



Strategic Plan

2020-2023

OUR STORY

The Men and Family Centre grew out of community concerns about the state of men's health (including mental health) in the Northern Rivers region in the mid 1990s. Initially this led to the formation of a volunteer-run Men's Health Line, but after a period of time the organisers made a startling discovery: around one third of the men calling were concerned about their own use of violence and intimidation in their relationships. This revelation highlighted two things:

- There was a serious problem with family violence in the Northern Rivers region which was being under-reported in official statistics, and
- There were many men looking for help to address their own behaviour.

With the experience of operating the Men's Health Line, a group of Northern Residents then sought to establish a group program to address family violence and build safer, more respectful communities. They recognised that the cultural change needed to address family violence not only had to be directed *at* men, it needed to engage and be driven *by* men.

So in 1996, the Men Exploring New Directions (MEND) program was born. Influenced by the development of Men's Behaviour Change programs in countries such as the USA, New Zealand the United Kingdom, the group program was initially delivered by committed volunteers. The program was coupled with partner support activities, including a Women Exploring New Directions (WEND) group program.

Since then the Men and Family Centre increasingly focussed on the need to reduce the use of violence, intimidation and coercion within family relationships. The organisation has become more professionalised – and now employs highly-trained specialist staff. The Men and Family Centre plays a leading role in the development of Men's Behaviour Change practice in the Men's Behaviour Change sector.

In 2020 and beyond we will continue our commitment to helping men and families in the Northern Rivers community to develop safe and respectful relationships.

OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose is to contribute to the development of a society where all relationships are built on mutual respect, safety and equality.

OUR WAYS OF WORKING

We are a community based, non-government organisation working across the lands of the Bundjalung Nation (Northern Rivers).

Who we work with:

We aim to create safer families and communities through our work:

- with people who use violence, abuse, coercion and control, and
- with people affected by other's violence, abuse, coercion and control, and
- with the communities and systems that this violence happens within.

What we do:

We work with people who use forms of violence, and those affected by forms of violence, in group programs and through individual support.

We seek to address the underlying causes of violence at a community level through primary prevention activities.

Our approach:

Our work is informed and guided by our Collective Ethics (see Appendix 1), the *NSW Practice Standards for Men's Domestic Violence Behaviour Change Programs*, a *gender transformative framework* and the *Our Watch Change the Story Framework*.

Each of these approaches makes clear that a core driver of violence within families is gender inequality and intersecting systems of power that create a social context where:

- violence and disrespect towards women is condoned;
- men predominantly control decision-making and women’s independence is limited;
- masculinity and femininity is understood through limiting stereotypes; and
- relations among male peers support aggression.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people these drivers are compounded by their experience of intergenerational trauma and the ongoing impacts caused by colonialism.

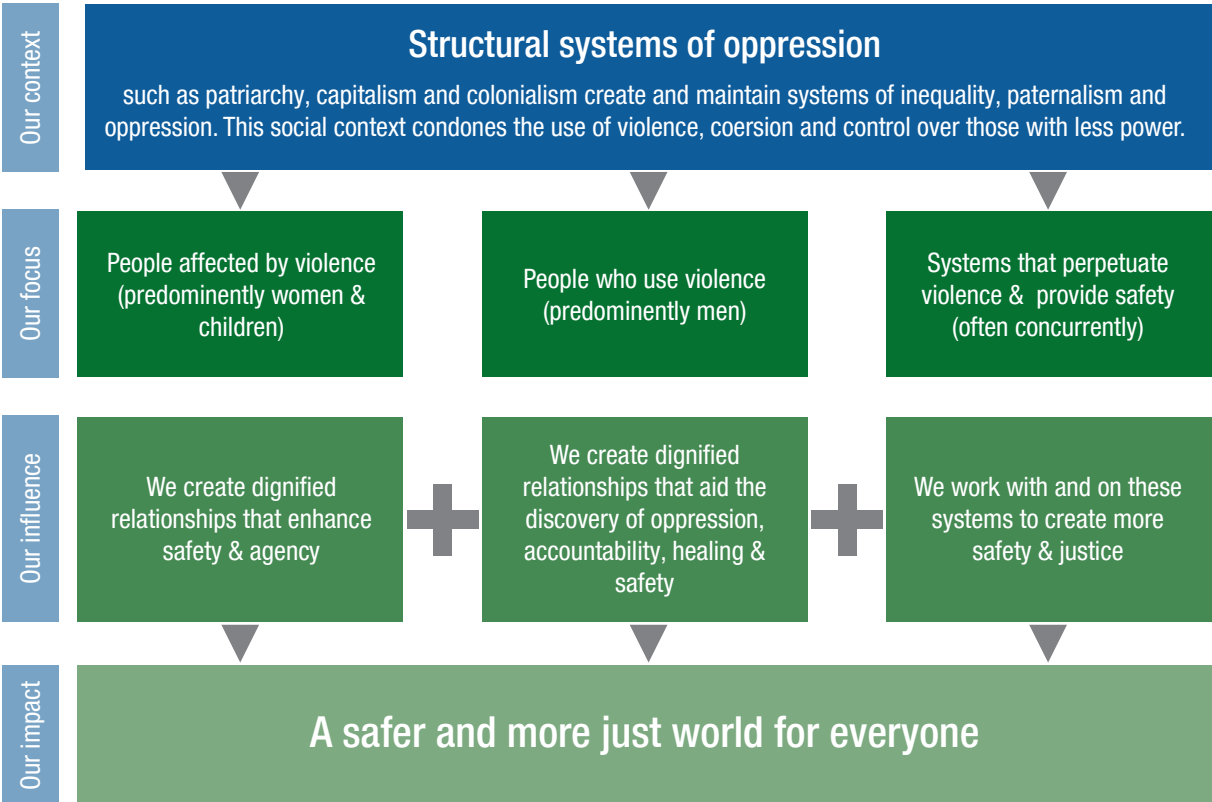
Violence is preventable by challenging these norms, promoting gender equality and addressing the intersecting systems of power that sustain prejudice, discrimination and inequality.

When violence has occurred, we give highest priority to the safety of those who have been victimised, and work to create accountability, healing and safety with the user of violence.

Our impact map:

Figure 1 provides a summary of our organisational context and how our work aims to create a safer and more just world for everyone. This is achieved through working in trusting, ethical relationships with people affected by violence, people using violence, and the communities and systems we all live and work with.

Figure 1. Men & Family Centre Impact Map



OUR COLLECTIVE ETHICS

Our collective ethics define how we intend to do our justice-doing work. By putting these words into action, we believe we will be more able to do our work ethically and create more justice in the world. A full explanation of our collective ethics is included as Appendix 1.

We use our collective ethics to understand the impacts of our work on us and our communities. It is a tool for wayfinding when we're struggling and/or lost and to provide destinations as we traverse our complex work. Our collective ethics will help us to resist adjusting to oppression, promote dignity in our work and make decisions. This is a living document that will evolve with our learning and growth.

Our collective ethics:

- provide a guide for understanding and doing our work;
- articulate the ethical stance anyone can expect from us, and hold us accountable to those stances;
- are not a strict rule book that provides rigid answers;
- are presented without hierarchy, no single ethic is universally more important than another;
- direct our attention to relevant considerations and obligations, particularly in times of conflict or uncertainty;
- require us to exercise professional judgement and maintain an awareness of the intersection of personal, professional, client and community values and beliefs;
- must be used on purpose and discussed and debated openly;
- may not solve every challenge or guarantee ethical behavior; and
- they are an ethical stance that we aspire to and are willing to be judged against.

Our collective ethics are relevant to all people who engage in justice-doing work with the Men & Family Centre.

Strategic Directions

(See next page)

Strategic Priority Areas	Intended Outcomes By 2023 we will be able to demonstrate:	Key Activities These activities will create our intended outcomes	Measures We will track our progress using these indicators
1) We are an ethical, sustainable, respected and effective organisation	1.1 We are well-governed and managed, and have a positive impact on our staff, clients and stakeholders 1.2 Our ethical stance is known to our stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will meet all requirements specified in our funding contracts, and maintain our status as an accredited MBC provider • We will provide a safe, supportive and ethical work environment • We will ensure our people will reflect the diversity of our community • We will efficiently manage our workloads and workflows • We will seek to grow our organization while improving our financial sustainability • We will uphold the principles of good management and organisational governance • We will meet all requirements specified in our funding contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet all legislative and contractual requirements • Maintain MBC Accreditation
2) We are delivering ethical and effective programs with men, women and children	2.1 We provide programs that reflect the diversity of our community's demographics and needs 2.2 People affected by violence can access support that enhances safety and agency 2.3 People using violence can access programs that create accountability for their behaviour and opportunity to heal and overcome their own oppression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will increase the awareness our mission, services and programs within our local communities and among stakeholders • We will develop new programs for and with currently under-served communities • We will seek to identify and remove barriers that may prevent people from accessing our service and programs • We will continually improve our current programs in line with client feedback and our ethics and best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the total number of people accessing the full range of M&FC services or programs by 10% over 2019 figures.
3) We are strengthening the capacity of other services to respond effectively to violence	3.1 Service providers have access to a community of practice 3.2 Service providers in the region have access to regular opportunities to develop their knowledge and skill to respond to violence through training 3.3 Service providers have access to printed/online resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will actively collaborate and engage with other organisations • We will expand our role as a training provider • We will expand our assistance and support to other organisations by providing appropriate resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand our suite of training programs. • Deliver updated website • Develop an active social media presence
4) We are strengthening our community's capacity to respond ethically to violence	4.1 Our community is safer and more inclusive due to our participation and advocacy in formal community governance processes. 4.2 Our community is safer due to increased general knowledge and awareness of the causes and ways to prevent violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will engage in political and policy processes regarding domestic and family violence-related • We will expand our community engagement activities • We will seek to increase awareness of domestic violence issues in our communities through the media and social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in at least 2 community events per year • Secure at least one regular engagement (eg column or blog) in local media.

ACTION PLAN

The action plan explains what we will do to deliver our key activities, and represent a broad “road map” for the organisation over the coming three years.

1. An ethical, sustainable, respected and effective organisation

- We will meet all requirements specified in our funding contracts, and maintain our status as an accredited MBC provider, by:
 - > applying rigorous compliance procedures, diligent record-keeping, and a culture of accountability within our own organisation
- We will provide a safe, supportive and ethical work environment by:
 - > providing our people with access to relevant training and development in a timely manner
 - > ensuring reflective and reflexive practice is built in to workplans
 - > providing appropriate supervision for group work
 - > providing organisational support for caseload allocation and workload management
 - > having a comprehensive orientation process for all new staff
- We will ensure our people will reflect the diversity of our community by:
 - > seeking to recruit new staff from a broad pool of potential candidates;
 - > encouraging applications from indigenous, CALD and LGBTIQ people;
 - > regularly reviewing recruitment and related policies and procedures to ensure they are accessible.
- We will efficiently manage our workloads and workflows by:
 - > recruiting a dedicated administrative officer / reception
 - > structuring workplans to allow time for organisational development work
 - > updating our procedures and policies, fixing any gaps, and ensuring all staff have access to (and are aware of) organisations policies and procedures
 - > ensuring current and new programs are integrated with all work
 - > creating and implement an induction process for staff and volunteer roles
- We will seek to grow our organisation while improving our financial sustainability by:
 - > reviewing other sources of grant income (philanthropic, government, business)
 - > exploring opportunities for generating income through core activities
 - > reviewing current expenditure
- We will uphold the principles of good management and organisational governance by:
 - > ensuring the Board follows and complies with ACNC governance standards
- We will increase the awareness our mission, services and programs within our local communities and among stakeholders communities by:
 - > reviewing our organisational name, logo and branding
 - > implementing a safe and manageable social media presence
 - > seeking opportunities to tell our story on our terms

2. Delivering ethical and effective programs with men, women and children

- We will develop new programs for and with currently under-served communities by:
 - > investigating opportunities to engage communities in outlying areas such as Casino, Kyogle and Grafton
 - > engaging and working with organisations that represent or provide services to LGBTIQ people
 - > investigating opportunities to partner with indigenous organisations (such as Rekindling the Spirit) on joint projects
 - > investigating opportunities to partner with organisations such as HeadSpace to address adolescent violence towards parents

- We will seek to identify and remove barriers that may prevent people from accessing our service and programs by:
 - > engaging with other service providers and with community groups to identify potential barriers that may impede access, and to build our capacity in partnership with other organisations
 - > reviewing our policies, procedures and practices to ensure our services and programs are accessible
 - > considering timing of services for women to account for needs such as childcare
- We will continually improve our current programs in line with client feedback and our ethics and best practice by
 - > ensuring that evaluation and review processes are built into all aspects of our work.

3. Strengthening the capacity of other services to respond effectively to violence

- We will actively collaborate and engage with other organisations by:
 - > engaging and with organisations from the LGBTIQ sector, Aboriginal and CALD organisations, and mental health communities to understand their needs
 - > continuing to provide facilitator training pathways
- We will expand our role as a training provider by:
 - > developing a “Working with Men” training program
 - > developing a “Working with Adolescents” training program
 - > investigating potential joint training packages with the Lismore Women’s Health and Resource Centre
- We will expand our assistance and support to other organisations by providing appropriate resources such as:
 - > developing brochures to help other organisations address domestic violence
 - > developing an -on-line library of materials and links on the organisational web site

4. Strengthening our community’s capacity to respond ethically to violence

- We will engage in political and policy development processes regarding domestic and family violence-related issues by:
 - > participating in relevant local Council processes (such as Strategic Plans, consultations and committees)
 - > participate in relevant State and Federal government inquiries, reports, meetings, etc (such as Feedback on 4th National Plan)
 - > playing a leading role in sectoral bodies (such as NSW Men’s Behaviour Change Network, No To Violence)
- We will expand our community engagement activities by:
 - > identifying opportunities and relationships for (fee-based) training with local businesses/ workplaces
 - > taking ARC programs to a broader audience and providing tailored support for specific organisational issues
 - > expanding our presence at local events and use community-wide activities (such as the 16 days of Action and Harmony Day) to promote primary prevention messages
 - > seeking opportunities to collaborate with educational institutions (such as local schools, TAFE, Southern Cross, University)
 - > participating in local events such as the Lismore Women’s Festival
- We will seek to increase awareness of domestic violence issues in our communities through the media and social media by:
 - > building relationships with local journalists
 - > developing online resources and content for use on our communications channels (such as a podcast)
 - > engaging community champions to promote our work and message

APPENDIX 1

Our Collective Ethics Statement

SOLIDARITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

We resist individualising work and encourage collective responsibility. We recognise that dignified relationships are necessary for creating justice. This means we aim to see the whole person and stay in relationship with them as they explore their truth and story in the context of their past and the immediate demands on their lives. Our work is interconnected and always in relationship with people, place and planet. We act collectively to promote social justice and resist oppression together. We look for points of connection across difference to bring people together to create community. We are meant to do this work together; it creates generative energy.

We ask How are we creating relationships of dignity? are we creating space for people unlike ourselves? are we understanding individuals within the context of their lives? are we resisting oppression?

JUSTICE-DOING

We are working to change the social context of problems- changing the real conditions of people's lives rather than helping them adjust to oppression. Our work is political, we are not neutral. We aim to cause no more harm or oppression. Justice means identifying and attempting to address structural disadvantage, discrimination and inequality. It means recognising and creating circumstances where everybody has worth, where equal rights and opportunity are fully realised, and everybody has access to self-determination and the basic needs to thrive in society.

We ask: who does this cause harm to? who can most carry the harm? will this have a material impact? what are the values driving this decision? would we be able to account for our decision/s as justice-doing to ourselves, our clients, our colleagues, our community?

VISIBLE ACCOUNTABILITY

We make our ethical stance known. Visible accountability is necessary to creating justice in our work with each other, with clients, and with our communities. Our willingness to be held to account encourages us to be proactive and courageous in our ethical stances and lessens the likelihood of transgressions.

We ask: what is our ethical stance? how can we make our ethical stance known to people affected by our work? do we have any blind spots? are we structuring safety in to accountability? what are we learning from accountability? are we turning learning into action? Are we allowing people to be in a zone of productive discomfort (not rescuing)?

SELF DETERMINATION

We resist reproducing structural forces of oppression by committing to anti-oppressive practices. We name power and its abuse when we see it. We recognise how structural forces such as capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism create and maintain intersecting systems of privilege and oppression that create different lived experiences within our social context. This analysis requires us to act in ways that attend to abuses of power and privilege, whilst holding ourselves to account for not replicating or misusing our own power and privilege. We aim to create relationships of respect and dignity that allow for self-determination.

We ask: how is power, privilege and oppression being used? what are the impacts of that use? are we seeing our own power, privilege and oppression? how can we help to create self-determination?

REFLEXIVITY & HOPEFUL SKEPTICISM

Our biases, prejudices and histories are recognised and analysed in order to understand their influences on our work and to enable us to decide on the appropriateness of their influence for this moment. This requires a healthy and hopeful skepticism about whether or not our practice is in accord with our ethics. We make room for learning and its struggle. We witness. We learn from transparency of process and reflexivity. We are tentative and cautious in drawing conclusions. We do this individually and together.

We ask: what is influencing my work? is that influence appropriate to my professional work now? what do I notice influencing other's work? is that influence appropriate? as I practice reflexively, am I aware of where I am in terms of comfort, learning zone, danger zone? what can I do to check back and learn from my conclusions from today? Is my reflexivity generative and hopeful?

STRUCTURE SAFETY

We create practices that invite safety into our work, that inform us to act as allies where we are privileged and to honour collaboration. Safety looks different in different contexts and for different people. Safety includes feeling comfortable, and productive discomfort. We focus on co-creating dignity in our relationships with clients through encouraging self-reflection and self-determination.

We ask: For each person: what is the difference between conflict and abuse? between safe and safety? uncomfortable and productive discomfort? What do I need to feel safe enough, and to structure safety for others? Am I structuring restful time and challenging/stretch time? Am I creating space for others to express what safety means and participate in its creation?

MULTIPLICITY

We create spaces to hold two or more realities at once as we and others concurrently make sense of our experiences, meanings and truths. Sometimes these realities will seem to be oppositional. We maintain an openness and apply an intersectional lens to such tensions to encourage a deeper understanding of ourselves and people we are in relationship with. We are open to multiple ways of knowing including facts, feelings and intuition. We can hold the duality of having erred or transgressed and being a human worthy of dignity and respect.

We ask: What are other ways of understanding this moment? What axes of power and privilege are impacting this moment? What are the differences and similarities in perspectives?

CRITICAL COMPASSION & HEALING

We apply critical thinking to compassion. Using critical compassion means we act in ways that offer understanding and care, and concurrently serve the cause of justice and inspire solidarity in relationships. When things go wrong, we own our part of it, and seek to repair as quickly as we can. We believe that transgressions can be repaired through justice-doing. By being accountable for our actions and applying critical compassion and healing we aim to lessen the occurrence of transgressions, not just heal each time they occur.

We ask: How can our expression/s of compassion serve justice and maintain solidarity? Are we naming transgressions when we see them? Are we aware of the multiple ways for healing to occur? Are we able to accept that healing is not always possible (despite efforts)? Am I being critically compassionate to myself?