



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into men's suicide rates

Submission number: 49

Submitter: Parents Beyond Breakup

Date authorised for publication: 9 September 2025



Parents Beyond Breakup
Keeping mum and dad alive and in their kids lives

Level 35, Tower One
100 Barangaroo Avenue
Sydney NSW 2000

Tel. 02 6652 8113
enquiries@parentsbeyondbreakup.com
www.parentsbeyondbreakup.com
ABN 30 606 982 343

8th August 2025

To the Standing Committee of Social Policy (Legislative Assembly for the ACT).

Parents Beyond Breakup (PBB) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to your inquiry into male suicide in Australia. As an organisation dedicated to supporting men experiencing situational distress, particularly following family or relationship breakdown, we offer insights from 26 years of frontline experience to advocate for urgent policy reform to address this critical public health issue.

The Urgent Need for Reform

Men account for approximately 75% of suicide deaths in Australia, yet most suicide prevention policies, programs, and initiatives adopt a gender-neutral approach that fails to address male-specific risk factors. This oversight limits the effectiveness of interventions and perpetuates unacceptably high male suicide rates.

Through our accredited frontline program, Dads in Distress (DiDs), PBB supports up to 10,000 separated men annually across Australia. Our services include a national helpline (1300 853 437), peer-led support groups, and both online and in-person mentoring in communities nationwide.

Over 50% of men accessing our services report suicidal ideation at their first point of contact. After an average of three support interactions, this figure drops to less than 1%, demonstrating the efficacy of our approach.

A cornerstone of our success lies in the recognition that the majority of male suicide, particularly within our core demographic of men experiencing family or relationship breakdown, stem from situational distress rather than mental health conditions. The most effective response to situational distress is targeted situational relief. That is, practical support such as assistance with legal, financial, or social challenges. Until the broader suicide prevention sector acknowledges that male suicide differs significantly from female suicide, due to distinct risk factors and triggers, substantial reductions in male suicide rates are unlikely to be achieved.

Key Insights from 26 Years of Experience

Our evidence, drawn from extensive qualitative analysis of client interactions, highlights the following critical considerations for reducing male suicide:

- **Male-Tailored Interventions Are Essential:** Generic approaches often fail to engage men effectively. Programs designed with male-specific needs in mind (without males being targeted as the 'problem') yield significantly better outcomes.
- **Focus on Situational Distress:** For men experiencing family or relationship breakdown, situational distress, rather than clinical mental health issues, is often the primary driver of suicidal ideation. Interventions targeting practical support (e.g., navigating legal or financial challenges) are more effective than traditional mental health-focused approaches.
- **Power of Peer Support:** Peer-led models, which offer unconditional positive regard and intuitive understanding, lower barriers to help-seeking among men. Despite its proven effectiveness, peer support remains underutilised in Australia.
- **Underfunding of Effective Programs:** Proven, community-based initiatives like Dads in Distress are often overlooked or underfunded in favour of traditional approaches that struggle to demonstrate measurable impact.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Policies in areas such as family law and domestic violence prevention can inadvertently exacerbate male suicide risk by perpetuating systemic biases, such as limited access to children or unfair treatment, which significantly heighten distress.
- **Challenging Ideological Assumptions:** Interventions that attribute male suicide to inherent flaws in men's behavior or nature, such as stoicism or traditional masculinity, are misguided and counterproductive. Effective suicide prevention strategies must be grounded in empirical evidence rather than ideological assumptions to ensure they address root causes and avoid exacerbating distress.
- **Collaboration Within the Sector:** Numerous organisations and programs deliver vital suicide prevention services, yet many operate in isolation. The absence of systemic incentives for collaboration hinders the potential for a coordinated approach that could amplify impact. Enhanced collaboration among stakeholders, through shared resources, knowledge exchange, and integrated service delivery, represents a cost-effective force multiplier that would significantly improve outcomes and save lives.

Recommendations for Policy Reform

To address the rate of male suicide, we urge the inquiry consider the following:

- **Increase Focus on and Funding of Successful Male-Specific Programs:** Prioritise investment in tailored initiatives, such as peer-led support groups and helplines, that have a proven track record of addressing men's unique needs.
- **Promote Peer Support Models:** Expand access to peer-based interventions, which have demonstrated success in engaging men and reducing suicidal ideation.
- **Address Systemic Drivers:** Reform family law and domestic violence policies to mitigate factors that contribute to situational distress, such as parental alienation, homelessness,

domestic violence or financial instability. Despite the complexity of this recommendation, simply connecting organisations like ours with those in front line service delivery (e.g. courts, police etc.) can have dramatic positive impact yet it is rarely enabled or authorised.

- **Integrate Practical Support:** Develop policies that prioritise practical, situation-specific interventions over purely clinical approaches to better address the root causes of a significant proportion of male suicide.
- **Drive Sector Collaboration:** Create systems, policies and processes that provide incentive to expert service providers within the sector to better collaborate vs compete.

Our Commitment to Collaboration

Parents Beyond Breakup is committed to sharing our expertise and data with the inquiry to inform effective policy development. We are prepared to provide detailed insights into our Dads in Distress program, including client outcomes and evidence of our impact, to support the committee's work.

Please contact us to arrange further discussion or to access additional information. We look forward to contributing to meaningful change that saves men's lives. Thank you for your dedication to addressing this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Pete Nicholls, CEO
Parents Beyond Breakup