

Submission to the committee on Men's Health March 13 2009

By Jonathan Pearson
13/March/2009

Summary

It is almost impossible to raise men's issues without being branded a male activist, a victim, having an agenda, hating women, etc– so rather than try to judge who I am – try instead to understand the submission and the points I am trying to make.

- 1, What is men's health – What's ADD/ADH, Aspergers Syndrome?
2. Mental stress – relationships, family court, CSA, low self esteem, lack of support, suicide
3. Physical – industrial accidents (very high), disabilities, risk taking
4. Attitude to men in society – men 'don't look after themselves' hence it's their fault.
5. Life events – life span for men – working lives
6. Provide meaningful work or activities to un or under employed men
7. Other stuff

Source ABS, related and other publications.

1 Men's Health Definition

The most obvious physical health issues seem to be prostate cancer, bowel cancer, cancer in general, heart disease, etc. Less obvious are the mental health issues like depression and despair.

ADD, ADH and Aspergers syndrome are interesting in that they seem to have been invented to classify boys (in particular) as ill or deficient and thus allow the drug industry (chemists, etc) to make boys behave 'properly'.

Don't support drugs designed for children for 'behaviour' problems.

What concerns me is the attitude to male issues and lack of support.

Males who go of their rockers are shot by police. This is a health issue where the government intervenes drastically. What does not seem to emerge is any understanding of the pressures or problems leading up to the final event.

Victoria shoots the most men. ACT has shot dead a man inside his own home after being called by the mental health group who were supposed to be looking after him.

Stop shooting men.

Men who have gone to war suffer enormous problems – physically and mentally.

Generally speaking we do not treat men very well at all.

War is a last resort – not follow the leader.

Everyone knows all of this, sees this and it has a huge affect on young males as they grow up. Self esteem, self worth, and idea that society values them must be almost impossible to find.

At best a male child growing up can expect to work most of their life, pay tax, get blamed, pay for everything, live a short life, be assumed guilty and have little or no support.

Peter Gabriel's (with Kath Bush) song "Don't Give Up" has some interesting lyrics.

*In this proud land we grew up strong
We were wanted all along
I was taught to fight, taught to win
I never thought I could fail*

*No fight left or so it seems
I am a man whose dreams have all deserted
I've changed my face, I've changed my name
But no one wants you when you lose*

*Though I saw it all around
Never thought I could be affected
Thought that wed be the last to go*

It is so strange the way things turn

.....

While this song may seem extreme to some – I believe large number of men would relate to this,

The point for me is the **lack of health** in putting men down, not encouraging their creativity, spirit and drive, freedom from oppression. What has man to look forward too under the weight of what is presented by the government, police, law, tax and society?

Provide hope to young men at school – support, grants, communication classes, tailored classes, activities.

Sexual health is also important but complex, and to a large extent has become feminised, Men' sexual appetites is not often talked about as a natural, healthy, different and valid. I would argue that there are problems in our society with men's sexual health as well.

Open up the sexual health debate

2. Mental Stress

It takes many males a great deal of effort to learn the skills to be able to express their feelings. Along with this skill comes assertiveness. This lack of ability can lead to problems in relationships, stress, anger, frustration, self harm.

Improve communication training.

Encouraging males to be able to talk freely means more than “Mens Sheds” . It actually means that the government, media, education, books etc – all have to allow the expression to take place. A big inhibitor to this is the weight of political correctness which has built up over the last 40 years.

There are too many people being given public air time who lack the ability to talk about men's issues without being subjugated by political correctness.

In other words – rational discussion must be allowed to take place – its actually one thing males in general are good at – rational debate.

I spent 12 years (3 years break in the middle) in Family court , CSA and SSAT. During that time I could not believe that anyone would be treated that way. It only when I realized it was because I was male that I understood the deep prejudice, assumptions etc. I lost my house, most of my money and much of my health (but not my life or my children). The system is simply atrocious. I met and talked with many men and women around during those years.

Most males know how bad it is now and this affects healthy relationships. Fix the system.

I spoke with “Beyond Blue” and asked them for their policy on men’s health – given the large number of suicides – why wasn’t there a men’s policy? I was told that that was probably due to despair rather than depression. I was also told that it was almost impossible to raise a men’s agenda due to the people in the organisation and their prevailing views – a bit like the ex family court judge.

Unless key organizations actively support a men’s health agenda then no progress can be made. If people have to be removed to allow this – then remove them or their funding or both.

3. Physical Health

Doctors are not happy with the amount of funding given to men health. Its obvious and overwhelmingly unbalanced.

Make health funding balanced and fair

Men die young.

Suicide levels have not significantly changed for 30 years.

Research why suicides occur in men – find the causes (is it lack of a future, bad media reports, government actions, drugs, family situations or all of the above?)

The most obvious statement of how government cares about men is by the population statistics.

It would be good to accept the notion that it’s a good idea to have roughly the same number of males and females by age group and help facilitate that as a stated aim for the government - by helping males survive.

Governments could state that they find it unacceptable that males die at a greater rate and they will be trying to address the problem. Implement population policies.

The rate of industrial accidents in Australia is a disgrace and causes needless death and injury to males.

Address Industrial Safety problems – Education, Standards, compliance checks, (free) safety gear .

Despite the difference in population between males and females at each age group – more males are disabled. Disability rates in males are high and they live shorter lives.

It would be good if the government could say as a matter of policy it wants males to live healthy, productive and happy lives and to this end it will find ways to reduce the disabilities in males.

Research causes of disability – provide education and remediation.

4. Attitude

Some ideas bandied about against men's health include:

- a) They can't look after themselves – they're hopeless and do it to themselves (hence not worthy)
- b) Men do not want to look after their health
- c) The money has gone on other things
- d) We can do men's health issues but only if women benefit as well
- e) Men are responsible for their own troubles and should not expect government handouts
- f) If they want to be healthy then they should work hard, earn some money and pay someone to look after their health.
- g) It's the wrong time – we need an enquiry, maybe later

And more.

The general theme is one against male health.

They are facile arguments at best.

We could adopt some principles – here's some –

- A) Government is allowed to intervene in people's lives (from time to time)
- B) Money should be allocated on a needs basis
- C) Target groups for benefits can be classified any number of ways – including (but not limited to) gender, age, location, educational status, employment status, assets, family arrangements, culture
- D) Framework for decisions: Legal, Ethical, Fair, Sensible, Timely

Use Strong Principles – not cherry picked facile arguments

Here are some positive public statements we could make which could help public sentiment and mental and physical health:

- A) We like males
- B) We need males
- C) We respect males
- D) We value males and all they contribute
- E) We depend on males being successful
- F) Males have rights

Make public statements supporting men's health and valuing men

5. Life Events

Males are struggling at school, work longer days, more years of their lives, earn the most money, pay the most tax, are sicker, more disabled, commit more suicides, are jailed more frequently, are arrested for more violent crimes, spend less years retired.

You know this because you have all of the studies and statistics which show this.

So despite all the subsidized alternate “research” groups – the government statistician has been presenting unbiased, defined, robust historical information which has shown all of this very clearly for many years.

Review funding of research – based on current needs – even if that means some universities which have been receiving grants for years – no longer do.

6. Meaningful work

Aboriginal males are struggling and need employment, meaning, a future, responsibilities and role to play in society.

Males who have too much time on their hands or low self worth need something to do which helps to create a future and is positive.

Instigate positive work programs – based on input from regional and local areas for positive projects building future capability e.g. Dams, Roads, Railways, Farms, Trees, Small Business, Art, Music, Dance, Film, Sport, Story Telling, Writing, Stocking Fish, Feral Animal removal, Web Presence, Tourism, etc.

Open up the world for those who need it

7. Other Stuff

This is some of the book I wrote some years ago (not published). The interpretations are based on generally available reports by government agencies.

Males and Society

Over many years of reading, listening, observing, discussing and thinking about males and their position I have formed some views.

Males in Australia since the 1970s have been in decline.

Not all males - just the position of males generally.

This has corresponded with a rise of the position of females generally.

Males die younger than females and there are less males than females despite more males being borne than females. Males have a lower life expectancy and females life expectancy is improving more than males. Males at late teenage years are particularly more prone to death than females.

During the 1970s moderation policies were introduced in schools to adjust female's scores to improve their results and increase intake into tertiary institutions. This was based on the notion that there was a natural bias of education towards males. Now we are seeing a decline in male's education results.

Death and harm

More males are sent to war than females.

More males are violently attacked or killed than females.

More males are injured or killed in industrial accidents than females.

More males are killed in transport accidents than females.

Males are four times more likely to die from suicide than females.
Three times as many males die from prostate cancer than females die of breast cancer.
Males die of breast cancer as well.
Males die at greater rates in nearly all causes of death than females except for mental health and some other causes.
Society seems to be much happier killing males than females.

Health

Males are slightly less mentally ill than females.
Males under the age of 35 are more likely to be disabled and more severely disabled than females.
The government funds health campaigns for women's health at greater levels than males even though more males are dying.

Education

Fewer males are currently studying for qualifications than females.
Males are more likely to be studying for engineering, science, architecture or management than females.
Females are more likely to be studying health, society, culture or food.
More males are studying for post graduate qualifications than females.
More males have qualifications than females.
Males are getting lower scores at school than they were 30 years ago.

Families

Males are more likely to be sole bread winner in families.
Males spend less time with the children than females but males are increasing the time they spend while females are decreasing their time.
Males and females are promiscuous whether married or not. If you suspect your partner of having affairs then there is greater than one in three chance you are correct.
Up to half of all females and males have affairs at sometime during marriage.

Divorce

A third of marriages are likely to end in divorce.
About a third of the population is married.
Less people are getting married now and this has been the trend for at least 20 years.
Males lose more in marriage breakups than females.
Males don't win as many family or CSA court cases as females.
More males pay child support than females and they pay more money than females.
For males there is a significant chance that children you are paying CSA for are not your biological children. For females there is zero chance.
Males pay child support for children who are not biologically theirs. Even though the ex female partner had sex with other males who are the real fathers judges have consistently ruled that the non biological male must pay child support. The government has continued to discourage DNA tests and has warned those males who do DNA tests without permission.
Males who donate sperm are liable for child support. Judges have ruled on this many times.
Males who inherit large assets years after divorce have to give a large percentage of those assets to their ex partners. Judges have ruled on this recently as well. It is based

on a sort of expectations concept. i.e. If there is any hint that males are going to get more money at a later stage the ex partner has an expectation that they are going to get it despite the fact it did not accrue until years after divorce.

Males pay more spousal maintenance than females. Females are still applying for spousal maintenance.

In court cases - males get custody one fifth the times that females do.

In court cases - males get contact more often than females

One fifth of sole parents are males.

Males are less likely to have a baby without a female than a female without a male.

This may seem obvious but IVF has allowed a completely new stolen generation to be borne without identified biological parents. Those children are starting to ask why.

Males and females don't tend to marry as much after divorce as much as they did in 1976 and the trend continues downward. Males over the age of 30 are much less likely to remarry than females over 30 which shows that most males have learned the lesson.

Governments noticed the trend in less marriages and introduced legislation to allow females to get your assets even if you are not married.

Work and Taxes

More males work than females.

More males than females work fulltime.

Males are half as likely to be underemployed than females.

Males are tending to become more underemployed.

Males work longer hours in more demanding jobs which require greater training and qualification than females.

Males spend twice as much time working than females.

Males pay more tax than females.

Males are less likely to do unpaid work.

Males do one quarter of the household domestic work of females (represented mainly by food, laundry and household cleaning tasks).

Males do one sixth more of the combined paid and household work than females i.e. they work more in total.

Its not a government policy to discriminate in favor of males by way of promotion, training or advancement as it is for females.

In some labour force categories males are twice as likely to be working than females.

Support

Males receive less in government benefits than females.

Males are less likely to receive the aged pension and females can receive it five years earlier than males.

Males are twice as likely to receive the disability support pension.

Males do not receive the wife pension.

Males do not receive widow's allowance.

Males are more likely to receive sickness benefits.

Males and females share equally in a number of smaller benefits except newstart where males are more likely to receive it.

Males are one tenth as likely to receive parenting payments.

Males are less likely to receive rent assistance.

There are government agencies for females reporting directly to the Prime Minister – there is not an Office for the Status of Men.
Males have less laws and government support to protect them against discrimination

Crime

Males are seven times more likely to be in court for a crime than females.
Males are less likely to be found not guilty although females are more likely to be found guilty of homicide when taken to trial than males.
Males are given greater punishments than females for the same crimes.
There are fourteen times as many males in prison as females
Of people taken to court, males are proportionally less likely to lie, cheat, steal or be involved in illicit drugs than females.
Of people taken to court, males and females are equally represented proportionally for violent crimes.
More males commit sexual assault than females and are more likely to be known to their victims. There are less male victims of sexual assault.
Males are more often portrayed in the media as criminals than females. Females are more often portrayed as victims.
Males do not get away with murder while females who successfully use the battered wife excuse do. There is no abused male excuse.

Other

There are more homeless males than females.
Males are more likely to be kept in immigration detention centers than females.