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## Deputy Premier of Western Australia Minister for Health; Indigenous Affairs

Our Ref: 25-02211

Mr Chris Reid  
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Dear Mr Reid

Thank you for your letter of 17 February 2009 regarding an invitation to make a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Men's Health Inquiry into Men's Health.

### **Current Status**

#### **1. Level of Commonwealth, State and other funding addressing men's health, particularly prostate cancer, testicular cancer and depression.**

Population Health Policy Branch currently funds and manages two men's health service agreements. The Men's Advisory Network (MAN) and the Midwest Men's Health Inc. (MMH). The term of these contracts is over three years from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2010. Funding is \$297, 410 (excl. GST) for MAN and \$325,102 (excl. GST) for MMH.

MAN has been contracted to deliver provision of health information services for Western Australian men in the metropolitan and some regional areas. MMH service provision is to facilitate access to existing health services and appropriate health related information to men living in the Midwest region.

Both service agreements do not provide direct services in relation to prostate cancer, testicular cancer or depression. They mainly provide information and advocacy to facilitate and increase access to the existing men's health services.

#### **2. Adequacy of existing education and campaigns regarding men's health for both men and the wider community.**

Although MAN and MMH provide a range of information services, campaigns and education to improve awareness and inform men of issues relating to their health, there is a need for a national and state policy and strategic framework in setting up priorities to guide the implementation of more comprehensive health education programs for men. There is also a need to extend the health education and campaigns that focus on boys and youths, Indigenous men and those who live in the rural and regional areas.

Access to adequate health information and quality existing services is critical for achieving better health outcomes for men. While websites are a good source of information for men, not everyone has access to internet facilities or has the awareness or skills to effectively and efficiently access the information. Therefore, innovative approaches are needed to facilitate and empower men to take more responsibility for better health outcomes. Community men's health promotion events such as 'Stay connected and talking to a mate', 'Sustainable Farm Families', 'Day with Dad', "Secret Men's Business", Men's health week, Men's Health Forum and the "Hip Hop Pit Stop" for young Indigenous people have been carried out by MMH and MAN. These programs have shown positive outcomes.

**3. Prevailing attitude of men towards their own health and sense of wellbeing and how these are affection men's health in general.**

In the past few years MAN has shown that there is growing number of men who do care and are interested in improving their health and well being. From July 2007 to June 2008 the number of new visitors to the MAN's website seeking health related information increased by 32 percent compared to same period in 2006/07. Further more, from July to December 2008 the number of unique visitors to the MAN website increased by 50 percent compared to same period in 2007.

**4. Extent, funding and adequacy for treatment services and general support programs for men's health in metropolitan, rural, regional and remote areas.**

Our programs do not specifically address treatment services.

General support programs for men's health in regional areas are still limited and face considerable challenges in many areas. MMH reports that for men in rural and regional areas, the distinct geography, the seasons and the weather all influence men's access to health information and services, particularly for those within the farming community. Discussions conducted by MMH with rural and regional men revealed concerns about the implications for farm and personal health from climate change, Genetically Modified crops, maintenance of social fabric and education.

The Office of Aboriginal Health (OAH) in Western Australia (WA) has initiated a statewide coordinated approach to 'men's business' holding a community forum in April 2008. As a result, a Men's Health Advisory group has now formed. The OAH has made some early investment in setting a platform for change for the betterment of Aboriginal men's health and wellbeing and plan to develop a State Aboriginal men's health and wellbeing implementation framework.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. WA Health supports several programs which specifically target men's health and wellbeing and thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kim Hames MLA  
DEPUTY PREMIER  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH  
09 MAR 2009