

Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Men's Health

My name is Graham Fazio, and I am employed as a Senior Health Promotion Officer with the Hunter New England Area Health Service of NSW. However, the following submission is made as a private citizen, and are not endorsed or authorised by my employer. As well, while my knowledge of the structure of area health services in NSW is strong, I have little or no knowledge or experience of other states and territories

I too welcome the development of a National Men's Health Policy, and congratulate the Parliament and the Senators for their involvement in the process. I would also like to acknowledge all those men and women who have for many years worked in the area of men's health and wellbeing, and who have advocated strongly for such a policy to be developed.

I would like to submit the following points for discussion by the senate committee in the development of the men's health plan:

- The philosophical approach to the development and implementation of the men's health policy should be a positive one, not one which emanates from the deficit-model. It should also take into account men's health and wellbeing, not just health.
- A formalised structure for men's health and wellbeing should be developed and implemented in all area health services in Australia. While the structure should be similar for all, local issues will need to be taken into account in its establishment.
- While the plan is a national one, it should also be one that is flexible and therefore enables the development and implementation of local solutions to local issues.
- As part of this structure, each area health service should have at least one dedicated Men's Health Officer and at least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men's Health Officer.
- Given the emphasis on 'Closing the Gap' and the parlous state of the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, each area health service should also have a specific structure/unit dedicated to the health and wellbeing of that population
- Particular emphasis needs to be given to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, as well as taking into account the holistic view that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men have of their health. This emphasis would include the creation of culturally appropriate and safe health services, and greater links with Aboriginal medical Services.

- A formalised process should be developed and implemented aimed at linking area health service men's health services with other recognised organizations which work in men's health and wellbeing.
- Each area health service should be funded to carry out research into a relevant aspect of men's health and wellbeing, in partnership with a recognized research institution. Other recognised organizations which work in men's health should also be formally involved in this process.
- The promotion of good health and wellbeing, and the prevention of illness, should be seen as the most appropriate strategic avenues for the policy.
- Particular emphasis also need to be given to the health and wellbeing of marginalised men (e.g. gay men, men involved in the criminal justice system), men who endure social and economic disadvantage, and men who live in rural and remote areas of Australia.
- Opportunities need to be created so that people working in the area of men's health are provided with appropriate training in the engagement of men.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide this submission.

Graham Fazio