



How an investment in the Men's Advisory Network benefits

- **the budget bottom line**
- **the community**
- **the electorate**

MAN is the peak organisation representing agencies working in men's health. It services health professionals statewide including Divisions of General Practice, State and Local Government, health and welfare organisations and individual professionals such as GPs, psychiatrists, allied health professionals, human resources practitioners as well as members of the public.

MAN is the sole, central source of information and referrals to the full range of healthcare providers and services. It publishes a widely circulated, strongly supported newsletter and is currently developing a major website to act as a public resource and information clearing house for both professionals and members of the general public.

MAN promotes male health and wellbeing including physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual aspects.

MAN organises ongoing events, media and distribution of information to men, to encourage and facilitate better health choices.

MAN also promotes to women, because men's health is often women's problem.

MAN is funded by the Department of Health and cannot continue to provide its services without that funding.

Benefits to the Budget bottom line

Reduction in extended care and palliative care hospital costs

Men's ill health is preventable. Men often do not maintain regular health checks. They may avoid seeing doctors unless symptoms are severe.ⁱ

The consequences of men's low uptake of medical servicesⁱⁱ are a direct long term cost to the State Budget bottom line.

M.A.N. is encouraging men to visit their GP (if they have one) annually, just prior to their birthday, for an annual check up. In the long term, men will associate being a year older with having their annual check up. The cost of a GP visit is covered by a Medicare fee and therefore of no expense to the State Government. Health education on lifestyle issues such as smoking; alcohol use; nutrition; exercise and stress reduction and the early identification and management of other risk factors such as high blood pressure, cholesterol and/or blood sugar levels will avoid the need for expensive, long term State funded hospitalisation in the future. Such hospitalisation is for conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease and certain types of cancers.

It is important to note that for most men, the first sign and/or symptom of heart disease is a heart attack.

Prostate cancer is just one, high-profile example that results in 260 deaths each year in WA. Similar analyses could be applied to a range of conditions including diabetes, cardio-vascular disease and other forms of cancer.

The per case State Budget saving is about 20 hospital days/visits for recovering cases and 50 or more hospital days/visits for terminal cases.

A primary function of MAN is promotional activity which encourages men to have regular medical checks, to recognise warning signs and to seek immediate attention – increasing the rate of early diagnosis and reducing the pressure on hospitals.

There is no other way this essential attitudinal change can be achieved.

Reduction in hospital presentations and average stays

Men not taking care of themselves still has a “macho” value in our culture, and it is renewed with every generation from father to son i.e. “She’ll be right mate”.

These preventable risk factors include obesity, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor diet, lack of exercise and high stress levels. They can be a direct cause of hospitalisation, especially for men 50 plus.

Additional hospital contacts result from excessive alcohol consumption and abuse of other drugs.

More often, the lack of attention paid to risk factors compound other presenting causes to make hospitalisation more likely and probably extending average stays by a factor of 20% or more.

Reducing health care demand is the only long term solution

The immediate budgetary issue is to control total dollar expenditure, but if long-term costs are to be stabilised as a percentage of State GDP the growth in *per capita* demand for medical services must be halted.

Expanding medical and drug technology will continue to push up potential costs. If individuals are ill, they will demand access to an ever wider range of ever more expensive treatments.

For the last two years, health inflation has been running at double the normal inflation rate.ⁱⁱⁱ

Preventative health care is the best, most effective way of reducing per capita demand, by reducing the call on expensive hospitalisation.

And the only way of increasing male “self care” is promotion which builds positive attitudes to self health care and responsibility.

MAN is doing this, through targeted, ongoing health promotion and information dissemination.

Suicide prevention

“It grieves me to say I have lost more male friends to suicide than to road accidents.”
– Dr Bill Glasson, AMA President, 11/9/03^{iv}

Suicide is the major preventable cause of early death for males with four completed male suicides for every one female suicide.

Most completed suicides are preceded by one or more attempts requiring hospitalisation and often psychiatric care.

These hospital based services are a direct cost to the State Budget bottom line, which could be reduced if more men sought early assistance.

Early assistance is available through several non-government agencies and through private providers – all at no or minimal cost to the State Budget.

MAN’s promotions and information services actively encourage seeking help early, peer support and a change to the macho culture which inhibits seeking health.

There can be no effective way to reduce male suicides which does not change attitudes through promotion and information.

More evidence on the Budget bottom-line benefits of health promotion

“Preventive programs have been shown to be a long term cost effective approach to managing disease, and the reallocation of resources in the health sector towards population health would improve the efficiency of the health sector.”^v

The Population Health Division of the Department of Health believes that “continued investment in prevention programs is vital to maintaining and improving our health and ensuring very good long term strategies are in place for reducing demand.”

MAN’s cost effectiveness

Currently however only about 2% of health budgets are allocated to health prevention measures. This is one third of the current health costs inflation rate.

MAN spends its small share of this allocation very effectively, using voluntary contributions of time by health professionals, their supportive influence within their own organisations and community partnerships to extend the impact of every dollar.

MAN is currently seeking sponsorship of its central website, to extend the dollar impact of this project.

Money spent via MAN is returned to the State Budget bottom line through reduced per capita demand for hospital-based health care services.

“Research has proven that investment of resources to build and maintain health and wellbeing saves health costs. These resources are needed, now”.

– Dr Bill Glasson, AMA President, 11/9/03^{iv}

Non duplication of services

MAN provides services which are not duplicated by other agencies. It receives enquiries from men referred by various agencies including the Department of Health and the HealthInfo Line. MAN provides the Western Australian database to the national Men’s Line Australia.

It should be noted that the Department of Health has no leaflets, brochures or posters relating to the health of males. MAN is developing these.

The Department Health has noted that men do not respond to general health promotion strategies.^{vi} They need the specialised, targeted programs that MAN develops and delivers.

MAN provides a unique service – one that was desperately needed and is welcomed and embraced by service providers across all areas of health and welfare. A survey of MAN newsletter recipients, for example, clearly shows the gap that this service fills.

How MAN benefits the community

More active male self-care brings significant financial gains to the community, though these may not be measured directly in the State Budget.

These include:

- Fewer early retirements due to ill health, with consequent benefits to family incomes and the local economy.
- Fewer early deaths, avoiding consequent social and family disruption and reducing sole-parent welfare dependency.
- Reduced call on partners to care for chronically ill men, improving their quality of life.
- Improved quality of life for men, including in social and spiritual benefits.
- Reduced trauma from medical emergencies, suicide and untreated mental illness.

How MAN benefits the electorate

There is a lack of information about men's services (compared with women). This can be a source or a focus of discontent for both men and women. MAN is actively redressing the inequality.

Many men believe there is an inequality between health services for women and men. MAN's promotional activities help counter this perception.

Funding of MAN's activities is a practical demonstration of inclusive political and community concern for the issues men face.

References

ⁱ Men's Health: Beyond Biomedicine. A commentary on men's socially determined illness, injury and death, Allan K. Huggins, 2002

ⁱⁱ Men's Health: Men's Health Policy and Discussion Paper, Health Department of Western Australia 1997: *"In spite of their poor health status, men use health services at a lower rate than women and are perceived to be less amenable to influence by current public health programs."*

ⁱⁱⁱ Federal Health Minister, Kay Patterson, on Perth radio 6PR, 12 September 2002, said: *"One of the things we have to understand is that the health CPI has been in the last couple of years over double the CPI. Health costs increase at a faster rate."*

^{iv} AMA President, Dr Bill Glasson, Speech to 5th National Men and Boys' Health Conference, Palm Cove, 11 September 2003.

^v Population Health 2003, A paper prepared by Population Health Division, Department of Health for the Health Reform Committee to facilitate discussion, Government of Western Australia.

^{vi} Men's Health: Men's Health Policy and Discussion Paper, Health Department of Western Australia 1997: *"...men... are perceived to be less amenable to influence by current public health programs."*

Further Information

If you require any further information, please contact:

Gary Bryant
Executive Officer, Men's Advisory Network
Claisebrook Lotteries House
33 Moore Street
East Perth WA 6004
Phone/Fax: (08) 9218 8044
Mobile: 0414 950 902
Email: admin@man.org.au