

MENTORING
MEN



ENGAGING MEN IN
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY
VIOLENCE PREVENTION

A COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTION TO DELIVER THE NATIONAL PLAN

2025 WHITE PAPER

#MENDOTALK

Executive Summary

Domestic and family violence (DFV) in Australia is an epidemic that demands innovative early prevention. On average, one woman is killed every nine days by a current or former partner¹, and one in four women has experienced violence or abuse by an intimate partner¹. The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 calls for bold action across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery to end this violence within a generation². This second edition of Mentoring Men's white paper builds on our proven model of men's peer mentoring – outlined in the first edition "Proven Impact and the Need for National Support" – and extends it to focus on DFV prevention. Our goal is to show how trusted peer mentoring can uniquely engage men as part of the national DFV solution.

Prevention matters. When governments adopt a prevention framework they create lasting change, tackling issues at their root, shifting social norms, and equipping communities to respond earlier. We have seen the advantages of this approach in areas such as road safety, firearms amnesty, smoking reduction, and most recently in suicide prevention, where investing in training and education, skills, empower people to step up, ask questions, and intervene before lives were lost.

Mentoring Men has seen this first-hand how mentoring conversations have the ability to save lives. Through training and education, men in our program report feeling more confident to ask others if they are at risk of harming themselves. But when it comes to asking whether someone may be at risk of harming others, especially in the context of intimate partner and family violence, men report far less confidence. This gap is understandable. It reflects the lack of education, skills, and safe spaces for men to learn how to have these conversations without shame, while still promoting responsibility, accountability, and change.

The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 is clear, prevention requires engaging men as part of the solution. Meeting men where they are, equipping them with tools, and empowering them to step in is vital. Crisis responses and resources for women and children are essential, however, on their own they cannot achieve the generational change the National Plan envisions.

Mentoring Men is positioned to deliver this shift. For seven years, we have provided a free, accredited, national mentoring program, increasing wellbeing and building healthier behaviours through one-to-one, stigma-free support for adult men. Through an initiative that started with Griffith University, we now deliver our own Proactive Bystander Training, giving mentors the tools to ask difficult but necessary questions about respect, harmful behaviours, and safety. This education empowers men to notice warning signs, start conversations, and intervene early. First with a focus in relation to suicide, but now also with a focus of preventing family and domestic violence.

Our model aligns with best practice prevention frameworks:

- Challenging harmful gender norms and fostering healthy masculinities.
- Reducing risk amplifiers such as isolation, stress, and poor emotional regulation.
- Building bystander capability so men can confidently step in with peers.
- Providing life-course, community-based support at critical transitions.
- Developing relational capability of empathy, communication, and conflict resolution.
- Balancing accountability with non-shaming support, encouraging real change.
- Embedding evaluation and evidence, contributing data to strengthen the national knowledge base.

This is not a pilot. Mentoring Men is a proven, community-based model that complements crisis and clinical services by working upstream. With modest national investment, Mentoring Men can expand to embed prevention in communities nationwide.

The opportunity is clear. Just as suicide prevention required giving men the skills to ask hard questions and save lives, DFV prevention now requires the same effort, also to save lives. Mentoring Men offers the government a politically savvy, evidence-backed pathway to advance the National Plan that protects women and children by investing in healthier men.

Call to Action: To realise this vision, we seek national support to scale up Mentoring Men's DFV prevention efforts. As outlined in our first white paper, a modest investment (approximately \$3 million per year for three years) would allow us to expand and embed mentoring as a permanent, nationwide service³. This includes funding to train mentors in bystander intervention, integrate with DFV response systems, and rigorously evaluate outcomes. For a fraction of the social and economic cost of domestic violence (estimated at \$21.7 billion annually¹), government can back a proven model that operates upstream, before violence occurs. Lives will be saved, families kept intact, and communities strengthened as part of Australia's journey to end violence against women and children. The opportunity is clear and the need is urgent. We must act now to scale what works and fulfill the National Plan's promise of a safer future.

1. Our Watch | Quick facts about violence against women <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts>

2. National Plan to End Gender Based Violence | Department of Social Services <https://www.dss.gov.au/national-plan-end-gender-based-violence>

3. Mentoring Men | Proven Impact and the Need for National Support <https://www.mentoringmen.org.au/>

Introduction - Building on a Proven Foundation

In 2025, Mentoring Men released “Proven Impact and the Need for National Support” a white paper highlighting a critical gap in men’s mental health and wellbeing services. It showed how thousands of men were “falling through the cracks” of our system, not engaging with traditional services until crisis point, and made the case for scaling up a community-based solution; free, one-to-one life mentoring for men. That paper demonstrated the Mentoring Men impact in reducing suicide risk, loneliness and stigma, by urging investment to embed mentoring as a permanent pillar of the mental health system. Policymakers, including state and federal inquiries, took note of the evidence that peer support and mentoring can change lives when properly funded.¹

This second edition extends that proven model into the domain of domestic and family violence prevention, recognising that the same upstream, peer-led approach can be a powerful tool to address Australia’s DFV crisis. We frame the original white paper’s insights as the foundation, demonstrating that when given the chance, men do talk, and build upon it to tackle the urgent challenge of violence against women and children. Our timing is deliberate: with the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 now in effect, there is unprecedented national focus on prevention and early intervention. The Plan makes clear that ending violence “in one generation” will require engaging all parts of society to change underlying attitudes and systems². Notably, it emphasises that violence will not end without a sustained focus on those who choose to use violence (predominantly men)² and calls for community-driven initiatives that work with men to stop violence before it starts.

Mentoring Men is uniquely positioned to answer this call. Our volunteer mentors are everyday Australians trained to stand alongside their peers through tough times. They form exactly the kind of trusted relationships that can influence personal beliefs and behaviors.

Many men who would never walk into a counsellor’s office will open up to a mentor who like them, is another ‘everyday bloke’ and offers non-judgmental support¹. This trust-based, early engagement is the cornerstone of our impact in mental health and it can be just as transformative in preventing domestic violence. By meeting men where they are (culturally, geographically, emotionally) and normalising help-seeking, mentoring can reach individuals at risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence who are not engaging with formal services. In fact, research shows most men who choose to use violence avoid formal help, one study found only 33% of men who admit to intimate partner violence ever speak to a health professional, while 60% confide only in friends or family³. The top barrier to seeking help is shame (41%), followed by the belief that violence is “normal” (35%)³. These are precisely the barriers Mentoring Men overcomes by providing a confidential, stigma-free mate to talk to. In effect, our mentors become the offer of guidance and support that many men will speak to when they won’t speak to anyone else.

This paper will detail how the Mentoring Men program enhanced with specific domestic violence prevention training and protocols can fill a critical gap in Australia’s DFV prevention ecosystem. We will outline the strategic fit with national policy, the practical mechanisms by which mentoring shifts attitudes and behaviours, and the outcomes we aim to achieve. Importantly, we are not proposing to replace or replicate specialist DFV services. Rather, we offer a missing piece that complements existing responses. We seek to connect and engage men early and reach those that may be in denial or consumed by shame. A peer mentor can gently pull them into a constructive dialogue earlier in the journey.

Where community campaigns broadcast the message that violence is unacceptable (a message we wholeheartedly support), our mentors reinforce, personalise, and extend that message through ongoing one-to-one conversations. In short, Mentoring Men provides the human connection that turns abstract prevention goals into lived change at the individual level.

Why focus on men and mentoring?

DFV is overwhelmingly a gendered problem, men's behaviour is having devastating impact on victims, women and children. Any effective solution must therefore engage men as agents of change, not just as potential perpetrators but as allies in prevention. The National Plan recognises this, highlighting the need to involve men and boys in challenging the social norms that give rise to violence⁴. Mentoring Men offers a practical way to do this. Through mentoring, men can critically examine concepts of manhood, learn respectful relationship skills, and be held accountable by someone they respect. At the same time, mentors themselves become change agents, modelling positive behaviour in their families and communities. This cascading effect, one man at a time influencing others, is how normative change takes root. Our work is grounded in the understanding that healthy masculinities are a protective factor against violence, whereas rigid, "toxic" masculine norms are a risk factor⁵. By fostering healthier masculine identities, we address one of the root drivers of gender-based violence².

1. Mentoring Men | Proven Impact and the Need for National Support <https://www.mentoringmen.org.au/>

2. National Plan to End Gender Based Violence | Department of Social Services <https://www.dss.gov.au/national-plan-end-gender-based-violence>

3. ANROWS (2021). Listening to the voices of victims and perpetrators to transform responses to IPV.

4. Part 4: Bystander interventions in violence prevention | Australian Human Rights Commission <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/part-4-bystander-interventions-violence-prevention>

5. Our Watch | Quick facts about violence against women <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts>

The Role of Peer Mentoring in DfV Prevention

Addressing Drivers of Violence through Trust and Support. Domestic and family violence does not emerge in a vacuum, it is often the end-result of compounding factors in a man's life, including entrenched beliefs, unaddressed trauma, social isolation, and stressors like unemployment or substance use^{1,2}. A common thread is that many of those who are at risk or inflict violence have never had a safe outlet to discuss their emotions or challenges in healthy and constructive manner. Instead, they may default to anger, control or violence as coping mechanisms, often fueled by rigid ideas that seeking help is "weak" or that a man must be in control at all times^{1,2,3,4,7}. Mentoring directly intervenes in this trajectory. By pairing a man with a compassionate mentor, we open up a channel for honest conversation and self-reflection providing a place for growth and accountability.

Mentors are trained to build rapport and listen without judgment. This empathetic approach can defuse the defensiveness and shame that can inhibit men from confronting their violent or disrespectful behaviours and/or beliefs. As one of our guiding principles states, "Men do talk – they just need to know we exist." When a mentee realises his mentor genuinely cares and won't shame him, denial and silence give way to dialogue. Difficult topics such as how he handles conflict with his partner or feelings of jealousy or use of alcohol, can be broached gradually. The mentor can challenge excuses or toxic attitudes, while affirming the man's capacity to change. This approach encourages personal accountability through connection, not coercion. A man is more likely to accept responsibility for his actions when it's coming from a trusted friend figure rather than an authority figure. Further, this develops a sense of advocacy and social norm of equality and healthy relationships for all.

Crucially, mentoring has an opportunity to reduce isolation and reinforce pro-social norms, which are protective against violence. By establishing a consistent, supportive relationship, a mentor becomes a positive male role model who demonstrates empathy, respect, and non-violent problem solving. In each mentoring session, alternatives to aggression or control can be modelled. For example, the mentor shows healthy ways to cope with stress, or talks about times he handled anger without violence or coercion. Over time, the mentee experiences a new norm; male friendship that isn't built on dominance or bravado but on trust and vulnerability. This can profoundly alter a man's view of himself and his behaviour. It helps "rewrite internalised scripts" about what he must do to be respected. No longer does he only equate masculinity with control or toughness, he sees value in compassion and communication. Strength in a man through his own humility.

Promoting Healthy Masculinities

Mentoring Men explicitly incorporates discussions of masculinity and respect into our mentor training and resources. We help mentors understand how strict gender role expectations (e.g. that men must be stoic, always in charge, sexually dominant, etc.) can harm men's wellbeing and fuel gender inequality and violence^{5,6}. Mentors in turn can help mentees explore their own beliefs about manhood in a constructive way. Rather than lecturing, a mentor might share personal stories. For instance, how trying to "tough it out" emotionally backfired for him or how learning to express vulnerability improved his relationships. These conversations plant seeds for a more flexible, positive masculinity. We encourage what some researchers call a "hybrid masculinity", allowing men to choose traits and values aligned with their authentic selves, beyond the narrow stereotypes^{5,7,8}.

The impact of this can be seen in other contexts: Studies show that men aged 18–30 who endorse rigid masculine norms are 17 times more likely to report having hit a partner compared to those with more egalitarian views⁷. By contrast, men who learn emotional intelligence, empathy and mutual respect are far less likely to resort to violence. Thus, each mentoring conversation that normalises vulnerability, compassion, and gender equality is a small but vital step toward violence prevention. It's primary prevention in action, changing the underlying attitudes and social norms that drive abuse.

Early Identification and Intervention

Another strength of mentoring is the ability to spot early warning signs of potential DFV and intervene before escalation. Through regular chats, a mentor might notice a mentee expressing increasingly hostile attitudes toward his partner or admitting to behaviors like constantly checking his partner's phone or isolating her from friends (signs of coercive control). Because of the trust built, the mentor is in a position to call attention to these behaviours in a non-confrontational way. The mentor can then gently highlight why certain behaviors are unhealthy or abusive and encourage the mentee to consider changes or seek help. If needed the mentor can facilitate a warm referral to specialist services (like a men's behaviour change program or anger management counselling), framing it not as punishment but as support. This kind of peer encouragement can overcome the barrier of shame that stops many men from accessing formal help.

In cases where a mentee discloses active abusive behavior or serious risk, mentors have the support of the operations team to navigate appropriate intervention. They do not operate as vigilantes or therapists, but they serve as critical connectors in the system. In this way, our program bolsters the existing response system by catching cases that might otherwise go unseen until they result in police intervention or injury.

It's worth noting that mentoring also supports men who themselves have been subjected to domestic or family violence, a group that is often overlooked. Men can be victims of abuse (in same-sex relationships, or as children, or in elder abuse situations), and they too face stigma in seeking help. A mentor provides a non-judgmental ear and can encourage male victims to access support and break the silence. This ancillary benefit for male victims aligns with a holistic approach to community healing and breaking cycles of violence. Forming social networks that respect equality and support for a whole community.

Prevention has to be more than awareness. Awareness of a problem is not going to solve it. Peer mentoring provides the next step of education, social change, development of healthy masculinity norms, and leverages the power of human connection. It equips men with healthier coping and relationship skills, making them less likely to use violence as an outlet. And it creates a ripple effect: each man positively influenced can influence others, whether it's his children (modelling a better way to handle conflict), his mates (calling out a sexist joke), or his community (volunteering and advocating for change).

1. Bosson, J. K., Vandello, J. A., et al. (2009). Precarious manhood and its link to aggression.

2. Our Watch | Quick facts about violence against women <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts>

3. Hodges, M. D., da Silva, R., & Shortland, N. (2022). A common psychology of male violence? Assessing the effects of misogyny on intentions to engage in violent extremism, interpersonal violence and support for violence against women. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 34(6), 1165–1184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2020.1857922>

4. Hegarty, K., McKenzie, M., McLindon, E., Addison, M., Valpied, J., Hameed, M., Kyei-Onanjiri, M., Baloch, S., Diemer, K., & Tarzia, L. (2022). "I just felt like I was running around in a circle": Listening to the voices of victims and perpetrators to transform responses to intimate partner violence (Research Report No. 22/2022). Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

5. Wong, Y. J., Ho, M., Wang, S., & Miller, I. S. K. (2017). Meta-analyses of the relationship between conformity to masculine norms and mental health-related outcomes.

6. Ging, D. (2019). Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere.

7. ANROWS (2021). Listening to the voices of victims and perpetrators to transform responses to IPV.

8. World Health Organization (2013). Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women: WHO clinical and policy guidelines.

9. Meth, I. Z. (2023). Aggression, avoidance, shame, and narcissism in fragile masculinity (Doctoral dissertation, Long Island University, Brooklyn). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (NOT PUBLISHED)

Integrating Proactive Bystander Training for Mentors

One of the most effective strategies emerging in violence prevention is the bystander intervention approach. Encouraging individuals to “step up” when they see problematic behaviour and safely intervene to prevent violence or escalation¹. The National Plan’s, explicitly notes that male bystanders who remain silent in the face of sexism or disrespect tacitly enable violence, and that we must work with bystanders as part of the solution². In recognition of this, Mentoring Men will implement a comprehensive Proactive Bystander Training (PBT) module for all mentors (and available to interested mentees and community members as well). This section outlines what that training entails and how it will be integrated into our program.

Goals of PBT

The primary goal is to equip our mentors with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to intervene or speak out before violence occurs. Whether in their role as mentors or in everyday situations. This aligns with the idea of making every volunteer mentor a catalyst for broader cultural change. Specifically, PBT will help mentors to:

- **Recognise the signs** of domestic and family violence and the precursors to violence. This includes understanding the spectrum of behaviors (from sexist language and controlling behaviors to overt physical or sexual violence and coercive control) and knowing what risk factors or red flags to watch for in their mentees or social circles.
- **Assess situations for safety.** Determining when and how to intervene without putting themselves or others at undue risk.
- **Apply appropriate intervention techniques.** We train men to have strategies that focus on safety and accountability to feel empowered to address domestic and family violence in a proactive manner.
- **Practice de-escalation and empathy.** Mentors role-play scenarios to practice staying calm and constructive when intervening.
- **Follow-up and referral.** After an intervention, mentors learn to follow up.

Safety Protocols

We have established clear protocols to ensure that bystander interventions by our volunteers do not inadvertently cause more harm.

Integration with Systems

Proactive bystander training doesn’t stand alone. It is integrated into a wider referral and partnership network. We have protocols for warm referrals where mentors can directly facilitate a mentee’s engagement with these services (with the mentee’s consent), and in return, some programs may refer men to us for ongoing peer support after or alongside formal interventions.

Why PBT for Mentors Matters

By training our mentors in proactive bystander skills, we significantly magnify our impact. Each mentor becomes a change agent not only in his one-on-one mentoring relationship but in his family, workplace and community. He is equipped to challenge harmful talk or behavior he encounters day to day, thereby multiplying the prevention message. - The mentees, in turn, learn from example. As mentors practice bystander interventions (even micro-interventions like challenging a casual sexist remark the mentee makes), mentees internalise those behaviors. They learn that real men respect women and call out mates who don't. Over time, mentees can adopt this role themselves. many of our former mentees become volunteer mentors or community advocates, creating a virtuous cycle of empowerment. It addresses the often intangible but crucial factor of community attitudes. Large-scale change in attitudes comes from countless small actions, someone speaking up at a BBQ, in a group chat, or at the pub.

Our network of mentors could collectively spark thousands of such actions, helping to shift norms. This directly supports one of the National Plan's stated outcomes: "Community attitudes and beliefs embrace gender equality and condemn all forms of gendered violence without exception."²

Proactive Bystander Training will enhance mentors' effectiveness in preventing violence, by expanding their role from supportive listeners to active upstanders. It synergises with the mentoring model: the trust mentors build gives weight to their words when they intervene. And it reinforces the idea that preventing DV is everyone's business, not solely the domain of police, courts, or counsellors, but a collective responsibility where volunteers can play a part. This approach has been informed by research and best practice from

1. Part 4: Bystander interventions in violence prevention | Australian Human Rights Commission <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/part-4-bystander-interventions-violence-prevention>

2. First Action Plan 2023-2027 <https://www.dss.gov.au/system/files/resources/d23-1021308-first-action-plan-accessible-pdf.pdf>

An approach that hits key ministerial and policy priorities

Building the Prevention Workforce

The First Action Plan identifies the need to develop a strong, national primary prevention workforce, encompassing people who can drive prevention initiatives at scale¹. Our volunteer mentors are exactly this, a distributed workforce of trained community members dedicated to prevention. With support, we can rapidly expand this workforce (e.g. recruiting and training hundreds more mentors across Australia). These mentors are embedded in communities and can reach many diverse places (rural areas, certain cultural groups, workplaces, etc.). By investing in Mentoring Men, the government is essentially investing in the expansion and skilling-up of the prevention workforce, as called for by Our Watch and others². We also invest in our workforce's well-being, recognising (as the government does) that those doing this emotionally challenging work need support and supervision to sustain their efforts. Our model, which includes ongoing mentor coaching and check-ins, could serve as a template for supporting the broader prevention workforce nationally.

Intersectionality and Inclusion

We know that experiences of violence and barriers to support differ across communities. The National Plan emphasises tailoring strategies to be culturally responsive and intersectional, meeting the needs of Indigenous communities, CALD communities, LGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, and so on¹. Mentoring Men is committed to inclusive service delivery. Our mentors reflect Australia's diversity, we have mentors of various ethnicities, ages (from 21 to 80+), sexual orientations, and life experiences. When matching mentors to mentees, we take into account language, culture, and any preferences that would make the mentee more comfortable. Ensuring each man can talk to someone who "gets" his context. We partner with specialist agencies to improve access (for instance, working with multicultural men's organisations to reach migrant men). Additionally, our content around masculinity and violence is framed in a way that acknowledges multiple forms of disadvantage and discrimination. For example, with First Nations mentees, conversations might include the impacts of intergenerational trauma and colonisation as factors in family violence, aligning with the separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. We do not take a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, we empower communities to own the mentoring model. This community-led adaptation ensures our DFV prevention messaging is heard and trusted. By funding Mentoring Men, policymakers would be supporting a highly adaptable, intersectional initiative that can be nuanced to various populations, in line with national principles.

Community-Led and Volunteer-Driven Responses

Governments at all levels have noted that top-down solutions alone cannot solve domestic violence. Communities must be resourced to drive change from within. Mentoring Men is inherently a community-led model. Our mentors are volunteers stepping up out of altruism and care for their fellow Australians. We operate through local partnerships to find both mentors and mentees. This grassroots engagement builds social capital and local leadership on the issue. For example, if we train a cohort of 20 men in a rural town as mentors with DFV bystander skills, those skills stay in that town, even outside the formal mentoring context, creating a safer community environment. Investing in Mentoring Men thus means strengthening community capacity to respond to DFV in an ongoing way. It also represents an efficient, high-leverage investment. For a relatively small cost, the government taps into thousands of volunteer hours and lived experience expertise (our mentors include people who have overcome personal struggles, offering rich insight). This embodies the government's aim to support community-led initiatives that complement formal services³.

Keeping Women and Children Safe

Ultimately, all these efforts must translate to the bottom-line outcome, reducing violence and increasing safety. How will mentoring achieve that? By working with men on prevention and early intervention, we expect to see fewer incidents of abuse in the families connected to our program. Our outcome measures can track the health of relationships. Over time and scale, these individual changes contribute to population-level reduction in DFV. This approach directly serves the safety of women and children, who are the beneficiaries of violence not occurring in the first place. Moreover, by challenging sexist and violent norms in society, we create a culture where women and children are believed, respected, and protected, and where men take on the responsibility of being part of the solution. This is aligned with the National Plan's vision of a future where all Australians live free from violence, and the community as a whole condemns and rejects any form of abuse³.

In conclusion, Mentoring Men's DFV prevention initiative is not an offshoot working at cross-purposes to national policy, it is directly supportive and augmentative of that policy. By anchoring our program in the Plan's pillars and ministerial priorities, we ensure that any investment in Mentoring Men yields strategic returns for the nation's objectives. We provide an innovative mechanism to fulfill policy goals around prevention and community engagement that might otherwise be hard to operationalise.

1. First Action Plan 2023–2027 <https://www.dss.gov.au/system/files/resources/d23-1021308-first-action-plan-accessible-pdf.pdf>

2. Our Watch | Quick facts about violence against women <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts>

3. National Plan to End Gender Based Violence | Department of Social Services <https://www.dss.gov.au/national-plan-end-gender-based-violence>

Program Logic and Intended Outcomes

Inputs and Resources

Strategy / Inquiry	Key Priority
Trained Volunteer Mentors	The heart of the program. We recruit men of good character from diverse backgrounds and provide extensive training (including the new PBT module, DFV awareness, trauma-informed practice, and cultural competency).
Mentoring Men Staff and Experts	Our program managers, and partnership coordinators oversee mentor-mentee matching, monitor risk, and liaise with DFV services.
Curriculum and Materials	The structured training sessions focus on topics like healthy relationships, communication skills, managing emotions, bystander scenarios, etc. We also have evaluation tools (surveys, checklists) and referral directories at the ready.
Partnerships	Collaboration with DFV organisations, community groups, and government agencies to support referral pathways, co-deliver workshops, and share data (as appropriate) for comprehensive support.
Funding and Technology	Sufficient funding (as requested) to scale operations, plus our MentorConnect platform for tracking mentorship activities and collecting data (with privacy safeguards).

Activities

Strategy / Inquiry	Key Priority
Mentor Training and Accreditation	We conduct intensive training for new mentors. This now includes additional training specific to DFV and bystander role-play. Mentors must demonstrate understanding of safety protocols and attitudes aligning with zero tolerance for violence.
Mentor–Mentee Matching and Mentoring Sessions	Men seeking support (mentees) are carefully matched with mentors, often based on goals or risk factors (for instance, if DFV risk is identified, match with a mentor skilled in that area). They meet regularly for conversations guided by trust and the mentee’s needs. Over 3–12 months of engagement, these sessions cover not only general wellbeing but also respectful relationships content where relevant.
Proactive Bystander Engagement	Mentors actively look for teachable moments during sessions e.g. if a mentee makes a concerning comment about his partner, the mentor uses it as an opening to discuss it (micro-intervention). Outside mentoring, mentors commit to applying PBT in daily life and report back successes/challenges in supervision. We foster a community of practice: mentors share stories of interventions to encourage each other.
Referrals and Wrap-Around Support	When a mentee has needs beyond the mentor’s scope (legal advice, counselling, substance abuse treatment, etc.), mentors (with staff help) connect them to services. We ensure a “warm referral” approach. Conversely, some men may be referred to us from perpetrator programs to get additional peer support in maintaining non-violence; we integrate those referrals smoothly.
Community Outreach and Awareness	Beyond one-on-one mentoring, the program hosts workshops and seminars in the community (for example, a toolkit on “How to be a Proactive Bystander” open to the public, led by our trained mentors). This spreads knowledge to a wider audience and recruits more champions. We also contribute to public conversations (e.g. speaking at forums, submitting evidence to inquiries) to advocate for the role of mentoring in DFV prevention, ensuring visibility and buy-in.
Monitoring and Evaluation	We systematically collect data. Mentors and mentees complete baseline and periodic surveys capturing attitudes (with investment this can extend to using, for example, the Gender Equitable Men scale), self-reported behaviors (e.g. conflict tactics used, help-seeking actions), and wellbeing indicators. Session feedback forms note qualitative progress (e.g. “mentee discussed using time-out instead of shouting during an argument – a positive change”). We track outputs like number of mentors trained, mentoring pairs in DFV-focused work, bystander interventions done, referrals made, etc. Our staff review risk logs and case notes to identify any incidents (positive or negative) and resolutions.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Strategy / Inquiry	Key Priority
Reach and Engagement	Number of mentors trained in DFV PBT, number of men mentees engaged in DFV prevention-focused mentoring, demographic spread (to show reach into priority populations).
Capacity Building	% of mentors demonstrating competency in bystander skills (via assessments), % increase in prevention workforce capacity (we can define a unit per mentor and track growth).
Behavior Change	% of mentees with self-reported reduction in abusive behaviors or improvement in management of anger (pre vs post), % of suitable mentees who engage in external support (like 80% of those advised to see a counselor do so).
Attitude Change	Composite score improvement on attitude scales, target e.g. a 30% reduction in endorsement of gender-inequitable norms among participants.
Satisfaction and Perception	High satisfaction ratings from mentees and mentors regarding the program's usefulness in addressing relationship issues (target >90% say it made them a better communicator or made them think differently about DV).
Partnerships	Number of formal partnerships and bidirectional referrals, indicating system integration (target: at least 5 key DFV service partnerships in each major region we operate).

Evaluation Plan

We will undertake a mixed-method evaluation. Quantitatively, pre-post surveys, will measure changes in attitudes and wellbeing. Qualitatively, interviews with participants and their family members (with consent) will provide insight into how mentoring influenced their lives. We'll also incorporate feedback from partner agencies on community impact. This evaluation will be documented and shared transparently to contribute to the evidence base. We anticipate working with research partners to ensure rigor and perhaps publish findings, as this could inform scaling decisions and continuous improvement.

Our approach to measurement is anchored in the understanding that prevention is measurable if you choose the right indicators and timescales. We are committed to proving our value not just through powerful stories but through data that policymakers can trust. As noted in our first white paper, Mentoring Men has continuously strengthened impact measurement, adopting tools like the Harvard Flourishing index to capture changes at the core of wellbeing. We will extend this culture of evidence to the DFV context, potentially breaking new ground in how community-based prevention programs are evaluated (an area historically seen as challenging to quantify).

In summary, our program logic illustrates a credible pathway from input to impact: by investing in mentors and training, delivering tailored mentoring and bystander interventions, we can effect change in individual men that adds up to safer homes and communities. We have aligned our outcomes with national goals (e.g. reducing violence prevalence, improving attitudes) and we will hold ourselves accountable through rigorous monitoring.

Conclusion - A National Opportunity for Early Prevention

Australia has set an ambitious goal: to end violence against women and children within a generation. Achieving this will require not only maintaining our efforts in response and justice, but dramatically scaling up prevention and early intervention. The work must reach into the places where violence begins, hearts, minds, relationships, and communities. This is challenging terrain: it means engaging with men who may be reluctant, ashamed, or defensive. It means changing long-held societal norms. It means sustaining behavior change over time. Government alone cannot easily do this at scale, but government can empower communities to do it, with the right support.

Mentoring Men offers a ready-made, evidence-backed solution to fill this crucial prevention gap. Our model has proven that with minimal resources, it can connect with men who were previously isolated and heading toward crisis. We have shown that men will open up and change when given empathy and support rather than judgment. Now, with a focus on DFV, we are poised to similarly demonstrate that men can choose non-violence when shown a better way by a mentor they trust. This second edition white paper has outlined how we will do it. Through proactive bystander training, through alignment with national strategy, through measurable outcomes, and why it aligns with what the nation's leaders are calling for.

Our ask remains, in essence, what it was in the first edition, modest but sustained national investment to scale up mentoring as a pillar of prevention. Specifically, we seek on the order of \$3 million per year over the next three years to implement the DFV-focused enhancements described and expand our reach to every state and territory. For context, this is a fraction of what violence costs our economy and our communities – violence against women is costing Australia an estimated \$22 billion per year in health, legal, and lost productivity costs[, not to mention incalculable human suffering. Redirecting even a small portion of those resources to prevention will yield exponential benefits. By funding Mentoring Men to train more mentors, set up more community hubs, and integrate with the national plan, government would be backing a proven model to tackle one of the root causes of these costs. Every dollar invested enables hundreds of hours of mentoring, dozens of men reached, and potentially multiple incidents of violence prevented. It is rare to find a prevention program that is already operational, scalable, and endorsed by those with lived experience, this is that opportunity.

We also call on corporate and philanthropic partners to join in support; ending DV is a whole-of-society effort. Government seed funding can be the catalyst that attracts additional community investment, much as we have seen in our mental health work where local businesses and donors chip in when they see government belief in the model.

The cost of inaction is far too high. If we do nothing different, then the heartbreaking statistics, one woman killed every week and a half, one in four women abused by a partner^{1,2} will remain or worsen. Children will continue to be raised in homes torn by violence, perpetuating cycles. On the other hand, the benefit of action is transformative. With a relatively small investment leveraged by volunteerism, we can embed mentoring and bystander intervention in communities nationwide. We can create an Australia where it becomes normal for men to mentor and hold each other accountable, where “mates respect mates’ partners” just as much as they respect their mates. Where a man struggling with anger knows reaching out for help is a show of strength, not weakness. Where every government strategy, from mental health to violence prevention, includes peer support alongside professional services, as multiple inquiries have recommended.

In closing, Mentoring Men urges Australia's leaders to seize this moment. We have a blueprint and a team of passionate Australians ready to act. The National Plan has laid down the challenge to innovate in prevention; this is a practical innovation that can be implemented immediately. By supporting Mentoring Men's DFV prevention initiative, the government would send a powerful message: that it believes in community solutions, that it values engaging men as partners in change, and that it is serious about ending violence for the next generation. As we stated in our first white paper, "The opportunity is clear, the need is urgent, and the solution already exists". We stand ready to expand our proven model to meet this need. The only remaining question is: will we act now to back what works?

Together, let's make Australia a country where every man has a mentor, every woman and child has safety, and violence is truly not part of our national story. The vision of a violence-free future can become reality, one mentoring conversation at a time.

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