



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into men's suicide rates

Submission number: 36

Submitter: Mr Perfect

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MR
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MORE THAN A BBQ

ABN: 91 690 308 488



Standing Committee of Social Policy
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
196 London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via Email: LCommitteeSP@parliament.act.gov.au

Friday, August 8th, 2025

Re: Standing Committee of Social Policy Inquiry Into Men's Suicide Rates

Dear Committee Members,

In my position as CEO of Mr Perfect, a Men's Health NFP and Registered Charity, I am writing in support of the inquiry and wanted to introduce myself, John Mooney, and our organisation, Mr. Perfect Incorporated, to the committee members.

As you will be aware, men account for the majority of deaths by suicide in Australia, but most policies, programs and initiatives focused on suicide prevention do not take into consideration the gender of those at greatest risk.

Mr. Perfect is a community organisation experienced in providing support to men at risk of suicide. We connect men across Australia, over a relaxed, free BBQ, to chat about "all things life." The reality is that we are more than a BBQ. Our attendees are often seeking connection to overcome loneliness or isolation, or are experiencing mental health, family breakdown, career distress, or other issues.

Our BBQs are a disarming and egalitarian way for men to connect. Our attendees soon find themselves having discussions about the footy, weather, work, and more importantly, their state of mind. Our hosts are good at identifying attendees who are struggling and can have frank discussions, referring those who are at risk to crisis help in a non-threatening and non-judgmental way.

In the Mental and Men's Health landscape, we are not clinicians. But that is our strength, or secret sauce. We are approachable, open, and disarming. The lived

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experiences of our attendees serve to reassure men undergoing hard times that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that seeking more formal assistance is beneficial.

At many events, we offer information about Lifeline and other local community mental health providers, and we refer those in crisis to help, at times accompanying men to Lifeline, Local Area Health services, or in the extreme, contacting Paramedics.

Online, we provide a comprehensive directory of information and quality resources for the good of men's mental health, from both community and national organisations. Going forward, we are building this resource, and we encourage attendees and other service providers to use it.

Our attendees are from many walks of life and different ages. We have older gentlemen who have lost partners, young men new to an area and without friends at hand, and men who find themselves in tough life situations.

Some find Mr. Perfect themselves, as they are seeking connection, others are referred by their partners, or local health organisations, and some are connected by attendees.

Our BBQs are a way for men to engage in conversation (and listening) that always helps them. Getting outside in the sunshine is healthy – it's an antidote to isolation, meeting a welcoming bunch of guys in the fresh air.

The BBQs are a pathway to meeting new mates and undertaking new activities together – the community we create have met to cycle, walk, or have coffee and form support networks. And for those in need, the experiences of other attendees serve to reduce the anxiety and stigma when seeking formal or clinical help. The following are comments from attendees:

"I'd been hesitant to seek mental health support because I didn't want to feel judged. The BBQ was casual and laid-back, and I ended up having an open chat with someone who really listened. It helped me take that first step toward getting help."

Mike, Melbourne

"I was feeling isolated and struggling to find a sense of purpose. Attending a Mr Perfect BBQ gave me an opportunity to connect with people who understood. It was such a relief to share a laugh and know I wasn't alone."

James, Sydney

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"I was hesitant to show up because I've always been bad at meeting new people. But from the moment I arrived, everyone was so kind. I shared things I'd been holding inside for years, and no one judged me. I left feeling lighter."

Chris, Gold Coast

Since its inception, Mr. Perfect has operated BBQs at over 80 different locations across Australia. At present, there are 44 regular BBQs operating once a month, with an annual total of about 420 BBQ events.

In a recent survey of our current Mr. Perfect BBQ Hosts, the average attendance at an event was 14 people. Some BBQs have three or four attendees, while others reach over 30. Even having one attendee is worthwhile, as we may save them from potential harm.

On current numbers, we host over 5,600 attendees in a year. Allowing for a few snags per attendee, that's about 12,000 sausages that our hosts cook in total, annually. Since its inception, we have hosted over 20,000 attendees nationally.

Our events are held Australia-wide and in the last month, we held 10 BBQs in NSW, 5 BBQs in Queensland, 6 BBQs in Victoria, 2 BBQs in Tasmania, 8 BBQs in Western Australia and 1 BBQ in the Northern Territory. These recur at the same locations, on the same Sunday, every month.

Looking at our organisation, strengthening our board, executive, and advisors has been a priority over the last six months as we build capacity for Mr. Perfect to grow its reach further, and help more Australian men, nationally.

Our board has been bolstered with the appointment of Lawrence Atkinson as our Chair in April 2022, and three new board members joined in June 2024.

The position of CEO was created, and I was appointed in April 2023. I have also recruited an advisory committee for Marketing and Strategy, appointing three new external advisors in July 2024, who have now joined our board.

In the year ahead, we will develop our brand and communications with the view to increasing event locations, growing attendees, strengthening our representation in regional Australia and creating a sustainable funding structure.

We are planning to host more events, in more locations, to reach more men experiencing loneliness, finding times tough, and seeking connection.

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Our vision is to help get men connected, reduce their loneliness, refer those in crisis to appropriate resources, and support those who are finding life tough. We believe through helping men, we can contribute to reducing suicide, domestic violence, keeping families together, and making men healthier and productive.

We would be happy to share our experience of what works when engaging with men at risk of suicide with the Inquiry and provide any additional information that supports the work of the committee.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in your offices, with our Chair Lawrence Atkinson, to discuss the Inquiry and introduce our organisation, Mr. Perfect, and our learnings to you in person.

Of concern to our organisation is the fact that while 7 in 10 suicides in the ACT are male, men are not currently a priority of suicide policy or funding in the ACT. Also that around 9 in 10 males who die by suicide have been in contact with frontline services.

This may reflect the experience that our founder, Terry Cornick and other attendees to our BBQs have highlighted – that mainstream services can be clinical and cold, do not ask about loneliness and connection, and can often miss men at risk or provide support that doesn't adequately address their needs. You can read more about Terry and why he started Mr Perfect in the pages that follow.

We welcome the opportunity to share our findings and unique knowledge gained from the experiences of attendees through our hosts. We can share our learnings from the events we hold, and can contribute to the inquiry.

I appreciate your time in reviewing this letter, and look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the points above.

Yours sincerely,

John Mooney

CEO
Mr. Perfect Incorporated

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About Mr. Perfect and Founder, Terry Cornick

Terry Cornick founded Mr Perfect in 2017. He is a Sydney-based father of three young boys, working in the healthcare industry. He also battles several mental health challenges. And he used to be damn good at hiding it.

After leaving the UK, Terry's life in Australia on the surface looked ideal, so much so that his best mate called him "Mr Perfect" regularly.

But like many men, Terry realised he was not Mr Perfect. After a lifetime of mental challenges, he finally navigated a path to tackle them and found something was missing in the support he accessed, with a desire that no man be left behind.

As a writer at heart, before telling anyone, he first started writing his story, then later created an anonymous blog named "Mr Perfect".

His "coming out" to mental illness to his GP and Psychiatrist was cold and clinical (unlike a warm and welcoming Mr Perfect BBQ), and Doctor friends of his revealed their own helplessness to truly make an impact. They also did not ask about Terry's connections with friends and the community.

One afternoon, Terry read a Movember and Beyond Blue report that showed the worrying steady decline of men post-30 to a potential life of isolation. A confession to two close mates about his mental health saw them relate and want to team up to help others.

A hastily arranged kick-around in a Sydney park saw 40 men of all ages and backgrounds get together and then chat and connect after. They struck gold in those post-game conversations.

It was then that he realised it wasn't just the kicking of the ball that helped, but the chats that were had afterwards. They gave Terry heart and were the catalyst to start Mr Perfect and host BBQs that connected men facing isolation and loneliness.

Isolation and loneliness are both symptoms and precursors to mental health issues. While men do access clinical and formal mental health services, as Terry found, these services can be cold and clinical. They also require people to visit a GP, obtain referrals and then visit specialists, often repeatedly.

This requires knowledge of the medical system and the courage to speak with a GP or specialist. This can alienate some men, while a BBQ in a park may be a great first step in tackling bigger issues in an unassuming and approachable setting.

The sharing of lived experiences of other men can convince others that seeking assistance is beneficial. Particularly if they are alone or do not have access to a support network.