



THE MEN'S TABLE

Strength To Care

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ACT Government Pre Budget Submission: FY27 - FY29

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Community-Led Early Intervention for Men

Funding request: \$1.5 million over three years (2026-27 to 2028-29)

From 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2029

Vers 1.0

February 2026



Executive Summary

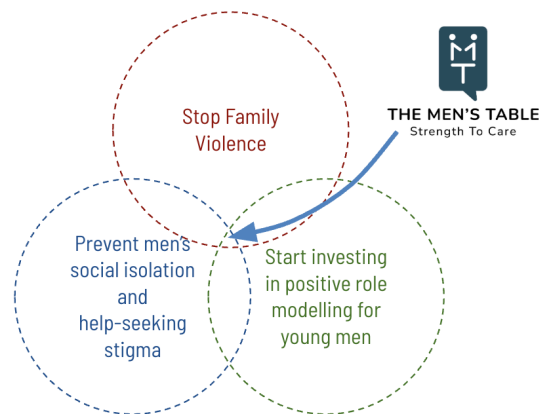
The Men's Table seeks \$1.5 million over three years from the Australian Capital Territory Government to strengthen and expand a community-led early intervention program for men across the ACT.

The ACT continues to experience pressure from male suicide, social isolation, and domestic and family violence. Men account for most suicide deaths in the Territory. Police and courts manage high and increasing volumes of family violence incidents. Many men present late, after harm has occurred.

The Men's Table works earlier. It provides structured, peer-led connection for men before a crisis. The model strengthens emotional regulation, reduces isolation, and supports safer relationships. It aligns with ACT priorities for prevention, wellbeing, and reducing downstream demand on acute services.

Funding will stabilise existing Tables, expand access for priority populations, and embed long-term prevention infrastructure across the ACT.

1. ACT Context and Need



Diag 1. A leverage point for all 3 imperatives; community led, **healthy masculinities** and *positive male peer relationships*.

1.1 Suicide and Men's Mental Health

The ACT's suicide rate remains a concern, with an age-standardised rate of approximately 11 to 12 deaths per 100,000 people. Men account for around three quarters of suicide deaths. Risk is highest among men aged 18 to 35 and 35 to 64.

Despite strong clinical services, many men do not engage until crisis. Non-clinical, community-based early intervention options remain limited.



1.2 Social Isolation

The ACT has a highly mobile workforce, a large tertiary student population, and a high proportion of single-person households. Men relocating for work or study often lack informal social networks. Isolation increases the risk of depression, substance misuse, suicide, and relationship breakdown.

2. Family and Domestic Violence in the ACT

Family and domestic violence remains a significant pressure on ACT services.

ACT Policing attends an average of approximately 11 domestic and family violence incidents each day. Family violence accounts for around 43 per cent of all assault matters reported in the Territory. Police-attended incidents increased by around 20 per cent between 2022 and 2023, continuing an upward trend since 2019.

Family violence drives substantial demand on policing, courts, hospitals, housing services, and community supports. Men are over-represented as respondents in police-attended incidents, highlighting the need for earlier engagement with men before harm occurs.

National modelling estimates the economic cost of domestic and family violence at \$21.7 billion per year, driven by health, justice, lost productivity, and long-term social impacts. Preventive approaches that reduce escalation deliver significant downstream savings.

The Men's Table addresses this gap by working with men earlier, in community settings, before crisis and justice involvement.

3. Policy and Legislative Alignment

This proposal aligns with key ACT legislation and strategies, including:

- ACT Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2024–2028
- ACT Mental Health Strategy 2024–2034
- ACT Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy
- Family Violence Act 2016 (ACT)
- ACT Wellbeing Framework

The Men's Table delivers practical, community-based action aligned with these priorities.

4. About The Men's Table in the ACT



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The Men's Table operates a growing Table community across Canberra. Men meet monthly in small, facilitated groups that build trust, accountability, and emotional literacy over time.

The ACT program is established and ongoing, not a short-term pilot.

Current delivery includes:

- Fifteen active Tables
- Around 150 active members meeting monthly
- Trained volunteer facilitators and leaders
- Strong demand for new Tables and settings

5. Evidence of Impact

Participant data and independent evaluation show that The Men's Table:

- Reduces loneliness and social isolation
- Improves emotional regulation and help-seeking
- Strengthens peer accountability and relationship skills
- Supports earlier disclosure of distress, reducing escalation

These outcomes build protective factors linked to lower suicide risk and reduced family violence.

6. Proposed ACT Program and Projects

6.1 Our Watch Primary Prevention Partnership

Delivery of an Our Watch-aligned primary prevention program in the ACT region, in conjunction with regional partners. This work strengthens prevention of violence through peer accountability and healthy masculinities and positive role modelling for men of all ages

6.2 ACT Tertiary Campuses Program

Expansion of Tables across ACT tertiary campuses, reaching up to 5,000 staff and students aged 18 to 35. Funding includes tailored monitoring and evaluation to measure outcomes for younger men.

6.3 Mental Health First Aid Training



Delivery of three Mental Health First Aid courses per year, training 75 men annually. This strengthens early identification, peer response, and safe escalation pathways.

6.4 Volunteer Leadership and Care Model

Training and support for three volunteers per annum in part-time regional leadership roles focused on the care of Tables, facilitator support, and safeguarding.

6.5 Regional Host and Stewardship

A dedicated 0.5 FTE Regional Host and Steward to coordinate delivery, manage risk, support volunteers, and grow the ACT Table community.

7. Budget

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Our Watch aligned ACT program	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
ACT campuses expansion and evaluation	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$100,000
Mental Health First Aid training (75 men)	\$37,500	\$37,500	\$37,500
Volunteer regional leaders (3 roles)	\$30,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Regional Host and Steward	\$80,000	\$85,000	\$90,000
Care and coordination of existing and new Tables	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000
Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting	\$42,500	\$42,500	\$57,500
Total	\$460,000	\$520,000	\$565,000

A contingency and administration allowance brings the total funding request to \$1.545 million over three years.



8. Deliverables

Over three years, the ACT Government will receive:

- Sustained operation of existing ACT Tables
- Expansion into campuses and priority populations
- A supported Table community of at least 154 active men
- Trained volunteer leaders embedded locally
- Improved early identification and peer response capacity
- Regular reporting on participation, outcomes, and risk management

9. Value for Money

The Men's Table is preventive, volunteer-led, and low cost. It reduces escalation into crisis, policing, hospitalisation, and justice responses. The model complements existing ACT services and strengthens community-level prevention.

With on average \$120,000 philanthropic and government health funding in each of the last 4 years we have grown slowly by 4 Tables a year to now have 154 men contributing 5400 hours annually with their participation. Using the Volunteering Australia calculator, this generates \$282,000 in economic value—more than double our cash funding. We are not even adding the impact of

- The Ripple Leverage Effect into health families, workplaces and communities which would have multiple times of social impact.
- Local Hospitality Stimulus: Our "cheap meal and a drink" model injects roughly \$54,000 p.a. directly into local ACT small businesses and venues.

10. Conclusion

The ACT has strong crisis services. The gap remains early, community-based prevention for men.

The Men's Table fills this gap with a proven, governed, and scalable model. An investment of \$1.5 million over three years will embed prevention infrastructure that supports safer men, stronger relationships, and healthier ACT communities.



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Sources

1. ACT Policing Annual Report 2023–24
2. ACT Policing family violence statistics, 2022–2024
3. ACT Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2024–2028
4. ACT Mental Health Strategy 2024–2034
5. ACT Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy
6. Family Violence Act 2016 (ACT)
7. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death and Partner Violence data
8. Our Watch, *The Cost of Violence Against Women and Their Children in Australia*

For further information:

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Appendices:

- 2025 Impact Report: A Thousand Men's Voices
- 2023 Impact Report: The Ripple Effect