Reimagining Boyhood in Australia:
A step towards more equitable and cohesive policies, systems and structures

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ARC Mid-Career Industry Fellow
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Acknowledgement of Country

I acknowledge the Turrbal and Yuggera people, on whose Country I am presenting from today.

I also acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of all lands on which Flinders University's campuses are located: these are the Traditional Lands of the Arrernte, Dagoman, First Nations of the South East, First Peoples of the River Murray & Mallee region, Jawoyn, Kaurna, Larrakia, Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri, Ramindjeri, Warumungu, Wardaman and Yolngu people.

I honour their Elders past, present, and emerging.

I also pay my respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

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Smith · Watkins · Griffith Eds.

James A. Smith
Daphne C. Watkins
Derek M. Griffith *Editors*

Health Promotion with Adolescent Boys and Young Men of Colour

Health Promotion with Adolescent Boys and Young Men of Colour

Global Strategies for Advancing Research, Policy, and Practice in Context

Springer

Dedication – Jacob Smith, 13 yrs

Presentation overview

- Boyhood within national and global landscapes

- Prioritising equity in the context of boyhood
  - Intersectionality, Gender Equity, Health & Social Equity

- Understanding the roles of different interest-holders
  - Boys, Fathers/Parents, Role Models, Professionals

- A need for more cohesive policies, systems and structures

- Final reflections of contemporary boyhood

Plus Paternal:
A focus on fathers
Case for Change

Plus Paternal
A focus on fathers

HEALTHY MALE
ANDROLOGY AUSTRALIA

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Boyhood within national and global landscapes

- **Are we facing a boyhood crisis or an awakening in Australia?**
- **Exponential growth in evidence-generation and public discourses on adolescent boys and young men both nationally and globally**
- **Health and social impacts of digital development extends beyond geographical boundaries**
  - Social media – and the impacts of Manosphere
  - Gaming
  - Artificial Intelligence
- **Positioning of boyhood within geopolitics and polycrisis**
- **Growth in healthy/progressive/positive masculinities**

Real talk: Masculinity and young men's mental health
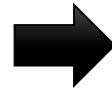*POLICY REPORT*

(Orygen, 2025)

Young men's health
in a digital world

2025 REPORT

MOVEMBER® INSTITUTE
OF MEN'S HEALTH
MOUSTACHES LOVE RESEARCH

(Movember, 2025a)

Young Men's Media
Landscaping Report

IN-DEPTH RESEARCH ON EMERGING TRENDS,
CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

MOVEMBER® INSTITUTE
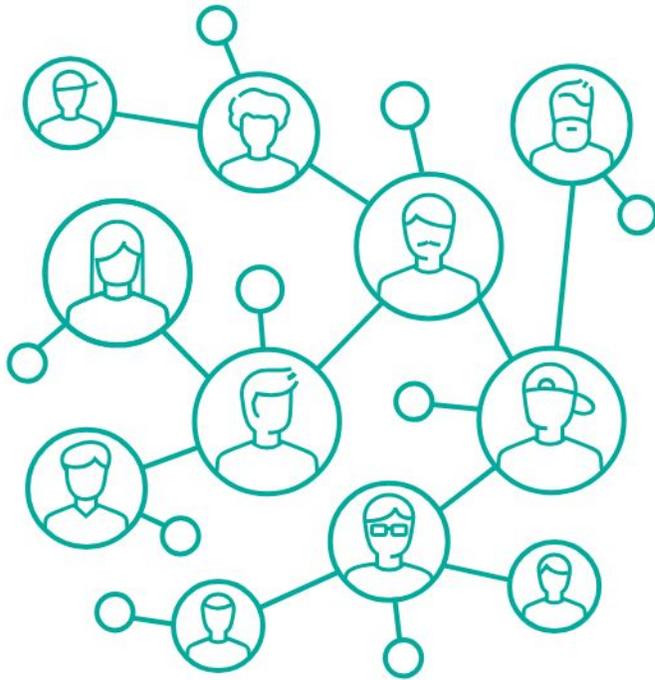OF MEN'S HEALTH
MOUSTACHES LOVE RESEARCH

(Movember, 2025b)

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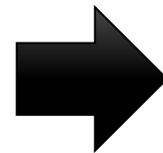# Healthy masculinities in policy and practice

Masculinities and Health:
A framework for challenging masculine gender stereotypes in health promotion

vichealth.vic.gov.au

VicHealth

(Vic Health, 2020)

Men in focus

Practice guide

Addressing masculinities and working with men in the prevention of men's violence against women

Our WATCh

(Our Watch, 2022)

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Leveraging healthy masculinities scholarship

Article

A Critical Stocktake of Community-Based Healthy Masculinities Programs in Victoria, Australia

Journal of Men's Studies
2024, Vol. 32(3) 595–615
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$ Sage

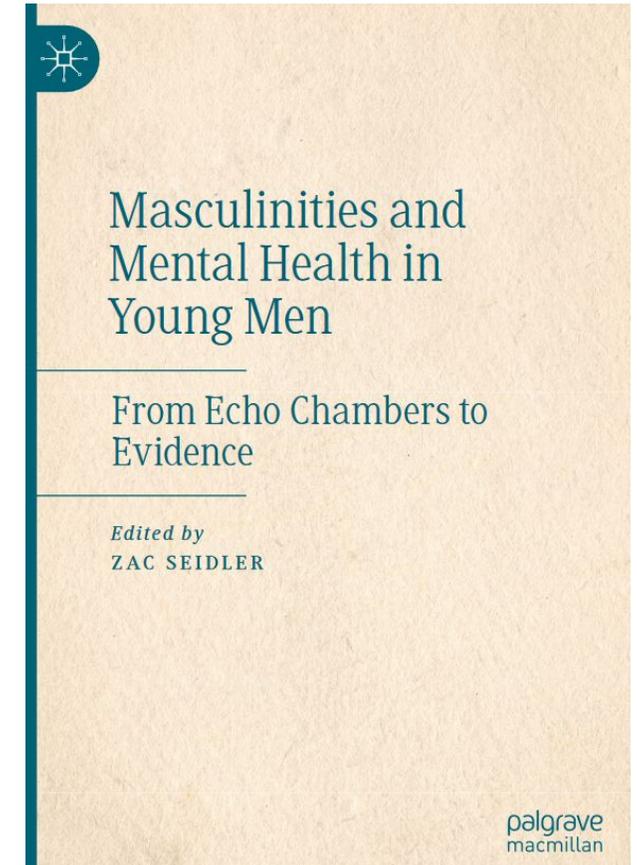Michael Flood[1], Shelley Hewson-Munro[2], and Amanda Keddie[3]

(Flood et al., 2024)

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Comprehensive Psychiatry

ELSEVIER

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/comppsych

Intersecting identities, diverse masculinities, and collaborative development: Considerations in creating online mental health interventions that work for men

(Opozda et al., 2024)

Masculinities and Mental Health in Young Men

From Echo Chambers to Evidence

Edited by
ZAC SEIDLER

palgrave
macmillan

(Seidler, 2024)

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A strong political commitment to healthy masculinities

"I'm trying to bring a co-ordinated whole-of-government approach to healthy masculinities, we desperately need to do that…there is definitely an appetite for a whole-of-government approach...Dan and I will be working together very hard."

Hon Ged Kearney MP
Assistant Minister for Social Services;
Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence

Launch of **Parliamentary Friends of Health Masculinities** at Government House, 19 November 2025

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Prioritising equity in the context of boyhood

- **Understanding intersectionality and cumulative disadvantage**

- **Understanding where boyhood fits within discourses on gender equity, gender justice and gender-relations**

- **Prioritising equity-owed populations of boys and young men**
  - Centering vulnerability and marginalization

- **Moving from (theoretical) rhetoric to action**

"Confusions and contestations about gender and gender equality profoundly affect how gender gets inadequately addressed in global health policies, programmes, and practices."

(Lancet Commission on Gender and Global Health, April 2025)

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The evolution of scholarship on gender and health equity (in relation to boys and men)

Understanding gender equity in the context of men's health policy development

James A. Smith, Steve Robertson and Noel Richardson

(Smith, Robertson & Richardson, 2010)

International Journal of Men's Social and Community Health

Commentary

STRENGTHENING POLICY COMMITMENTS TO EQUITY AND MEN'S HEALTH

James A. Smith[1], Daphne C. Watkins[2], Derek M. Griffith[3], Noel Richardson[4], and Mick Adams[5]

(Smith et al., 2020)

Men's Health Equity
A Handbook

Edited by Derek. M. Griffith, Marino A. Bruce, and Roland J. Thorpe, Jr.

EDITORIAL

WILEY

Equity, gender and health: New directions for global men's health promotion

(Griffith, Bruce & Thorpe, 2019)

(Smith, Watkins & Griffith, 2020)
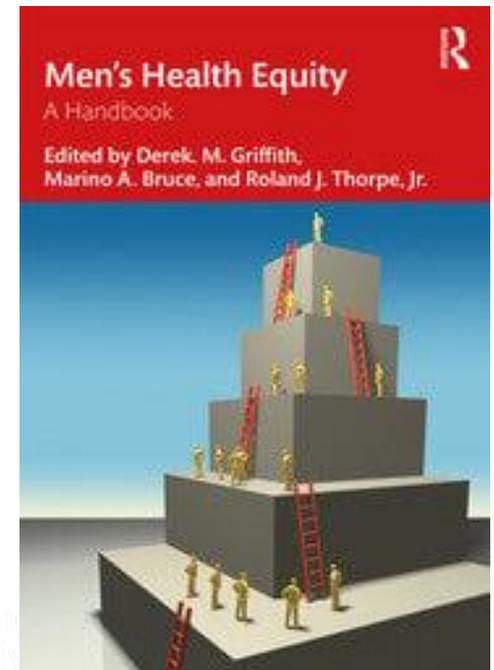
Casting an equity lens

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males**

- Boys living regional, rural and remote locations

- Migrant and refugee boys

- LGBQTIA+ community

- Boys from low SES backgrounds/unemployed

- Incarcerated boys and young men

- Boys and young men sleeping rough

- Boys living with a disability

RESEARCH   **Open Access**

Navigating the cultural adaptation of a US-based online mental health and social support program for use with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males in the Northern Territory, Australia: Processes, outcomes, and lessons

Melissa J. Opozda[1], Jason Bonson[2,3], Jahdai Vigona[2,4], David Aanundsen[1], Chris Paradisis[2], Peter Anderson[5], Garth Stahl[6], Daphne C. Watkins[7], Oliver Black[8], Bryce Brickley[2], Karla J. Canuto[2], Murray J. N. Drummond[9], Keith F. Miller Jr.[7], Gabriel Oth[10], Jasmine Petersen[11], Jacob Prehn[12], Maria M. Raciti[13], Mark Robinson[14,15], Dante Rodrigues[4], Cameron Stokes[2], Kootsy Canuto[1*†] and James A. Smith[2*†]

Background Despite disproportionate rates of mental ill-health compared with non-Indigenous populations, few programs have been tailored to the unique health, social, and cultural needs and preferences of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males. This paper describes the process of culturally adapting the US-based Young Black Men, Masculinities, and Mental Health (YBMen) Project to suit the needs, preferences, culture, and circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males aged 16–25 years in the Northern Territory, Australia. YBMen is an evidence-based social media-based education and support program designed to promote mental health, expand understandings of gender and cultural identities, and enhance social support in college-aged Black men.

Methods Our adaptation followed an Extended Stages of Cultural Adaptation model. First, we established a rationale for adaptation that included assessing the appropriateness of YBMen's core components for the target population. We then investigated important and appropriate models to underpin the adapted program and conducted a non-linear, iterative process of gathering information from key sources, including young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, to inform program curriculum and delivery.

Results To maintain program fidelity, we retained the core curriculum components of mental health, healthy masculinities, and social connection and kept the small cohort, private social media group delivery but developed two models: 'online only' (the original online delivery format) and 'hybrid in-person/online' (combining online delivery with weekly in-person group sessions). Adaptations made included using an overarching Aboriginal and Torres Strait
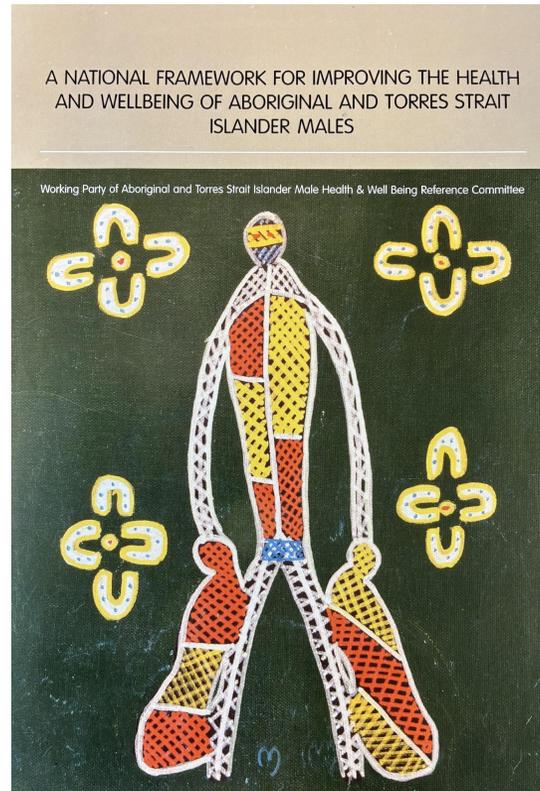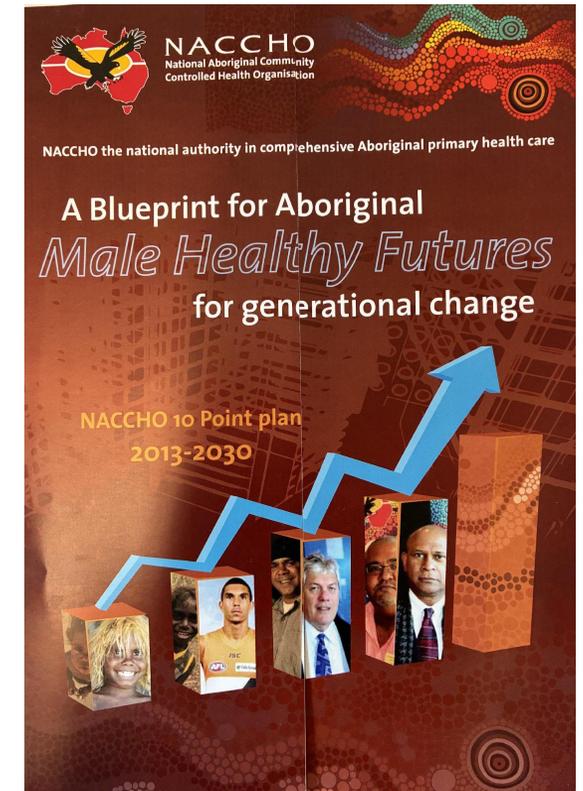
(Opozda et al., 2024)

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Male Health & Wellbeing
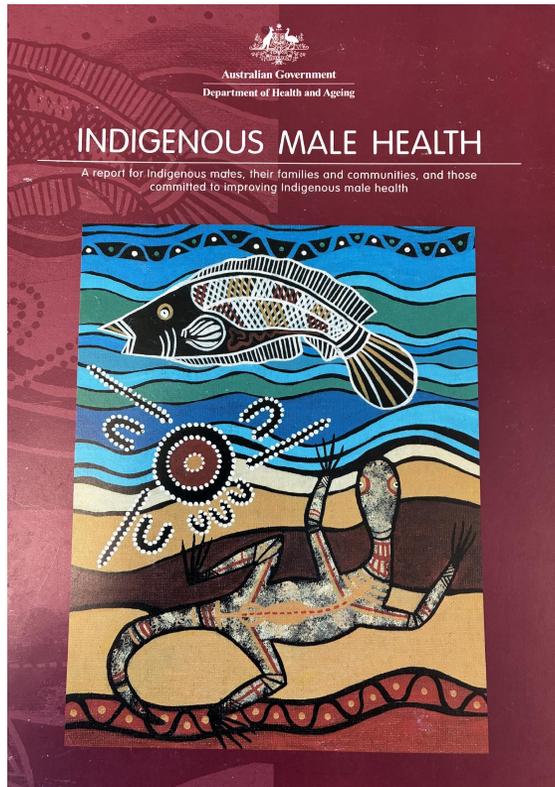
(DoHA, 2002)

(Working Party, 2024)

(NACCHO, 2013)

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Understanding the roles of different interest-holders

- **Prioritising the lived-experience of boys and young men**

- **Understanding the perspectives of parents – emerging evidence from lifecourse studies (about fatherhood)**

- **Role models – teachers, coaches, peers, civic leaders, personalities**

- **Professionals – teachers, health professionals, police, lawyers**
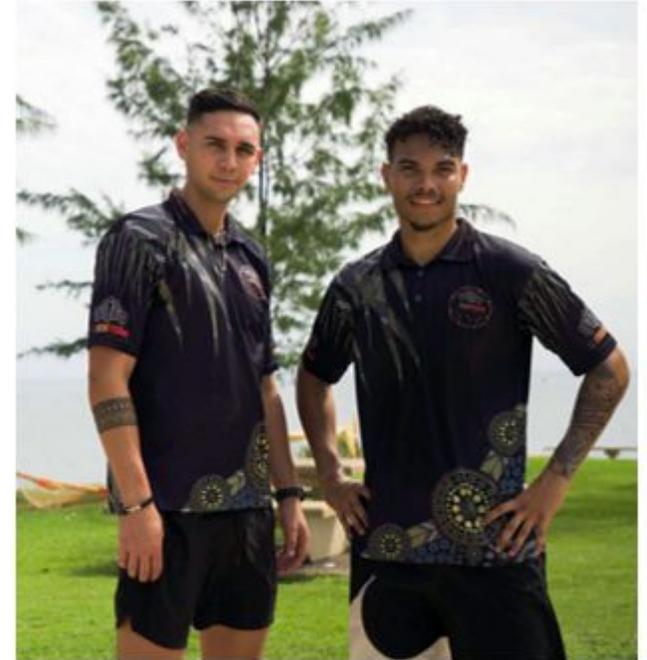
Co-Founders of One Percent:
Dante Rodrigues and Jahdai Vigona

ONE PERCENT

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A need for more cohesive policies, systems and structures

- Boys and young men frequently identified as a 'priority population' in public policies (with no or minimal resourcing commitment)

- Emphasis on individual lifestyle/behaviour change

- Seldom focused on systemic or structural change

- The boyhood 'crisis' must focus on social, political, economic and commercial determinants of health and wellbeing. This demands a *cohesive* policy response!

- Current policies are fragmented and require a more joined-up, whole-of-government response

Policy Brief

E-mental health interventions for men: an urgent call for cohesive Australian policy and investment

Melissa J. Opozda[1,2], Murray Drummond[3,4], Himanshu Gupta[1], Jasmine Petersen[3,4], and James A. Smith[1,*]

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[2]Freemasons Centre for Male Health and Wellbeing, South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute and University of Adelaide, North Tce, Adelaide, South Australia 5000, Australia
[3]College of Education, Psychology, and Social Work, Flinders University, Sturt Rd, Bedford Park, South Australia 5042, Australia
[4]SHAPE Research Centre, Flinders University, Sturt Rd, Bedford Park, South Australia 5042, Australia
*Corresponding author. E-mail: james.smith@flinders.edu.au

Few men who experience a common mental disorder access any mental healthcare from a health professional. E-mental health (eMH; online) interventions may facilitate men's access to mental healthcare and reduce inequities in access via assistance in a format that aligns with their preferences and needs. Recent reviews show that men who have used these programmes generally find them useful and satisfactory; however, data on their effectiveness and factors impacting effectiveness in men's use are limited. Few eMH interventions have been designed specifically to suit men's preferences and circumstances, and little is known about the eMH-related experiences and needs of men from vulnerable and marginalized backgrounds. Despite their potential, Australian men's health, digital mental health, preventive health, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional well-being policies—and men's health policies from Malaysia, Ireland, and South Africa—make no specific mention to progressing the use or evaluation of eMH for men. We present a series of policy recommendations, aiming to improve men's access to effective and acceptable mental health assistance via eMH and increase health professional confidence to recommend and support these programmes. These include (i) the need for specific, connected health policy actions and targeted funding; (ii) policy priorities for intervention development, dissemination and evaluation; and (iii) for the experiences of men, particularly those from marginalized and vulnerable backgrounds, to be centred in policy. eMH for men should be promoted alongside interventions to reduce systems and social-level determinants of men's mental health inequities.
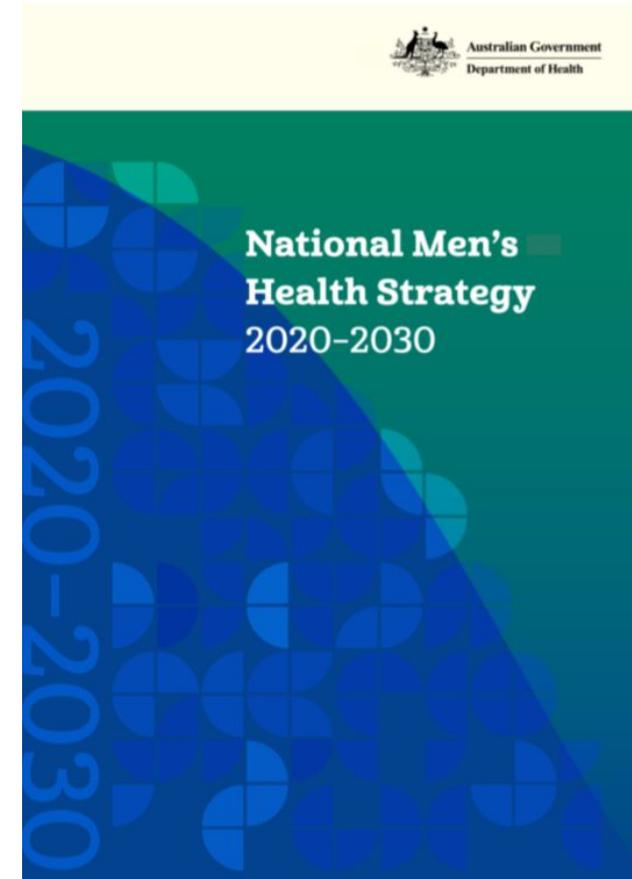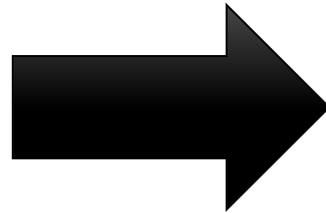
Keywords: men, e-mental health, mental health, policy, Australia

Opozda et al, 2024

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Key Lever for Change: National Men's Health Policy/Strategy
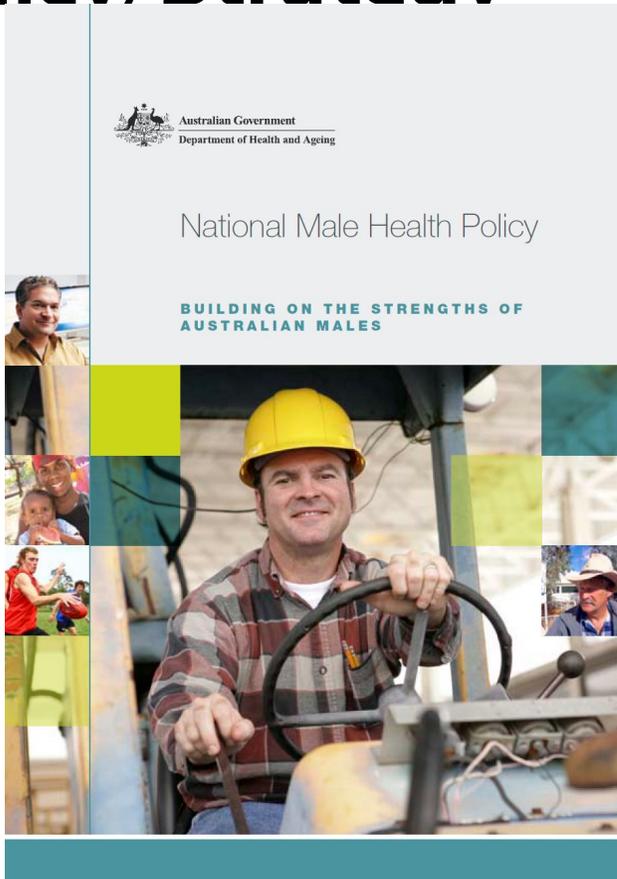
(DoHA, 2010)

(DoH, 2019)

Other Policy Integration Opportunities
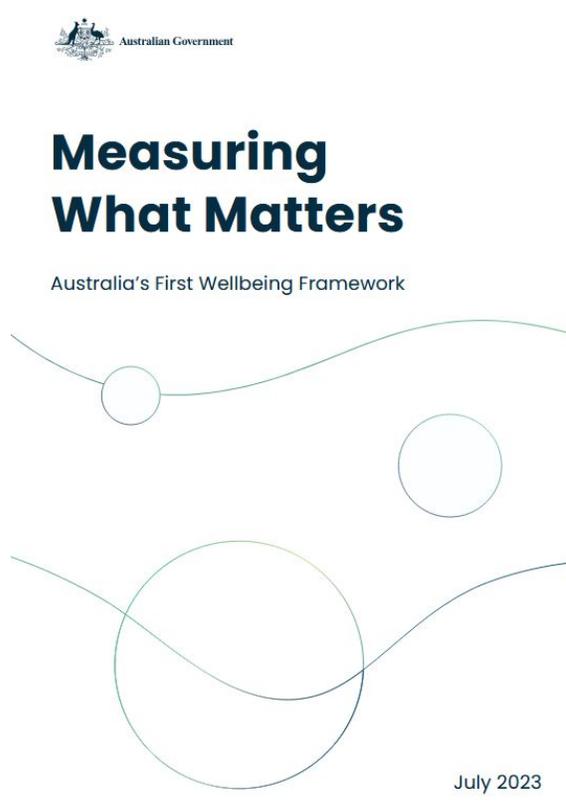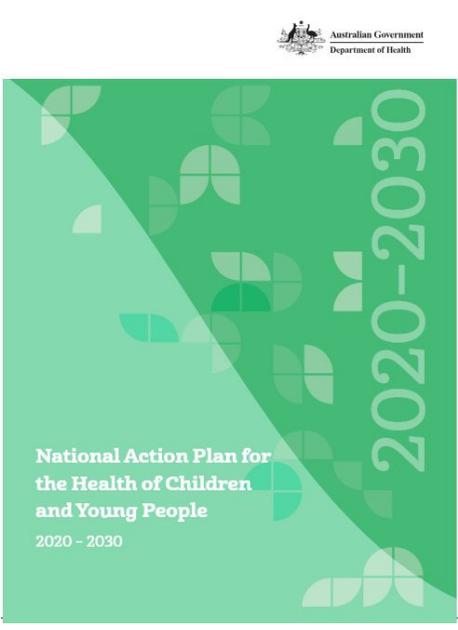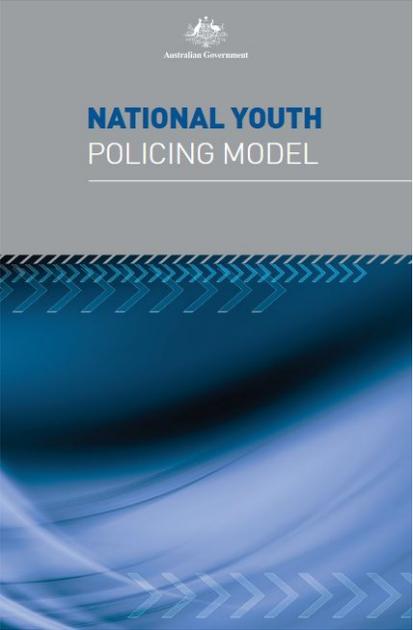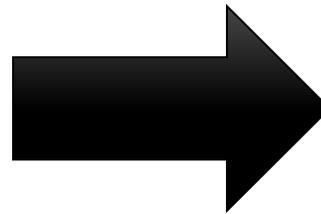
Other Policy Integration Opportunities
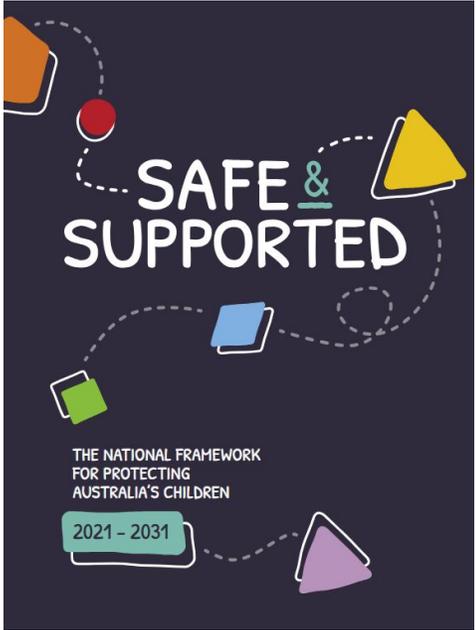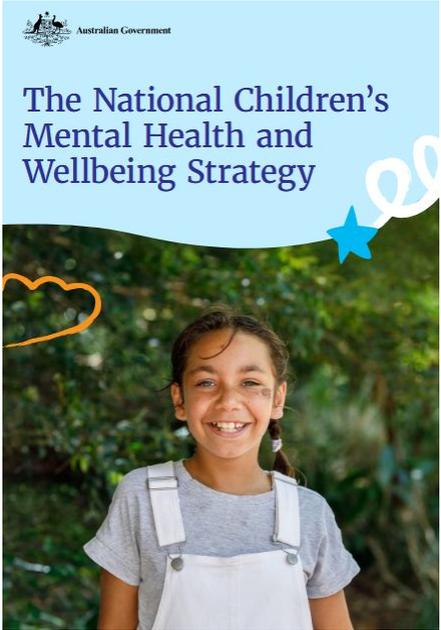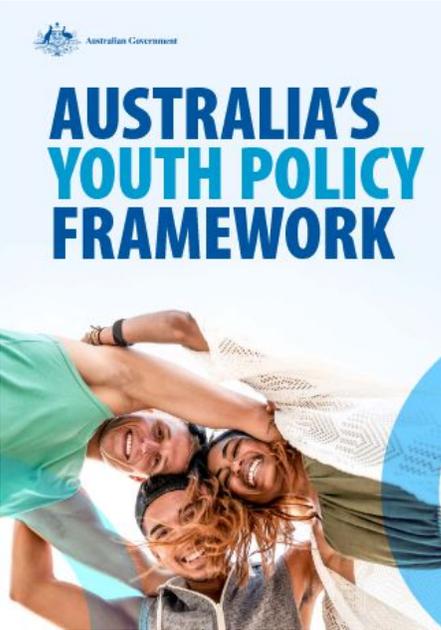
National Youth Engagement Strategy – Engage!

Final Reflections

- Adopting an explicit strengths-based and asset-focused lens aligned with contemporary healthy masculinities discourses is critical for advancing outcomes for boys in Australia.

- Embedding the lived experience of marginalised and equity-owed groups of boys and young men into program design and systems transformation is critical.

- Targeted men's health programs that address health and social inequities at scale need prioritisation, particularly for adolescent boys and young men.

- Organisations investing in boys – particularly adolescent boys – should be celebrated more publicly. They require long-term funding from state and federal governments.

- A more cohesive public policy response is required to amplify actions that support boys and young men in Australia. This requires much better co-ordination between health, social services, education, and justice sectors.

- The development of a National Men's Health Research Strategy, which incorporates an explicit focus on the needs of boys and young men is urgently required.

MOVEMBER FOUNDATION

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Movember Institute of Men's Health

The Man Cave