implications across much or all of the state, rather than focused on any particular program or locality. Feedback from members will be of tremendous assistance to help us determine what the sector most needs during the next five or seven years of this decade.

Of course, we are under no illusion that our asks will easily be funded. However, as a peak body, NTV feels that it is important to be pro-active and forward thinking about what most needs to be funded, even if it might take some time for the funding asks to come into fruition.

To provide your thoughts on what the priorities should be, please email me at rodney@ntv.net.au, or phone me at the office. We are looking to make use of the pre-election period in Victoria to put forth some of our funding priorities, so feedback over the coming fortnight or so would be most welcome. However, the process will continue beyond any window of opportunity that the forthcoming election might present, so feedback after this time would also be useful.

Rodney Vlasis
2010
