Dear Senate Mens Health Inquiry

I wish to specifically address the following issues:-

- adequacy of existing education and awareness campaigns regarding men's health for both men and the wider community,
- prevailing attitudes of men towards their own health and sense of wellbeing and how these are affecting men's health in general, and
- the extent, funding and adequacy for treatment services and general support programs for men's health in metropolitan, rural, regional and remote areas.

As a member and facilitator for the Mens Health and Wellbeing Association Queensland (MHWAQ) having found out by accident such an organisation existed when I was in a life crisis, likely depression, after a separation 4 years ago I have an insiders view as to the three points to be addressed by the inquiry as listed above.

Adequacy of existing education and awareness campaigns regarding men's health for both men and the wider community,
I submit that there is little awareness regarding mens health issues, particularly mental health, in the male or wider community. I am not aware now or have I become aware of the mens health association from media or government services. I came across the association through an accidental meeting of another man at a workshop I was attending. I often hear from men in groups that I facilitate who are typically suffering from depression from a life crisis that they know little of the resources available to men who are needing support. There is no portal existing that I am aware, even the MHWAQ website links provides few links to other resources available to men seeking to move beyond depression arising from a life crisis. I also

I have reviewed the Mens Line Australia, I would never ring this type of site for support, the feedback from the men in my mens group and men who have I have facilitated have not chosen to contact this site. The MHWAQ is based on men supporting men, face to face, about empowerment through men being supported to take responsibility for their own lives, actions and relationships.

Prevailing attitudes of men towards their own health and sense of wellbeing and how these are affecting men's health in general, and
My submission is that men (I) ignore(d) my mental health until a crisis forced me to address it, I imagine I was operating in a paradigm that is widespread in the Australian male community that to seek support shows weakness. As was the case with changing community values around the equality of women, it took time, commitment and money to change societal views. I submit that it is necessary for the government's of Australia to embrace a view that it is not a mens problem it is societal problem, it is about embracing the humanity of all men, whereas the view prevailing, is that men are more than human, they don't need support and are weak and <u>not</u> strong if they seek connection with other men and/or professional health advice.

The extent, funding and adequacy for treatment services and general support programs for men's health in metropolitan, rural, regional and remote areas.
I submit that funding is totally inadequate from state and federal governments and which obviously does not recognise the economic cost from the loss of productivity from mens health issues. I submit that the Australian government's are not aware of the economic cost resulting from men falling into depression as a result of a life crisis, and the cost of men either not recovering or recovering over longer timeframe than would have been the case if they had access to a mens health organization such as MHWAQ. In may case, I closed down a business for 3 years which employed 9 people during my recovery after crisis, now I have employed 9 people again after my first year back in business. So in my personal case the economic cost to my recovery would have been $4M to the Australian economy or more. I believe this would not have been necessary had I been able to seek support from MHWAQ, had I been aware of its existence or aware that I was proceeding towards a crisis. Every year MHWAQ support over 200 men, which even it were at a cost of $100,000 per man, that would be a cost to the economy of $20M p.a for each year these men are not actively back in society. I imagine the number of men who are not operating at high levels of productivity would be in the order of 10%-15% of the male population, costing the Australian economy by billions per annum.

The evidence I have that the government's do not provide financial support or understand the economic cost of mens health issues is the fact that MHWAQ is not able to obtain financial support from either

governments to undertake their vital work. MHWAQ is an entirely volunteer organisation that relies on the free time of men to support other men.

regards

Francis Barram