

Men & Family Centre

2020 REVIEW

About Us

The Men and Family Centre is a community based, non-government organisation working across the lands of the Bundjalung Nation (Northern Rivers).

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

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.

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

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



From our President

The Men and Family Centre has steadily been evolving over the past two and a half decades – from its genesis as a community-based, volunteer-driven collective, to a focused and professional service provider that is recognised as a leader in its field.

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant short-term disruption to our operations. At the same time, we experienced increased demand for support. As a result, we had to be both nimble and brave – experimenting with video-conferencing and finding COVID-safe methods for group sessions.

The pandemic also gave us an opportunity for some organisational self-reflection. We were able to develop a Strategic Plan to define where we want to go as an organisation, and an Operational Plan to help us get there. These documents reflect the vision, enthusiasm and ambition of our staff, and the wisdom of our community stakeholders. A significant aspect of the Strategic Plan is a statement defining our collective ethics – as our ethics are the foundation stone for the work we do, the outcomes we seek to achieve, and the decisions we need to make along the way.

We remain in a sound position financially, and we remain extremely grateful for the wonderful support of the NSW Government. Nevertheless, our reliance on short-term funding commitments remains a concern, and a large proportion of our funding contracts cease in June 2021. The board and staff are acutely aware of this and we hope to secure funds within the first three months of 2021 to ensure our programs continue or even expand.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the board for their work and support this year. I would particularly like to thank Steve Carrigg for his contribution to the Men and Family Centre over the past six years, during which time he served as President, Vice President, and Secretary.

Stewart Prins
PRESIDENT

From our Manager

It goes without saying that 2020 is a year we are unlikely to forget. The financial pressures, isolation, physical barriers/borders and level of restrictions were just a few of the challenges we all faced in our day-to-day lives. At an organisational level we saw significant change in the way families and individuals attempted to cope with the adversity they faced, and in the way we could respond. The way Gender Equality and Domestic & Family Violence (DFV) was reported, understood and addressed all changed. And we rose to the challenge! Staff adapted incredibly well to the changes we faced throughout 2020.

As a sector, 2020 was already ear-marked as being of huge significance, with all Men's Behaviour Change Programs/services (MBCPs) required to undertake a gruelling re-accreditation process under the newly developed Practice Standards, while also managing the unseen impact on families from the fires. This is what we thought was going to make for a big year in February ... Staff have done such an incredible job of continuing to engage and support the community during a year where this was more challenging than ever before.

During 2020 we engaged over 115 men and 90 partners in Domestic and Family Violence intervention work. We provided a variety of training and support (most of which was transferred to online delivery) to community members, community leaders, NGOs and Government Departments.

In 2020 the Men and Family Centre directly engaged 115 men and 90 partners. Despite the pandemic restrictions, we ran over 80 group sessions (in person and online) across our various programs.

In addition to maintaining our usual client engagement and (at times modified) program delivery, this year we also:

- Were one of the first organisations in NSW to meet the new MBCP Practice Standards registration process;
- Successfully applied for and received more short-term funding for direct service delivery than previous years;
- Increased service delivery hours ;
- Employed more staff in both Lismore and Tweed Heads;
- Significantly increased our investment in IT infrastructure and resources;
- Successfully adapted and delivered several programs to an online format;
- Improved our data-reporting systems and processes;
- Reviewed and updated various policies and procedures, and implemented new ones;
- Undertook an organisational development process that involved staff training and input into the organisation's future direction and culture;
- Collaboratively developed a new Strategic Plan with external sector representatives, staff and board members;
- Represented the organisation at conferences, forums, network meetings, on panels and in literature where "best practice" was being explored;
- And importantly, supported one-another through an incredibly challenging year.

I'd like to thank all board members and staff for their remarkable work during 2020.

I'd also specifically like to thank those who have left or are leaving us in 2020, for your invaluable contribution to our little organisation. This includes Steve Carrigg (Board), Blake Johns (Tweed Heads), Pete Jones and Natasha Kasselis (Lismore). Thank you so much. You will be missed.

Luke Addinsall
MANAGER

From other practitioners

SECTOR TRAINING

“It was incredibly informative and very neatly connected the concepts of networking, collaboration and community development into the Domestic and Family Violence space – very, very clever!!”

“The students got a great deal out of the presentation and were very impressed with your knowledge, passion and professionalism. “

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

“I always get a great deal out of participating. I have had three conversations with three different clients about accountability and exploring what it means for them and how to remove barriers.”

“It was amazing, you always put together such an incredible thought-provoking session, we’re all so grateful”

From our participants

FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS

Men Exploring New Directions (MEND) - our flagship Men's Behaviour Change Program

Participant 1: My experience at the Men and Family group is one that has been profoundly positive, challenging and life changing. Nothing great is easy and the process of seeing how I was impacting those I love, letting go of hurt and changing into a positive force in my family's life and in MY life wasn't easy but it WAS very very worthwhile.

If you are hesitant to commit to change it is a good time to ask yourself what really matters to you? How do you want your loved ones to think of you? Is it with fear and loathing or love?

For me the group environment is a clear reminder that many of the patterns of behaviour that led us to the group are far too common and if you truly value your loved ones, you will learn to value your impact on them and want to make sure that it is positive. The facilitators won't let you talk your way out of uncomfortable discussion and will ask you to look at you. Trust that they know what they are doing and no matter how difficult it feels that you will be safe, become safer and take your place as a man who is a force for good and one that your partner and children will appreciate made the time to be a better person.

Participant 2: I have spent almost a year with the MBC group. I was that guy who would never think I would attend such a group, but after spending the time I have spent with both the practitioners and other men (participants) I am extremely thankful I have been able to be a part of this program.

It was confronting and uncomfortable to talk about improving behaviour. But it was also good hear from other men struggling with the same problems and to hear from practitioners who have overcome these problems themselves. Having a female practitioner's perspective has also widened my outlook and given me a better understanding in general.

I have learnt it will take time and consistent attendance to make these changes stick and become my natural response.

The issues discussed in the group have made me aware of situations and behaviours that I now can see need changing.

This group has made me want to make positive changes in certain behaviours.

From our participants *(CONTINUED)*

Accountable, Respectful, Connected Dads - our parenting group for men

"Awesome group that is well run and organised"

"It was great to have so many different people sharing their experiences. I felt like everyone was included."

"Inspirational"

"I think the discussion about being a man (man box exploration) was very important."

"I am more confident that I am meeting my children's needs so can say no when I need to, and my children are able to handle it, as I am better at seeing and meeting their needs"

"Definitely do it. Invaluable information"

"Have recommended to other Dads"

Supporting Change - continuing support for men who have previously been through the MEND program.

"Just fronting up and talking about my behaviour - don't feel like you're in it by yourself. I really liked the shift to being more about social justice, safety for everyone, equality for all. You guys had an agenda but you went where the group went, you supported us to go where we needed to go. I thought it was good that you had a flexible plan. As facilitators you guys were just awesome. It felt like it ran well, exercises and information were meaningful."

"With the reflective journal I got more out of everything, extra thinking time. Shame: seeing that shame is a big core of some of my abusive behaviours, realising that link and strategies for dealing with shame so that it doesn't come out through violence and abuse. Entitlement: looking at privilege... so this is what it's like for a woman and this is how much privilege I have got ... [I can] walk through the world more respectfully."

"It has assisted me to continue managing conflict in my family relationships in a more constructive manner."

"I have more empathy and skills and resources to be safe towards others."