

# men's wellbeing matters inc.



promoting good health & wellbeing for men  
on the Mornington Peninsula

[www.menswellbeingmatters.com.au](http://www.menswellbeingmatters.com.au)

## About Men's Wellbeing Matters



Patron: The Governor of Victoria  
Professor David de Kretser AC

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Men die five years earlier than women. Men suffer a greater burden of disease. Men are more likely to be afflicted by early onset health conditions. Most of the health problems encountered by men are modifiable through early intervention.

As well as the early death and personal suffering affecting individuals, the poor state of men's health in Victoria has profound impacts on families, communities and the economy. The economic productivity losses alone from preventable and avoidable health problems demand a response.

Much of the impact is avoidable. Men disproportionately display modifiable risk factors that lead to poor health and early death. Education coupled with a solid partnership with a general practitioner can make a significant difference.

AMA Victoria has identified better health for men as a priority public health area for 2007 and 2008. There are 2.42 million men in Victoria, comprising 49.1 per cent of the population (ABS 2007), who need better health care. AMA Victoria will work with government, community groups and other professions to ensure men's health potential is realised. If we can all work together to achieve better health for men, then the Victorian community will have more quality time to spend with fathers, sons and friends. The Victorian economy will grow. Men will live longer, happier lives.

Dr Douglas Travis, President Australian Medical Association Victoria from *Better Health for Men* (2007)

## Introduction

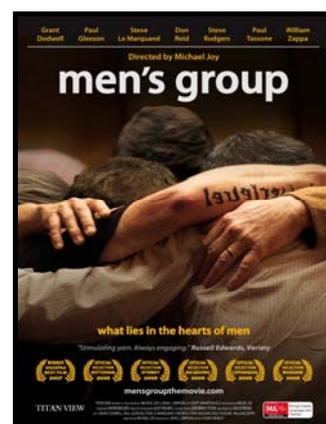
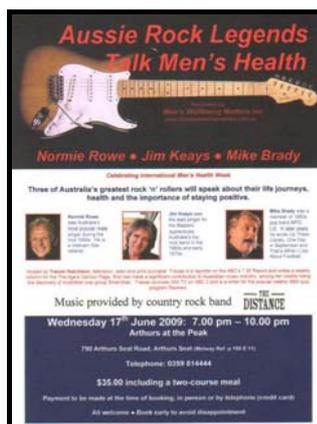
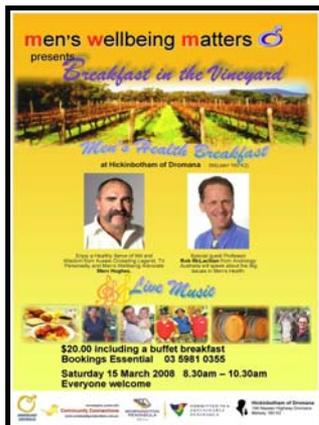
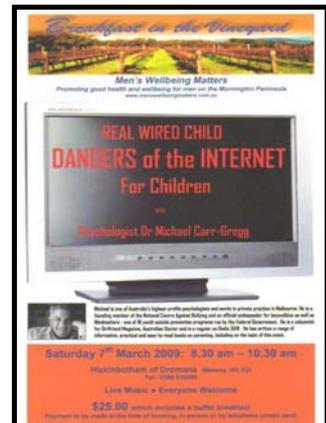
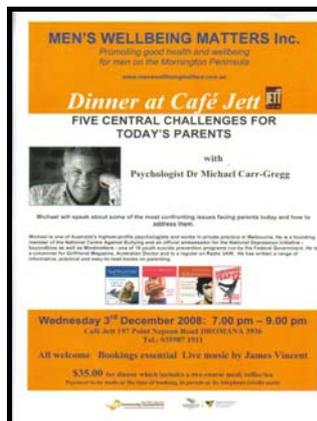
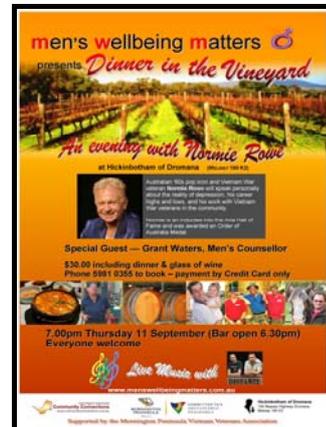
**men's wellbeing matters** is a unique grass-roots community group which had its origin on the Mornington Peninsula in October 2007 and since then has maintained a strong record of achievement with recognition and commendations for its work increasing.

Through health promotion, education and community capacity building **men's wellbeing matters** aims to improve the health and wellbeing of men on the Mornington Peninsula.

The work of **men's wellbeing matters** is undertaken by professional men from the fields of medicine, social work, psychology, business, the arts, local government, policing, sport and engineering - and mostly on a voluntary or pro bono basis.

To December 2008, **men's wellbeing matters** had conducted five events and has more events and activities planned for 2009. Each function held has had a capacity audience, with the event at the Peninsula Community Theatre in June 2008 attracting nearly 500 people.

The following are flyers from **men's wellbeing matters'** events:



## Why do we need a group such as this?

There is a wide range of information indicating that all sections of the community need to take greater responsibility for men's health and wellbeing, including men themselves, health and welfare services and government policy and funding programs. The following is a small selection of the available information.

### The Florey Study

Preliminary results of the 2007 Florey Adelaide Male Ageing Study presents a concerning picture of men's health. Among the study participants aged 35 - 80 years:

- ✚ 47% were overweight and a further 31.5% obese
- ✚ 61% did not get sufficient exercise - 44% were sedentary
- ✚ Over one third have been diagnosed with high cholesterol
- ✚ 30.2% have been diagnosed with high blood pressure
- ✚ 57.2% reported some degree of erectile dysfunction
- ✚ 12.5% have been diagnosed with depression
- ✚ 9.3% have been diagnosed with anxiety
- ✚ 11% have been diagnosed with insomnia
- ✚ 9.5% have been diagnosed with diabetes

### Comparisons between men's and women's health

There are some interesting comparisons between men's health and women's health. The figures vary depending on the source, but essentially they are in agreement. For example:

- ✚ The average life span for males is 76 years and for women it is 81
- ✚ Heart disease kills almost twice as many men as women
- ✚ Men are ill more frequently than women
- ✚ Men use health services 40% less than women and see their GP only rarely
- ✚ Depression is very high with males and often goes undiagnosed
- ✚ Men use counselling services 50% less than women
- ✚ About 62% of men are overweight, compared with 45% of women
- ✚ Despite a concerted anti-smoking campaign, 26% of men still smoke compared to 19% of women
- ✚ The rate of work injuries is much higher for men than for women
- ✚ Deaths from prostate cancer have overtaken deaths from breast cancer

### The impact of this situation

There is a broad range of adverse physical, social and economic consequence resulting from men's health and wellbeing issues remaining unaddressed.

The Australian Medical Association, for example, expressed strong concerns recently about the wide-ranging social and economic effects of men's poor health and wellbeing. A range of university studies has emphasised the high costs to industry and the country's economy of men's problems.

The media and human service groups report regularly on the adverse effects of men's problems and frustrations on families, the community and on other people.

The following highlights a brief cross section of the consequences of men's poor health and wellbeing:

- ✚ Reduced productivity at work
- ✚ Absenteeism
- ✚ Loss of employment
- ✚ Reliance on inadequate pensions and benefits
- ✚ Loss of quality of life

- ✚ Stress and anxiety in families
- ✚ Depression and risk-taking behaviour
- ✚ Child and spouse abuse
- ✚ Child behaviour problems
- ✚ Relationship and family breakdown
- ✚ Premature death or disability
- ✚ Reduced physical activity, leading to obesity, heart disease, type II diabetes, stroke, cancer, arthritis, etc.
- ✚ Poor physiological and immune responses through inability to manage stress
- ✚ Increase in family health care expenses
- ✚ Reduced capacity to deal with life's challenges
- ✚ Resorting to alcohol and substance abuse
- ✚ Increase in traffic accidents, suicide and criminal violence
- ✚ Reduced capacity to contribute to and benefit from the community
- ✚ An increase in health and welfare service costs to taxpayers

### Are current services effective?

Despite the availability of a wide range of health and welfare services in the community, it would seem that men are not accessing these services, or they are but are not receiving good-enough advice, or the advice that they are being given is not being followed. Consequently, the problems of many men are not being addressed at all or not being dealt with properly.

Traditionally, men have been reluctant to seek out professional assistance with medical and other personal problems, or even to speak about them with close family and friends. One explanation for this is that men have been socialised to be stoic about their problems. Another view, however, is that services do not appreciate fully the unique biological, social and cultural determinants of health and wellbeing for men. Consequently, services are not accessible or welcoming enough for men.

Much work needs to be undertaken to encourage men to take greater care of their health and wellbeing. Similarly, the community generally, governments, health and welfare services require assistance to understand that there is a unique range of factors influencing men's health and wellbeing. These factors should be reflected strongly in the ways that we respond to men's health and welfare.



AFL legend Simon Madden at Breakfast in the Vineyard, Hickinbotham of Dromana, October 2007 - the first event conducted by **men's wellbeing matters**.

## What does 'wellbeing' mean?

'Wellbeing' refers to how a man's life is going, that is if his life circumstances are stable, healthy and comfortable allowing him to pursue his full potential and his family to pursue theirs.

While popular use of 'wellbeing' relates to physical health only, **men's wellbeing matters** has a wider focus and is concerned with a man's social health as well, that is how he is faring in a range of areas of his life, such as family, education, employment, income, housing, sport, recreation and social support networks.

Closely related to social health is intellectual health. This is not just about scholastic opportunity and achievement but also is about attitudes to issues such as human rights, culture, cultural differences, the role of women, parenting, the environment and citizen responsibility. A man's outlook and associated responses to these and other important issues can have a major impact on the wellbeing of those around him, including the wider community.

## What does the group plan to do?

Activities the group plans to undertake include to:

- ✚ increase public awareness of the issues
- ✚ encourage and assist men to take greater responsibility for their wellbeing and behaviour
- ✚ encourage community services to be responsive to the unique needs of men
- ✚ encourage good relations between men and community services
- ✚ advise and support local employers of men
- ✚ contribute to education about men's health and wellbeing
- ✚ bring interested people together for the exchange of ideas, knowledge, skills and resources
- ✚ encourage interested parties to collaborate
- ✚ attract support from government, community and business.
- ✚ assist other communities and groups to address the issues
- ✚ encourage and support research
- ✚ contribute to government policy development



Merv Hughes and Professor Rob McLachlan at Breakfast in the Vineyard, Hickinbotham of Dromana, March 2008.

## How will the group do this?

**men's wellbeing matters** will conduct a range of events and activities on the Peninsula which will convey a strong message of encouragement to men about the benefits of good health and wellbeing and how they can be achieved.

It will have displays in public places providing information and advice about men's health and wellbeing.

It will provide information to decision makers from all levels of government, business and the community about men's health needs on the Peninsula.

It will advise, support and work in partnership with other groups interested in men's health and wellbeing.

It will consult and take advice from various groups interested in men's health and welfare about the direction of its activities.

## Why address men's issues in these ways?

There is much evidence to indicate that health promotion and public education campaigning are effective ways to bring about changes in people's thinking and behaviour. Campaigns which have experienced success in Australia have addressed community problems such as:

- ✚ Health and fitness (Life Be In It - Norm)
- ✚ Skin cancer (Slip, slop, slap)
- ✚ Smoking (Quit)
- ✚ Environment conservation (Clean Up Australia)
- ✚ Road safety (TAC television commercials)
- ✚ Breast Cancer (Pink Ribbon)

Despite the success of these approaches, only around 3 per cent of Australia's health budget is allocated to prevention strategies such as health promotion. By far the majority of government support is allocated to treating health and wellbeing problems when they have reached an acute level. This is the most expensive end of the intervention continuum and for some people who are seriously ill it is too late. This highlights the importance of:

1. Communities themselves taking responsibility for addressing men's health and wellbeing issues at a local level through working together on health promotion and public education strategies, but at the same time
2. Highlighting to governments the needs and problems in their communities with the aim of securing appropriate levels of resourcing.

**men's wellbeing matters** is utilising both these approaches and believes strongly that it is crucial for local individuals and community groups to work together if the desired improvements to men's health and wellbeing are to be achieved.



The Governor of Victoria Professor David de Kretser AC (Patron of **men's wellbeing matters**) and sports physician and media commentator Dr Peter Larkins at the men's health forum at the Peninsula Community Theatre in June 2008.

## Assessment, referral and counselling

Through their contact with the various activities conducted by **men's wellbeing matters**, some men in distress will seek advice and support from the group. Members of the **men's wellbeing matters** team who possess the appropriate health and welfare qualifications, skills and experience will undertake a basic assessment of the problems that these men present and refer them to local support services best equipped to meet their needs.

As resources permit, **men's wellbeing matters** will engage professionals in private practice to support these men when public sector services are unavailable.

## What do others say should be done?

A variety of strategies has been proposed to address men's health and wellbeing issues in Australia. A summary of them is as follows:

- ✚ Government health and welfare policy and programs must take into account that men's health and wellbeing requires specific attention and that knowledge and services should be more 'men friendly'.
- ✚ Groups concerned with the health and wellbeing of men need to co-operate and whenever possible work in partnership.
- ✚ Boys' and men's beliefs about their health and wellbeing need to be addressed from an early age through formal education in schools and more broad-based health-promotion campaigns, with greater emphasis on providing services/education through the workplace.

- ✚ Public, health and welfare professions and policymakers need to accept that men's health and wellbeing needs are different to those of women and make an effort to understand the differences.
- ✚ Resources for men's health and wellbeing promotion should be comparable with the resources allocated to other areas of health and wellbeing promotion.
- ✚ Men's health and wellbeing needs to be a field of practice in its own right to encourage research, debate, education and practice.

**men's wellbeing matters** will advocate for the implementation of each of these strategies.

## Background of the group

The first 12 months of **men's wellbeing matters**' aimed to assess the feasibility of the group, that is to trial a series of health promotion and education events to see if:

1. Local people would attend and deem them valuable
2. Institutions such as local government, national men's health groups, key local medical and welfare groups, business and other community groups would support the work of **men's wellbeing matters**
3. The initiators of **men's wellbeing matters** would be encouraged sufficiently by the above outcomes to make a long-term commitment to the group.

The results were that **men's wellbeing matters** achieved a capacity audience at each of its five events – the biggest audience being 450+ at the Peninsula Community Theatre in June 2008. Strong positive appraisals were received from audiences at each event.

The initiators of **men's wellbeing matters** raised the funds and in-kind support from a wide range of sources to run the five events, including from:

- ✚ Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
- ✚ Mornington Peninsula Community Connections
- ✚ The Triple A Foundation
- ✚ The Peninsula GP Network
- ✚ The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia
- ✚ Beyondblue
- ✚ Andrology Australia
- ✚ Family Life
- ✚ American Medical Systems
- ✚ Foundation 49
- ✚ Hickinbotham of Dromana
- ✚ Traineeship Advisory Services Australia
- ✚ BlueScope Steel
- ✚ Tribal Media Makers

Encouraged by strong support from audiences and sponsors, the initiators of **men's wellbeing matters** commenced planning for the group to make a significant and sustainable contribution to men's health and wellbeing on the Mornington Peninsula.

## Who is behind this project?

As with most grass-roots community projects, at the foundation of **men's wellbeing matters** is a group of mostly local people who have a vision for a better way of addressing the issues and possess the passion and strong commitment to make it happen.

The following are members of the **men's wellbeing matters** team.



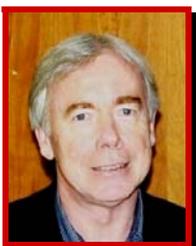
**Professor David de Kretser AC**, Patron, is the Governor of Victoria and one of Australia's most highly regarded men's health experts. His research into reproductive biology, infertility and endocrinology has been recognised nationally and internationally. Professor de Kretser has a hands-on role with MWM; he was a presenter at MWM's June 2008 event in Mornington and will open and present at its June 2009 event.



**Greg Holding**, Chairman, is one of Victoria's most respected men's health promotion practitioners. He has qualifications in Social Work, Health Promotion and Community Development. He was the driving force behind the establishment of the Frankston Men's Shed and the award-winning Men Behaving Positively forums which were held in Frankston for four years between 2004 and 2007.



**Dr Mark Sujewski**, Deputy Chairman, is a general practitioner on the Mornington Peninsula with a strong interest in and commitment to men's health. He graduated from Monash University in 1986 and then worked in the UK, Africa and in outback Australia before settling into general practice in Mt Martha. His interests are reflected in his work as he is involved in travel medicine, paediatrics and he helped initiate a local health project for men. He is on the board of the Peninsula GP Network.



**Dr John Murphy**, Secretary, is a leading Community Development practitioner. He has been a Lecturer at Monash University and has worked in the community and business sectors for more than 40 years. He has published extensively on the topic of community building and spoken throughout Australia and New Zealand on the subject. His work is funded by Barrie Thomas, a businessman philanthropist who owns The Body Shop retail chain in New Zealand and the Levi® Stores franchise in Australia and New Zealand.



**Joe Cauchi**, Treasurer, is a senior director with the Mornington Peninsula Shire. He is a Doctoral candidate with a Masters Degree in Social Work and a Bachelor of Theology. Joe has an extensive background in the human services with Local and Federal government and the not-for-profit sectors. He has played a crucial role in gaining financial and in-kind support for the group since it was established.



**Normie Rowe AO** was Australia's most popular male singer in the mid-1960s. He is a Vietnam War veteran who was awarded the Medal of Australia for his support for veterans, children and contribution to the entertainment industry. He is one of the busiest entertainers of his generation and travels throughout Australia on a regular basis. Normie's special role on the MWM committee is to provide advice on the group's work with veterans.



**Stuart Marshall** is a mechanical engineer. Raised on a farm in Shelford in the Geelong Region, Stu completed an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic at the Ford Motor Assembly Plant in Geelong. He completed an Honours Degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch. Stu has travelled widely as an expedition leader in outdoor recreation.



**Ted Kay** grew up on the Mornington Peninsula. As a member of the Victoria Police he has worked in a diversity of roles including in the field of family violence. Ted has developed and promoted services for men experiencing a range of social problems including perpetrators of violence. He has co-ordinated community forums addressing the issue of family violence and other family-related matters. Ted has an Associate Diploma in Business Management from Monash University

## Are there others interested in this project?

Groups especially keen to see **men's wellbeing matters** develop include the Mornington Peninsula Shire, Mornington Peninsula Community Connections, the Peninsula GP Network, Andrology Australia, Foundation 49, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, BlueScope Steel, beyondblue and Family Life.

Each of these groups has already supported the early development of **men's wellbeing matters**, including event sponsorships, provision of speakers, advice and literature on men's health.

Those involved with **men's wellbeing matters** have received positive responses from every individual and group that they have consulted for advice and opinions about the project.

Women have been equally as supportive of the project as men. Most people in the community are aware that men's health and wellbeing is an area that requires urgent attention given that men's poor health and wellbeing affects everyone.

## Will it be part of another group?

**men's wellbeing matters inc.** is an independent, incorporated organisation governed by an elected committee comprising, for the most part men who are residents of the Mornington Peninsula. **men's wellbeing matters** works in co-operation and in partnership with existing community groups whose role is compatible with and complementary to the aims of **men's wellbeing matters**.

Organisations with which **men's wellbeing matters** shares a particularly close relationship are the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and Mornington Peninsula Community Connections, both of which have provided financial and in-kind support to the group during its establishment phase.

## Will it compete with women's groups?

The group's emphasis on men's health and wellbeing does not infer a contest for resources nor an attempt to detract from or obstruct the health and wellbeing agenda of women. By adopting a gender approach, **men's wellbeing matters'** aim is to highlight the key biological, social and cultural determinants of health and wellbeing for men so that it will become a specialist field in its own right.

**men's wellbeing matters** is well aware that most advances in women's health over the last 40 years can be attributed largely to women themselves taking responsibility for their own field of health. This has inspired **men's wellbeing matters** to do similarly.

As appropriate, **men's wellbeing matters** will seek the support of and co-operate with women's groups on issues relating to men's and family health and wellbeing.

Women are encouraged to attend all of **men's wellbeing matters'** events given the crucial role that they play in family health. Around a third of the audiences at **men's wellbeing matters'** events are women, most of whom attend with their partners.

## Will the project be sustainable?

**men's wellbeing matters** will strive to achieve long-lasting benefits for the community by:

- ✚ avoiding dependency on large amounts of government and other sources of limited-term support
- ✚ maintaining a core of talented and committed local men for the management committee
- ✚ establishing a wide network of equally talented men and women to advise and support the group
- ✚ developing a range of supportive partnerships
- ✚ maintaining a non-partisan party political approach



AFL legend Robbie Flower with 7.30 Report and Age journalist Tracee Hutchison at the men's health forum in Mornington in 2008.

## Who will do the work?

As **men's wellbeing matters** does not have employed staff, the management committee will take the major responsibility for the activities of the group.

The Shire of Mornington has committed some resources to the project and Mornington Peninsula Community Connections has provided some staffing, financial and in-kind resources during the project's establishment period.

As the project continues to develop, employed staff may be engaged, but it is anticipated that this would be some years into the future if funding becomes available.

A short-term priority is to obtain funding to second Chairman Greg Holding from his position in Aged and Disability Services at the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council for a day a week to work for **men's wellbeing matters**. The Shire is supportive of this plan which will allow Greg to maintain his current employment benefits.

## What are the group's limits?

Through its talented and committed members, strong project design, meticulous planning, energetic event advertising and the creative use of its limited resources **men's wellbeing matters** is able to conduct quality events with esteemed presenters and capacity audiences.

With no employed staff, however, all projects and activities are undertaken by committee members on a pro bono or voluntary basis. This is in addition to the many demands of their professional full-time employment and commitment to family life.

Clearly, therefore, **men's wellbeing matters** has to be realistic and selective with its activities to ensure that its limited financial and human resources are used effectively.

## The group's financial situation

As indicated earlier, the priority of **men's wellbeing matters** during its first 12 months of operation was to ascertain the feasibility of the group. Funding was sought only for the cost of events and on an event-by-event basis. Funds in reserve were maintained purposely at a minimal level in case the group did not continue.

Buoyed by its initial success, however, **men's wellbeing matters** has commenced the process of strengthening its financial position and is pursuing sponsorship for its events and activities from a range of local and other sources.

This document will be used to complement **men's wellbeing matters'** efforts to gain financial and in-kind support from sponsors.

## Main costs

The main cost items for **men's wellbeing matters** over the next 12 months are:

- ✚ Preparation of strategic plan
- ✚ Day-a-week project officer
- ✚ Production of promotional DVD
- ✚ Insurance
- ✚ Information display equipment
- ✚ DL cards
- ✚ Presentation folders
- ✚ Pull-up signs
- ✚ PA system
- ✚ 4 – 5 events

Ongoing day-to-day operating overheads are low because, as indicated previously, most work is undertaken by committee members on a voluntary or pro bono basis. Most of the items on the above list are set-up costs and will not be ongoing.

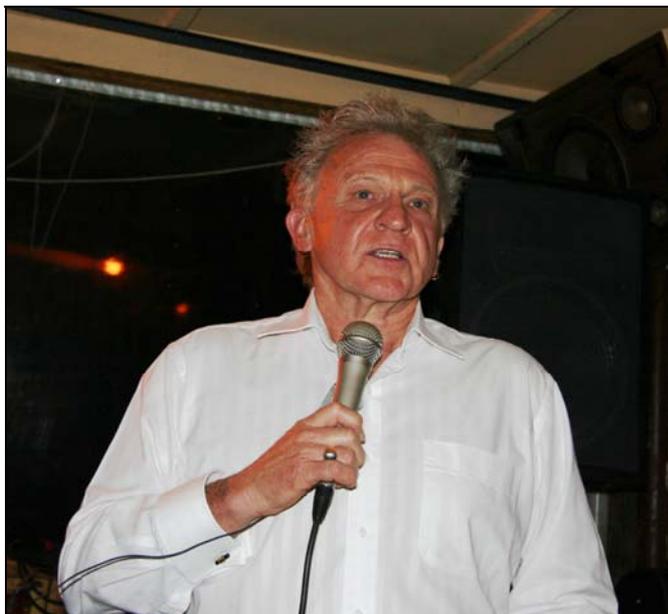
Event speakers' fees comprise the main area of ongoing expenditure for **men's wellbeing matters**. Generally, respected men's health experts do not attract large numbers of ordinary men to community events. However, high-profile sporting, entertainment and other public figures will. A mix of celebrities and medical experts who inform and entertain audiences has been a successful formula for **men's wellbeing matters**' events.

Most celebrities charge a fee. Medical experts usually do not charge because they see health promotion and education as a professional responsibility. Celebrity medical professionals such as Dr John Tickell, Dr Peter Larkins or Dr Feelgood (Dr Sally Cockburn) do charge a fee for speaking engagements.

Because it is a not-for-profit group, most speakers are prepared to give **men's wellbeing matters** a discounted fee. After-discount fees range from \$2000 to \$4000 with most speakers charging around \$2000.



Local GP Dr Mark Sujecki speaking at the men's health forum in Mornington, June 2008.



Sixties pop icon Normie Rowe, and a member of the **men's wellbeing matters** management committee, at Dinner in the Vineyard, Hickinbotham of Dromana, in September 2008.

## Sponsorship plans

As a priority, **men's wellbeing matters**' will pursue sponsorships mostly from local sources. As a local group committed strongly to improving the health and wellbeing of men on the Mornington Peninsula, it should have some appeal to local sponsors.

Sponsors also of interest are benevolent trusts, corporations and national men's health organisations.

The Federal Government intends to develop a national men's health policy in 2009 which, hopefully, will be accompanied eventually by funding opportunities for **men's wellbeing matters**.

## Sponsorship ethics

**men's wellbeing matters** has a strategic and ethical approach to pursuing sponsorship which entails:

- ✚ Pursuing sponsorships only from organisations which, to the best of **men's wellbeing matters**' knowledge, maintain high ethical standards and do not jeopardise deliberately or incidentally the wellbeing of people and the environment
- ✚ Pursuing sponsorships only from organisations whose goals are clearly compatible with or sympathetic to those of **men's wellbeing matters**
- ✚ Maintaining the integrity of its events and activities and not compromising its ideals, principles or goals just for the purpose of achieving financial or other support
- ✚ Establishing a documented agreement with sponsors outlining the agreed terms and responsibilities of the sponsorship arrangement.

## Strategic partnerships with sponsors

It is **men's wellbeing matters'** preference to develop longer-term strategic partnerships with its sponsors, and not necessarily always based on a financial arrangement. **men's wellbeing matters** believes that an effective way to address community issues and problems is that whenever possible sponsors and sponsored groups should work together over an extended period of time, combining their range of resources such as knowledge, experience, skills, networks, and so on.

Many community problems, especially those which are large in scale or have become firmly entrenched, cannot be resolved by small grants alone or one-off, short-term efforts.

## Summary

Although relatively new, **men's wellbeing matters** is a local initiative which is starting to have a positive impact on men's health and wellbeing on the Mornington Peninsula.

The negative effects of men's poor health and wellbeing is far reaching, affecting families, friends, employers, communities, taxpayers and the economy generally through government health and welfare expenditure. Therefore, men's health and wellbeing needs to be an area of concern for all sections of the community.

Based on its achievements thus far, it is clear that **men's wellbeing matters** has much potential to expand its activities to get the message of good health and wellbeing to men on the Mornington Peninsula.

Currently, the main strengths of **men's wellbeing matters** upon which its future will be built are:

- ✚ The diverse professional backgrounds and skills of its members
- ✚ Their passion, commitment and energy
- ✚ Minimal operating costs because work is done mostly on a voluntary or pro bono basis

- ✚ Its uniqueness
- ✚ A solid record of achievement including its ability to accomplish capacity audiences at events
- ✚ Its use of innovative and creative ways to convey the message of good health and wellbeing
- ✚ Its flexibility and willingness to work with others
- ✚ Its preparedness to share freely its knowledge, experience, skills and other resources
- ✚ Its good relationships with national and local men's health and welfare groups.
- ✚ Its partnerships with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and Mornington Peninsula Community Connections
- ✚ Its capacity to offer sponsors recognition for their support through its well-attended events, extensive event publicity, widely distributed newsletters and popular website.



Mark Mitchell, alias Con the Fruiterer, provided a comedy interlude at the men's health forum in Mornington in June 2008.