

Greetings from WA.

I trust that my small contribution, some anecdotal and some mixed with a few semi-plausible generalisations will assist you in this overdue policy formulation.

Having been working with men for 56 years, both in the automotive engineering industry, firstly as a slave and ultimately as a Caesar. Then devoting over half of that time to the pursuit of voluntarily promoting men's awareness raising groups as a small practical means for men to know how their male socialisation plays a major role in their health and wellbeing. I have reached the following conclusions that may or may not agree with the current thinking around the formulation of an all embracing National Men's Health Policy.

During this life time I have attended many Conferences, Forums, Seminars, lectures, gab fests etc, all very well intentioned and directed to the problems associated with men's health, I have come away with satchels full of pamphlets and information that overload my recycling bin. Apart from the early days of the then, Australian and New Zealand Men's Leadership Gatherings, very little collective action or support was available to men interested in pursuing men's issues around health and wellbeing.

My conclusions are that there are two basic types of men interested/mindful/aware of the need to question their current male socialisation and how that impacts on their general health and the way they conduct their lives. Before anyone wants to jump on me for this statement and to counter it with a mass of stats and academic proof, please refrain and save your words for another forum. Sure, there are many, many different reasons as to why men are the way they are, and I still contend that a major factor in men's health and wellbeing is that we have not really challenged the influence of our socialisation. Most of us are content to just be "blokes" and do bloke stuff, I won't bore you with examples, I'll leave that to your daily observations, be it work or just driving there, TV, newspapers, bus stops, train stations, anywhere in fact.

Whatever ultimate shape or form this National Men's Health Policy effort takes, I would like to see an emphasis placed on how we males are currently socialised, and continue to be influenced and modelled by images that are basically redundant, and how does this impact on our daily life and our concepts around healthy male behaviour?

Ok, what about the two types of men who become, or are interested in challenging the effects of their own male socialisation/circumstances? My own limited time working with men has shown that men experiencing some form of trauma/pain/problem, be it major or minor, who have dropped the toughing it out bit and sought assistance (not help, blokes don't like to seek help!) are usually looking for answers that are not readily available from within their own current personal know-how, a sort of dependency option to seek other opinions. Again, my experience has shown that most of these men readily move on after problem solving and making some alterations to their life

style and the way in which they relate to others, some, sadly fall by the wayside and become another statistic in the health record system. The largest majority just get on with their lives complying with the "system" and are not that interested in alternatives, life itself then presents the known stages of male development and health predictable outcomes, they too form part of the statistical information detailing the declining health standards of males.

The other type of men are those who receive their masculine wake-up call at any stage, again usually through some hiccup in life, be it health or a relationship based issue, their choice then is to become an explorer, visits to their GP even! Books, self development groups, tapes, information, kindred spirits, counselling, in fact anything that serves as a reminder for them to respond to those inner callings and actually turn ill health into action, for me, this is the concept of men's "health" that could be described as salutogenic. Working with the "health" of men rather than their pathology invites a way for them to become ambassadors rather than a predictable clone who follows the pack.

While not keeping statistics or having a research facility, I reckon that the incidence of men actively participating/seeking health and wellbeing related information/activity, would be less than 2% of the male population, before you want to challenge me to a wager on this..... consider that if this is a reasonable assumption, **what is it about such a minority of males that actually self motivates them to become interested/involved in their own, and families, health and wellbeing?** If we could tap into that interest and driving force, then our ultimate task would be so much easier.

How will we appeal to the male population in a way that significantly changes the current high rates of dysfunctional and costly effects of male "ill health?"

Regards

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