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Ms Pam Williams  
Director, Policy Coordination and Projects  
Department of Health  
50 Lonsdale Street  
**MELBOURNE VIC 3000**

By email: [diversity@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:diversity@health.vic.gov.au)

Dear Ms Williams

**RE: Victorian Men's health and wellbeing strategy**

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding the review of the Victorian Men's health and wellbeing strategy.

As you are aware in May of last year AMA Victoria made a significant submission to the consultation process which included considerable evidence on the health issues facing Victorian men. We endorse the information contained within that submission and, in response to your invitation for further comment, we would add the following.

Men and women should be given equal opportunity to realise their full potential for health and it is imperative that initiatives to address the health needs of one gender do not occur at the expense of the other gender.

At the same time AMA Victoria recognises the benefits of a tailored approach to addressing the health of Victorian men and women respectively. Health services will best meet the needs of both men and women if the issue of gender is incorporated in the planning and delivery of health services.

**Alcohol and drug issues**

As was mentioned in AMA Victoria's original submission, men are far more likely than women to use methamphetamines and prescription medication for non-medical purposes. Males are also significantly more likely to drink alcohol at risky levels.

Following that submission, AMA Victoria has since put forward a number of recommendations to the whole of government Victorian alcohol and drug strategy which would effectively address these men's health issues. Accordingly we would draw your attention to those recommendations.

## **Prison population**

Initiatives to address the health of Victoria's prisoners must be incorporated into the Men's health strategy as a matter of priority.

According to the Department of Justice *Statistical Profile of the Victorian Prison System*, as at 30 June 2010, the number of male prisoners in Victoria was 4,224 compared with 313 females in the prison system. Needle exchange programs and methadone treatment must be provided to prisoners, particularly within male prisons, and upon prisoners' release.

We must ensure that people living in Victoria's prisons are not forgotten by our health system.

## **Primary care**

General Practitioners have a significant role to play in improving the health of Victorian men, and programs within their practices and communities should be adequately funded to facilitate this.

It is important for men to find a GP they feel comfortable with so that they can work in partnership with their doctor to improve their health. Men should feel able to approach their GP as the first port of call for health problems, to engage in regular visits and to discuss mental and emotional issues with their doctor. Men should feel able to participate in these discussions openly and without reservation.

## **Workplace and recreational settings**

The Men's health and wellbeing strategy must address not only the biological causes of ill health but also the socio-environmental factors that impact on men's health such as workplaces and access to recreational facilities.

Men are more likely to be the perpetrators of violence as well as the victims of violent crime. Accordingly, we support effective anti-bullying and anti-violence projects that seek to minimise violence in our communities and our schools and workplaces in particular.

The development of culturally appropriate health services for men is also important and recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach may not address the needs of the entire male population.

If you would like to discuss any of the matters above, or contained within our original submission, please contact Elizabeth Muhlebach, Policy Officer, on (03) 9280 8754 or [elizabethm@amavic.com.au](mailto:elizabethm@amavic.com.au).

We would appreciate being kept informed as to the progress of the review.

Yours sincerely



Bryce Prosser

**DIRECTOR POLICY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS**