

# ACT Inquiry into Men's Suicide Rates

Summary of yourtown and headspace's advocacy submission 2025

## What is it about?

**yourtown** and **headspace** made a joint submission to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Men's Suicide Rates. The submission highlights the urgent need for targeted, gender-sensitive suicide prevention strategies for boys and young men in the ACT. Drawing on recent research and frontline experience, it outlines the barriers young men face in seeking help, the importance of community and school-based prevention, and the need for a whole-of-government approach to address the social determinants of suicide.

## Why is it important?

Suicide is the leading cause of death for young people aged 15–24 in Australia, and young men are three times more likely to die by suicide than young women. Rates of distress and suicidality among children, young people, and families are rising, with particular concern for vulnerable groups such as First Nations young men, LGBTIQ+ youth, those in rural areas, or those in statutory care. The submission calls for urgent, ambitious, and nuanced responses to prevent further loss of life and to ensure that all young men can access the support they need, when they need it.

## Some of **yourtown** and **headspace**'s key messages:

### 1. Establish a Youth Suicide Prevention Response Framework

The ACT Government should create a framework tailored to the developmental and cultural needs of young people, with dedicated strategies for priority groups such as children aged 10–14, First Nations youth, and those in regional or semi-rural communities. This should include age-appropriate interventions across schools, youth services, and digital platforms, co-designed with young people.

### 2. Implement tailored and responsive pathways for high-risk young men

Certain groups of young men—including First Nations and LGBTIQ+ youth, those involved with the justice system, and young men in or leaving statutory care—face higher risks and significant barriers to accessing support. Addressing their needs requires funding peer navigators to build trust, embedding tailored screening and referral pathways within youth justice and care systems, expanding telehealth and outreach in regional areas, equipping frontline workers with trauma-informed training, and ensuring youth-led advisory panels help shape services that are relevant and accessible.

### 3. Adopt a 'no wrong door' approach across services

A "no wrong door" approach means every point of contact—across health, education, justice, housing, and community sectors—serves as a gateway to timely, tailored support for young men. This requires proactive suicide screening, holistic care at all service entry points, targeted training for staff, and coordinated efforts to reduce service fragmentation and ensure seamless access to help.

### 4. Invest in family-inclusive suicide prevention

Families and peers, especially mothers, are often the first support for young men in distress, yet many families lack understanding of suicidality and feel unsupported by the mental health system. The ACT Government should build the capacity of parents and caregivers through education and compassionate response skills, embed family-inclusive care in youth mental health services and schools, ensure resources reflect lived experience, and help families understand how home environments affect suicidality so they can create safer, more nurturing spaces.

### 5. Address the social determinants of suicide

Suicidal distress is often linked to factors like disengagement from education or employment, housing instability, cost-of-living pressures, trauma, and discrimination. The ACT Government should adopt a whole-of-government strategy to tackle these issues through coordinated support and targeted education campaigns that challenge harmful masculinity norms and promote help-seeking.

### 6. Challenge harmful masculinity norms and promote help-seeking

Systemic masculinity norms discourage young men from seeking help and expressing emotions, as cultural expectations around strength and self-reliance often prevent them from reaching out for support. Tailored education initiatives and awareness campaigns should challenge these norms and promote mental health literacy. Campaigns developed in consultation with young men and those with lived experience will help reduce stigma and make it easier for young men to seek help when needed.

**READ YOURTOWN'S FULL SUBMISSION**

