Submission to consultation on the

Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework 2019-2024

August 2019

Jesuit
Social Services
Building a Just Society

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Jesuit Social Services

Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services is a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. For over 40 years we have been working at the hard end of social justice with some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of our community, who are often experiencing multiple and complex challenges.

As an organisation, we do and we influence. We accompany people and communities to foster and regenerate the web of relationships that sustain us all – across people, place and planet; and we work to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion.

We work where the need is greatest and where we have the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference. We have a presence in Victoria, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and internationally, through involvement in the Jesuit Prison Network.

Our practical support and advocacy covers five main areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** for people involved with the criminal justice system.
- **Mental health and wellbeing** for people with multiple and complex needs and those affected by trauma, suicide, and complex bereavement.
- **Settlement and community building** for disadvantaged communities, and recently arrived migrants and refugees.
- **Education, training and employment** for people with barriers to sustainable employment.
- **Gender and culture** providing leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and building new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.

The pursuit of **ecological justice** underpins all that we do in our programs and advocacy. Recognising the inherent interrelationship between all things, as an organisation we have been on a journey to transform our programs and practices so that they are both environmentally and socially just.

The promotion of **education, lifelong learning and capacity building** is fundamental to all our activity. We believe this is the most effective means of helping people to reach their potential and exercise their full citizenship. This, in turn, strengthens the broader community.

Research, advocacy and policy are coordinated across all program and major interest areas of Jesuit Social Services. Our advocacy is grounded in the knowledge, expertise and experiences of program staff and participants, as well as academic research and evidence. We seek to influence policies, practices, legislation and budget investment to positively influence participants' lives and improve approaches to address long term social challenges. We do this by working collaboratively with the community sector to build coalitions and alliances around key issues, and building strong relationships with key decision-makers and the community.

Our **Learning and Practice Development Unit** builds the capacity of our services through staff development, training and evaluation, as well as articulating and disseminating information on best practice approaches to working with participants and communities across our programs.

We acknowledge that we live and work on unceded Aboriginal lands. We value and respect the knowledge and living culture that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people bring to our communities. We walk alongside them as we strive together for justice.

Our work in the Northern Territory

Jesuit Socials Services' work in the Northern Territory commenced in 2008 with an invitation to work collaboratively with the Central and Eastern Arrernte people in Santa Teresa and Alice Springs.

Since then, at the invitation of a number of other communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, our work has grown to include the communities of Atitjere and Engawala on the Plenty Highway and Tennant Creek, as well as with the Thamarrurr Regional Aboriginal Authority Corporation (TRAAC) and Thamarrurr Development Corporation (TDC) in Wadeye. Our work in Central Australia and the Top End has focused on building the governance and service delivery capacity of the communities and organisations with whom we work.

To enable a more strategic response to the structural issues we see playing out in the lives of people on the ground, in 2015 we established an advocacy presence in Darwin. We have a strong network of relationships within government and community leaders and have been strong advocates, particularly on youth justice issues.

In 2017, with the support of a range of agencies including Aboriginal legal services, Jesuit Social Services initiated a pilot pre-sentence Youth Justice Group Conferencing program in the Top End (delivered in Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine). Jesuit Social Services continues to deliver this service and is working to promote and build capacity in restorative practice in the Territory.

Our work on gender justice

For over 40 years, Jesuit Social Services has been working with boys and men. This work has included work with boys and men involved in the criminal justice system, including those leaving prison; establishing Victoria's first dedicated counselling service to working with young people struggling with concurrent mental health and substance abuse problems; and the Support After Suicide program which provides free individual and family counselling to people bereaved by suicide and runs a specialist men's group.

Many of the boys and men we work with use violence, and we see many of them hold harmful attitudes towards girls and women. The boys and men we work with are in trouble, and causing trouble.

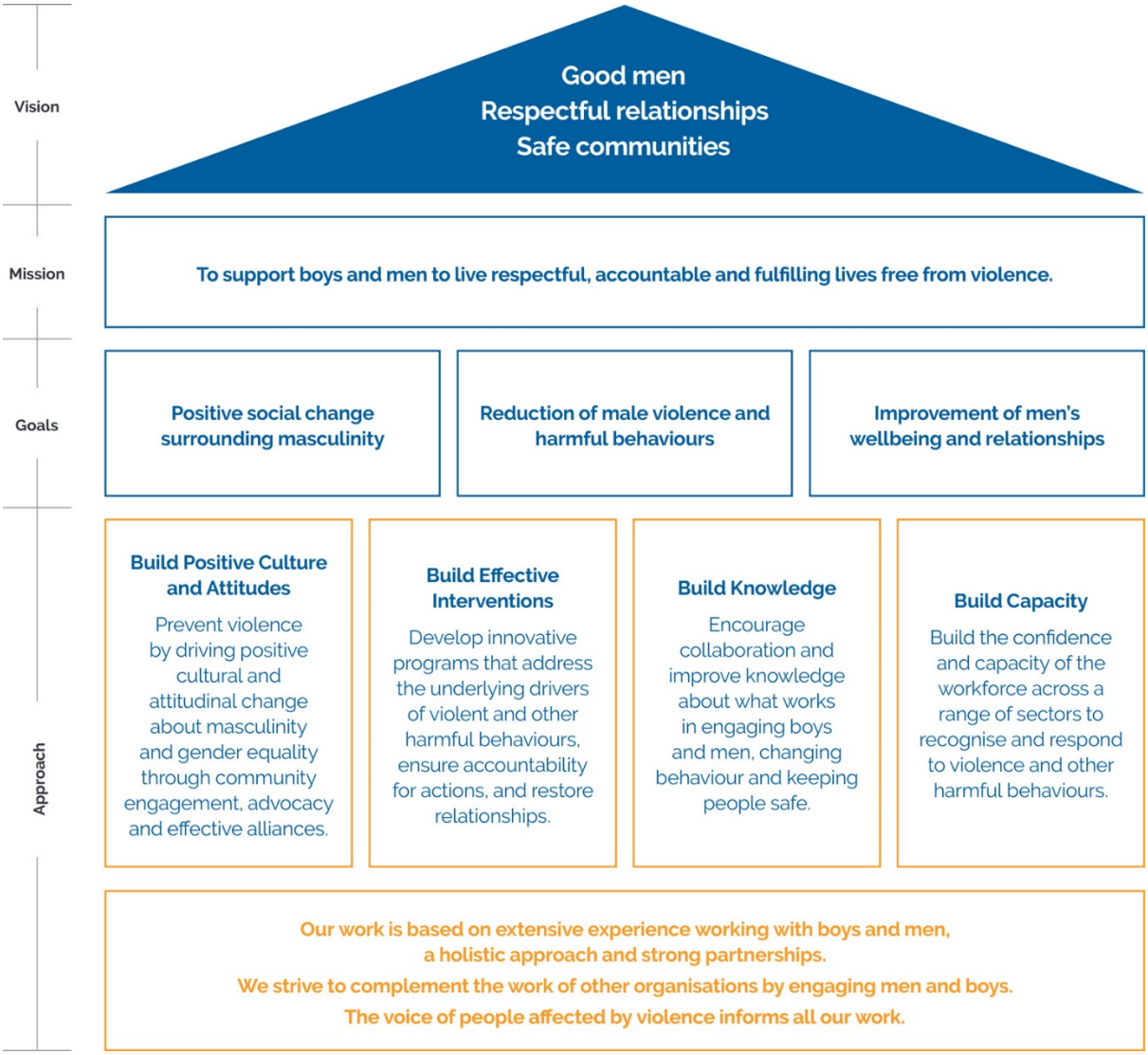
Spurred by our proximity to these issues, and in response to an unmet need, in 2016, Jesuit Social Services established The Men's Project. The Men's Project focuses on supporting boys and men to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives, where they are able to develop loving relationships free from violence and contribute to safe and equal communities. It incorporates a range of initiatives across four key approaches, namely to:

1) Promote cultural and attitudinal change around issues of masculinity and gender to support primary prevention efforts
2) Develop, deliver and evaluate interventions that address violence and other harmful behaviour
3) Share knowledge across sectors about what works to engage boys and men and change their behaviour, and
4) Build capacity across services to recognise and respond to violence and other harmful behaviours in boys and men.

Collectively, these initiatives seek to promote positive social change surrounding masculinity, reduce male violence and harmful behaviours, and improve men's wellbeing and relationships.

An overview of our vision, goals and approach taken through The Men's Project is provided overleaf.

Figure 1: The Men's Project



Our work to date

Initiatives of The Men's Project include:

The Man Box research

The first of its kind in Australia, the *Man Box: A study on being a young man in Australia* is the first comprehensive study that focuses on the attitudes to manhood and the behaviours of young men aged 18 to 30. The findings shed a new light on the social pressures that young Australian men experience to be a 'real man' and the impact this can have on their wellbeing, behaviours and the safety of our wider community.

Modelling Respect and Equality (MORE)

Cultural and attitudinal change towards gender equality and around what it means to be a man today requires positive role models – both male and female – in the places where boys and men live, work, and meet. The MORE program provides tailored training and ongoing support to male and female role models who interact with boys and men on a frequent basis in a range of settings (such as community

groups, schools, sporting clubs and workplaces) to develop the knowledge, awareness, skills and confidence to become influencers for change in their community.

RESTORE and *Breaking the Cycle*

Despite around 1 in 10 family violence incidents involving adolescent perpetrators, there are very few interventions to respond to this issue. Drawing on our experience using restorative practices and principles in response to youth offending, we are piloting the use of a Family Group Conference process for young people who have used family violence to assist the family member victims and adolescent perpetrators to address the harm caused by adolescent family violence and prevent further violence in the home. The RESTORE pilot has been developed in partnership with the Melbourne Children's Court and *Breaking the Cycle* is working with schools in Western Sydney.

Before it Starts

Through our work with boys and men involved with the justice system we witness the pathways that lead to trouble. We know that often this story starts with disengagement from school dysfunctional family relationships, and falling in with the wrong crowd. These boys cycle in and out of crisis services and the justice system, at immense costs to their families, community and themselves.

Looking more closely at the pathways these boys take, we see that our current responses are too often inadequate of too late. That is why through The Men's Project we have developed *Before it Starts*, seeking to develop new ways to identify those at risk between the ages 8-14 years, and step in before the first signs of trouble present.

Stop it Now!

There are currently no early interventions in Australia for people who are worried about their sexual thoughts or behaviours in relation to children. The Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse recognised this and recommended successful international approaches be considered as part of wider efforts to prevent child sexual abuse. Drawing on a program that is operating successfully in North America, the United Kingdom and Ireland, and the Netherland, we are piloting the *Stop It Now!* phone helpline to intervene earlier to prevent sexual abuse.

Engaging African-Australian men project: a scoping study

The Engaging African-Australian Men Project seeks to further explore the wellbeing of African-Australian men and to improve knowledge about how best to engage men from African-Australian communities living in Victoria on issues related to what it means to be a man. The scoping study is informed by Jesuit Social Services' long history working with African migrant communities and extensive community consultation.

Our way of proceeding: Gender Justice

The Men's Project provides the opportunity for Jesuit Social Services to document its approach to gender and gender-related issues, identify opportunities to enhance its approach and to capture the unique ways in which the organisation engages and supports boys and men.

Through this we hope to be able to articulate a further dimension of Our Way of Proceeding – one related to gender justice. This will also involve seeking accreditation against OurWatch and Workplace Gender Equality Agency standards

Further detail of relevant initiatives are provided below and in our response to the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework consultation document.

Recommendations

Jesuit Social Services recommends that:

1. That the Northern Territory Government ensure alignment between the objectives of the Gender Equality Framework, Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework and other relevant strategies.
2. The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework articulate a clear vision, outcomes to be achieved, actions to achieve those outcomes, and indicators of success.
3. Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework is adequately resourced, including resources for monitoring and evaluation of relevant initiatives and the framework as a whole.
4. The Minister for Territory Families be required to table in Parliament an annual progress report towards the achievement of the outcomes in framework.
5. The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework acknowledges and is informed by the unique experiences and expertise of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal people of diverse gender and sexual orientation.
6. The Northern Territory Government facilitate the ongoing input of women and people of diverse genders and sexual orientation to the refinement and subsequent monitoring of the Gender Equality Framework, for example, through the creation of a permanent Gender Equality Advisory Committee, chaired by the Minister for Territory Families.
7. The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework include specific strategies to promote the rights, safety, wellbeing and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people, including targeted strategies for Aboriginal communities.
8. The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework acknowledge the responsibility of men in the advancement of gender equality including explicitly acknowledging the harmful impact of rigid adherence to stereotypical masculine norms.
9. The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework highlights the importance of raising awareness of and shifting harmful masculine norms in policies and programs related to mental health and wellbeing, road safety, alcohol harm reduction, crime and violence prevention, and the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence.
10. The Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework include specific strategies to engage male and female role models in promoting healthy and positive expressions of masculinity.
11. The Northern Territory Government partner with research institutions and organisations working with boys and men to undertake further detailed research to the attitudes and behaviours of boys and men in the Territory, in particular, to understand in more detail the specific experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and men.
12. The Northern Territory Government support 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, for example, practitioner networks and forums, as well as new tools for working with boys and men.

1. Introduction

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the first Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework 2019-2024. The development of this Framework is a significant milestone for the Territory. The creation of the Office for Gender Equity and Diversity has enabled a broader and deeper focus on the intersecting challenges to achieving gender equality.

This submissions provides recommendations to ensure the framework:

- Achieves lasting, systemic change.
- Remains responsive to the diverse needs of women and people of diverse gender and sexual orientation in the Northern Territory.
- Engages men constructively in work towards gender equality.
- Reflects the role of government as a leader to drive wider community change.

Jesuit Social Services notes that the Northern Territory Government is concurrently developing the first Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework, on which we are commenting separately.

Gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of violence against women. While harmful attitudes towards women do not always result in violence, they provide the underlying social conditions for violence.

A strong Gender Equality Framework is therefore an essential foundation for the primary prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence in all its forms. It is important that these frameworks are developed with reference to each other so that objectives are aligned and actions taken within them are mutually reinforcing.

Recommendation 1

That the Northern Territory Government ensure alignment between the objectives of the Gender Equality Framework, Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework and other relevant strategies.

2. A framework for enduring change

Despite significant strides towards equality led by women over decades, gender inequality persists in Australia. These inequalities exist within our social and cultural norms, economic structures, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices.

Nationally, one in three women has experienced violence since the age of 15, and the same proportion have been sexually harassed since the age of 15.[1] Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience violence at more than three times the rate of non-Indigenous women and are 32 times as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence as non-Indigenous women.[2]

Women spend twice as much time on unpaid work as men.[3] Women are more likely to live below the poverty line[4] and, on average, retire with half the level of retirement savings than men.[5] In 2016, Australia's ranking on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index dropped to 46, down from 36 in 2015. Australia ranks 48th in the world in terms of female political empowerment (the representation of women in politics), down from 32nd in 2006.[6] Women account for just 21 per cent of sources quoted directly in news articles.[7]

The compounding effect of gendered barriers and other forms of disadvantage and discrimination are evident in the Northern Territory's statistics. The Territory has by far the highest rates of homicide offences related to family and domestic violence at 16 per million people – at least for times higher than any other Australian jurisdiction.[8] The Territory has the second highest pay gap in Australia.

A framework for action

Achieving enduring change takes time. The development of this framework is a very positive starting point. Making gains on the multiple indicators of disadvantage and inequality experienced by women in the Northern Territory will require sustained commitment, focus and resourcing by government.

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[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2017. Personal Safety, Australia, 2016, ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS, cited at Our Watch Facts and Figures (online)

[2] Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) (2016) Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016. Productivity Commission: Canberra, cited at Our Watch *Facts and Figures* (online)

[3] ABS 4125.0 – Gender Indicators, Australia, Feb 2016: Work and Family Balance (online)

[4] ACOSS and Social Policy Research Centre (2016) Poverty in Australia (online)

[5] Senate Standing Committee on Economics (2016) *'A husband is not a retirement plan' Achieving economic security for women in retirement,* Parliament of Australia: Canberra (online)

[6] AHRC (2013) *Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies,* p.3 cited at AHRC (2018) Face the facts: Gender Equality in 2018 (online)

[7] Women in Media (2016) *The Women in Media Report: A study of gender differences in Australian media* (online)

[8] ABS (2014) 4510.0 - Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia: Experimental Family and Domestic Violence Statistics, cited at ABC (22 September 2016) *'75,000 domestic violence cases in three years in the Northern Territory: Police Commissioner'* (online)

This framework must, therefore, be a framework for action. This requires that it clearly articulates the outcomes sought, the actions that will be taken to achieve those outcomes and the indicators that will provide measures of success.[9] It also requires that the actions articulated in the framework are appropriately resourced and that mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability for progress, for example, by requiring the tabling on an annual progress report to Parliament.

The ability to measure progress will require work to review existing data sources and data sets for gender equality indicators to develop baseline data and inform targets.

Recommendation 2

That the Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework articulate a clear vision, outcomes to be achieved, actions to achieve those outcomes, and indicators of success.

Recommendation 3

That the Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework is adequately resourced, including resources for monitoring and evaluation of relevant initiatives and the framework as a whole.

Recommendation 4

That the Minister for Territory Families be required to table in Parliament an annual progress report towards the achievement of the outcomes in framework.

Guiding principles

The consultation document has requested feedback on draft principles for the framework. Jesuit Social Services considers that while the principles listed are broadly sound, they would benefit from some refinement to ensure they clearly state the parameters for decision-making within the framework. The principles should ensure actions to promote gender equality in the Northern Territory:

- Are informed by the views of Aboriginal people
- Take an **intersectional approach**, recognising the ways in which gendered barriers interact with other forms of disadvantage and discrimination
- **Be multi-faceted**, targeting the norms, practices and structures that support gender equality in a range of spheres, including in schools, workplaces, sports and other community groups, and the media.
- Are focused on **achieving long-term change** by undoing systemic gender inequality
- **Engage the community** and **strengthen partnerships** across government, the non-government sector, business and industry, community groups, education providers and others who want to be part of the change.

[9] See, for example, *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* Outcomes Framework.

- Contribute to the **evidence base** on what works to advance gender equality in the Northern Territory.

An inclusive framework

Acknowledging the diversity of experiences

Jesuit Social Services welcomes the intersectional approach in advancing gender equality in the consultation document. We know that while gender inequality is experienced by all women, it is not experienced in the same way by all women (or men). As highlighted in the consultation document, the impacts of gender inequality are interrelated with, and often compounded by, other forms of discrimination and disadvantage. A sophisticated gender equality strategy will acknowledge the diverse needs and experiences of women and people of diverse genders in the Territory. For example:

- **Aboriginal women** experience domestic, family and sexual violence at horrific rates in the Northern Territory. Aboriginal women make up almost three quarters of domestic violence victims, despite making up only 15 per cent of the population.[10] In 2013, the Northern Territory recorded the highest homicide rate in Australia, five times the national rate.[11]

  The extent and severity of violence experienced by Aboriginal women demands that priority is given to their voices and experiences when developing the Gender Equality Framework for the Northern Territory, given the framework will serve as a platform for primary prevention of violence against women and girls.

  This reflects the need to understand the violence and discrimination experienced by Aboriginal women in the context of a complex web of causal factors, including the ongoing impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. Importantly, it also recognises the generations of strong Aboriginal women, and the leadership and resilience of Aboriginal women across the Northern Territory who are driving change within their own communities.

  The development of the framework should draw on existing resources developed to respond to domestic, family and sexual violence from within an Aboriginal cultural framework, including work by The Healing Foundation and White Ribbon Australia *Towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence prevention framework for men and boys* and *Changing the Picture*, a national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children produced by Our Watch.[12,13]

[10] Northern Territory Government (NTG) Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia (November 2014)
[11] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2014) Recorded Crime – victims, Australia, 2013, cited in NTG Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia.
[12] Our Watch (2018) *Changing the Picture: national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children* (online)
[13] The Healing Foundation and White Ribbon Australia (2017) Towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence prevention framework for men and boys.

Recommendation 5

That the Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework acknowledges and is informed by the unique experiences and expertise of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal people of diverse gender and sexual orientation.

- **Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**, including those who are migrants and refugees, and Aboriginal women, experience a range of additional barriers to accessing education, employment and services. These include language barriers, experiences of racism and discrimination, a lack of culturally responsive services, lack of access to information about their rights, and the challenges of interacting with the legal system and support systems in English. For migrant and refugee women, separation from family and other support networks, insecure visa status and overrepresentation in insecure and low paid work are additional challenges.
- **Differently abled women** are at much higher risk of domestic, family and sexual violence, less likely to be in paid employment and paid comparatively less than both men with a disability or women without disabilities.
- Isolation and poor service access can place **women in remote, rural and regional areas** at greater risk of poorer health outcomes and greater vulnerability to domestic, family and sexual violence. At the same time, isolation can produce strong self-reliance and support networks within small communities.
- **Trans and gender diverse people** may feel forced to hide their gender identity when accessing services, when in the workplace and in social settings. They are more likely to experience mental illness, verbal abuse and physical abuse, as well as cyberbullying and social exclusion. LGBTI people have the highest rates of suicidality of any population in Australia.[14]
- **Young women** are subject to harmful social pressures, including unhealthy ideas about sexuality and body image. Girls' career opportunities are shaped by societal expectations and are less likely to pursue STEM subjects into upper secondary and tertiary studies. Girls aged 10-14 years are the most likely cohort to experience sexual assault, followed by girls and young women aged 15-24 years.
- Older women often face financial precariousness. The cumulative effective of the gender pay gap and fewer employment opportunities mean that women retire with just half the superannuation savings of men[15], and older women are the fastest growing cohort of homeless Australians, increasing by 31 per cent between 2011 and 2016.[16]

[14] Rosenstreich, G. (2013) LGBTI People Mental Health and Suicide. Revised 2nd Edition. National LGBTI Health Alliance. Sydney (online)
[15] Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia Ltd (2017) Superannuation account balances by age and gender, cited in Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Face the Facts: Gender Equality 2018 (online)
[16] AHRC (2019) Older women's risk of homelessness: Background Paper (online)

We note that targeted consultations are taking place with representatives from the groups highlighted in the consultation document, including Aboriginal communities, people from migrant, refugee and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people living with disabilities, people from remote, regional and rural areas of the Northern Territory, people from LGBTQIA+ communities, young people and older people. It is important that these voices continue to inform the development and monitoring of gender equality policies and initiatives in the Northern Territory.

Recommendation 6

The Northern Territory Government facilitate the ongoing input of women and people of diverse genders to the refinement and subsequent monitoring of the Gender Equality Framework, for example, through the creation of a permanent Gender Equality Advisory Committee, chaired by the Minister for Territory Families.

An example of an effective consultative body on issues of gender equality is provided below.

Finnish Council for Gender Equality

The Council for Gender Equality (TANE) is a permanent parliamentary committee operating within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Established in 1972, TANE brings together Ministers, public servants, representatives of non-government organisations and researchers to advise the Finnish Government on gender equality issues. TANE's strong and diverse networks ensure policy is informed by a wide range of expertise in the field of gender equality. The Council's duties are to:

- monitor and promote the implementation of equality between women and men in society
- present motions and proposals as well as to issue statements, to develop legislation affecting gender equality and other gender equality measures
- promote co-operation among authorities, social partners, women's and men's organisations, as well as other bodies
- promote research on gender equality and the implementation of research findings
- follow international developments in the field.

TANE has been a pioneer in initiating debate and proposing motions on gender equality policies, and demanded many reforms that have required extensive dialogue on gender equality in Finland, that have set significant societal change in motion.[17]

[17] See TANE Council for Gender Equality website (link)

Acknowledging people of diverse gender and sexual orientation

The development of the Gender Equality Framework is an opportunity to place a clear focus on promoting the rights, safety, wellbeing and inclusion on LGBTQIA+ people in the Territory.

Statistics show in stark terms the discrimination and negative outcomes experienced by LGBTQIA+ people across Australia. A significant proportion of LGBTQIA+ people hide their sexuality or gender identity when accessing services (34 per cent), work (39 per cent), or social and community events (42 per cent).[18] Experiences of abuse are common, with six out of ten LGBTQIA+ Australians experiencing verbal abuse, approximately one in five experiencing physical abuse and one in ten experiencing other types of abuse such as cyberbullying, graffiti, social exclusion and humiliation.[19] Transgender males and females experience significantly higher rates of non-physical and physical abuse compared with lesbians and gay men.[20]

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are three times more likely to experience depression compared to the broader population. [21] Discrimination and abuse starts from a young age, with 80 per cent of homophobic bullying occurring at school.[22]

The findings from the *Sorting it Out* study highlighted the high rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual assault among GBTIQ men in Australia.[23] Almost two thirds of men indicated that they had been in an unhealthy or abusive relationship in the past, yet of those who reported personal experiences of abusive relationships, only 6 per cent disclosed to medical services and 5 percent had reported to police. When providing advice to other men experiencing abuse or control in a relationship, men most often recommended leaving the relationship or "sorting it out" within the relationship. It was less common for men to advise contacting a third party, such as a support service or police. The findings highlighted a clear need for community discussions, education and programs on respectful relationships and sexual ethics that address the diverse lives and experiences of GBTIQ men.

[18] Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University (2010) Private Lives 2: The second national survey of the health and wellbeing of GLBT Australians citied in Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) (2014) *Face the Facts: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People* (online)

[19] Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University (2010) *Writing Themselves in 3: The third national study on the sexual health and wellbeing of same sex attracted and gender questioning young people*, cited in AHRC (2014) (above).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Beyond Blue (2012) In my shoes: Experiences of discrimination, depression and anxiety among gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex people, cited in AHRC (2014) (above).

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ovenden, G., Salter, M., Ullman, J., Denson, N., Robinson, K., Noonan, K., Bansel, P., Huppatz, K. (2019) Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Men's Attitudes and Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault, Sexualities and Genders Research, Western Sydney University and ACON (online)

Of particular note in the Northern Territory context, brotherboys, sistergirls and other LGBTQIA+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience a number of significant and intersecting points of discrimination and marginalisation. A report by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), *Resilient Individuals: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Rights* report considered the intersecting issues of racism, homophobia and transphobia faced by these communities. The report highlighted the need for further investigation into the experiences of Aboriginal people of diverse gender and sexual orientation, and the need for policies and actions to meet the ever-growing population of Aboriginal people who identify as LGBTQIA+.[24]

The Northern Territory Government has made significant steps in recent years towards a fairer and more inclusive community for LGBTQIA+ people, including passing the Adoption of Children Legislation Amendment (Equality) Bill in 2017, the expungement of historical convictions for men who were charged with gay sex offences, the passage of significant birth certificate and legal reforms for trans, gender diverse, and intersex people in 2018, and the continuation of funding for the Safe Schools program in Northern Territory Government schools. The Gender Equality Framework is an opportunity to continue to advance reforms and deliver new initiatives in this area.

Recommendation 7

That the Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework include specific strategies to promote the rights, safety, wellbeing and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people, including targeted strategies for Aboriginal communities.

3. Engaging men to achieve change

An effective Gender Equality Framework must recognise that equity is relational: achieving gender equality cannot happen without men. Inequities are rooted in unequal power dynamics; changing these dynamics therefore requires men to take responsibility for challenging attitudes, changing behaviours and joining as allies to women in the pursuit of equality.

Taking this step requires that men acknowledge the privileges they have been born into as a result of social structures that confer power to men while excluding women. Often men are not aware of the system of patriarchy because they have always enjoyed these privileges.

Acknowledging the experiences of men also highlights the harmful effects of patriarchy on men themselves. Findings from The Man Box research project, an initiative of The Men's Project (see below), found that two-thirds of young men have been told since they were a boy that a real man behaves in a certain way.[25] The enormous pressures to be a 'real man' can lead to feelings of inadequacy, yet those same gender norms often prevent seeking help for fear of being labelled 'weak'.

[24] AHRC (2018) Brotherboys, sistergirls and LGBT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (online)
[25] The Men's Project and Flood, M. (2018) The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in Australia. Jesuit Social Services: Melbourne (online)

Men and boys are overrepresented in key indicators of harmful social behaviours and negative social outcomes: they are more likely to consume alcohol excessively, engage in risky behaviour, perpetrate violence and other crimes, suffer from addiction, mental illness and suicide; and less likely to admit pain, seek medical advice or have a strong social network from which to draw support.

The reasons for this are complex and multi-faceted, deriving from deeply embedded social norms and structures, as well as major shifts in social and economic conditions in more recent times. They are also the product of our failure to put in place the processes and settings that foster behaviour change, stem poor trajectories and break cycles of violence and exclusion.

The pursuit of gender equality cannot be solely seen as a women's issue and an effective strategy will include actions to engage men in changing harmful values, attitudes and behaviours.

Recommendation 8

That the Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework acknowledge the responsibility of men in the pursuit of gender equality including explicitly acknowledging the harmful impact of rigid adherence to stereotypical masculine norms.

Understanding and challenging harmful expressions of masculinity

The Man Box: A study on being a young man in Australia

Understanding the state of young men and their perceptions of masculinity provides a basis to identify areas where action is required to change values, attitudes and behaviours. In 2018, The Men's Project conducted The Man Box research project. The first of its kind in Australia, the study surveyed 1,000 young men aged 18 to 30 years to better understand the attitudes and behaviours of young men towards gender stereotypes, and the impact that this can have on their wellbeing, behaviours and the safety of our wider community.

What is The Man Box?

The Man Box is a set of beliefs within and across society that place pressure on men to be a certain way – to be tough, not to show any emotions, to be the breadwinner, to always be in control, use violence to solve problems, and to have many sexual partners.

Some of these beliefs, such as condoning the use of violence, are always wrong; others, such as acting strong, can sometimes be useful but at other times lead to problems (for instance when bottling up negative emotions).

Design of the study

The Man Box study explored how young men encounter the Man Box rules in society and personally internalise them by asking their views on 17 messages about how a man should behave. The messages were organised under seven pillars, namely: self-sufficiency, acting tough, physical attractiveness, rigid gender roles, heterosexuality and homophobia, hypersexuality, and aggression and control.

We also looked at the influence of agreement with the Man Box rules on different areas of young men's lives, including health and wellbeing, physical appearance, relationships, risk-taking, violence, and bystander behaviour.

The Man Box survey contained a nationally-representative sample of Australian young men including those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, as well as young men from a range of cultural and religious backgrounds. However, given the small sample size of these diverse groups and the higher margin of error that comes with such small sample sizes, the report did not contain a specific analysis of findings broken down by cultural or religious cohort. As noted below, we recommend this is an area for future research.

Key findings

The Man Box is alive and well in Australia

The research showed that social pressure around what it means to be a 'real man' are strong in Australia, and impact the lives of most young men from a very young age. Young men see the rules of the Man Box being communicated and reinforced throughout society, particularly those related to acting strong, being the primary income earner, and not saying no to sex.

Figure 2: The Man Box Rules

%of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "Society as a whole tells me that…"	**Man Box Rule**	Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "In my opinion…"
69%	**Acting tough** *E.g. Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside.*	**47%**
54%	**Self sufficiency** *E.g. Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help.*	**27%**
35%	**Aggression and control** *E.g. Men should use violence to get respect if necessary*	**20%**
56%	**Hypersexuality** *E.g. A "real man" would never say no to sex.*	**24%**
56%	**Rigid gender roles** *E.g. Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women.*	**35%**
48%	**Physical attractiveness** *E.g. A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly.*	**32%**
47%	**Heterosexuality and homophobia** *E.g. A gay guy is not a "real man."*	**28%**

Importantly, as shown in figure 2 above, there is a difference between how young men *perceive* these pressures and their *personal agreement* with them; overall, the young men surveyed held more progressive views on what it is to be a 'real man' than what they believe society is telling them.

Looking at the personal views of young men, there was not one Man Box rule that a majority of young men agreed with, and over three quarters of the young men disagreed with the rules on hypersexuality, rigid household roles, and the idea that men should use violence to get respect.

However, the study also showed that a substantial minority (averaging around 30 per cent) of young men endorse most of the Man Box rules. Of particular concern are high levels of personal endorsement of rules that indicate gender inequitable views, and control of women.

Adherence to the rules of the Man Box is causing harm

The findings clearly showed that living up to the pressures of being a 'real man' causes harm to young men and those around them, particularly women. As shown in figure 3 below, young men who most strongly agree with these rules report poorer levels of mental health, engage in risky drinking, are more likely to be in car accidents and to report committing acts of violence, online bullying and sexual harassment. The top 20 per cent of young men 'inside the Man Box' (that is, subscription to the 'rules' of the Man Box) are *20 times* more likely to perpetrate sexual assault.

Figure 3: Life inside the Man Box

By Man Box quintile % of respondents who reported:	**1 Stuck in the Box**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5 Free from the Box**
Suicidal Thoughts	64%	36%	21%	19%	27%
Feeling down, depressed, hopeless	81%	71%	65%	67%	70%
Perpetration of Verbal Bullying	71%	47%	36%	29%	13%
Perpetration of Physical Violence	71%	33%	17%	8%	5%
Perpetrated Sexual Harassment	70%	33%	16%	9%	3%
Experiences of Verbal bullying	79%	57%	53%	47%	37%
Experiences of Physical Violence	76%	38%	25%	14%	12%
Binge Drinking	38%	29%	21%	25%	18%
One or more Traffic Accident	55%	32%	13%	11%	9%

Implications

Raising awareness

The Man Box and other research clearly demonstrate that gender inequality, and narrow, rigid gender stereotypes are bad for all of us, keeping women and men from living healthy, safe and fulfilling lives. The findings confirm the need for action across the community to build awareness of the Man Box norms and their harmful impacts, weakening their cultural grip and promote positive alternatives.

Recommendation 9

That the Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework highlights the importance of raising awareness of and shifting harmful masculine norms in policies and programs related to mental health and wellbeing, road safety, alcohol harm reduction, crime and violence prevention, and the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence.

Modelling positive alternatives

Engaging men and women to role model healthy and positive alternatives to the Man Box is a second crucial strategy to weaken its grip and embrace, encourage and celebrate a wide range of expressions of masculinity.

For this reason, in 2018, Jesuit Social Services commenced the Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program that seeks to develop strong role models – both male and females – to lead change in the places where boys and men live, work and meet.

Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program

MoRE is a three month program supporting community members who work closely with boys and men to develop the knowledge and skills to create change in their communities around issues of respect and equality. This includes challenging harmful and limiting stereotypes about what it means to be a man today and supporting boys and men to be their best selves.

The program commences with a two day intensive workshop focused on personal reflection and growth, building awareness and understanding of the issues, developing skills to model and drive change within their own work, team and community. This is followed by ongoing, active support for participants to identify and action opportunities and activities in their own communities, supported through online and offline peer support. The program wraps up with a half-day follow-up workshop that celebrates achievements, aims to solve problems and consolidates learnings.

Since the program commenced in October 2018, there have been more than 75 participants from a wide range of backgrounds including schools, sporting clubs, community service organisations and faith-based community groups.

Recommendation 10

That the Northern Territory Gender Equality Framework include specific strategies to engage male and female role models in promoting healthy and positive expressions of masculinity.

As the first nationally-representative study of the gender-related attitudes and behaviours of young Australian men, the Man Box research provides important insights into the norms of manhood and the impacts on men, women and wider society. There is a need for further research to build on these insights, in particular to better understand the diversity of young men's experiences by cultural and socio-economic background, and sexuality.

It is also important that the lessons from the Man Box and related research are put to practical use. This means creating opportunities for organisations working with boys and men to come together to share knowledge and build capability around challenging the dominant harmful expressions of masculinity, modelling positive alternatives, and help boys and men to play their part in building safe, respectful and equal communities.

Recommendation 11

That the Northern Territory Government partner with research institutions and organisations working with boys and men to undertake further detailed research to the attitudes and behaviours of boys and men in the Territory, in particular, to understand in more detail the specific experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and men.

Recommendation 12

That the Northern Territory Government support 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, for example, practitioner networks and forums, as well as new tools for working with boys and men.

These actions should build on positive initiatives already being undertaken within and outside of government. It is critical that efforts undertaken in line with the actions above are pro-feminist and align with existing women's rights processes; are non-discriminatory and accommodating of diversity; and engage men from a positive perspective.

The full Man Box report, including findings and recommendations, can be accessed here.

Further discussion about engaging men in primary prevention against sexual violence is provided in our submission to the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework.

4. Leadership by Government

We welcome the leadership role that the Northern Territory Government has taken in advancing gender equality. Enduring change requires action at both the grassroots and change lead from above. It is important that the framework articulate the actions the Northern Territory Government will take through the range of levers it has available, including legislation, governance structures, employment practices, budget, policy, procurement, funding decisions and advocacy to the Commonwealth.

Example: Using purchasing power to influence

Governments across Australia and internationally are increasingly using their buying power to deliver positive social, economic and environmental outcomes. With a significant proportion of Northern Territory Government high-value contracts awarded to businesses in traditionally male-dominated industries such as construction, incorporating gender equality goals into the Northern Territory Government's procurement framework is an opportunity for the government to use its purchasing power to influence wider community change.

Victorian Social Procurement Framework

Victoria's Social Procurement Framework aims to ensure value-for-money considerations are not solely focused on price, but encompass opportunities to deliver social and sustainable outcomes that benefit the Victorian community.

The framework sets out a whole-of-government scalable and consistent approach to social procurement for all Government departments and agencies, seeking to streamline and embed social procurement within ordinary government processes. For suppliers, whether they be major businesses or small to medium enterprises (SMEs), the framework advises how to incorporate social value when competing for government procurement opportunities.

The framework sets out the social procurement objectives the government is seeking to achieve, and the specific outcomes sought. This includes the **objective of women's equality and safety**, under which the Government is seeking the **outcomes** of the adoption of **family violence leave** by Victorian Government suppliers and **gender equality** within Victorian Government suppliers.

Example: Broader indicators of progress

A number of jurisdictions globally are developing broader models of the economy to complement Gross State Product (GSP) that balance economic and social considerations, acknowledging the value and costs of unpaid work, income inequality and underemployment.

Maryland Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)

GPI provides a more complete picture of economic and social progress in the North American state of Maryland. It accounts for non-market benefits from the economy, environment and society not included in GSP and identifies and deducts costs such as environmental degradation and poor health. By assessing economic and social impact indicators such as reducing time on unpaid work or income inequality, GPI more clearly reflects the costs and benefits of the state's economic activity.

Example: Advocate to the Commonwealth

A number of the levers available to promote gender equality sit with the Commonwealth Government. The Northern Territory Government should be a strong advocate to the Commonwealth on these issues, including childcare subsidies, managing income tax and benefits, superannuation and spending in aged care, health and education.

Policies in these areas that advance gender equity will not only benefit women and girls in the Territory, but contribute economically to the Territory and the country as a whole. For example: closing Australia's gender employment gap would increase GDP by around 11 per cent; the Australian economy would gain $8 billion if women transitioned from tertiary education into the workforce at the same rate as men.

5. Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the development of this landmark framework. We hope that the Norther Territory Government will set its ambitions high so that we can work together towards a vision of a safe and equal Territory, were all people, regardless of gender, have access to equal power, resources and opportunities, and are treated with dignity and respect.

If you have any questions or require any further information regarding our submission, please contact:

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