

Australia 2020 Summit Submission

MAN made submissions on three of the ten topics.

TOPIC 2: The productivity agenda – education, skills, training, science and innovation

Boys Education

Boys are generally not performing as well as girls on a range of educational achievement measures, and on a range of broader social indicators as well. Boys are also less likely to finish school or attend higher education, are more likely to be excluded from school and have higher rates of suicide and motor vehicle accidents than girls.

The reasons for the school retention rate for boys being lower than for girls need to be examined. Some of the contributing factors are:

- Inappropriate teaching methods, in both primary and secondary schools, to the learning styles of boys, which are different to those of girls
- A perceived lack of relevance of the school curriculum to success in the various aspects of life after school
- Lack of relevance of the school curriculum to the interests of some boys, particularly those who are seen as under-achievers in the school system

The findings and recommendations of the 2002 House of Representatives enquiry into boy's education should be taken into account in re-designing primary and secondary schooling.

TOPIC 5: A long-term national health strategy

Men's and Boys' Health

The government has announced that it will develop a men's health policy. MAN believes that the national men's health policy should be based on a holistic view of men's health, one that includes all Australian men and boys and that incorporates all those physical, mental, emotional, social, relationships and spiritual components. It should take into account the social determinants of health, including economic, social, cultural, political and environmental factors that contribute to health or to illness across the life span of men and boys.

Suicide

The suicide rate of men is four times that of women at the national level and eight times that of women in rural areas. More males take their own lives than are killed on our roads, including pedestrians and children. An unknown number of single vehicle road fatalities are probably also suicides.

The prevention of male suicide needs to be made a high priority in the national men's health policy.

Violence

The ABS Personal Safety Survey (2005) showed that a large number of men (10.8%) were the victims of violence in the past 12 months, which is almost double that of women (5.8%).

Of those men who were physically assaulted, 74% were physically assaulted by a male stranger and 43% of men who were physically assaulted were aged 18-24 years.

Apart from the justice system, there are no programs aimed at reducing this level of violence.

Intimate Partner Abuse of Men

The ABS Personal Safety Survey (2005) showed that:

- Of those women and men who experienced current partner violence since the age of 15, 70% were women and 30% were men
- Of those women and men who experienced violence from a previous partner 76% were women compared to 24% who were men
- Of those women and men who were physically assaulted by their current or previous partner of the opposite sex during the previous 12 months, 78% were women and 22% were men.

Despite the significant number of men who are the victims of intimate partner abuse, there are no public education programs aimed at reducing the incidence of such abuse, no support services for men who are abused and no treatment services for women who are using violence and abuse.

TOPIC 6: Strengthening communities and supporting working families

Family Law

It is essential to the best interests of the child (both boys and girls) that their fathers as well as their mothers raise them. Children love, want, and need both parents. Both parents are fundamental to a child's wellbeing and development.

As such, MAN. supports the proposal that there should be a presumption in Family Law that children will spend equal time with each parent. Research consistently shows that children suffer far fewer detrimental effects from the breakdown of their parent's relationship when they are able to continue their relationship on equal terms with both parents.

Male Role Models

Strategies need to be developed to provide mentors and male role models for boys who would benefit from having them. In 2004 the ALP outlined a policy titled "More male role models for boys." A number of the suggested strategies could be implemented in schools as well as in the community. One is the need for more male teachers in both primary and secondary schools.

Accommodation for Fathers and Children

Fathers who have the care of their children for less than 50% of the time are unable to access suitable public housing in Western Australia (and probably other states). This effectively means that unless they have the financial resources to own a home or afford private rental, these fathers are denied the opportunity to care for their children.

Emergency Accommodation

There is inadequate provision of accommodation for men who are subject to violence restraining orders and have to leave their home. This creates considerable stress and resentment and may exacerbate an already tense situation leading to further violence.