Dear Senator Bernardi and Committee,

Here are our suggested recommendations to improve men's health in Australia -

l. Recognize the full extent of the problem: in regard to health, men are a disadvantaged group compared to women, just as we regard Aborigines are disadvantaged compared to non-aborigines. All the health indices for men are worse than for women, i.e. infant morality, life expectancy, drug and alcohol addiction, rates of imprisonment, vulnerability to violence and homicide (both as victims and perpetrators), education outcomes, success rates in VCE, university education, incidence of suicide, involvement in accidents, etc. etc.

2. There should be "affirmative action" to remedy some of these ills, e.g. offer higher wages to male teachers to equalize the male/female numbers in primary schools. Increase spending and publicity on issues pertaining to men's health.

3. Reinstate Warwick Marsh, founder of the Fatherhood Foundation as an "Ambassador for Men's Health" or create a special honorary post for him.

4. Increase special funding for publicity, treatment and research into prostate cancer and benign enlargement of the prostate. It is a scandal that more men die (at quite young ages) from prostate cancer than women die from cervical cancer, yet there is no routine PSA testing offered to men at age 45.

On this issue the Anti-Cancer Councils are a liability as they refuse to acknowledge the life-saving results that could be achieved as a consequence of routine PSA testing just as routine mammograms have saved women's lives.

We recommend the immediate creation of an expert committee chaired by Prof. Tony Costello and including researcher Dr.Chris Hovens, to vastly increase funding, publicity and routine PSA testing at age 45 for all men, (to be repeated a few years later for those with high readings). PSA testing is the best predictor of malignant disease.

We also recommend the training of specialist prostate cancer oncologists. Although there are specialists dealing with breast cancer, there are no oncologists specialising in prostate caner. All the oncologists dealing with prostate cancer also deal with bowel and other cancers. There is a need for dedicated prostate cancer specialists.

The Prostate Cancer Centre at Epworth Hospital in Richmond, Victoria, is a start, but there needs to be far more of these Centres, both in public and private hospitals, e.g. it would be useful to have such a centre established at Cabrini Hospital in Malvern, Victoria.

Babette Francis,
National & Overseas Co-ordinator,
Endeavour Forum Inc.