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**Minister for Health and Ageing**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**AUSSIE MEN URGED TO SPEAK UP ABOUT THEIR HEALTH**

The Australian Government wants Aussie men to start talking – to help it develop Australia's first ever National Men's Health Policy.

Whether young or old, single or married, in the city or the bush, the Government wants the views of Australian men to help make the policy strong, robust and effective.

A number of men's health ambassadors will be appointed to help engage the men of Australia in this important task.

Formal consultations on the development of the National Men's Health Policy will begin in early 2009, with discussions to be held in all states and territories.

Community groups will also be encouraged to hold their own local discussions about men's health.

To assist in the consultation process, I am today releasing a range of materials including a detailed information paper and a summary of the major health issues facing Australian men.

I am pleased to announce the first of the ambassadors who have signed up. They are:

- Professor David de Kretser AO, Governor of Victoria and founder and patron of Andrology Australia
- Mr Warwick Marsh, President of the Fatherhood Foundation
- Mr Tim Mathieson, Businessman and men's health advocate
- Mr Bill Noonan, Vice President of the Transport Workers Union Australia
- Mr Barry Williams, President of the Lone Fathers Association
- Professor John Macdonald, Foundation Chair in Primary Health Care and Co-Director Men's Health Information and Resource Centre, University of Western Sydney and President Australasian Men's Health Forum

It is important to recognise that there are specific health problems that disproportionately affect men.

Life expectancy for Australian men, for example, is 4.8 years less than that of women – 78.7 years for men, compared with 83.5 years for women.

Men also experience 70 per cent of disease related to injury, and bear the brunt of suicide (78 per cent) and road accidents (73 per cent).

Men under 75 years are almost three times more likely to die from coronary heart disease, stroke and vascular disease than women, and men are also over represented in deaths related to HIV/AIDS, lung cancer, emphysema and liver disease. Australian men have the second highest rate of bowel cancer in the world.

Despite these and other concerns, many men are still reluctant to seek medical help or even talk to someone about their health.

Gender is a key determinant of health in Australia, and the best way to improve health outcomes is to have policies that recognise the unique needs of men.

A National Men's Health Policy is also needed to address the specific health needs of communities of men who have the poorest health outcomes, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, and men living in rural and remote areas.

As well as the detailed information materials being made available today, there is also a ready made power point presentation that can be downloaded and used by people interested in holding their own local community discussion on men's health.

The presentation is designed to lead discussions and examine issues such as identifying gaps in men's health and barriers for men in accessing health care.

Copies of these materials can be found at [www.health.gov.au/menshealthpolicy](http://www.health.gov.au/menshealthpolicy).

An additional resource kit, developed by Andrology Australia, called '*What every man needs to know*', is also available by emailing [National.Mens.Health.Policy@health.gov.au](mailto:National.Mens.Health.Policy@health.gov.au).

**For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.**