

Men's Health SA Media Watch

A report on activities from December 2007 to May 2009

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MEN'S HEALTH SA

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In November 2007, I was contracted by Men's Health SA (at that time the South Australian Men's Health Alliance - SAMHA) to conduct a one-day-a-week Media Watch role on behalf of SAMHA and its collaborative partners, the Men's Health Information & Resource Centre and the Australasian Men's Health Forum. This role was to involve the critique, analysis and, when appropriate, challenging of mass media statements and commentary and other forms of institutional, academic and government literature and media that:

- depicted men or boys or masculinity in an unfair, negative or disparaging way
- were misleading, inaccurate, or prejudicial towards men and boys
- detracted from a general positive affirmation of men, boys, and masculinity
- undermined the endeavour to approach men and boy's health and issues in an intelligent, respectful, positive, equitable and constructive way.

Education systems are failing our boys and young men

FIRST WORD

THIS is Education Week – a time to reflect on the successes and failures of the education system. One of its failures that rarely appears in the media is the way schools and universities are failing our boys and young men.

During the 1960s and 70s, research identified that girls were not equally represented in retention rates to year 12 and were less likely to go to university. The social roles of women had restricted their opportunities to participate in the public sphere. This inequity led to initiatives by the federal government and state education departments to ensure that girls' needs were met, culminating in the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools in 1987.

Soon there was proof of success. By 1989 slightly more females (49.6 per cent) than males (48.3 per cent) were continuing to tertiary study. By 1990 there was a substantial increase in all students staying at school until year 12, with a majority being girls. In 1992, retention rates were 10 per cent higher for girls (82 per cent) than boys (72 per cent).

However, there was a developing concern that these gains for girls were not the result of integrating the differing needs of boys and girls to the benefit of both, but had come about through neglecting boys' needs.

In 1994, the NSW Government Advisory Committee on Education, Training and Tourism commissioned an inquiry into boys' education under Stephen O'Doherty. His report identified a range of reasons for concern and suggested ways to improve educational outcomes for boys. However, it was subjected to sustained attack from influential policy makers. Sue Walpole, then federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, argued that attention to boys should be less focused on measurable disadvantages, and more concerned with "correcting" the poor behaviour of males.

Her attempt to divert attention from concerns for boys to concerns about boys seems to have been successful. By 2002 the Australian Council for Educational Research listed continuing deterioration of outcomes for boys in education and other social arenas linked to school experiences, including poor progress in literacy, higher drop-out rates and discipline problems.

The gender gap between boys and girls for participation in year 12 and higher education has continued to widen. Between 1993 and 1999, the proportion of female enrolments at university increased from 53.3 per cent to 55.2 per cent, while male enrolments decreased from 46.7 per cent to 44.8 per cent. Almost 50 per cent more females than males graduated from Australia's universities in 2006.

Given that the academic outcomes for girls were turned around in less than 10 years, it is worrying that 15 years after the first report on boys' education, the situation for boys is deteriorating. This suggests that efforts to improve educational outcomes for boys to date have been either misguided or poorly implemented.

It is high time we start to fix the education systems that are failing our boys and young men so badly.

Greg Andresen Men's Health Australia, Bondi Junction
Michael Woods University of Western Sydney

An example of Men's Health SA Media Watch activity

The role soon expanded to include three main categories of work. The first - **media watch** - involved keeping an eye on print press, advertising, websites, publications, TV, movies and radio, looking out for inaccurate and misleading representations of men, boys and gender issues. When such material was identified, three main methods would be employed to challenge these inaccurate and misleading representations: direct contact with the media outlet involved, letters to the editor, and media releases (followed, if successful, by media appearances). Some of this work was conducted as a member of the SAMHA Media Watch Portfolio – an active group of SAMHA members working toward similar goals (you can find out more at <http://www.menshealthsa.com.au/excecutive.html>).

An appendix has been included at the end of this report giving pointers for those wishing to conduct their own Media Watch work.

The second category of work - **lobbying and networking** – involved talking to politicians and government bureaucrats to convey a male-friendly point-of-view on issues of concern to males. This involved both pro-active networking (for example, meeting the new Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner in Sydney in February 2008) and lobbying politicians (for example, taking part in the Men and Fathers’ Health Forum at Parliament House, Canberra, in March 2008).

The third category of work undertaken in the role of Media Advocacy Consultant was that of **taking part in government inquiries and consultations**. This involved both written submissions to government inquiries (for example, the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave) and taking part in government consultations (for example, the establishment of the National Council to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children).

Summary of Men’s Health SA Media Watch Activities, Dec 07 to May 09

Every month

- Circulated numerous media articles of relevance to men and boys and posted them on menshealthaustralia.net.

December 2007

- Promoted the new Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner’s [Listening Tour](#) to men’s networks in Melbourne.

January 2008

- Promoted the new Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner’s [Listening Tour](#) to men’s networks in Canberra.
- Communicated with Melbourne journalist Alan Howe (Herald Sun) regarding his hysterical, inaccurate and misleading article “[Fathers accountable for violence](#)”.
- Lobbied Oxfam Australia and Oxfam UK regarding incorrect and misleading data on their websites’ [gender pages](#).
- Successfully lobbied The Body Shop to correct an error in their [domestic violence survey](#) (amended male perpetrator rate from 98% to 87%).



February 2008

- Wrote a background paper and organised a meeting for myself, Micheal Woods and Maggie Hamilton with the new Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, and two of her staff - Cassandra Goldie (Director, Sex & Age Discrimination Unit) and Dr Sarah Squire (Senior Policy & Research Officer, Sex & Age Discrimination Unit).
- Published [analysis](#) of The Age article “Women still keeping house”, by Dewi Cooke
- Promoted Ann Bressington’s Press Release on proposed SA rape laws - “[Rape Laws Go Too Far](#)”
- Contacted Suzanne Franzway and Carole Zufferey from UniSA regarding gender bias in their research on “Domestic Violence and Women’s Work”
- Uploaded video footage of domestic violence industry “Hypothetical: Are Men Equally Victims of Domestic Violence” to [YouTube](#). Transcribed the highlights of this unashamedly male-bashing exercise.

March 2008

- Promoted the new Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner’s [Listening Tour](#) to men’s networks in Darwin and Perth. Promoted use of the HREOC [blog](#), and posted a number of items.
- Researched and promoted the latest [gender breakdown](#) of Australian university graduates
- Researched, prepared [media release](#), co-facilitated and wrote [report](#) on Men & Fathers’ Health Forum, 18th & 19th March 2008, Parliament House, Canberra. The press release and Forum generated a great deal of media attention around the need for a National Men’s Health Policy (see AAP article to the right).

Suicide rates spark calls for men's health policy By Kate Corbett CANBERRA, March 19



Five Australian men commit suicide each day compared to just one woman, according to an academic who says the nation urgently needs a national men's health policy. Health professionals, indigenous leaders and key stakeholders met at Parliament House in Canberra today to discuss the need for such a policy.

Before the November election Health Minister Nicola Roxon announced a Labor government would develop a men's health policy to complement the women's policy created 20 years ago. Professor John Macdonald from the Australasian Men's Health Forum said it was vital men's health was put on the national agenda. "Five men a day kill themselves in our country, one woman," he told reporters in Canberra. "That's atrocious - what's the country doing with that now?"

He said it was very old men and those between the ages of 25 and 55 who were killing themselves and there was no national consciousness about it. "If it were five whales a day... we'd be out there pushing them back into the sea," he said. "But five males a day, who knows? Who cares? There's something strange happening."

Prof Macdonald said there was an incorrect assumption in the community that men were doing well and didn't need any extra help. But, he said, a national men's health policy would bring men's issues to the fore and ensure those issues were addressed appropriately. Psychologist and author Elizabeth Cogg said it would be simplistic if that policy just focused on physical problems. "We are really encapsulating quite a holistic approach of physical, psychological, social and family health when it comes to a national men's health policy," she told reporters.

Dr Cogg said simple gender differences on health matters must be recognised. "There are specific needs that men have with regards to their health. And it's something that does need to be acknowledged and recognised on a national level so that as leaders of the country we can all be guided forward with that and really have efficient and effective services to meet their needs."

Prof Macdonald said the problems fathers face when they are separated from their children during family break-ups must also be addressed. "There's a lot of evidence that that impacts on the stress on your immune system, makes you more vulnerable to not just mental but physical diseases," he said.

The group will report back to Ms Roxon after the meeting and hopes to create a subcommittee to help create the national men's health policy.

April 2008

- Promoted the new Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner's [Listening Tour](#) to men's networks in Brisbane and Mackay. Also posted a number of items to the HREOC [blog](#).
- Researched and co-authored [media release](#) regarding the lack of representation on men's issues at the 2020 Summit, Canberra. Also collated support materials for the Fatherhood Project representative who attended the summit.
- Circulated new Australian [study](#) shedding light on the prevalence of female sex offending against children.
- Circulated Janet Albrechtson article "[Dangerous sex as the state enters bedroom](#)", regarding the potentially negative impact on men and boys of recent NSW Rape Law Reforms.
- Promoted male-friendly attendance at an anti-male, anti-father [seminar](#) on shared parental responsibility in Australian family law and the impact on children.

May 2008

- Wrote and distributed [report](#) on a meeting between myself, Micheal Woods, Maggie Hamilton, the new Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, and two of her staff.
- Circulated Roger Smith's Online Opinion piece "[Power and violence in the home](#)", challenging many of the myths around domestic violence.
- Circulated Susanna Dunkerley's article, "[Women 'must work longer hours'](#)", and Andrew Bolt's opinion piece, "[Work, don't whinge, ladies.](#)" promoting Professor Mark Wooden's findings that the 'wage gap' is not due to discrimination but due to choices men and women make in the workplace.
- Promoted John Ashfield's [books](#) to overseas publishing contacts with a view to securing overseas publication or distribution.
- Corresponded with the new Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, challenging her use of incorrect and misleading domestic violence statistics.
- Attended workshop on establishment of National Council to Prevent Violence Against Women & Children, and brought along colleagues to challenge the conventional 'wisdom' on domestic violence (e.g. Duluth 'Power & Control' Model).
- Published "first word" (headline) letter, "[Education systems are failing our boys and young men.](#)" co-authored with Micheal Woods, in Sydney Morning Herald.

- Assisted a South Australian MP, in the early stages of establishing a state-based men's advisory group in South Australia.
- Secured a commitment from Oxfam International to revise the unreferenced, incorrect and misleading statistics on the ['Gender' pages](#) of their website.
- Circulated South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework [material](#) which demonises men, boys and masculinity.

June 2008

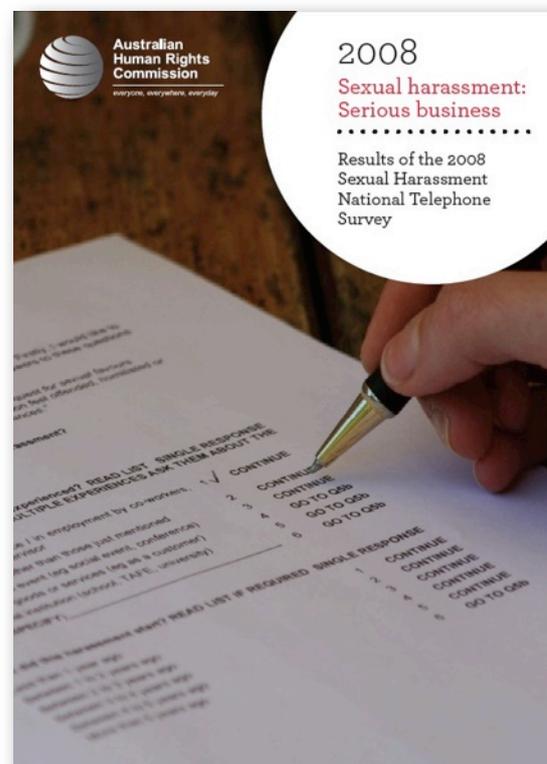
- Successfully lobbied the NSW Parliament not to remove fathers' names from birth certificates and to retain the phrase 'paternity leave' in the [NSW Miscellaneous Acts Amendment \(Same Sex Relationships\) Bill](#). Also successfully convinced the NSW Attorney General to [lobby his Federal counterpart](#) to amend Federal Child Support legislation that discriminates against fathers (this legislation was subsequently amended as a result).
- Wrote [submission](#) to Productivity Commission Enquiry into Paid Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave.
- Circulated Gerry Bellett article, "[3 in 4 B.C. boys on street sexually exploited by women](#)", challenging the myth that only men are child sexual abusers.

July 2008

- Circulated Deidre Mussen article, "[Women-only scholarships under spotlight](#)", regarding the New Zealand legal challenge to women-only educational scholarships under human rights laws.
- Attended Skype teleconferences with SAMHA Media Watch Portfolio, and set up Evernote media clipping electronic archive.

August 2008

- Wrote [submission](#) to the Senate Inquiry into the Federal Sex Discrimination Act.
- Corresponded with the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick about gender bias in HREOC's proposed [Sexual Harassment research](#).



September 2008

- On leave.

October 2008

- Circulated Productivity Commission Draft Inquiry Report, "[Paid Parental Leave: Support for Parents with Newborn Children.](#)"

- Promoted "[Men's Group The Movie](#)" National Screenings.

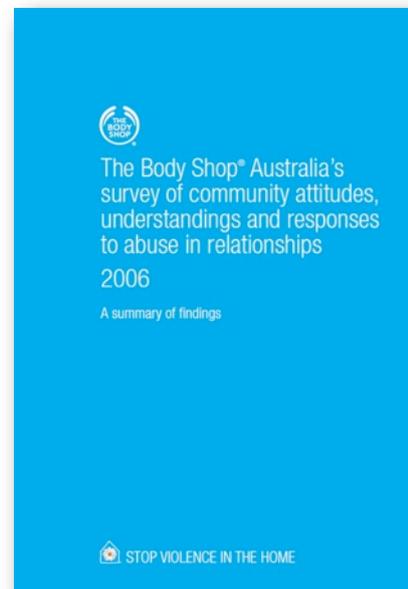
- Researched Federal Sex Discrimination Act prior to appearing as an 'expert guest' on ABC Radio National "[Australia Talks](#)" program.



November 2008

- Appeared as an 'expert guest' on ABC Radio National "[Australia Talks](#)" program on the 11th November, discussing the current Inquiry into the Federal Sex Discrimination Act.
- Corresponded with HREOC over concerns about the methodology of their recently published [Sexual Harassment Survey](#).
- Corresponded with North American colleagues as research into the SAMHA Workforce Development Forum presentation on "[Men's Issues in North America](#)".
- Promoted Bettina Arndt's [current research](#) into Australian men and sexuality.
- Distributed [media release](#) to counter false and misleading statistics published by the White Ribbon Foundation and [widely reported](#) in the media. Did three radio interviews in response to the media release: with Leon Delaney on Sydney radio 2SM, with National Radio News and with Student Youth Radio, Melbourne.
- Requested that the ABC correct their web articles based upon false and misleading White Ribbon Foundation Report 'statistics'. The ABC amended [numerous webpages](#) in response, obtaining an [admission](#) from the author, Dr Michael Flood that he had made a substantial error in his Report.
- Promoted Foundation 49's men's health web [survey](#).

- Wrote to Oxfam UK about their failure to correct errors in the [gender pages](#) of their website as promised many months ago. No response received to date (July 2009).
- Wrote to the Body Shop about their failure to correct errors in the online version of their [domestic violence report](#) as promised many month ago. Received response that they had finally corrected the report (case closed).
- Distributed Andrew O’Keefe’s hysterical and misleading White Ribbon Day [editorial](#) from the Sydney Morning Herald as an example of the lack of intellectual and academic rigour of the White Ribbon Foundation.
- Corresponded with a Sydney-based media / PR professional about the possibility of some proactive projects to challenge White Ribbon Day and other anti-male propaganda. Set up meeting for February 2009 when Micheal Woods returned from overseas.
- Gave two presentations at the SAMHA Workforce Development Forum in Sevenhill SA, “[Emerging priorities in men’s issues in North America](#)” and “[An overview of men’s health and issues of SAMHA Media Watch - insights from a national perspective.](#)” Distributed copies of both presentations in PDF format.



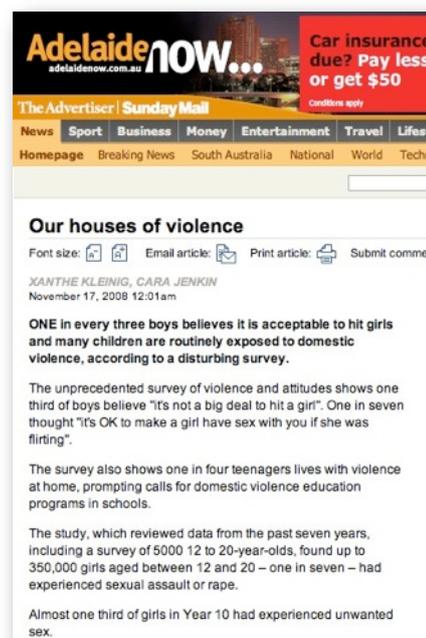
December 2008

- Distributed the “Men’s Issues in North America” presentation from the SAMHA Workforce Development Forum Nov 2008 as an online [Flash Video](#) to colleagues for feedback.
- Co-drafted letter with the Media Watch Portfolio to the Federal Office for Women regarding the use of incorrect and misleading statistics by the Prime Minister in his White Ribbon Day [speech](#). Luke Bain (portfolio chairman) had a number of positive telephone conversations with the Office for Women in response.
- Received positive reply from Sophie Mirabella MP (Federal Shadow Minister for Women) in response to my White Ribbon Day fax.
- Received positive reply from Pru Goward MP (NSW Shadow Minister for Women) in response to my White Ribbon Day fax.

- Contacted 15 media outlets, 5 politicians, 2 websites, HREOC, Amnesty International, ADFV Clearinghouse and the SA Office for Women, alerting them of the [acknowledged errors](#) contained in the White Ribbon Foundation Report. The ABC either amended or deleted all five of their news stories on the web that referred to the WRF Report. Four newspapers published corrections or letters to the editor correcting the WRD misinformation. The ADFV Clearinghouse corrected their website. Other errors haven't yet been corrected and remain on the internet (mainly on News Corporation publications such as the [Adelaide Advertiser](#) and [Daily Telegraph](#)).

- Lodged complaint with the ABC about incorrect and misleading statistics in their 7:30 Report White Ribbon Day [program](#) on domestic violence. The ABC removed one misleading statistic from their website (pretending it had never existed rather than issue an apology!), but the rest of their reply was disappointing. Have lodged an appeal with the ABC Complaints Review Executive.

- Advised SAMHA on the cost and availability of internet domain names for future website and email use. Purchased domain names on behalf of SAMHA.



- Investigated the possibility of SAMHA assisting a South Australian man who is taking the SA Department of Education to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal for publishing anti-male materials on its website.

- Circulated Barbara Kay's White Ribbon Day column from the National Post, Canada, titled "[Fed on myths, preying on men](#)".

- Circulated University of Adelaide [research](#) debunking health myths about Aussie men.

- Circulated [report](#) by the Federal Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs into the Effectiveness of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 in eliminating discrimination and promoting gender equality.

- Gave feedback on SAMHA flyer.

- Gave feedback on a letter sent by the Media Watch Portfolio to ABC Media Watch regarding biased [reporting](#) of domestic violence statistics by the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper.

January 2009

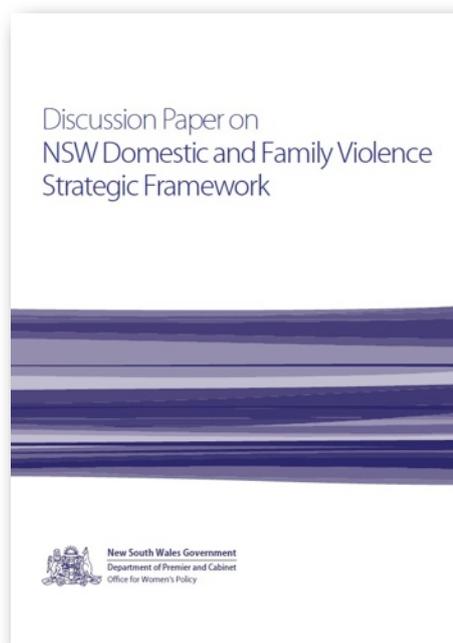
- Published [Flash Video](#) and [PDF](#) versions of the presentation “Emerging priorities in men’s issues in North America”, originally given at the SAMHA Workforce Development Forum, Sevenhill, in November 2008. Circulated them widely both within Australia and overseas (they were linked to by many high-profile [websites](#)).
- Co-drafted letter with the Media Watch Portfolio to Better Health Victoria regarding the use of gender-biased language on their “Domestic violence - tips for children” [website](#).
- Wrote to the Australian Institute of Criminology regarding their recent publication, “[Homicide in Australia: 2006–07 National Homicide Monitoring Program annual report](#)”, noting that 15 child homicides were perpetrated by “male family members”, and asking for a breakdown of this “male family members” category, into (for example) natural fathers, stepfathers, brothers, uncles, etc.
- Received reply from James Herlihy, Online Team, Amnesty International Australia regarding a fax I had sent to them requesting references for their unsubstantiated [claim](#) that “violence against women is the most widespread human rights abuse in the world.”
- Received disappointing reply from Graeme Innes, Human Rights and Disability Discrimination Commissioner and Tom Calma, Torres Strait Islander Social Justice and Race Discrimination Commissioner regarding a fax I sent them in December regarding their [media release](#) based upon incorrect and misleading information put out by the White Ribbon Foundation (‘boys think its OK to hit girls’). Wrote back to the Commissioners.
- Received extremely positive reply from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) to the email I had sent them about their latest child homicide stats:

“Your request alerted us to an error within the NHMP 2006-07 Annual Report. Homicide statistics differ if they are reported on the victims’ relationship with their offender or offenders’ relation with the victim. In this case, there was a transcription error as we moved between the two. Instead of 7 homicides involving a mother and 15 involving male family members killing a child as originally stated, 11 homicides involved a mother and 11 homicides involved a male family member killing a child in 2006-07. This has now been corrected in the online version of the document. Regarding your request, of the 11 homicides that involved a male family member, 6 involved biological fathers of the child and 5 were de-facto partners of the mother, who lived with the child. One biological father murdered two children. We acknowledge the usage of male family member and mother is not a useful way of classifying relationship between a child homicide victim and their offender. In future reports we will employ classifications that provide a more detailed classification of the relationship between child victims and offenders. Partly as a consequence of your email, we have started to look at child homicide in more detail and plan to publish more on this later in the calendar year.”

- Circulated the above AIC statistics widely, with the approval of the AIC.
- Posted an original [opinion piece](#) on the National Body Discussion Forum email list about what a good men's health policy would address (avoiding the unwarranted focus upon violence of the Doctor's Reform Society's [policy](#) on Men's Health).
- Received email from the ABC confirming that they were conducting a review of my complaint about biased and misleading material in a 7:30 Report White Ribbon Day [broadcast](#) on domestic violence.
- Circulated a request from author Maggie Hamilton for interviews with dads for an upcoming book she is researching about boys.
- Received email from ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs confirming that two further ABC News and Radio Australia online stories using the incorrect and misleading White Ribbon Foundation material had been amended, as per my request.

February 2009

- Wrote letter to NSW Government requesting the correction of a large list of incorrect and misleading 'statistics' contained in their [Discussion Paper on the Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework](#). CC'd letter to every NSW Government MP, Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner (Ms Elizabeth Broderick), President of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian AM), NSW Commissioner of Police (Commissioner Andrew Scipione APM), Federal Minister for Health (The Hon Nicola Roxon MP), Federal Shadow Minister for Health (The Hon Peter Dutton MP), Federal Minister for the Status of Women (The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP), Federal Shadow Minister for the Status of Women (Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP), Federal Attorney-General (The Hon Robert McClelland MP), and the Federal Shadow Attorney-General (Senator the Hon George Brandis SC). Also issued [media release](#) via AAP Medianet.
- Received reply from NSW Government indicating that they were looking into the issues raised in my letter of complaint (above).



- Published letter to the editor in the Sydney Daily Telegraph:

“Despite the recent high-profile cases of fathers allegedly taking their children’s lives, the main killers of children in Australia are mothers. The latest child homicide figures from the Australian Institute of Criminology show fathers represent less than a quarter of child homicide perpetrators. Mothers make up more than 50 per cent.”

- Posted an original [opinion piece](#) on the National Body Discussion Forum email list about the importance of language when talking about violence, in an effort to adopt non-gendered descriptions of violence, as per the World Health Organisation’s Typology of Violence (i.e. avoiding such language as “male-on-male violence” or “men’s violence against women”).

- Issued a combined [media release](#) with Dads in Distress via AAP Medianet about the AIC Child Homicide statistics.

- Wrote follow-up email to NSW Government regarding the request for the correction of a [large list](#) of incorrect and misleading ‘statistics’ contained in their [Discussion Paper](#) on the Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework.

- Met with representatives from MHIRC and the Men’s Health Reps from NSW Health to discuss a submission to the [Senate Select Committee on Men’s Health](#).

- Widely promoted the National Men’s Health Policy [Consultation Forums](#) in Canberra, Launceston, Hobart and Sydney.

- Advised the SAMHA Executive about the design and structure of the proposed [menshealthsa.com.au](#) website.

- Widely promoted the writing of submissions to the [Senate Select Committee](#) on Men’s Health.

- Assisted Family Voice Australia with statistics on fatherlessness for their [submission](#) to the [Senate Select Committee](#) on Men’s Health.

- Sent follow-up email to my local member, Paul Pearce MP, requesting a meeting to discuss my concerns about the use of incorrect and misleading ‘statistics’ contained in the NSW Government’s [Discussion Paper](#) on the Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework. Received no reply.

- Received email from the ABC Complaints Review Executive informing me that my complaint about the 7:30 Report’s White Ribbon Day [broadcast](#) was *not* upheld.



March 2009

- Attended the Sydney Men's Health Forum, as part of the Federal Government's consultation process for the development of a [National Men's Health Policy](#).
- Presented and participated at the Men's and Fathers' Health [Roundtable](#) in Sydney with Senator Cory Bernardi, Chairman of Senate Select Committee on Men's Health.
- Sent follow-up email to Amnesty International Australia asking for a source for their [claim](#) that "Violence against women is the most widespread human rights abuse in the world."

Received acknowledgement reply.

- Collaborated with the Media Watch Portfolio on the SAMHA [submission](#) to the Senate Select Committee on Men's Health.

- Sent materials on domestic violence to Alison Mclean, a Bachelor of Social Work student at the University of Tasmania, who is investigating the relative under-reporting of domestic violence perpetrated by women in Australia.



- Widely promoted the National Men's Health Policy [Consultation Forums](#) in Grafton, Newcastle and Brisbane, and also the opportunity for people to [host their own](#) forums.
- Discussed with Micheal Woods and the Media Watch Portfolio the possibility of action in relation to "[The Larapinta-Uluru Trek for Family Peace](#)" (a fundraising activity based on outdated gender-biased perspectives on domestic violence).
- Created 'shell' of new Men's Health SA [website](#) ready for content to be added.
- Contacted Susan Kingsley, Marketing Co-ordinator, ABC Local Radio South Australia and promoted SAMHA as a useful media contact for their '[Tune-Up with 891](#)' men's health event.
- Lodged formal [submission](#) to the NSW Discussion Paper on Domestic and Family Violence.
- Received a disappointing letter of reply from the NSW Minister for Women regarding my complaint about the use of incorrect and misleading 'statistics' in the Discussion Paper on Domestic and Family Violence (ignoring the entire substance of my original complaint).

- Lodged a formal complaint with the NSW Ombudsman about the NSW Government's use of incorrect and misleading domestic violence 'statistics' in their Discussion Paper. Advised the NSW Government of my complaint.

- Provided material to Dr John Ashfield for the inner back cover of his book reprint of "[Matters for Men.](#)"

- Received reply from the NSW Attorney General, the Hon John Hatzistergos MLC, regarding my concerns about errors in the Discussion Paper on NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework. The Attorney General has arranged for the [Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research](#) (BOCSAR) to review my concerns. BOCSAR's comments on the issues I have identified will be provided to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, which prepared the Discussion Paper.

- Set up a subscriber [form](#) on the [menshealthaustralia.net](#) website which, to July 26th 2009, has collected 88 subscribers to the Men's Health Australia electronic newsletter (an average of 22 subscribers per month).

- Received reply from Angela D'Amore MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Police, acknowledging my letter about the Discussion paper on Domestic Violence and Family Violence Strategy.

April 2009

- Sent follow-up email to the Federal Shadow Minister for Women, Sophie Mirabella MP, regarding uncorrected '[statistics](#)' contained in two of her media releases regarding White Ribbon Day 2008.

- Received letter from NSW Ombudsman's Office, noting that:

"It would appear your concerns have been noted and appropriate action is being taken by the department and the BOCSAR to address them. Therefore, I do not intend to take any further action on your complaint."

- Met with Micheal Woods and a public relations professional about future media initiatives around men's issues.

- Appeared before the Senate Select Committee on Men's Health [Public Hearing](#) in Sydney, alongside Micheal Woods and Rick Welsh from the University of Western Sydney.

- Corresponded with the public relations professional about ideas for creating a Men's Health Australia blog and publishing 'fact sheets' and 'case studies' about major issues of concern to men and boys.

- Wrote to the NSW Attorney General, Mr Hatzistergos, Barry Collier MP and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) regarding BOCSAR's review of my concerns about statistical errors contained within the Discussion Paper on NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework. CC'd to potentially sympathetic NSW MPs.
- Submitted a new formal complaint to the next level of the ABC's complaint bureaucracy about the ABC's White Ribbon Day 7:30 Report broadcast.
- Widely promoted the National Men's Health Policy Consultation [Forums](#) in Perth, Kalgoorlie, Whyalla, Adelaide, Geelong and Melbourne.
- Received email from Greg Smith, Shadow AG, thanking me for bringing the false and misleading statistics in the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework to his attention.
- Received a disappointing [letter](#) from Claire Mallinson, National Director of Amnesty International Australia, in response to my email requesting references for the claim that "Violence against women is the most widespread human rights abuse in the world." The letter didn't address my simple straightforward question at all. Sent email in reply, politely asking her to please address the question that was asked. Received acknowledgment reply.
- Trained Stephen Toon by telephone on the Content Management System of the Men's Health SA [website](#).
- Successfully lobbied the Executive of the Australasian Men's Health Forum to remove problematic 'deficit model' material from the [website](#) of the 2009 National Men & Family Relationships (MFR) Forum.
- Corresponded with Rebecca Walker, an Australian Volunteer working in Bougainville, PNG, interested in receiving information about supporting men who experience severe trauma - which in turn can be displayed through violence against their women (there are no facilities whatsoever in PNG for these men).
- Contacted colleagues in Adelaide about my concerns that the [Safer Family Law Campaign](#) rallies, although cleverly worded in a 'gender neutral' manner, appear to be only looking at fathers' violence towards mothers and children (and not the reverse), while ignoring the issue of false allegations made by vexatious parents of both genders.

May 2009

- Discussed with the Media Watch Portfolio a response to the sexist and misguided [National Plan](#) to Reduce Violence Against Women. Took part in a teleconference of concerned organisations to discuss possible actions, leading to an [op-ed](#) being published on [crikey.com.au](#).
- Assisted with organising delegates for the [Men & Father's Health Summit](#) held at Parliament House, Canberra.
- Discussed with the Media Watch Portfolio a response to an [article](#) in Marie Claire online magazine titled "What Kids Learn From Domestic Violence", quoting the inaccurate and misleading White Ribbon Day Foundation materials.
- Received letter from the ABC's Independent Complaints Review Panel confirming that they had decided to accept my complaint about the 7:30 Report White Ribbon Day broadcast for review.
- Sent materials on domestic violence to Jessica Schumann, BA Journalism (Bond University) and Freelance Journalist on the Gold Coast who was writing an article on violence against men and is soon to begin an internship with Amnesty International (hoping to change their one-sided approach to the issue of interpersonal violence).
- Interviewed by Kristyn Comino, a third year journalism student at the University of Canberra, for an article for their student news website about the recently announced Paid Parental Leave scheme, focusing on the fact that no paid paternity leave has been introduced. Article published [online](#).
- In the Federal Budget, the Government announced that it will introduce a [Paid Parental Leave scheme](#) on 1 January 2011 based closely on the recommendations of the final report of the Productivity Commission's [Inquiry](#) into Paid Parental Leave (which closely resembled the recommendations put forward in our [submissions](#)). The Government's announced scheme generally follows these recommendations, but unfortunately does *not* include paternity leave (as a cost-saving measure) and sets an income threshold for the primary caregiver.



- Drafted a [media release](#) with the Media Watch Portfolio in response to the Government's Paid Parental Leave Proposed Scheme. Release distributed via AAP Medianet and also distributed to a wide email list including all Federal MPs and the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner. Conducted two radio interviews in response to the release, the first with Paul Serratore from SYN Media (the Student Youth Network) in Melbourne, and the second with Genevieve Jacobs on 666 ABC Canberra Mornings.

- Conducted interview with and sent materials on domestic violence to Layla Lunn, a Journalism student from Griffith University in Brisbane who was working on a feature story about domestic violence against men and the gender stereotypes that are attached to domestic violence.

- Wrote letter to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald (unpublished):

Paediatrician Rachel Skinner says that sex-education classes are failing to teach young women the skills they need to resist having sex they will later regret (SMH, May 19). If she had studied boys as well as girls she would have found that they also need such education. The 2002 Secondary Students and Sexual Health study by LaTrobe University found that 24.4 per cent of males compared to 16.4 per cent of females were "a little confident or not at all confident" in saying no to unwanted sex. The 2001 Crime Prevention Study of Young People & Domestic Violence found that 5 per cent of males and 6 per cent of females had been physically forced to have sex by their partners. It is high time that we got rid of the myth that only girls need protecting when it comes to unwanted sex.

- Continued training Stephen Toon by telephone on the Content Management System of the Men's Health SA website.

- Conducted interview with, and sent materials on domestic violence to Kristen Vear, a journalism student from Deakin University in Melbourne, who was writing an article about domestic violence.

Appendix - Pointers for conducting Media Watch work

Letters

- Letters to the editor can be very effective
- Keep your letters credible, polite, reasonable, on-topic and succinct
- Be constructive, keep your cool, use humour where appropriate
- Don't 'rant', don't be hostile
- Be positive and solutions-focused rather than negative and victim-focused.

Journalists

- In the case of error or bias, contact the journalist and request that they do a follow-up story
- Feed journalists the correct information so they don't have to do the work themselves
- Don't contact journalists to 'correct them' but to 'help them see another side to the story'
- Find pro-male academics for journalists to refer to, in order to give credibility to stories
- Target media and journalists that are more receptive to male perspectives
- Lodge complaints with the Australian Press Council if necessary.

Media Bias

- Remember that much of the media (especially the ABC/SBS/Fairfax press) are dominated by ideologies that ignore, trivialise or demonise males and their concerns.
- If an interviewer or media host is biased against you or biased towards an anti-male position (as they most probably will be!), try to come across as balanced, reasonable, sensible, and moderate. This can make a biased moderator and any unreasonable radical guests be seen for what they really are.

- Acknowledge the ‘[lace curtain](#)’ that exists in the media by:
 - ❖ appealing to how women and girls (mothers of sons, daughters of fathers) are affected by the issue
 - ❖ using female spokespeople
 - ❖ using boys as an example instead of men to generate sympathy
 - ❖ focusing your energies on people with open minds (don’t waste your energy on changing the minds of hardened radicals)
 - ❖ raising issues that effect minority men (gay men, aboriginal men, migrant men, etc.) as this will garner more media attention than talking about “white men’s issues”
 - ❖ using a human rights rather than a men’s rights framework.

Timing

- Timing is important (to fit in with the media). Send out media releases and letters to the editor to coincide with important media events (e.g. White Ribbon Day, Men’s Health Week, Father’s Day). Don’t send out press releases on big news days (e.g. the Federal Budget, the Melbourne Cup).

Information Technology

- Use electronic networks to generate many letters to the editor, submissions to inquiries, etc., on any particular topic, theme or issue. Target websites and blogs to get people talking about the issues. These days the print media will often quote stories from websites.

Advertising

- When offensive advertising appears, target all parts of the advertising chain: the network, the channel, the advertising agency and the sponsor themselves. Also target the Advertising Standards Council (for what it’s worth!).

Persistence

- Be persistent! Don’t give up!
- Sometimes it takes months or years to get a result, so be patient
- Don’t take ‘no’ for an answer, but remember to be polite.