

# Evaluating the VicHealth ‘Healthier Masculinities Partnership Grants’: Mornington Peninsula Communities Creating Change

## *Final Report*

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# Acknowledgements

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# Table of contents

Executive summary	4
Key findings	7
Pre-project Commencement	7
Post-project commencement	7
Community mobilisation	7
<hr/>	
1.0 Introduction	9
1.1 The Partnership	11
1.2 The project plan	13
<hr/>	
2.0 Evaluation Methods	14
2.1 Evaluation tools: one-off events	14
2.2 Evaluation tools: MoRE program and Community of Practice	16
2.3 Evaluation tools: Partnership governance and collaboration	16
2.4 Evaluation Limitations	20
<hr/>	
3.0 Findings	21
3.1 The partnership was deemed an effective collaboration from the outset	21
3.2 Successes and challenges within the partnership	22
3.3 Community mobilisation in the Mornington Peninsula	29
<hr/>	
4.0 Conclusion	39
5.0 References	41

# Executive summary



“We offer recommendations for future community partnerships seeking to promote gender transformative, healthier masculinities work”

In recent years, promoting healthier masculinities has become a key focus in the effort to tackle harmful masculine norms and achieve greater gender equality. However, there is limited evaluation data on programs that promote healthier and positive masculinities in the Global North (Ralph et al. 2020; World Health Organisation 2007), particularly in the Australian context (Stewart et al. 2021). Contributing to the evidence base, this report presents the evaluation findings from the Mornington Peninsula Communities Creating Change (MPCCC) project, funded by VicHealth’s Healthier Masculinities Partnership Grants. We offer recommendations for future community partnerships seeking to promote gender transformative, healthier masculinities work.

This research was guided by the central research questions:

1. To what extent was the project delivered as planned?

2. To what extent has the initiative achieved its outcomes?

## The execution of the MPCCC project was undertaken by a partnership of three organisations:

- **The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council (MPS):** The local government organisation in the Mornington Peninsula. Their involvement in this project forms part of their 2020–2030 [Gender Equality Strategy](#). The MPS Equity and Inclusion Officer was the MPCCC’s project lead.
- **Family Life:** A specialist, not-for-profit family services provider that works with vulnerable children, families and communities in Victoria. Family Life’s Creating Capable Communities Community Development Team Leader collaborated closely with the MPS project lead to develop and implement this project. In addition, the Project Co-ordinator, a role funded by the grant, was housed at and supervised by Family Life.
- **Jesuit Social Services (JSS):** A ‘social change organisation’ that works ‘to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion’ (JSS 2022). JSS was recruited by MPS and Family Life to deliver their Unpacking the Man Box and Modelling Respect and Equality programs to the Mornington Peninsula community.

## The Communities Creating Change project had the following objectives:

1. To mobilise, engage, train and support local men and boys in building and promoting healthier masculinities.
2. To increase delivery of gender-transformative practice within community- and place-based settings.
3. To increase collaboration and skills development across partner agencies working in the gender equality sector.
4. To build strong partnerships that can be sustained beyond the funding period.

## To achieve these goals, they implemented:

- A series of one-off events (including workshops and presentations) delivered to a broad community audience, to increase awareness of harmful masculine stereotypes.
- A Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program with 26 influential community members consisting of a two day workshop followed by the facilitation of a 6-month Community of Practice with participants.

This evaluation assesses the extent to which these two aspects of the partnership were delivered as planned, and whether the partnership has achieved their overall objectives.

This evaluation drew on a combination of existing administrative data and evaluation tools, and both qualitative and quantitative tools designed specifically for this evaluation:

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**One-off online events:**



live pre- and post-polling, and short online surveys administered after the event.

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**MoRE Program workshop and Community of Practice:**



JSS pre-, post- and follow-up surveys, and recordings of the Community of Practice

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**Partnership governance and collaboration:**



VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool, focus group with partnership members, and reflective journal entries by partnership members

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As with all research methods, this study has limitations. The data derived from the above sources is predominantly self-assessment data. This means that, for example, the perceptions and reflections of the project team are used to assess the effectiveness of the partnership. This is supplemented by both quantitative and qualitative data in respect of community members' engagements with events and interventions. In this evaluation, some data relates to event attendees' self assessment of their own knowledge before and after the information session.

# Key findings

## Pre-project Commencement:

### The partnership was deemed an effective collaboration from the outset

- Scores from the VicHealth Analysis Tool suggest there was an equally high level of confidence in the partnership from both partner organisations.
  - There were some minor concerns related to the lack of standardisation of processes across organisations, the lack of formal structures for sharing information and resolving demarcation disputes, and the prospect of continued funding.
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## Post-project commencement:

### Successes and challenges within the partnership

- The existing rapport between organisations in the partnership expedited the initial phases of project planning, increased resilience of the project over time, and contributed to more successful outcomes.
- Establishing a shared vision and clear roles and responsibilities was foundational to the partnership's success.
- Each organisation contributed a unique set of networks, resources, expertise and skills to the partnership, which they were able to leverage to broaden their reach in the community and establish the credibility of the project.
- Establishing and maintaining a strong and productive partnership takes time and a strong investment from the project leads, and the costs associated with this work should not be underestimated.
- Receiving sign-off from multiple organisations with different leadership structures and organisational needs can significantly delay the dissemination of promotional material.

### Community mobilisation in the Mornington Peninsula

- While some of attendance targets were not met, the one-off events had significant reach, indicating community preparedness and the effectiveness of the partnership's promotional work.
- Implementing the MoRE program has led to further community mobilisation and created networks across organisations.
- MoRE participants faced a range of structural and logistical barriers to the development and implementation of action plans.
- Although most MoRE participants did not implement an action plan, they are effecting change in subtle, everyday ways by, for example, integrating MoRE content into their existing community programs, or challenging problematic attitudes in their personal and professional interactions.
- Presenting one-off educational events to a broad community audience requires catering to different levels of existing knowledge.

## Partnership governance and collaboration

### Recommendation 1

Establishing partnerships between organisations who have successfully collaborated in the past may expedite initial planning processes and increase the probability of success.

### Recommendation 2

Future partnerships should be realistic about the challenges and delays caused by differences in organisational structures and needs. To minimise turnaround times on project outputs, partnerships should seek to establish standardised processes across organisations and create efficient communication channels and sign-off systems.

### Recommendation 3

Successful partnerships take time and strong leadership. Funding for partnerships should integrate costs relating to the initial planning phases, as well as work completed by partner organisations' internal resources such as communications and marketing.

## Community mobilisation

### Recommendation 4

Recruiting community members and sustaining productive change via healthier masculinities programming can be difficult. Future partnerships should carefully plan appropriate and achievable project ambitions, and consider the obstacles that might prevent community members from being fully engaged and invested in gender-transformative work.

### Recommendation 5

Programs and events servicing broad community audiences should account for and seek to cater to different levels of existing knowledge.

### Recommendation 6

One-off or short-term interventions deliver limited results (Elliott et al. 2022). Partnerships seeking to create and nurture change makers in their communities should invest in long-term interventions. This, however, relies on sustained financial investment to ensure partnerships and project teams are able to engage providers that deliver long-term, evidence-based interventions.



# 1.0 Introduction



“...community mobilisation likely plays an important role in ensuring intervention efforts are successful in creating positive change.”

Decades of research has illustrated that traditional and rigid forms of masculinity – characterised by dominance, assertiveness, stoicism, aggression and risk taking – are a threat to the physical and mental health of all genders and underpin and legitimise gender inequality in a variety of areas of life (Ralph et al. 2020). Recent research in the Australian context attests to this fact as a present reality (The Men’s Project & Flood 2018). Accordingly, attention has been given to how and whether we might set about promoting and normalising ‘healthier masculinities’, characterised by equality and respect, non-violence, reflection and self-awareness, emotional expression and vulnerability, and accountability. The plural ‘masculinities’, rather than the singular ‘masculinity’ denotes that masculinity takes many forms, and can vary in its esteem and expression in different places and across historical and cultural contexts.

Related to a growing focus on healthier masculinities, and as part of their ambitions for advancing gender equality and improving health and wellbeing for all Victorians, in mid 2020 VicHealth launched [‘Masculinities and Health: A framework for challenging masculine gender stereotypes in health promotion’](#). This framework acts as planning tool for people and organisations engaging in health promotion, emphasising that ‘all health and wellbeing initiatives can be strengthened by considering the influence of masculine stereotypes, from mental wellbeing or healthy eating initiatives, through to preventing violence against women or preventing harm from alcohol’.

The launch of the framework was followed by a round of competitive VicHealth funding opportunities, including The Healthier Masculinities Partnership Grant (HMPG), part of a pool of support aimed at a diverse range of organisations to help propel community wellbeing and health promotion initiatives into unchartered territory. Applications for HMPG funding invited local government, in partnership with relevant community organisations, to work towards developing, trialling and evaluating initiatives that would help VicHealth build the evidence base about what types of programs can help engage men and boys in gender equality, particularly efforts to transform harmful gender stereotypes, masculinities and negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours. An underlying ambition in this remit was also to build a knowledge base of ‘what works’ in terms of development of partnerships that could successfully set about achieving these tasks in different communities. This is important because, as suggested by [Promundo’s recent review of evidence about what works to engage boys and men in gender equality](#), community mobilisation likely plays an important role in ensuring intervention efforts are successful in creating positive change.

The present evaluation report relates to one of the projects funded under the HMPG opportunity: 'Mornington Peninsula Communities Creating Change'. This place-based project aimed to raise awareness of the need to cultivate healthier masculinities in the local community and to empower local community members to become knowledgeable and empowered 'change makers' in a variety of contexts. Led by Mornington Peninsula Shire Council (as the local government partner) in partnership with Family Life and Jesuit Social Services, and which ran from July 2020 to June 2022. The partnership was supported by VicHealth, as funder, and Monash University as VicHealth's designated project evaluator. Both parties supported and advised the partnership during the duration of the project. For example, VicHealth and the Monash evaluation team offered project advice throughout and were involved in the co-design of the evaluation framework and data collection methods and any associated developments to the plans for delivery and data collection during the life of the project. Further, VicHealth supported the partnership in organising and delivering the Community of Practice and associated events.

### **Context: The Mornington Peninsula Shire**

The Mornington Peninsula is located southeast of Melbourne, along the southern coast of Victoria, on the traditional lands of the Bunurong/ Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. According to data from June 2021, it is home to over 168,000 residents, and has a diverse local economy made up of 13,800 businesses operating mostly in tourism, agriculture, retail, manufacturing, construction and business services industries. While it is a popular tourist destination and almost 95% of residents say they are satisfied with life in their community (MPS 2021a), the region faces higher than average rates of family violence.

Mornington Peninsula has a 9.3% higher incidence of family violence than the Melbourne metropolitan average, and between 2019 and 2020, reported family violence increased by almost 17% (MPS 2021b). Addressing family violence has been a priority for the local council since the release of the 2009 [National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women](#). The council's most recent [Gender Equality Strategy](#) aims to improve gender equality and reduce violence against women and their children. The Strategy provides a framework for Mornington Peninsula Shire Council's policy and actions aimed at improving gender equity and reducing violence against women and children within the Shire workforce, community and through Shire services and programs. As part of this broader strategy, the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council partnered with Family Life to develop the Communities Creating Change Project.



## 1.1 The partnership

The Communities Creating Change Project brought together three organisations, with the aim of engaging and empowering men, boys and the broader Mornington Peninsula community to challenge and shift rigid masculine norms. The project was planned and implemented by the Mornington Peninsula Shire and Family Life, delivered in collaboration with Jesuit Social Services. The project also forms part of an evidence-based collective impact approach overseen by the Mornington Peninsula Primary Prevention Family Violence Collaborative—a group of local organisations committed to addressing gendered drivers of family violence.

### The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council (MPS) is the local government organisation in the Mornington Peninsula. It is responsible for overseeing and delivering a range of community services including traffic regulation, youth facilities, waste management, family and children's services, community building and business development. The MPS Equity and Inclusion Officer was the Communities Creating Change project lead, and their work was supported by the Shire's various internal resources including communications, marketing and research. As the lead agency, the Shire had ultimate oversight of the project, ensuring the coordination of a number of aspects. Further, the Shire provided the partnership access to a variety of stakeholders both internally and externally, and assisted in promoting the project's events and activities.

### Family Life

Family Life is a specialist, not-for-profit family services provider that works with vulnerable children, families and communities in Victoria. Responding to issues identified through academic analysis, government strategy and global and community trends, Family Life delivers programs across a broad range of areas to build capable communities, strong families and thriving children. Family Life offers an array of services to help address the issue of family violence, including trauma-informed counselling services, men's behaviour change programs, case management for male perpetrators, and community engagement and capacity building activities.

As a trusted and grassroots community service organisation, Family Life played a key role in connecting the project with the Mornington Peninsula community through place-based outreach and engagement. Family Life's Creating Capable Communities Community Development Team Leader collaborated closely with the MPS project lead to develop and implement this project, and also had primary supervisory responsibility for

the Project Co-ordinator. This work was supported by their internal business units including monitoring and evaluation, community engagement, communications and volunteer management.

MPS and Family Life have worked in partnership for many years. In 2018, Family Life approached MPS to establish the Mornington Peninsula Primary Prevention Family Violence Collaborative using a collective impact model. Through this work a strong foundation of mutual respect was formed, and has been further strengthened through their collaboration on the Communities Creating Change project.

## Jesuit Social Services

Jesuit Social Services (JSS) is a 'social change organisation' that works 'to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion' (JSS 2022). In 2017, JSS developed The Men's Project in response to the disproportionate levels of risk-taking, mental illness, suicide and violence among young men in Australia. The Men's Project 'aims to support boys and men to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives free from violence and other harmful behaviour'.

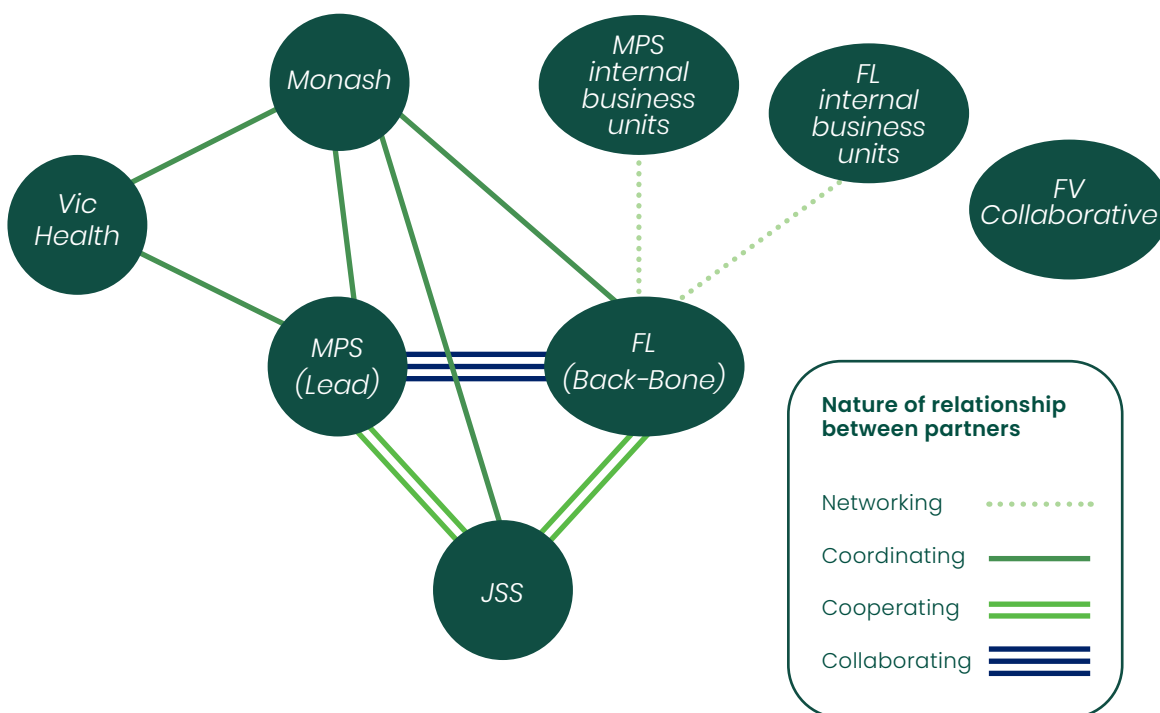
Central to this work is The Man Box study, which offers comprehensive insights into how young Australian men's adherence to traditional masculine norms impacts their social, emotional and physical wellbeing, and shapes how they treat those around them (The Men's Project & Flood 2018). Building on the findings of this study, The Men's Project developed a number of programs and targeted interventions. Among them is:

- the Unpacking The Man Box session, a 1 hour presentation in which JSS representatives share findings from the Man Box Study and engage community members in a discussion of how breaking free of masculine stereotypes can improve health and wellbeing for all people, and

- the Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program, a two-day workshop followed by a 6-month Community of Practice that equips community members who work with men and boys with the tools to help them reject harmful masculine stereotypes.

JSS was recruited by MPS and Family Life to deliver both of these programs to the Mornington Peninsula community. While these programs were central to the project, this evaluation did not assess their effectiveness per se, but rather the extent to which the partnership itself was able to mobilise the Mornington Peninsula community to engage with this form of gender-transformative work.

### A visual representation of the partnership



## 1.2 The project plan

The Communities Creating Change project had the following objectives:

1. | To mobilise, engage, train and support local men and boys in building and promoting healthier masculinities.
2. | To increase delivery of gender-transformative practice within community and place-based settings.
3. | To build strong partnerships that can be sustained beyond the funding period.

To achieve these goals, MPS and Family Life worked with JSS to deliver a series of training and education opportunities for men, boys and the broader Mornington Peninsula community that challenged unhealthy gender stereotypes and sought to break the stigma around men's mental health. The plan included:



A series of one-off events delivered to a broad community audience, to increase awareness of gender stereotypes and the values, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes related to unhealthy masculinities. This included:

- a project launch event involving the JSS Unpacking The Man Box presentation and a panel discussion with Sydney Swans player Josh Kennedy, delivered to a target of 300 community members;
- three Unpacking the Man Box events run across three different townships (publicly promoted as "Manhood, Men, Mates and Me" events); and
- two Bystander Activation training sessions delivered to a target of 50 participants.



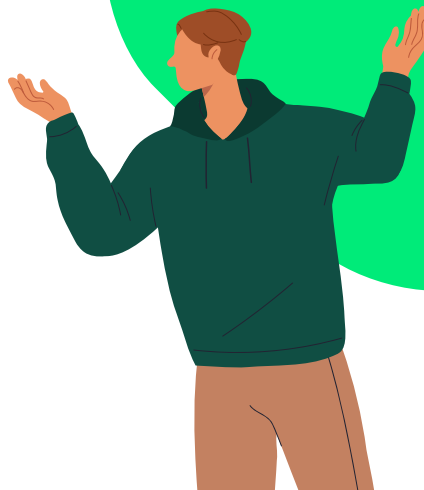
A two-day Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) workshop with 25 influential community members, out of whom 10–20 were anticipated to create and implement action plans. As part of this workshop, JSS facilitates an online community of practice with attendees, which involves 3 meetings over 6 months.

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This evaluation aims to determine the extent to which these two aspects of the partnership were delivered as planned, and the extent to which the partnership has achieved their overall objectives.

# 2.0 Evaluation Methods

“All methods were tailored in close collaboration with the partnership organisations to ensure they were suitable for each aspect of the project.”



This evaluation used qualitative and quantitative methods to examine what works in partnerships seeking to mobilise community members to take part in and in turn further promote gender-transformative programming. A combination of existing administrative data (e.g. JSS MoRE pre-, post- and follow-up surveys), existing evaluation tools (e.g. VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool)

and tools designed specifically for this evaluation were utilised. All methods were tailored in close collaboration with the partnership organisations to ensure they were suitable for each aspect of the project.

## 2.1 Evaluation tools: one-off events

To assess the reach and impact of the launch event (a one-off online event that promoted the project by highlighting the need for healthier masculinities programming) attendees were asked to take part in a live pre- and post-polling exercise, as well as a short online survey. The pre-event polling exercise asked participants to self-assess their ‘awareness of the impact of gender stereotypes on boys and men and the people they live and work with’ as either poor, average, good, very good or excellent. The post-event polling exercise asked participants to answer yes or no to the statement that ‘as a result of this session my awareness has improved’. In addition to this, participants were asked to fill out a short qualitative questionnaire following the session, which collected some basic demographic information, and asked:

1. What did you enjoy about the session?

3. What are your take-aways?

2. What could we improve?

4. How do you think the session impacted you?

Further comments and feedback were collected through the 'chat' function in the webinar, and the partnership also kept track of feedback provided through informal channels such as email correspondence following the event.

Participants at the 'Manhood, Men, Mates and Me' events and Bystander Activation training sessions were also asked to take part in the live pre- and post-polling exercise and a short online survey. However, the survey questionnaires were tailored to these events, and thus asked slightly different questions.

#### **Manhood, Mates, Men and Me:**

1. In what way has the workshop increased your understanding of stereotypical masculine norms?
2. What aspects of the workshop were most helpful?
3. In what ways are your actions likely to change as a result of completing the workshop?
4. What could we improve?

#### **Bystander Activation Training:**

1. What aspects of the workshop were most helpful?
2. In what way are your actions likely to change as a result of the workshop?
3. Has your level of confidence (to act) increased?
4. Has your level of skill (to act) increased?
5. Could you now teach this to another person?
6. What could we improve?

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These questions were designed to be minimally burdensome on participants, while still providing feedback to the partnership (about the effectiveness of the programs they delivered), and data for this evaluation (to assess whether partnership activity was well-received, effective and/or acted upon).



## 2.2 Evaluation tools: MoRE program and Community of Practice

While the one-off events were designed to have significant reach, the two-day MoRE workshop was the centre-piece of the MPCCC project. The aim of delivering this program and facilitating the subsequent Community of Practice was to educate and empower participants to promote further gender-transformative programming, thereby creating a ripple effect of positive change. As noted above, this evaluation seeks to consider whether the partnership achieved this aim, not to assess the quality of the MoRE program itself.

- Data was drawn from the existing pre-, post- and 6-month follow-up surveys that JSS staff administer for their own evaluative purposes, which the Monash research team reviewed. This survey was quite extensive, and included:
- 28 Likert scale questions that assess change in the participants' opinions about various gendered issues including violence against women and the impact of masculine norms;
- 12 open-ended questions that assess change in the participants' knowledge about identifying and responding to attitudes and behaviours that stem from harmful gender norms;
- 9 Likert scale questions that require participants to rate their confidence and skills in gender-transformative work; and,
- 10 questions that ask participants to reflect on (open-ended) or rate (Likert scale) the strengths and weaknesses of the program itself.

Of the 26 MoRE participants, 20 completed the pre-survey, 19 completed the post-survey and 5 completed the 6-month follow-up survey. Given the low response rate for the latter, data from the 6-month follow-up surveys have not been included in this evaluation report.

For the purposes of this study, data from three specific questions in the third section of the pre- and post-survey were collected. These questions asked participants to rate the following as either extremely low, low, average, high or extremely high:

1. Your knowledge of the potential consequences of stereotypical masculine norms.
2. Your confidence to work with men and boys to change their attitudes and behaviours about stereotypical masculine norms.
3. Your skills to work with men and boys to change their attitudes and behaviours about stereotypical masculine norms.

Participants' responses were summed and converted to percentages, to indicate whether there was change over time and thus if the program effectively educated and empowered participants. Qualitative data about the MoRE participants' experiences, challenges and ongoing community work was also drawn from a recording of the online Community of Practice held in December.

## 2.3 Evaluation tools: Partnership governance and collaboration

To assess the effectiveness of the partnership and their governance and collaboration systems and processes, the Monash research team gathered data through three methods:

- the VicHealth Partnership Analysis tool, which offered insights into the partnership members' confidence in and concerns about the partnership at the outset of the project;
- a one-hour focus group with partnership members toward the end of the project, which offered collective reflections on their successes, the challenges they faced and the most significant changes the project brought about; and
- Reflective journal entries, which gave partnership members an opportunity to reflect on their individual experiences of the project in a confidential manner.



## 1. VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool

As part of this evaluation, six key members of staff from across the partnership organisations filled out a checklist that features as part of the [VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool](#). The checklist assesses reflections on, confidence in, and work required in relation to seven domains:

1. Determining the need for the partnership.
2. Choosing partners.
3. Making sure partnerships work.
4. Planning collaborative action.
5. Implementing collaborative action.
6. Minimising the barriers to partnerships.
7. Reflecting on and continuing the partnership.

Through self-scored answers to questions related to these domains the checklist prompts partners to reflect on the factors that contribute to a successful partnership and then, as necessary, direct attention to the range of issues to be considered in assessing and maximising effectiveness.

Scores are measured across two levels: individuals and domains. First, an overall score is provided by each person who fills out the form, with a maximum score of 175. The range of scores equate to three levels of assessment of the partnership:

<b>35-84</b>	The whole idea of a partnership should be rigorously questioned.
<b>85-126</b>	The partnership is moving in the right direction but it will need more attention if it is going to be really successful.
<b>127-175</b>	A partnership built on genuine collaboration has been established. The challenge is to maintain its impetus and build on current success.

Second, scores for each domain are provided as a number out of 25 (5 questions, answered from a scale of 1-5). These scores were then disaggregated and combined to produce a total score for each domain. As four surveys were properly completed in this evaluation, this produced a score out of 100, with scores closer to 100 indicating a high level of confidence in that particular domain. This indicated which domains participants were more or less confident in.

As noted above, this process was undertaken by six members of staff from across the lead organisations in the partnership early in 2021, the end of the first quarter of the project. However, two partner members did not fill the survey out in full, so their responses have been excluded from the aggregated scores.

## 2. Focus group

Towards the end of the two-year project, the partnership members took part in a one-hour focus group. Due to organisational policies relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus group was held via Zoom. Five partnership members were in attendance, including the project coordinator, the Family Life project lead, the MPS project lead and two other MPS partner members. Using the 'most significant change' technique, the focus group sought an in depth understanding of:

- their overall experience of the collaboration;
- the most and least successful aspects of the collaboration;
- the most beneficial and the most challenging aspects of working with other organisations;
- unexpected or surprising outcomes of the collaboration;
- what they learned from the collaboration;
- the most significant change that came about because of the collaboration, and why this change was so important; and
- how they would improve governance and collaborative systems in future partnerships.

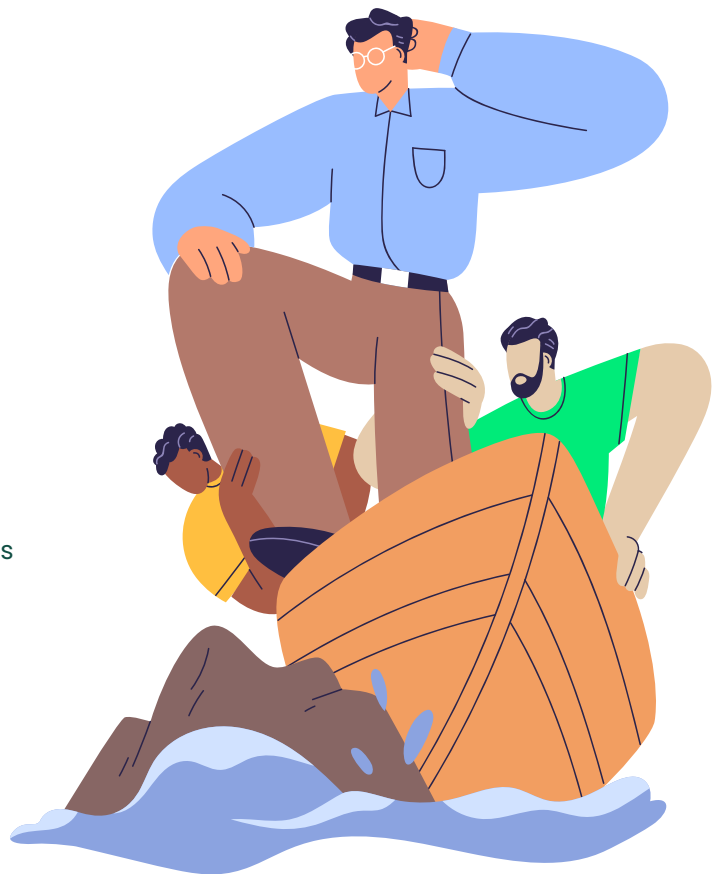
## 3. Partnership member reflective journals

To complement the collective reflections drawn out in the focus group, partnership members completed an individual reflective journal entry. This gave participants an opportunity to discuss their individual experiences of the partnership and its successes and challenges in a more confidential manner. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What have been the most successful aspects of the partnership to date?
2. What, if anything, will you do to build on this success as the project continues?
3. What has been the most challenging part of the partnership to date?
4. How have you or the partnership sought to overcome these challenges? Has this been successful?
5. In your opinion, what has been the most significant change that has occurred because of this partnership?
6. Is there anything else important about the partnership that you would like to add?

Three partnership members completed the journal entries, and they each emailed their responses directly to the Monash research team, to maintain confidentiality.

To avoid a question-answer group interview format and instead stimulate an open discussion of these topics, participants were asked to read out and respond to prompts (e.g. 'In my experience, the most successful aspect of the collaboration was...'; 'The most challenging part of working with other organisations was...'). Following this broad discussion, participants were asked to spend 3-minutes individually brainstorming what they believed was the most significant change that came about because of the collaboration, and why this was important. They then shared and discussed their responses as a group.



## Summary of partnership activities, key indicators and evaluation methods

Activity	Indicators	Evaluation methods
<p><b>One-off Sessions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch event</li> <li>• Unpacking The Man Box</li> <li>• Bystander Activation Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ One-off events delivered as planned.</li> <li>✓ Community members have increased awareness of gendered stereotypes and recognise behaviours and attitudes related to masculine norms.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Live pre- and post-polling</b></p> <p><b>Short online post-surveys</b></p> <p><b>Post-survey for Padua College event</b></p>
<b>MoRe Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The MoRE program delivered successfully:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 community members with a cross section of representation</li> <li>• Positive reaction to the nature/ mode of activities</li> <li>• 10-20 action plans developed and projects delivered in the local community</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ MoRE participants have increased:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of masculine norms</li> <li>• Skills to promote respect and equality</li> <li>• Connections with like-minded people</li> <li>• Confidence to be a bystander</li> <li>• Strategies to promote 'healthier masculinities'</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>JSS pre-, post- and follow-up surveys</b></p> <p><b>Qualitative data from recordings of the Community of Practice</b></p>
<b>Partnerships and collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The governance group successfully worked in a collaborative way.</li> <li>✓ The MP Family Violence Collaborative effectively supported the project.</li> </ul>	<p><b>VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool</b></p> <p><b>Focus group</b></p> <p><b>Reflective journal entries</b></p>

## 2.4 Evaluation Limitations

The COVID-19 pandemic, and especially the particular types and durations of lockdowns in Victoria, led to many logistical challenges for the partnership and this evaluation. This included difficulties with participant recruitment and retention for programs, and meant that some programs were delayed and/or run online rather than in person. As most activities were held online, the one-off events lacked the local, place-based focus the partnership had hoped to achieve through, for example, organising for community groups to set up stalls and connect with attendees.

In addition to this, it is worth noting the more general limitations of evaluating community partnerships. For this evaluation, two key limitations were that, 1) the data collected from event attendees at times spoke more to the content of the workshop or presentation (e.g. the effectiveness of facilitators or

the need for more engaging activities) than to the effectiveness of the partnership itself, and 2) data which pertained to the partnership itself was drawn from organisation members who arguably and understandably have a vested interest in projecting a particular image of the project. However, the journal entries and focus group discussion did produce a relative balance of perceived successes and challenges which we report on in section 3.2, and through an analysis of survey data and attendance figures we were able to clearly assess whether the partnership had achieved its objective to mobilise and educate the Mornington Peninsula community.



# 3.0 Findings

## 3.1 The partnership was deemed an effective collaboration from the outset

A few months into the project, six members of staff at the lead organisations undertook the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool Checklist exercise. The scores derived from the checklist are outlined below:

### VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool - Individual scores

Stakeholder	Overall Score(s)	Average
Project coordinator	115*	N/A
Family Life	172, 148, 89*	160
Mornington Peninsula Shire	142, 151	146.5

\*These surveys were partially incomplete and have been excluded from average calculations

### VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool - Scores for each domain

Domain	Total out of 100*
Determining the need for the partnership	92
Choosing partners	88
Making sure partnerships work	91
Planning collaborative action	89
Implementing collaborative action	85
Minimising barriers to partnerships	84
Reflecting on and continuing the partnership	91

\*Incomplete surveys were not included in these calculations

The overall scores listed above suggest there was an equally high level of confidence from both partner organisations, with average scores of 145 and 160 for MPS and Family Life, respectively. The total scores for each domain indicate that while there was a high perceived impetus for the project and confidence in the partner organisations' motivation, there was a lower level of confidence in the practicalities of carrying out this kind of work. In particular, the Analysis Tool responses suggest there were some concerns among partnership members relating to the lack of standardisation of processes across

organisations, the lack of formal structures for sharing information and resolving demarcation disputes, and the prospect of continued funding. Nonetheless all surveys (except those that were incomplete) scored in the highest band, suggesting that all project team members felt that: 'A partnership built on genuine collaboration has been established. The challenge is to maintain its impetus and build on current success'.

## 3.2 Successes and challenges within the partnership



### KEY FINDING

The existing rapport between organisations in the partnership expedited the initial phases of project planning, increased resilience of the project over time, and contributed to more successful outcomes.

The project team's confidence in the partnership, as per the results of the VicHealth Partnership Analysis Tool, was borne out across the duration of the project. Indeed, key to the partnership's success was the existing rapport and trust between organisations, which has developed since they began working together in 2018. This helped expedite initial planning and decision-making processes:

*"What really struck me as a success factor was just that existing relationship ... that level of trust and the relationship we already had with Family Life ... because you need to get on the same page with any partnership and be headed to the same vision."*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

The partnership members indicated trust and respect was also crucial to their ability to navigate the new and unfamiliar terrain of gender-transformative community work, as well as personnel changes and barriers relating to the COVID-19 pandemic:

*"... a lot of [this stuff] is not being done, so we were almost trialling everything. So to have different ideas and for people to feel comfortable enough to throw things out there, I think yeah... that was really beneficial."*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

*"With COVID we had to make some decisions around how we would facilitate things, and we were all coming at it from different angles and different organisational requirements... you know, we had to pivot and adapt how we would facilitate something and take it online, and [we were] kind of questioning "should we, or shouldn't we?". I think having that level of respect and trust in the group allowed us to make those decisions."*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

*"[A partner member] resigned during the project and also the project coordinator did too. That was obviously quite stressful for all of us, but it was great because [we] would just ring each other going, 'oh my gosh, this has just happened'. So I never felt like [it was all] my problem. I felt like it was shared, we were supporting one another, we were reassuring each other ... other people have got your back and we're all in this together."*  
**(Family Life partner, focus group)**

Throughout the project, members of the partnership built on this existing trust and rapport by putting into practice some of their learnings from the JSS programming:

*"..there were times when we actually did show a level of vulnerability like, 'oh wow, what are we going to do?' So just being open to that and being supportive of each other and allowing ourselves to express that kind of emotion, and I do think there was respect for each other to do that."*  
**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**



#### **KEY FINDING**

Establishing a shared vision and clear roles and responsibilities is foundational to the success of a multi-organisation partnership.

In the first six months of the project, Family Life and the MP Shire invested a considerable amount of time into establishing a clear, shared vision for the project and planning out roles, responsibilities and an effective leadership structure. This created a strong foundation for the project and helped to streamline decision-making processes.

*"I think a key success factor was that we took six months to plan out the roles and responsibilities and governance structure which was clearly documented in funding agreements with all partners ... we met regularly in the early stages of the project to align a shared vision for the project, this allowed the project to flourish."*  
**(MP Shire partner, journal entry)**

*"I certainly learnt the value of putting in the developmental work at the start of the project. Hearing about the work that the Shire and Family Life did early on to get protocols in place and decision-making structures ... rather than just pumping stuff out, was something new. And I have great respect for the fact that they were smart enough to say, 'no, this developmental stuff needs to be done at the start.'"*  
**(Project Coordinator, focus group)**



A key challenge at this stage of the partnership was deciding which organisation would employ the project coordinator:

*"We had a really big challenge around where the project coordinator should be employed to have the most influence... they were going to initially be employed by the Shire... and then went [on] to be employed by Family Life and co-located at the Shire."*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

*"I think we decided on Family Life, but they were going to co-located in the office, but then COVID hit, so we've done this whole project online. So that's probably an element we've missed in this project in the end ... the benefits of the person coming into the Shire office, having that direct relationship with, say, the comms team."*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

Despite reaching a solution and spending a significant amount of time on these initial planning phases, the partnership still faced some challenges in distributing the workload:

*"Sometimes I was confused about [the MPS Project Lead's] role and the Project Coordinator's role, because I did feel like [the MPS Project Lead] was left to do quite a bit... [and] that's not a bad reflection on anyone... I know the coordinator is working two days a week ... I wouldn't mind probably having the coordinator three days a week, so they can be doing a bit more of that 'doing.'"*

**(Family Life partner, focus group)**

For some specific issues, the complexity of a governance and line management structure that spanned across organisations within the partnership created additional (but relatively minor) bureaucratic challenges:

*"The biggest gap I reckon, was comms. Because it was led by The Shire's comms, so they would come to me and I'm having to say 'go to [the project coordinator]'. So I think maybe if [the project coordinator] had come and sat in the Shire [offices] and built those relationships, I wouldn't have been this conduit."*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

As these excerpts suggest, the issue was exacerbated by COVID-19 lockdowns and the barriers that working-from-home arrangements created between members of the partnership. Nonetheless, future partnerships could endeavour to have senior level managers endorse and communicate the governance structures in a whole of organisation communique to aid the collaboration between project coordination staff and key resources and departments across all organisations (such as internal comms and marketing teams). In addition to being economical from a time use perspective, this would also ensure that workloads are properly and efficiently delegated.





## KEY FINDING

Each organisation contributed a unique set of networks, resources, expertise and skills to the partnership, which they were able to leverage to broaden their reach in the community and establish the credibility of the project.

The partnership brought together local organisations that had complementary forms of credibility in the Mornington Peninsula community. This helped to establish the legitimacy of the project in a variety of spaces, and in turn encouraged a range of community members to participate.

*"We got the best out of each organisation. I've been able to emphasise, you know, this is a Mornington Peninsula Shire project, so it gives it that gravitas. And when I need to, I refer to Family Life, which gives it that community cred[ibility]. When I need to, I talk about Jesuit Social Services, who've done the research ... Each partner had credibility in different areas, that was really beneficial."*  
**(Project Coordinator, focus group)**

*"I think all of the organisations have a good reputation and profile within the community, so that elevates any project that we were doing together, I think was really helpful."*  
**(Family Life partner, focus group)**

The organisations also contributed unique forms of expertise and access to a variety of social networks across the Mornington Peninsula. This provided a formal legitimacy to the work being undertaken, and permitted an extensive reach within the community, both of which were essential to achieving the desired reach of the project:

*"It's not just radical feminists getting together and dissing blokes and stuff like that. Local government has got respect within the community... We've got subject matter experts, who've done the research [JSS]. We've got Family Life with relationships on the ground and we're all working together."*  
**(Project Coordinator, focus group)**

*"I just think these projects need that centering in local government ... it gives you that kudos, but also just the reach and the engagement reach that we have."*  
**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

Not only were these unique forms of expertise and networks complementary, they formed component parts that were vital to the project achieving its aims:

*"I mean, look, if you took out JSS, there's no project, as they are content experts. If you took out the Shire or Family Life, maybe someone else could scramble in there, but I don't think it would have had the same feel to it because we do know each other, we work really well with each other."*  
**(Family Life partner, focus group)**

Crucially, too, these organisations had internal resources that partnership members were able to draw on to support and enhance project delivery by, for example, developing communication strategies and producing promotional material that effectively targeted key cohorts in the community:

*“Both The Shire and Family Life have internal units that we were able to draw upon... both of us were able to pull in research and evaluation staff, [as well as] our marketing and communications teams... and then management to help with more strategic items too. So we were the ‘doing’ people, but then we did have teams sitting behind us to also support us as well.”*

**(Family Life partner, focus group)**

By bringing together multiple organisations with complementary sets of expertise, skills and networks, the partnership was best positioned to maximise both their reach in the Mornington Peninsula community, and the quality of the programs they delivered. As explored further in section 3.3, this enabled them to achieve high levels of participation despite barriers relating to COVID-19 lockdowns and personnel changes across the two year project.



#### **KEY FINDING**

Establishing and maintaining a strong and productive partnership takes time and a strong investment from the project lead, and the costs associated with this work should not be underestimated.

As noted by the MP Shire project lead, “good partnerships take time”. In the planning phases of the project, the partnership members met twice a week to establish a shared vision for the project, delegate roles and responsibilities and plan the partnership activities:

*“Those first few months there were so many meetings and I was beginning to think, “if this doesn’t reduce I’m not sure how I’m going to manage this level of time”. And of course it does taper off, but ... it was a lot.”*

**(Family Life partner, focus group)**

*“You do need that investment of time, and if this had been a one year project, we would have scrambled and had very different outcomes.”*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

In addition to this, the strong investment and leadership by partnership members from Family Life and MPS was crucial to the resilience of a project over the long-term, and particularly in the context of personnel changes:

*“Both [the MPS Project Lead and Family Life partnership representative] had a very clear overview of what was happening ... So that was a real beneficial factor given that the existing project worker moved on halfway through the project. So there wasn't any gaps ... they'd had to be very flexible along the way. And when the project worker left, things just kept going smoothly.”*

**(Project Coordinator, focus group)**

The depth of understanding of the project among the project leads was crucial in this instance. Commitment to the project aims and goals was matched by a very detailed overview of planned activity, ensuring that the resignation of a project worker did not derail the completion of required tasks. While this might raise questions about the efficiency of senior personnel undertaking administrative tasks, it also points to the significance of leaders being able to be part of a necessary contingency plan. In addition, the evaluation team were reminded regularly by all project staff at meetings across the project duration that the MPCCC's momentum was maintained as a result of the MPS lead's contribution in terms of both strategic planning and 'ground level' activity.

As noted above, this investment of time was key to the partnership's success – and is a key reason the organisations intend to continue their work together. However, the partners noted that it was a cost that was not accounted for in the original grant funding:

*“What was funded was [the project coordinator] role, the JSS work and venue hire and catering. So all the work that [the MPS project lead] does in leading the project, all the work I do, [other partner members], my manager, we've all done that as an in-kind contribution to ensure the project was a success.”*

**(Family Life, focus group)**

*“The amount of in-kind contribution we've needed to make, to make this project happen is enormous. Just the time it's needed from both organisations, ourselves, but then our uplines, marketing, research, all these different teams. It would be very interesting to put a price [on it]. For a \$120,000 grant over two years, it doesn't scratch the surface of what this has cost.”*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

This is a crucial learning for future partnerships, and should be integrated into grant funding structures to ensure organisations are equipped to complete the foundational work necessary for the development of successful community projects.



## KEY FINDING

Receiving sign-off from multiple organisations with different leadership structures and organisational needs can significantly delay the dissemination of promotional material.

As part of the partnership agreement, each organisation needed to review and sign-off on promotional material before it was released into the community to ensure it had the correct information and was a good representation of their branding. This created significant delays, and was cited as the most significant challenge faced by the partnership.

*“Because there were so many of us involved, we did have to get sign off on flyers and stuff like that. So someone would create it, then it would need to go to Family Life ... it would need to go to VicHealth, it would need to go to Jesuit Social Services ... that was tricky because it just really condensed our timelines and put a bit more pressure on us.”*

**(Family Life partner, focus group)**

*“The impact of backwards and forwards communication before getting approval, meant that the time available for promotion for the final three events was limited to less than 3 weeks.”*

**(Project Coordinator, journal entry)**

In addition to time delays, this challenge highlighted differences in the organisational structures of each partner, which created some tensions:

*“[There’s big differences] in a local government organisation versus a not-for-profit like Family Life, in the way we operate and how long things take, how many layers there are. So it was sort of finding that common ground in the middle and both understanding the pressures each other’s organisation are under. It can be challenging sometimes, especially with a local government organisation, things can take a lot longer than you want them to.”*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

As noted above, there are immense benefits to establishing partnerships between community organisations and local governments. Despite the delays they faced, the partnership was able to develop and implement a project that effectively mobilised the Mornington Peninsula community –albeit to a lesser degree than was hoped for– and is continuing to gather pace. To address this challenge, future partnerships should establish clear and realistic turnaround times at the outset of the project, and factor these timelines into the project plan:

*“I think, like planning ahead and knowing the timelines that needed to be met and having that understanding across both organisations about how long things take to get signed off helped.”*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**

### 3.3 Community mobilisation in the Mornington Peninsula



#### **KEY FINDING**

The one-off events had significant reach, indicating community preparedness and the effectiveness of the partnership's promotional work.

The table below details the programs run as part of the Communities Creating Change project, as well as attendance at each event. This data highlights that some of the attendance targets set at the outset of the project were achieved, while others fell considerably short. The Unpacking the Man Box sessions drew relatively large audiences and the partnership effectively recruited 26 influential community members to take part in the MoRE program. However, the launch event reached 168 community members rather than the target of 300, only 5 MoRE participants remained consistently active in the Community of Practice, and the Bystander Activation training sessions engaged 6 community members compared to the target of 50. The gaps between target attendance and actual attendance appear to speak more to the need for tempered goal-setting rather than ineffective partnership activity. Indeed, given the events were largely delivered online due to COVID-19 lockdowns, the level of community engagement achieved by the partnership is still objectively

high, and demonstrates the effectiveness of their promotional activity and a high level of community interest. Nonetheless, while the MPCCC project has demonstrated an appetite in the community for knowledge about gender transformative work, future partnerships should not underestimate the challenge of recruiting community members and sustaining productive change via healthier masculinities programming.



## Communities Creating Change events information and attendance

Event	Session date	Attendance
Project Launch (online)	24th Mar 2021	93
	Recording	75
MoRE	May 2021	26
MoRE Community of Practice	Sept 2021	11
	2nd Dec 2021	7 (5 not 'involved')
	29th Mar 2022	6 (5 not 'involved')
Unpacking the Man Box	22nd Sept 2021	75 (68 not 'involved')
	10th Nov 2021	25 (16 not 'involved')
Unpacking the Man Box (Padua College)	19th Nov 2021	421 (398 not 'involved')
Bystander Activation Training – Part 1 & 2	23rd Nov 2021	6
	30th Nov 2021	3
<b>Total Attendance at Partnership Events</b>		<b>748*</b>
<b>Approximate No. Community Members Reached</b>		<b>682**</b>

\*This figure represents the sum of the total attendees at all events, not the overall number of community members that took part in the project events.

\*\*This figure represents only community attendees (i.e. removes "involved" participants who were responsible for organising/facilitating the events) and removes repetition of attendees where possible (i.e. MoRE participants' attendance at CoP sessions) to more accurately represent the number of community members reached. Please note there is likely still some overlap.

Despite low attendance, the evaluation data suggests the events were effective at engaging and educating the community members in attendance. Of the 45 attendees who completed the post-webinar poll at the launch event, 39 (86.7%) said their 'awareness of the impact of gender stereotypes on boys and men and the people they live and work with' had improved as a result of the session. A local councillor who attended the launch event highlighted the quality of the session, and noted the potential for more local programs:

*"Thank you so much for the fantastic presentation and co-ordinating other participants. Took away a lot from tonight and the concept of doing presentations to local community sporting groups has so much merit."  
(Launch event attendee, post-webinar survey)*

Further to this, some participants noted that they have been spreading the word in their circles:

*"I have been telling others about the research and the negative impact it has on men and boys' health and wellbeing."*

**(Launch event attendee, post-webinar survey)**



#### **KEY FINDING**

Implementing the MoRE program has led to further community mobilisation and created networks across organisations

Alongside these one-off community-wide events, the MPCCC partnership delivered the MoRE program – a two day workshop and then a six month Community of Practice to educate and empower influential community members to become invested in and further promote gender-transformative work, thus creating a ripple-effect of positive change. There were 26 attendees at the MoRE workshop, who represented a diverse cross-section of the Mornington Peninsula community including local council workers, school and TAFE teachers, school principals, sports coaches, youth workers, and mental health practitioners.

*"We did quite a big task in getting the right people around the table ... [it was a] mammoth amount of work getting that message out there and trying to recruit those participants.."*

**(MPS partner, focus group)**

Cumulatively, this group of participants works with over 2,000 men and boys on any given week. Importantly the workshops delivered a significant increase in participants' necessary and relevant knowledge and skills. At the completion of the two-day workshop, 75.58% of the participants said their 'confidence to work with men and boys to change their attitudes and behaviours about stereotypical masculine norms' was high or very high (up from 21.4 % pre workshop), and 85.72% of participants said their skills to do this work were high or very high (up from 42.1% pre workshop). The table below summarises further data that highlights the increase in participants' knowledge, confidence and skills to do this work, as a result of their participation in the program. While this evaluation is not designed to rigorously test the effectiveness of the MoRE program, this does illustrate the positive impact the project has had on influential members of the Mornington Peninsula community. However, long-term data could not be included in this report, as—despite the partnership's efforts to recruit community members highly invested in this work—only five participants completed the 6-month follow-up survey.



## Summary of pre- and post-workshop survey results

Survey Question: 'How would you rate the following...'	Stage	Very Low - Low	Average	High - Very High
Your knowledge of the potential consequences of stereotypical masculine norms.	Pre-MoRE	5.26%	42.11%	52.64%
	Post-MoRE	0%	7.14%	92.86%
Your confidence to work with men and boys to change their attitudes and behaviours about stereotypical masculine norms.	Pre-MoRE	5.26%	31.32%	63.16%
	Post-MoRE	0%	21.43%	75.58%
Your skills to work with men and boys to change their attitudes and behaviours about stereotypical masculine norms.	Pre-MoRE	5.26%	47.37%	42.1%
	Post-MoRE	0%	14.29%	85.72%

\*20 participants filled out the pre-survey and 19 participants filled out the post-survey. As only 5 MoRE participants completed the 6-month follow up survey, this data has not been included.

As part of the MoRE program, participants were asked to produce an Action Plan for a project in their workplace/industry. Though many did not have capacity to develop their proposed projects (discussed further below), a pair of participants from Padua College not only implemented their plan, but had great success doing so.





## Community Mobilisation Case Study: Sean and Sara from Padua College

Following their attendance at the 2-day MoRE workshop, Sean and Sara [pseudonyms] from Padua College collaborated with the MPCCC Project Coordinator to have JSS present their Unpacking the Man Box session to the Year 10 cohort. Given lockdowns had prevented the in-person, place-based Masculinities, Men, Mates and Me sessions, the MPCCC partnership funded this session as their third 'one-off' community event.

Plans were in place to hold the event in mid-2021, however it was cancelled due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Sean and Sara could have run the session online, but decided against it as they believed presenting in-person would have the most impact on the students. Once students were back on campus, they quickly negotiated a time to hold the session right before end-of-year exams. Key to their success in implementing this Action Plan was both their commitment to promoting healthier masculinities programs, and their role as Assistant Principal and Wellbeing Coordinator at the school, along with the support of the Project Coordinator. This ideally positioned Sean and Sara to gain support from their leadership team and be able to prioritise the event despite barriers relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event was held during school hours and ran for around 90 mins. Alongside a number of teachers and staff members, the entire year 10 cohort was in attendance, equating to just under 400 students. Reflecting on the impact of the event, Sara said:

*"We [saw] the emotions of the kids ... go from, 'why are you attacking us?'; to then instantly when they understand the language and the program and all that sort of stuff to turn around and go, 'why haven't we been doing this sooner? And can we get this everywhere and to everyone and every teacher?'"*

**(MoRE participant, community of practice)**

To assess the impact of this program on attendees, students were asked to fill out a post-survey. A total of 51 students completed the survey, of whom 34 identified as female, 11 identified as male, 4 identified as non-binary, 1 selected 'prefer not to say' and 1 self-described 'I identify as Boeig 747' (discussed below). The student's feedback was broadly categorised as either 1) positive and/or constructive, 2) neutral, in that the event did not move their knowledge forward, or 3) negative or not a serious response.

Around 63% of students gave positive feedback, and emphasised that the session gave them a better understanding of the pressures men and boys face, and how this relates both to masculine norms and to issues such as mental illness:

*"[I] was surprised at how those 'in the box' seemed so much more likely to suffer from mental health issues."*

**(Padua student, post-workshop feedback)**

*"This workshop has helped with my understanding of stereotypical masculine norms by showing just how toxic these out of date standards for both men and boys are and the pressures they feel to try and achieve those unattainable standards."*

**(Padua student, post-workshop feedback)**

On the other hand, 17% of students stated that the program did not increase their knowledge of the topic, but nonetheless acknowledged the importance of the work:

*"I already take pride in my understanding of the issue and I truly wish it was talked about sooner."*  
**(Padua student, post-workshop feedback)**

*"I have a big understanding of this topic and therefore didn't learn anything."*  
**(Padua student, post-workshop feedback)**

Finally, 20% of the students who filled out the survey left negative feedback or did not take the survey seriously. For example, when asked to reflect on how the event increased their understanding of masculine stereotypes, these students responded:

*"none it was a waste of time"*  
**(Padua student, post-workshop feedback)**

*"learned about more stuff"*  
**(Padua student, post-workshop feedback)**

*"no way"*  
**(Padua student, post-workshop feedback)**

Further, when asked which aspects of the workshop were most helpful, one student said "yelling c\*nt [expletive deleted] at them", in reference to an activity where students were asked to yell out slurs and were later informed of the sexist, racist and homophobic roots of more insulting swear words.

The presence and tone of these more negative reflections are broadly in keeping with expectations of 'backlash' responses to this kind of work (Flood et al. 2021). As VicHealth's recent research on public reception to healthier masculinities messaging shows, 'attitudes towards the proposition that traditional masculinity is problematic can be arranged along a continuum, from strong support for this notion to strong opposition' (Flood 2020, p.7).

Recent research and evaluation work has noted that one-off sessions have limited long-term impact, but are highly useful as entry-points that provide an introduction to the issue and can help start conversations within an organisation (Stewart et al. 2021; Elliott et al. 2022). In this case, Sean and Sara's hard work has created a ripple effect at Padua College, with staff and students requesting more sessions be presented to more students. Due to this demand, they have been able to secure their own funding to implement JSS programs across the school:

*"Padua just loved the [Unpacking the Man Box] workshop and want to do more of it, so they've now gone on to hire out of their own funding for Jesuit Social Services to go in and do more of this work ... like that's massive, we're going to have hundreds and hundreds of children and young people that are going to be exposed to this information now that will go home and have conversations ... attitudes and behaviours will change as a result of that."* **(Family Life partner, focus group)**

For the Mornington Peninsula Shire partnership members, this is precisely the kind of community mobilisation they set out to achieve, and is thus a key success of the project:

*"I think it's such a big in-road, and what can be achieved long-term with that relationship ... it's something that I was really, really proud of and pleased to see."*  
**(MPS partner, focus group)**

Other MoRE participants have integrated their learnings into the work they were already doing to ensure it better highlights and challenges the impact of masculine norms:

*"I'm convening ... lunchtime learning sessions. So we've had a few where it's raising awareness surrounding issues to do with elder abuse. And this one there would have been 107 people there ... and I was challenging societal roles the whole time, [saying] we needed a feminist analysis. So, has my perspective shifted? I'd say just strengthened through being in [the MoRE program]."*

**(MoRE participant, community of practice)**

*"[I] have spoken to grade 6 students about the negative effects on males if they think they should have certain physical attributes to be considered 'a man'. Spoken about unrealistic expectations on males and how this can affect their behaviour."*

**(MoRE participant, 6-month follow up survey)**

*"[I] was able to slide MoRE concepts into my Shire work with [the] 'Communities that Care' programme that we deliver across the Peninsula."*

**(MoRE participant, 6-month follow up)**

Crucially, too, the participants were able to create connections across their various organisations, to share knowledge and resources:

*"It's such a diverse group, and we come from such different areas, that actually has been extremely valuable. And it's a shame that COVID has impacted our capacity to cross pollinate a bit more. I think there's so much opportunity still that I'm kind of feeling positive about the potential for the community of practice to continue."*

**(MoRE participant, community of practice)**

*"Making connections with the community [was a helpful aspect of the MoRE training]. I met ... a youth worker at Mornington Peninsula Shire youth services ... and now, because of the connection, she is coming in to run some Drumbeat sessions at my school. She also has access to grants which is great as my school has no extra money at the moment."*

**(MoRE participant, post-survey)**

Outside of the workplace context, MoRE participants also described being more confident having productive discussions and calling out problematic behaviours within their own social circles:

*"[I have] called out inappropriate comments made by my son's mates."*

**(MoRE participant, 6 month follow up survey)**

*"[I have] role-modelled healthier masculinities to the men I engage and work with."*

**(MoRE participant, 6 month follow up survey)**

*"[I] parent my kids in respectful ways."*

**(MoRE participant, 6 month follow up survey)**

This emerged as a key learning from the program, and when invited to speak at the Unpacking The Man Box events, community members often asked the MoRE participants for practical strategies about how to challenge stereotypes. This suggests there is a further appetite for these learnings in the community.

For members of the partnership, the community engagement and mobilisation that has come about from the one-off events and through the MoRE participants work was the most significant change the project has brought about:

*"I think the most significant change is in the community. This partnership has fostered an environment that has led to very successful engagement which has mobilised the Peninsula community."*  
**(MP Shire partner, reflective journal entry)**

*"I think the project has certainly had a positive impact on some community members who are now aware of the outdated stereotypes and how they can support healthier identities within their circles."*

**(Family Life partner, reflective journal entry)**

*"The collaboration created a groundswell that was welcomed and needed in our community. It created opportunities for training and learning, which led to informed action and empowered community members. This is all imperative to ensure sustainable approaches for increasing gender equality and decreasing family violence in our community."*

**(MP Shire partner, focus group)**



#### **KEY FINDING**

MoRE participants faced a range of structural and logistical barriers to the development and implementation of action plans.

A key goal for the partnership was to have "25 action plans developed and projects delivered in the local community". However, 24 out of 26 MoRE participants did not produce an action plan or implement a specific project. For some participants, this was because of barriers brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Others cited a lack of funding or a lack of buy-in from the leadership teams in their workplaces, with 50% of participants stating that the readiness of the community they work with to bring about challenge stereotypical masculine norms was average, and 7.14% saying it is low.

*"I did have one potential project in development the last time that we all met and lockdown closed the door on that one ... [and] what you mentioned before with the lack of funding - we can't produce these really great projects on fresh air, love and passion."*

**(MoRE participant, Community of Practice)**

During the Community of Practice, a representative from Jesuit Social Services noted that a limited number of Action Plans being delivered is a fairly consistent outcome of the MoRE program. So while this element of the project has not produced the desired outcome of 25 separate projects, it is not necessarily a reflection of the partnership's activities. Instead, it points to the need for more research into the kinds of barriers that impede the design and delivery of such activity. At a more practical level, the general lack of Action Plans and the specific examples of barriers, illustrates the need for future community mobilising initiatives to carefully plan appropriate and achievable project ambitions and to fully consider the challenges and obstacles that might prevent action plans and other activities from being delivered.



#### **KEY FINDING**

Although most MoRE participants did not implement an action plan, they are effecting change in subtle, everyday ways.

Though most participants did not implement a specific project or program, the participants have promoted the course material in more subtle ways and in some cases this has produced tangible outcomes. For instance, as these MoRE participants reflected on whether they had implemented an action plan:

*"We at the community house haven't done a project as such, but I can one hundred percent confirm that the conversations that we've had with the wider community, including men, have been much easier to have, and I feel much more equipped and skilled ... I feel that I can advocate better for the broader community's needs, and I know where to get the information from ... we would be seeing about 300 people a week come through ... so it is a high reach"*

**(MoRE participant, Community of Practice)**

*"No, but I had conversations at work with adolescents and volunteers ... [and] it took the awkwardness out of challenging rhetoric or speech like when someone would say 'boys don't cry' I could say 'really, don't they?' and keep it respectful and purposeful ... I talked with staff from my children's school [and] with other parents about this."*

**(MoRE participant, post-survey)**

*"No, but I was keen to change the vocabulary used in the school and use a gender-neutral lens. I helped staff who wanted to understand about inclusivity and how to help the 1% feel accepted and that they (the 1%) are not abnormal. I was pleased to see that in 2021 one of our students felt comfortable enough to tell us they didn't want to use the 'she' pronoun any more or identify as a girl."*

**(MoRE participant, post-survey)**

In the absence of COVID-19 related barriers, it is feasible that more projects would have been developed and implemented across the Mornington Peninsula community. However, it is important to acknowledge the value of these smaller-scale, more everyday forms of social change. While the MoRE program was set up as a long-term intervention, the lack of engagement in the Community of Practice meant that for most participants, it was only a two-day workshop. Thus, although these outcomes may fall short of the partnership's expectations, they are representative of what short-term interventions are generally able to achieve: creating entry points to the issue and starting productive conversations in the community (Elliott et al. 2022). With a growing body of evidence demonstrating the limited benefits of one-off events (Elliott et al. 2022), future partnerships seeking to effect change in their communities should consider carefully whether the programs they are investing in have scope and viability to be long-term and with multiple points of interventions. This points to a broader important issue related to funding, with long term financial investment in this type of work required so partnerships and project teams are able to engage providers to deliver interventions with optimal effectiveness.



### **KEY FINDING**

Presenting one-off educational events to a broad community audience requires catering to different levels of existing knowledge.

Programs are likely to succeed when their content is based on research and evidence, and is delivered effectively – as in the case of the JSS Unpacking the Man Box session. However, participants from the one-off community webinars had varying levels of knowledge. Some indicated that the content could have been more complex:

*“I have to say I already knew that, this isn’t new information or knowledge, but rather I think it was a confirmation of that understanding.”*

**(Participant, post-webinar survey)**

*“I’m looking forward to the presentations moving beyond a ‘base’ level and pushing to challenge a bit more.”*

**(Participant, post-webinar survey)**

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For others, the material was suited to their level of knowledge:

*“I am just learning about this... have been stuck a little in the Man Box myself in a way...”*

**(Participant, post-webinar survey)**

These differences in pre-existing knowledge reiterate similar findings in a recent multi-cohort evaluation of healthier masculinities interventions (Elliott et al. 2022), and highlights the ongoing challenge for community programs to cater to varying levels of knowledge, particularly as awareness about mental health and its connection to masculinity increases in Australian society. Future community partnerships could consider offering multiple webinars that cater to different levels of knowledge, and in doing so implement a more targeted approach of raising awareness among some groups and building on the existing knowledge of other groups. Alternatively, partnerships could have more advanced resources and activities on-hand to offer to participants with existing knowledge.



# 4.0 Conclusion



“...represents a strong foundation to set about raising awareness further still and, crucially, implementing change making projects...”

The Mornington Peninsula Communities Creating Change project was successful in leveraging a variety of different resources and networks across the partnership to engage and inform the local community about the significance of promoting healthier masculinities as a route to gender equality. All activities that formed part of the agreed work plan were undertaken, but the extent of the public and community engagement was somewhat curtailed by the significant challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns, particularly the long duration of these in Victoria.

Nonetheless, the project evidences how a partnership, formed of local government and community organisations, can work together to ascertain the appetite in the community to engage in such initiatives, increase awareness, and mobilise community leaders in the spirit of promoting the core messages and enacting positive social change. This represents a strong foundation to set about raising awareness further still and, crucially, implementing change making projects that will contribute towards the pursuit of healthier masculinities as a vehicle for gender equality. The barriers to enacting and sustaining change at the level of behaviours, rather than solely at the level

of attitudes, emerge very clearly in this project. These barriers remind us that there is no quick fix to overcoming the widespread commitments to, and the damage caused by, traditional masculine norms. As such, to be optimally effective, the type of community mobilisation activity detailed in this report must be seen as long-term. This will mean, for local councils and community organisations, ensuring that commitment to gender transformative work remains on the agenda and requires repeated investment of time and resources (perhaps through a combination of internal and external funding) in order to do the work at an appropriate scale.

There is much for future prospective partnerships to learn from the experiences, challenges and successes achieved of the MPCCC project.

## Recommendations

### Partnership governance and collaboration

#### Recommendation 1

Establishing partnerships between organisations who have successfully collaborated in the past may expedite initial planning processes and increase the probability of success.

#### Recommendation 2

Future partnerships should be realistic about the challenges and delays caused by differences in organisational structures and needs. To minimise turnaround times on project outputs, partnerships should seek to establish standardised processes across organisations and create efficient communication channels and sign-off systems.

#### Recommendation 3

Successful partnerships take time and strong leadership. Funding for partnerships should integrate costs relating to the initial planning phases, as well as work completed by partner organisations' internal resources such as communications and marketing.

### Community mobilisation

#### Recommendation 4

Recruiting community members and sustaining productive change via healthier masculinities programming can be difficult. Future partnerships should carefully plan appropriate and achievable project ambitions, and consider the obstacles that might prevent community members from being fully engaged and invested in gender-transformative work.

#### Recommendation 5

Programs and events servicing broad community audiences should account for and seek to cater to different levels of existing knowledge.

#### Recommendation 6

One-off or short-term interventions deliver limited results (Elliott et al. 2022). Partnerships seeking to create and nurture change makers in their communities should invest in long-term interventions. This, however, relies on sustained financial investment to ensure partnerships and project teams are able to engage providers that deliver long-term, evidence-based interventions.



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VicHealth acknowledges the Traditional  
Custodians of the land. We pay our respects  
to all Elders past, present and future.

