

Ground-breaking study identifies the pressures facing boys and men living in the Macedon Ranges

Results from a community survey targeting residents of the Macedon Ranges has highlighted that there is work to be done to ensure men get the support they need to live healthier lives. The survey is part of #thehumancode, a project led by local organisations along with Orygen, Australia's centre of excellence in youth mental health, with activities funded by the North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network and Vic Health.

Associate Professor Simon Rice, project lead at Orygen, said the survey asked community members for their views on what it means to be a man living in the Macedon Ranges. "Only 55 per cent of people who responded agreed that males in the region are comfortable seeking out health services when they need support."

"A further 57 per cent of respondents agreed that men and boys would not be comfortable talking about their mental health before things reached crisis point," Associate Professor Rice said.

The survey also found that nearly half of males felt that there was an expectation to take on traditional masculine roles such as being the main provider or always being strong. Research shows that adherence to these traditional masculine stereotypes is associated with higher rates of suicide, depression and anxiety, risky behaviours such as drink driving and violence against women.

Amongst younger male respondents, those aged 16-25 years, the majority believe that men and boys would need to drink alcohol in order to be able to talk about their emotions to friends or family.

Despite some of the challenges highlighted, findings also indicate that the majority of survey respondents agree that men feel connected to others in their local community and have relationships and connections that promote good mental health.

Jeremy Hearne, General Manager at Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health is a member of the working group overseeing the project. "We now have the information we need to start a genuine conversation with the community on the impact of these attitudes and behaviours on the health of men and boys. Our next steps will be to work in partnership with local services and the community to design and pilot activities that can improve the health men and boys and those around them."

This year, Men's Health Week runs from 14-20 June. Men's Health Week is an annual campaign aimed at raising public awareness of the health issues impacting men and boys, and encouraging those males in our lives to seek early support for their mental and physical health, before they become a problem.

If you need help call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or text 0477 13 11 14 (6pm-midnight).

END OF RELEASE

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