



2021 National Conference and National Body for Fathers, Fatherhood and Families.

Proposal for unsolicited bid for Commonwealth funding
January 2020



Proposal:

As a society we do very little to support men's health during their partner's pregnancy or to help them adjust to fatherhood and to play an integral part in the crucial First 2000 Days of their child's lives. We fully support the national agenda to support the mental health and well-being of new fathers and the Government's steps with Medicare-backed initiatives to screen new fathers. In full alignment with this work, we are seeking funding support to host the inaugural National Conference on Fathers, Fatherhood and Families with the intention of this becoming an annual event in the Australian calendar. This forum aims to bring together national and international thought leaders and key stakeholders in a 2-day conference in Canberra to progress the positive engagement of fathers in active parenting roles across Australia. A key outcome of the conference is to form an Australian Fatherhood peak body to develop a national strategic agenda and coordinated services and resources for fathers and fatherhood.

Funding Support Request:

Funding support of \$96,750 towards the conference and key personnel support and development of a white paper for a National body to develop a strategic agenda to support Fathers, Fatherhood and Families. The budget outline is provided on pg 5.

Executive Sponsors:

Dr Rosina McAlpine, CEO Win Win Parenting (lead); Grainne O'Loughlin, CEO Karitane, Mr Barry Williams, President Australian Lone Fathers Association and Dr James Rodriguez, CEO Fathers and Families Coalition of America.

Background:

Recognising the emerging focus on the mental health and wellbeing, early intervention and prevention and suicide prevention strategies for men, the time is right to bring together Australia's leading researchers, policy advisors, strategists and service providers in this space. In alignment with the National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program, the National Mental Health Strategy, the First 2000 Days Framework, we believe that it is timely to convene the thought leaders nationally to drive this work.

A large body of research provides evidence of the importance of positive fathers in children's lives (Thefatheringproject.org/research/). We know that positive engagement with fathers supports children's social, cognitive, physical and psychological development including positive outcomes in terms of school engagement and performance, self-esteem and mental health, positive social skills and relationships, as well as greater physical wellbeing.

Currently there are many issues that prevent father engagement including mental and physical health issues and a lack of father-focussed parent education programs and child and family health services. Not addressing these issues has a significant negative social and economic impact on our nation. The Fathering Project for example estimates that there is a strong ROI of \$2.45 for every dollar invested when calculating the prospective benefits from mental health support for new fathers ([Fathering-project-economic-and-social-benefits.pdf](#)).

In order to reduce the health burden costs and achieve positive outcomes for families more strategic and coordinated father support is needed nationally. The recent [NSW Inquiry into Support of New Parents and Babies](#) (November 2018) also noted the importance of fathers and made a number of father-specific recommendations for improving support for fathers. Advocacy to better support fathers and their mental health is gaining momentum nationally and internationally in the United Kingdom (UK), United States (US), Europe and through The World Health Organisation (WHO).

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PROBLEM WE ARE TRYING TO SOLVE:

Need for a National Agenda for Fathers, Fatherhood and Families

Issues: Despite the strong body of evidence in Australia and internationally of the social and economic significance of positive father engagement, Australia does not have a **national body for Fatherhood** or a **national strategic agenda for supporting positive father engagement**. With no identified body to represent Australia nationally or internationally, **Australia is being left behind on the international stage** with regards to fathers and fatherhood in comparison with the leadership and agendas of the UK, US, Europe and WHO.

Currently Australia lacks an overarching framework and common goals which has resulted in multiple states and territories running a **patchwork of overlapping programs** and a multitude of difficult to “find” programs with **no centralised directory**. While various attempts have been made to gather information on support services and programs for Fathers, without ongoing updating by a National body – the difficult to find registers soon become outdated and piecemeal.

The lack of a national agenda has resulted in the **inefficient use of resources including duplication in funding** of various programs and material development, delivery and advertising via a multitude of websites, social media channels, resources for fathers being developed independently of other work by many NGOs, government organisations, private providers and corporates. This **lack of a coordinated funding strategy** between states and federal government for research, material and program development and service delivery has led to a degree of **chaos in the system** with a **lack of coordination of resources** and the **loss of economies of scale**. As a result, many fathers simply do not know how or where to seek help.

PROPOSED SOLUTION: A National Body for Fathers, Fatherhood and Families

The aim of our National Conference on Fathers, Fatherhood and Families is to bring together national and international thought leaders and key stakeholders to **form an Australian Fatherhood body** and to develop a white paper for a **national strategic agenda** for fathers and fatherhood.

The whitepaper will outline proposed solutions to overcome the many existing negative social and economic outcomes of the current state in Australia as identified above.

The white paper will begin by developing the terms of reference including a list of the key roles and responsibilities for an **Australian body for fathers, fatherhood and families** including that the national body provide:

- A forum for the development of a **national agenda for fathers, fatherhood and families** to progress the positive engagement of fathers and greater family and social wellbeing at a national level.
- **A platform for communication and engagement nationally and internationally** – to raise **Australia’s profile and leadership in the international arena** of fathers and fatherhood.
- An advisory role for the **development of government policy**.
- A central point for the **coordination of government funding** to eliminate duplication and enable the efficient use of resources **supporting economies of scale**. An opportunity to encourage collaboration through a national community of practitioners to break down silos and **prevent wasteful use of resources** with parallel innovations producing similar outputs.
- A community of thought leaders, fathers and practitioners to support co-design and **share innovation and best practice** in resource and service development. An annual forum to bring fatherhood and



- family researchers, practitioners and policy makers, HR, Diversity, WH&S, Men's health practitioners and fatherhood groups together to progress our **understanding of the mechanisms** that enable fathers to engage positively with their children and families to enhance men's mental and physical health as well as family and societal wellbeing. To share and to **progress research, intervention and education programs** on fathers, fatherhood and families.
- A body to **map current fatherhood programs across various jurisdictions** including government (local state and federal), private practice, workplace, family service and academia and create and maintain an **up-to-date national directory of services to increase visibility and engagement** with service providers.
- A place to bring fathers and families together to learn more about the mechanisms and programs that **support father wellbeing and father engagement in family life.**

Supporting Organisations:

- **Australia:** Australian Lone Fathers Association, Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium, Dad's Inc., Karitane, Movember, Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA), Parents@work, Parents without Partners Australia, The Advancing Parental Leave Equality Network (APLEN), The Father-Hood, Win Win Parenting
- **United States:** Fathers and Families Coalition of America.
- **United Kingdom:** Fathers Reaching Out

Organising Committee

Barry Williams, President Australian Lone Father Association, Parents Without Partners.

James Rodriguez, CEO, Fathers and Families Coalition of America

Rosina McAlpine, CEO Win Win Parenting

Grainne O'Loughlin – CEO Karitane

Sharlene Vlahos – Director Education and Business development – Karitane

Emma Walshe – APLEN/parents@work/Aussie Dads

Nicole Highet – Centre for Perinatal Excellence, Melbourne

Bronwyn Leigh – Director Centre for Perinatal Psychology, University of Melbourne

Elly Taylor – Becoming us, UNE

Sarah Cotton – Director Organizational Psychology, South Australia

Mark Williams – Reaching Out PMH – UK advocacy group, UK

Karen Woodall - authority on Parent Alienation, UK

Alex Borchardt - Legal advocacy for fathers, UK

Toni Riviera – CEO, The FAST Institute of Family Engagement, US

Budget – over page.



Budget: Estimated Expenses

Venue – Parliament house (To be confirmed)	In kind
Audio Visual (equipment and staff including live streaming for virtual attendance)	\$25,000
Breakout rooms (if available)	\$10,000
Catering: 2 days: M.Tea/Lunch/ A.Tea (440 @ \$75pp = \$33,000)	\$47,300
Drinks and Canapes Evening 1 (220 @ \$43pp = \$9,460)	
Light Breakfast Morning 2 (220 @ \$22pp = 4,840)	
4 International speakers (\$7,500 each accommodation, fee and flights)	\$30,000
Website, design, printing and production	\$7,500
Conference management	\$49,500
Marketing	\$7,500
MC	\$5,000
Drafting of Whitepaper	\$20,000
Misc. expenses	\$9,950
TOTAL	\$211,750

Estimated Funding and Revenues

Registration fees: Professionals \$250 @ 220 registrants	\$55,000
Funding	
Request Federal Budget (To be approved)	\$96,750
Request NSW Ministry of Health/State Health Departments (To be approved)	\$20,000
Sponsorship – current estimated (To be confirmed)	\$40,000
TOTAL	\$211,750

Sponsorship

Australian Lone Fathers Association (\$10,000); Fathers and Families Coalition of America sponsoring speakers from the United States (TBC); Corporate sponsorship (estimated \$30,000); PANDA (TBC); Movember (TBC).