



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into men's suicide rates

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Submitter: The Right Direction Australia Ltd and Kinnections Australia

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**To: Standing Committee on Social Policy
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
Inquiry into Male Suicide in the ACT**

Submission by: Josh Vaughan – CEO The Right Direction Australia Limited & Mengineering, CEO Kinnections Australia, Manbassador The Man Walk Tuggeranong, and Director Marymead CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the ACT Government Inquiry into Male Suicide.

I write on behalf of several initiatives and organisations I am affiliated with, including The Right Direction Australia, and our Mengineering suite of programs, Kinnections Australia, The Man Walk, and Marymead CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn (MCCG). Across these diverse settings, I have witnessed the pain of male suicidality and, importantly, the powerful impact of tailored, community-based interventions that speak to men where they are.

As you are aware, seven in ten suicides in the ACT are by men. However, despite this, men remain largely invisible in suicide prevention policy, planning, and funding in our Territory. This is a systemic gap that urgently requires addressing.

Compounding the issue, around nine in ten people who die by suicide have had contact with frontline services. Yet, for many men, these services are not designed with them in mind. The support offered often doesn't align with how men seek help, process emotions, or build trust. Mainstream services frequently miss the men who are most at risk.

It is essential to recognise that male suicide is not just a mental health issue, it is deeply intertwined with social disconnection, financial stress, shame, loss of purpose, relationship breakdowns, and a lack of belonging. Suicide prevention must therefore be broader than clinical intervention alone. We must treat the social determinants as seriously as the mental health symptoms.

That's why grassroots, gender-responsive programs like Mengineering and The Man Walk are so important. They create space for connection and conversation without judgment or

pressure. We see time and time again how simple acts like a walk and a chat can open the door to life-saving conversations.

Let me share a powerful message The Man Walk recently shared for Loneliness Awareness Week; a message that resonated deeply with our community:

"Loneliness is the invisible epidemic nobody talks about, and 1 in 4 Australian men are struggling with it right now.

That's not some distant statistic. That's your mate at work, your brother and maybe even you.

Here's what loneliness actually looks like:

- *You've got people around you, but no one really gets it.*
- *You scroll social media feeling more disconnected than ever.*
- *You put on the 'I'm fine' mask so well that everyone believes it.*
- *But the worst part is loneliness makes you believe the lie that you're the only one going through it.*

You're not.

Every bloke deserves to know he's not walking through life alone."

These are not just words. They reflect the lived experience of countless men we walk beside each week.

The solutions to male suicide do exist but they require investment in approaches that are created with, by, and for men. There are specialist services in the ACT that know how to reach and support men effectively, yet they remain underfunded and often marginal to formal suicide prevention strategies.

I urge the Committee to ensure that the final report and its recommendations reflect this reality:

- That male suicide is a gendered issue requiring gendered responses.
- That frontline services must be retooled and reformed to better engage with men.
- That social connection, purpose, identity, and community are crucial protective factors.
- And that we have both the insight and the opportunity to prevent male suicide if we choose to act with courage and focus.

I would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee or provide further insight on what is working in practice, particularly through our work with fathers and sons, men recovering from trauma, and those navigating family separation, homelessness, or grief.

Thank you again for shining a light on this critical issue.

Regards,

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