

# The Working With Men and Boys for Social Justice Assessment Tool

Issues paper



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## Executive Summary

This issues paper introduces the Working with Men and Boys for Social Justice Assessment Tool. This online Tool aims to provide leaders, designers and facilitators of programs for men and boys the opportunity to review, reflect on and strengthen the principles of gender and social justice in their work. The following provides a background and context for the Tool and information about its structure, purpose and intended use.

## Background and Context

In Australia, there is a growing field of work focused on engaging men and boys in positive personal and social change. Some programs and initiatives are focused on preventing men's violence against women, some on boys and men's health and wellbeing, and others on fathering or other areas. The organisations involved in this work are diverse, from small advocacy and service-focused groups running programs in local communities to large-scale national organisations and regional and global networks. The wider context includes growing community and media attention on how boys and men are socialised and the harmful forms of masculinity that feed into sexism and violence and poor health - what some call 'toxic masculinity'. In Australia, there has been a surge in the growth of programs or initiatives designed to support healthy or positive masculinities. These programs are diverse: they draw on a wide range of understandings of men's and boys' lives or situations and strategies for change (Keddie, Hewson-Munro, Halafoff, Delaney & Flood, 2023).

The Working with Men and Boys for Social Justice Assessment Tool aims to provide leaders, designers and facilitators of programs or initiatives for men and boys the opportunity to review, reflect on and strengthen the principles of gender and social justice in their work. The Tool comprises a comprehensive list of key considerations that support positive social change in programs designed for men and boys. The Tool is informed by scholarship on the effectiveness of efforts to engage men and boys, including with regard to gender, masculinities, intersectionality, equity and education, pedagogies and gender/social justice, organisational justice, program evaluation, health, parenting and care work, and intimate partner and sexual violence. It has been designed for work with men and boys as programs in this area do not always support social justice. Many programs in this space are under-resourced and are not adequately informed

by gender/social justice research and theory.

The key areas and items in the Tool recognise that support and work with men and boys can create cultural change for social justice. The Tool is organised as a structured list, based on 56 principles. It is not intended to be used as a superficial 'tick and flick' checklist but a process that involves deep and considered critical reflection about the extent to which each item is evident in a particular program.

The Tool is relevant for work with men and boys across a wide range of fields and issues, including violence prevention, health and wellbeing, restorative justice, parenting, and other areas.

The Working with Men and Boys for Social Justice Assessment Tool is intended for use by:

- Organisations and advocates seeking to assess and improve their own work with men and boys;
- Organisations and advocates seeking to open discussion with program leaders, facilitators and participants about the strengths of their program and what they could focus on to improve their program; and
- Others seeking to assess the merits of work among men and boys.

Policymakers, funders, and other practitioners may find the Tool useful in identifying elements of good practice, although the Tool is best completed by organisations and practitioners who are themselves implementing programs.

## A Social Justice Approach

A social justice approach to this work is central to fostering boys' and men's genuine engagement with positive social change (Keddie, Flood & Hewson-Munro, 2022; Flood, 2022). The Tool conceptualises social justice as a process and an outcome. In relation to social justice as a process, the Tool includes many items that focus on connecting with boys and men in meaningful ways, creating safe and democratic spaces, listening to boys' and men's stories, recognizing trauma and its impacts and providing external supports if necessary. In relation to social justice as an outcome, the Tool includes items that focus on redressing gender and other forms of oppression through critical learning for social justice that invites boys and men to reflect on how their values, beliefs and behaviours contribute to creating inequality and harm and how they might take action for social change. The Tool's conceptualising of social justice as a process and an outcome is also evident in items that focus on boys and men caring for themselves and others including the non-human world (i.e., animals and the natural environment).

The Tool's conceptualizing of social justice across its 56 items is intended to support programs to consider the complex and intersectional diversities in boys' and men's lives that contribute to harm and violence. As such, it does not reduce the violence boys and men perpetrate to enactments of masculinity. As we know, practices such as violence while gendered, are not just about gender, they are also tied to other aspects of identity, relationships, contexts and structures. The Working with Men and Boys for Social Justice Assessment Tool is framed by these understandings.

In developing the Tool, we have drawn as far as we can on existing evidence regarding elements of 'effective' (i.e., socially just) practice in working with men and boys for gender/social justice. However, we recognise the limitations of this evidence base. Many interventions have not been evaluated, most interventions are focused only on micro- and meso-level change, their evidence itself is uneven, and few evaluations examine wider shifts in gender relations or structures of power (Flood & Greig, 2021).

## About the Tool

The 56 principles are divided into four areas: 1) aims and focus; 2) scale and support; 3) teaching and learning; and 4) evaluation and improvement. Items on teaching and learning comprise half (55%, 31 items) of the Tool, items on aims and

focus comprise one quarter (25%, 14 items) of the Tool, and scale and support and evaluation and improvement comprise about one-tenth each (5 items and 6 items respectively).

Completing the Assessment Tool involves program leaders/facilitators responding to questions that reflect the 56 principles for gender/socially just practice across the four areas. The questions invite respondents to evaluate the extent to which their program meets the standard in each item, responding to a five-point Likert scale from never (1) to always (5).

The Aims and Focus section of the Tool asks respondents to consider the extent to which their program aims to create safe connections and respect while also focusing on challenging the gender and social harms that men and boys experience and perpetrate. Example questions are:

- Does your program aim to build respectful and non-violent human relations?
- Does your program aim to support participants to increase their capacity to care for themselves and others physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually?
- Does your program aim to address how constructions of masculinity constrain or harm boys and men?
- Does your program include a focus on supporting connection, care and respect for the non-human world (e.g., animals, the natural environment)?

The Scale and Support section of the Tool asks respondents to consider the scale of, and support for, their program in relation to broader structures and practices in their organisation. Example questions are:

- Is your program connected with and supported by broader initiatives in your organisation or setting that aim to address similar issues or themes?
- Does the program build and work with broader networks and alliances to promote its aims and outcomes (e.g., women's organisations or broader social justice networks)?

The Teaching and Learning Section of the Tool asks respondents to consider the content and processes involved in the teaching and learning approaches their program adopts as well as the

quality of facilitation. Example questions are:

- Do the content and topics support participants to explore issues of identity, connection, respect and belonging (especially through personal stories)?
- Does the content invite participants to reflect on how their values, beliefs and behaviours may contribute to creating inequality and harm (in different contexts, e.g., the peer group, sports, work etc. and with different people, e.g., with friends, family, intimate partners, etc.)?
- Do teaching and learning processes and activities support a sense of safety, connection, inclusion, respect and openness?
- Do facilitators have relevant expertise and skills consistent with the aims of the program (e.g., good interpersonal/facilitation skills, active listening skills, openness and good knowledge of the content, aims and focus of the program)?
- Do facilitators engage in ongoing critical reflection about their own experiences and relations to gender and other intersections of identity, power, privilege and oppression (including identifying and questioning their own biases)?

The Evaluation and Improvement section of the Tool asks respondents to consider how they are evaluating their program towards improvement through thinking about who they are accountable to and how, and what kinds of evidence they need to gather to assess how well their program is achieving its aims. Example questions are:

- Does the program engage in multiple forms of internal accountability that involve sharing its findings and learnings in order to progress the work and improve quality (e.g., among participants, facilitators, managers, etc.)?
- Is the program revised in response to new evidence, research or changes in the issues it addresses?

# Program Score and Ranking

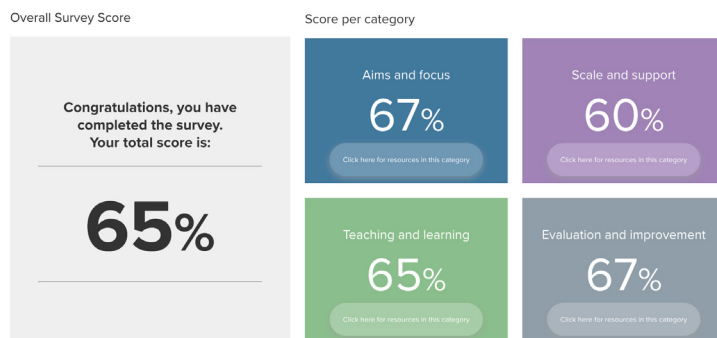
Responses to the checklist questions are used to generate an overall score which indicates the overall strength of the program, and also locates it in one of four categories:

**Beginning** - programs that may not lead to impact for social change.

**Developing** - programs that may lead to some positive social change.

**Accomplished** - programs that are likely to lead to positive social change

**Exemplary** - programs that are likely to have significant positive impact.



Program score and ranking: Implications

This numerical result is not intended to be used as a blunt instrument. As the Tool illustrates, working with men and boys for social justice is a complex, challenging and multi-faceted undertaking that cannot be reduced to a number or score. As already noted, the Tool (and any resulting scores) is best used as a conversation starter about aspects of programs that leaders and facilitators may want to think further about in relation to their understandings and practice. In this respect, it can be used as a stimulus for ongoing deep reflection about particular aspects of practice.

## Resource Bank

The Tool also provides access to a range of practice-oriented resources to support program improvement organised within its four areas: aims and focus, scope and support, teaching and learning and evaluation and improvement.



**Men in focus practice guide: Addressing masculinities and working with men in the prevention of men's violence against women**  
Our Watch | 2022



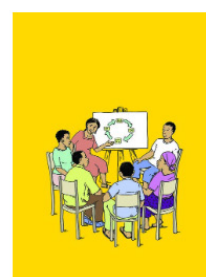
**Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia**  
Our Watch | 2021



**Engaging Men: Reducing Resistance and Building Support**  
Eastern Health, Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS), and Queensland University of Technology (QUT) by Flood, M., O'Donnell, J., Brewin, B., and Myers, B. | 2021



**Framing gender equality: Message guide**  
VicHealth | 2021



**Transforming Masculinities: Implementation guide**  
Tearfund by Thomson, S., Quirke, F., Deepan, P., Martin, L., Nkusi, S., Lele Baghuma, U., Bezzolato, E., & McLarnon-Silk, C. | 2021

# Where Can You Find the Assessment Tool?

Links to the Tool and associated resources:

[Access the Assessment Tool.](#)

[Access the Resource Bank.](#)

[Watch the recording of the Assessment Tool Launch - and download the slides, research papers mentioned in the launch and specific resources highlighted in the launch.](#)

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## Further Action

The soft launch for the Working with Men and Boys for Social Justice Assessment Tool occurred in December 2022. The research team is providing workshops to interested parties including leaders and facilitators of programs for boys and men designed to support healthy or inclusive masculinities; organisations designed to prevent violence against women; researchers and academics and other practitioners. Our aim is for the Tool to become a useful part of practice for those working with men and boys to support deep and ongoing critical reflection in ways that improve the social justice capacities of this important work.

For information about the Tool please email Amanda Keddie: [amanda.keddie@deakin.edu.au](mailto:amanda.keddie@deakin.edu.au)

# References

Flood, M. (2022). Men's Violence Against Women as a Social Justice Issue. In Orchowski, Lindsay M., and Alan Berkowitz (eds.) *Engaging Boys and Men in Sexual Assault Prevention: Theory, Research and Practice* (pp. 49-70), Elsevier.

Flood, M., and A. Greig. (2021). *Working With Men and Boys For Gender Equality: State of play and future directions*. UN Women Policy Brief, No. 23.

Keddie, A., Hewson-Munro, S., Halafoff, A., Delaney, M. & Flood, M. (2023) Programs for boys and men: possibilities for gender transformation, *Gender and Education* 35(3), 250-266.

Keddie, A., Flood, M. and Hewson-Munro, S. (2022) Intersectionality and social justice in programs for boys and men, *NORMA: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 17(3), 148-164.

# About the Authors

## Amanda Keddie

Amanda Keddie is a Professor of Education at Deakin University. Her research examines the processes, practices and conditions that can impact on the pursuit of social justice in education settings. Amanda's qualitative research has been based within Australian, English and American education and community contexts and is strongly informed by feminist theory with a particular focus on gender equality and issues of masculinity. She is the author of *Teaching Boys* (2007) and *The affective intensities of masculinity in shaping gendered experience: from little boys, big boys grow* (2022).

## Michael Flood

Michael Flood is a Professor of Sociology at the Queensland University of Technology. He is the author of *Engaging Men and Boys in Violence Prevention* (2019), the co-author of *Masculinity and Violent Extremism* (2022), and the lead editor of *Engaging Men in Building Gender Equality* (2015) and *The International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities* (2007).

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Shelley Hewson-Munro is the Manager - Prevention, Masculinities and Learning at RMIT University. She is a masculinities practitioner, social worker and research investigator in the working with men space and is the lead author and designer of the *Working Together with Men* model. Shelley has been implementing and supervising several of the model's iterations since 2018 and is a leader in creating unique, feminist-informed projects that both challenge and action men for change. <https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/our-values/respect-rmit/gender-equity-and-justice>

## Maria Delaney

Maria Delaney is an independent consultant who enjoys collaboration on education and research programs that focus on violence prevention, gender equity and respectful relationships education. Maria is currently facilitating sector professional development and Communities of Practice for Safe and Equal - the peak body for specialist family violence services in Victoria.

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Anna Halafoff is Associate Professor of Sociology in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Deakin University. She is the author of *The multifaith movement: Global risks and cosmopolitan solutions* (2013), the co-author of *Freedoms, faiths and futures: Teenage Australians on religion, sexuality and diversity* (2022) and the lead editor of *Education about religions and worldviews: Promoting intercultural and interreligious understanding in secular societies* (2016).