

MENS (Men Engaging New Strategies)

Men's behaviour change programs are an important aspect of reducing violence against women and children in our community. The delivery of the Men Engaging New Strategies (known as, Men's Behaviour Change Portal, from October 2022) at Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) is offered to low-moderate offenders of family violence who are accepting some responsibility for their own behaviours. Typically, men who engage with the program have identified that they need assistance with their mental health and strategies to work towards respectful relationships rather than abusive ones. The 19-week program consists of four pre sessions where practitioners assess the suitability and eligibility of the participant to continue into the group work component. If deemed suitable, participants are enrolled in the 10-week group work program based on a feminist framework of family violence using CBT practice principles to increase understanding around why their behaviours are unacceptable and strategies to increase their ability to make different choices.

The group uses the voice of the women and children in the participants lives to ensure that participants' can personally identify with the material based on their own family circumstances. Once the group has finished, participants are then provided with four post group sessions that are aimed to consolidate the learnings and to move into an action phase of change. This is then followed with a group reunion three months later to determine if change has been sustained.

The program is clearly outlined to participants as a step towards their behaviour change and is not a one-time commitment, as change only occurs when behaviour change is ongoing and consistent. They can then move into respectful relationships and keep the women and children in their lives safe from their abuse. The program also incorporates partner contact with current or ex-partners to assess their safety and to provide referrals to other specialist family violence services if needed.

In addition to the MENS program, an online facility has been developed to increase opportunities to solidify learnings and to really focus on how to make positive changes outside of sessions. Participants are provided a log in at the point of intake and asked to work through the program content. Participants' entries in the program are made available to practitioners for further exploration during sessions. The online facility has further use outside of the program, public users can access the resource and complete a limited version of the program where information about what family violence looks like, strategies to manage emotions and behaviour and how to work towards respectful relationships is available.

