

**Submission for the honourable Justice Marcia Neave,  
Commissioners and others whom it may interest.**

**We are all in this together! That is my mantra.**

**Prelude;**

My name is Anthony Nicholl and I thank you for the opportunity to express my convictions and those of others in pursuit of a greater understanding and resolution pertaining to family violence.

My credentials for so doing are a diploma of Community Services in mental health alcohol and other drugs a two year full time undertaking and during which time continuing to the present time placement and volunteer at Dad's in Distress. I have heard conservatively 500 accounts of marital breakdown and recovery. I am a trained facilitator there for their meetings.

I stress I do not have a personal 'axe to grind' though my wife and I broke up after 31 years and I number Kay as amongst my friends. This though gives me insight into what other fellows go through when presenting at Dad's in Distress.

Dad's in Distress is a support group giving fellows the opportunity to express their angst or worse often at the worst time of their lives, non misogynistic and has an edict of "there is her story, his story and the truth". Some women have a habit of curtailing their marriages/relationships when it is least expected and the aftermath becomes a major vexation.

I have read the 'Terms of Reference' and have tried to adopt this within those terms.

I have also made a submission within the terms of reference with cover note delivered in March.

**Abstract;**

I/we want a cessation of the constant vitriolic agenda to stigmatise all men and boys based on the actions of the dysfunctional/disaffected few. It is manifestly unfair that men and boys have to defend their masculinity on account of this.

There must be a realisation that family violence is NOT endemic as is implied by those that have the agenda, it has always been there but now victims are feeling free to speak up, thankfully.

The statistics on domestic violence are only based on what the police bring in, a high percentage is not reported not factored in.

An understanding that there are eight types of domestic violence, men suffer greatly from the pernicious, insidious forms. ( dad's in distress).

The perpetrators of domestic violence should be punished within the letter of the law and making a clear understanding to the general public that it is never ok for a man to hit a woman, whether these people are dysfunctional, disaffected and male or female.

That men are socialised to aggressive responses from an early age.

That gender entitlement is as much a female to male form of behaviour as vice versa by tyrannical people.

Education about issues from an early age surely must be the primary prophylaxis.

There are lots of bad reasons why male suicide is not addressed, 6 a day, and it is not realised that more women attempt suicide than men complete it.

## Substance;

\*\*I have had a number of letters published and replies received with a theme that we are all in this together and suggesting again and again that **ALL** men are not violent and that a conciliatory/collaborative approach be adopted.

I find an alarming attitude exists in the community towards men in this context. Men are patronised, vilified, and minimised like "oh yes I hear what you say but family violence is a women's thing".

## Mad and bad;

\*\* I contend family violence is perpetrated by men **and women** who are dysfunctional and or disaffected meaning bad or mad at the time and that they represent a small percent of the population. It is not endemic it has always been with us but now victims are more likely to feel they are able to report violence with impunity. In the past week there have been some homicides perpetrated by men and in **EVERY** case the perpetrator has been dysfunctional as in mad.

## Not an epidemic;

\*\*I contend also that family violence has always been in existence and that describing this as an "epidemic" is inciting hysteria which does no good for any agenda.

\*\* However all men are being trivialised, vilified and that their masculinity is being demonified" ( Kathleen Parker). Jane Caro wrote in the Age last year that men are "emotionally infantilised and wont take responsibility for their own emotions." I have heard Fiona McCormack ( domestic violence Australia) and Rodney Vlasis ( mens referral service) twice and both times their delivery was vehemently seeking retribution

upon all men and vilifying them. I think personally that Rosie Batty is wonderful and is sacrosanct. I had the good fortune to speak with her personally on one occasion and she mentioned "gender entitlement" as perhaps the primary cause.

\*\*Gender entitlement is practiced by both genders and manifests as tyranny. We know that tyrannical people are enforcers and likely to adopt violence as a means of control just as use of insidious forms of tyranny causes great pain.

\*\* there has been great emphasis on statistics pertaining to family violence. These statistics are compiled from police reports. There are also constant claims that a very significant amount of domestic violence is not reported especially by men, 40%?

I have taken random samples from police in the peninsula area about this and they are aware that the amount of family violence being reported may only be the tip of the iceberg so this factor makes the statistics much less valid. There is a lot of speculation about this in the literature.

### **Suicide;**

\*\* male suicide is a sad and miserable scandal being 60% higher than the road toll, six a day most often quoted. Marriage breakdown so often leads to self demise and constitutes another form of violence. The statistics show women attempt suicide even more than men succeed. "We are both in this together". This whole spectre is horrible to contemplate.

\*\* This is such a bad reflection on our society it just should not be this way. Addressing suicidal ideation should be paramount.

### **All men are not latent perpetrators. Absolute;**

\*\* Advising the public that ALL men are latent perpetrators is just causing more divide disrespect and fear amongst those

who have been victims male and female and not getting to the root cause.

\*\* The root cause must be primarily "EDUCATION".

\*\* It is rarely factored in that men are socialised to aggressive reactions under duress, sometimes violent.

**Education as the primary necessity;** *addressing course*

\*\* Marriage breakdown often manifests as violence and suicide by those who know no better, or who are disaffected (reacting aberratively on account of difficult circumstances) or who are dysfunctional, male or female some manifesting as homicide. Teaching kids that marriage/cohabiting is not the empirical panacea (to happiness ever after).

\*\* How can we possibly let our wonderful young people embark on matrimony or permanent relationship without being trained for it? Near fifty per cent fail after all that high expectation of happiness and fulfilment and an unknown percent live in a maelstrom of perpetual conflict 'for the sake of the kids' and separate when they become 'empty nesters'. I am suggesting training for high school students about the joys and perils of marriage and the phases particularly about respect and compatibility and sensible expectations of others.

**Frankston;**

\*\* I come from Frankston area where the drug problem is major, comorbidity which we call or some do, 'pissed and stoned'. The police have such a major problem on their hands in several areas.

**Restore gender inequality – wish they would....**

\*\* My understanding of the purpose of the commission is to restore "gender inequality remove the heat that motivates family violence and include steps to provide more focused

protection for women who are genuinely under threat, highlight problems and provide solutions.”

I have also noted that Mr Nicholson said on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2014 at a Brotherhood of St Laurence meeting “in the next year one or two decisions will be made about its future ( social welfare I presume) that in all likelihood is irrevocable. I hope we can engage in the difficult conversations that are needed. Well from my perspective factoring in males is one of the ‘difficult conversations’ and there is little evidence of that gender equality to date.

### What blokes have to contend with;

\*\* I have submitted this material from “key facts and stats, one in three campaign family violence Australia says no”

- At least one in three victims of family violence is male.
- One male is a victim of domestic homicide every 10 days.
- Almost one in four young people are aware of their mum stepmum hitting their dad stepdad.
- Males are three times less likely to report being a victim of domestic violence to police
- Post separation similar proportions of men and women report experiencing further violence.

\*\* Those that want to believe that men are not affected by family violence may want to consider the following

- You don’t believe that mens rights are being abused
- You don’t believe that an alleged murderer or terrorist should have more legal rights than an alleged domestic violence offender.
- You don’t believe in gender equality
- You don’t believe that AVO’s can be fabricated
- You don’t believe that women can lie or be violent

- You don't believe that a father has a close bond with his children or that they need a father in their lives
- You don't believe that AVO's are used to get custody of children
- You don't believe that police have trouble identifying which women are genuinely under threat.

I am suggesting that men be included thoroughly within the scope of the commission's findings. Highly regarded journalists and writers are fully supporting the inclusion of men's issues such as Miranda Devine ( enough is enough) Bettina Arndt, Sallee O'Brien, Wendy Touhy, others.....

The outcomes from the commission will be compromised unless men's issues are not factored in and the irrelevancy attitude towards men is made redundant.

## MEN'S LIFE QUALITY

- How good would it be if we eliminated us versus them continuum and men and women worked together with emotional maturity to enhance their lives?
- It can be demonstrated that hopelessness, despair and depression pervades an unreasonable percentage of men's lives especially older men. Activity is the antidote, how can reclusive men enhance their lives in this way? Do they want to?
- Domestic violence is an awful conundrum in all it's eight forms. All men must not be held culpable for the dysfunctional minority or those under untold duress.
- Men suicide at the rate of 6 per day. If six whales were washed up on the beach there would be an enormous outcry.
- It is imperative that we address the psychological needs of men and boys to improve the psychological well being of all people.
- Prostate cancer has the highest incidence and mortality and is least funded even though treatment modes have improved.
- In Victoria the government has no male health policy unlike federal policy and other states.



## CONVENOR



### Registration and Payment

Contact via Email or Phone to register your attendance

Payment can be made by cheque or money order to A M Nicholl or by bank transfer. Both registration and payment latest November 12th as facility only has limited availability and requires prior payment. Refunds will be facilitated if necessary



A certificate of attendance will be provided.

# MEN

## "ALL MEN MATTER"

A SYMPOSIUM ABOUT SEXUALITY, LIFE'S JOYS AND DIFFICULTIES, AND MANAGING LATER LIFE.

### WHY

To enhance the quality of life of men in times of change.

### WHEN

Saturday morning November 22nd  
8:40 - Lunch Time.

### WHERE

Mt Eliza Business School.  
An elite academic facility at Moondah Beach.  
70 Kunyung Road, Mount Eliza. 3930

### COST

\$80 per person.  
Includes morning tea and lunch.  
A non-profit exercise, any surplus will be donated to Male Health Victoria.

### WHY SHOULD I COME?

This symposium can improve the quality of your life.

Mt Eliza

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION





## THE SYMPOSIUM TOPICS

WHY DOES SEX MATTER  
SO MUCH TO MEN?

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HAVE YOU DONE YOUR  
BEST WORK YET?

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WORK, LIFE BALANCE

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WORKING THROUGH A  
MAN'S LATER LIFETIME.

**All men, women welcome  
addressing these critical issues.**



## THE SPEAKERS

### MS BETTINA ARNDT.

Relationship journalist.  
Keynote speaker.  
"Why does sex matter so much to men?"

### MR. G.C. (CHARLIE) LAST,

FRACS. Prominent local endovascular surgeon,  
Frankston & Mornington  
"Work, Life Balance"

### DR RODNEY SYME.

FRCS. Urology. Melbourne University,  
Austin Hospital.  
"Working through a man's later lifetime"

### MR GARETH ANDREWS.

CEO and founder of the Life Again Foundation.  
"Have you done your best work yet"

## THE CHAIRMAN

### MR. ROB KOCH

"Better Men Australia"

## WHO IS WHO



**Bettina Arndt**, a clinical psychologist, is known as one of Australia's first sex therapists. She's spent most of her career talking and writing about sex and relationships in newspapers and on TV and radio, as well as communicating her experience to other professionals.



**Gareth Andrews**, former VFL player for Geelong and Richmond, jointly founded the VFL Players Association and was its President. Commerce Degree at Melb. University. In 2011, he established Life Again, with the aim of inspiring and connecting men in times of change.



**Rob Koch** is a Men's Health & Parenting Educator with Monash Health and the founder of Male Health Victoria. He heads up a team of men's workers through his organisation Better Men



**Rodney Syme**, urological surgeon, Austin Hospital. He chaired the Vic. Section of the Urological Society of Australasia, and the Urology Study Group, Cancer Council of Vic. He is the 10 year President of Dying With Dignity Victoria.

## There is help. There is hope.

You can talk with someone who knows that from experience! DIDSS offers peer support\* that is:



Confidential  
Compassionate  
Cost-free\*\*

\* DIDSS does not provide professional counselling or legal advice.  
\*\* Some groups request a gold coin donation to cover room hire.

## What to do if recently separated:

- 1 Contact DIDSS on 1300 853 437** to get linked into local supports and resources.
- 2 Keep a diary.** Jot down advice, contacts, decisions, questions, issues, conversations.
- 3 Stay calm.** Emotions can lead you to make rash decisions. Keep a clear head to plan ahead.
- 4 Meet your obligations.** Do what you can to maintain your routine and get bills paid on time.
- 5 Look after yourself.** Your kids need you to eat right, sleep well, exercise, talk and stay positive.
- 6 Make the most of any contact.** It may not be much at first however your kids will love it regardless.
- 7 Work towards a working relationship.** Be patient and do whatever you can to get on with your children's mum, for their sake.



### DIDSS Head Office

Dads in Distress Support Services  
PO Box 2333  
Coffs Harbour  
NSW 2450  
ABN: 79 591 357 549

Email [enquiries@dadsindistress.asn.au](mailto:enquiries@dadsindistress.asn.au)  
Internet [www.dadsindistress.asn.au](http://www.dadsindistress.asn.au)  
Office 02 6652 8113  
Helpline 1300 853 437



Australian Government

Department of Families, Housing,  
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

DIDSS is a registered Harm Prevention Charity partially funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

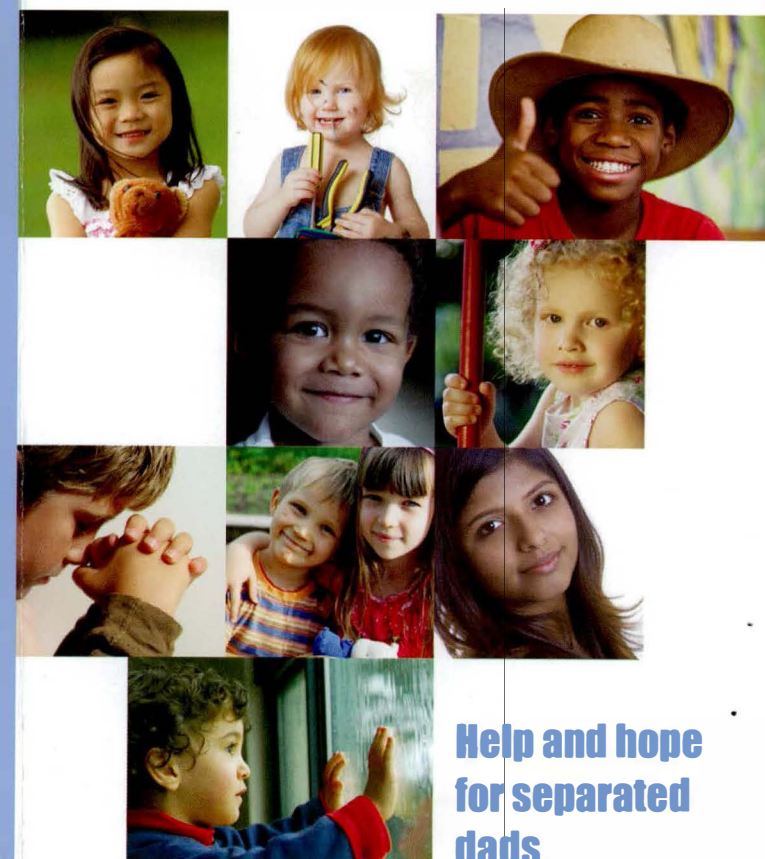
Please contact Head Office to discuss volunteering, partnering, donating or corporate sponsorship.

Who is your nearest DIDSS contact?

Find out by phoning 1300 853 437 or go to  
[www.dadsindistress.asn.au/meetings.html](http://www.dadsindistress.asn.au/meetings.html)



I'm glad someone's  
looking after my dad...



Help and hope  
for separated  
dads

**1300 853 437**



**“NOT ME!”**

Steve J, 29, Richmond

*“Not me. No way.*

*Other families break up but not mine.*

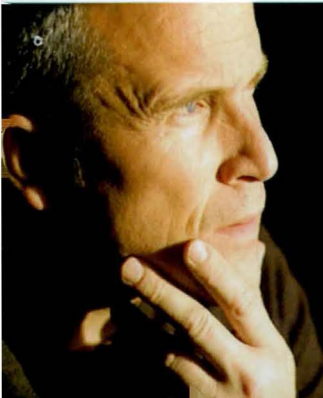
*It happened just a few months ago. Hit me like a ton of bricks. I wondered if I would ever get through this. Tried to tough it out but not seeing the kids was unbearable.*

*Then someone told me about a new support group for men going through separation from their partner or their kids.*

*Picking up that phone wasn't easy. Spilling my guts to the other blokes was even harder... at first. But I'm so glad I did. The fellas have been a great help. I've learned so much about myself, my family – the things that really matter in life.*

*It still bloody hurts but at least I can see the road ahead a little more clearly...*

**And I know I'm not alone.** *In fact, just by being there and really listening I've even been able to help some of the other guys through.”*



Each year in Australia over 50,000 married and defacto couples separate.

**Now there's help for men too, and it's OK to get it.**



Help and hope  
for separated dads



The DIDSS Peer Support Group training has been endorsed by the Institute of Group Leaders

Since it's humble beginnings on a veranda in Coffs Harbour in 1999, DIDSS volunteers have impacted thousands of families across the nation, saved untold men on the brink of suicide, and seen many children reunited with their fathers, grandparents and extended families.



#### HELPLINE 1300 853 437

Supporting men and their families around the country.



#### SUPPORT GROUPS

Weekly evening meetings of men led by trained volunteers who care.



#### ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT

Particularly in locations without a group, field volunteers can meet face-to-face or over the phone.



#### REFERRALS

Connecting you with other services and programs that directly meet your specific needs.



#### ADVOCACY

Specific issues and cases are regularly taken up with agencies, government departments and policy makers.



#### WEBSITE

Comprehensive news, resources, information and stories.

[www.dadsindistress.asn.au](http://www.dadsindistress.asn.au)



**“I'M ALIVE!”**

Ahmad Y, 44, Brookfield

***“If it wasn't for DIDSS, I'd be dead,***

*When my wife left me for another man I was in shock for weeks. Kids, money, house, car, friends – gone! I was too ashamed to get help from my own people. My head was spinning with anger, rage, guilt, apathy, loneliness, fear... couldn't sleep or work.*

***I got so depressed I thought suicide was my only option.*** *Drinking only made it worse. Alone in a boarding house on my girl's birthday I had a rope in one hand and the phone in the other.*

*Mensline Australia connected me to Dads in Distress. I just let it all out on this poor bloke at 2am but he somehow got me to postpone my plan. Next day I was having coffee with the DIDSS guy in my area who stuck with me and led me to the right services to get my life back.*

*That was four years ago. It is amazing that anyone could recover from what I went through. I did and many do. I have a new partner with a baby on the way, plus I'm seeing my kids grow up.*

*I am so grateful to DIDSS for saving my life. What's more, that local guy and I have formed a group in our area...*

*I not only have a life – I'm a 'lifesaver' now too!”*