
The Momentum Concept

A better world for us all.

*Committed to creating a willing reformation of unhealthy masculine behaviour
for the benefit of Men, Women, Children and the Planet.*

Expanding our understanding of the impact of gender imbalance.

Women and men working together to shape a better future for us all.

Meeting the challenge to change.

Dedication

For those who don't yet have a voice.

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Contents

Dedication	2
Welcome to the Reader	4
How this came about	4
Purpose of this document	4
What you can expect	5
Part One	7
Another world that made us who we are	7
Men, Women and Cooperation in another Era	7
What happened?	8
Urban Living	9
1788: a snapshot	9
Modified Masculine	10
Change, at last: the Ascent of the Feminine	11
Considerations	11
Part Two	12
Getting Together	12
Torvill and Dean	13
Benefits for Men	14
Thinking it through: Gender Cooperation	14
Remarkable us and why we exist	15
Family and Parenting	15
Children.	16
Arseholes and toxic power	16
Quarantining dominant power: Emperors without Clothes	18
Those without a Voice	18
Those with a Voice	19
Summary - the Journey so far	19
Part Three	19
The Status Quo: Women, Men, Children, the Planet and arseholes	19
Part Four	22
The Stage is Set	22
Elephants and Rooms	22
Australia does this well	22
What can Australians do? The challenge to change.	23
References	26

Welcome to the Reader

My quest is to find a fresh way to talk about how men and women relate in the 21st century. I want to redress a great unfairness that is being inflicted on us all, now and into the future. My central question is this: How can we men and women live together so that we realise everyone's full potential as a human being?

It will take about an hour to read and my objective is to guide you successfully to the really important last part.

How this came about

In 2015 the 21st Western Australian Men's Gathering 'commissioned' a group of us to take a look at 'The Future of Men'. In doing so, the enquiry began to look pretty bleak, and our group eventually dissipated in complexity and confusion around the topic. It led me to do a lot of heavy thinking, along with the other last man standing, my friend David Dyke. He held the space for me to do just that.

Through this I came to realise that I held some keys to helping men find another way to go forward – and not just men, but everyone.

What momentum and shift would we need to speed up and enhance cooperation between genders? And how could this prepare us for a rapidly changing world? These changes may end up being favourable, or not. It's up to us.

The chance to share my thinking came as David and others persuaded me to put my thoughts into a practical framework. The following pages outline where my contemplation and research took me.

I am part of a team who supported me to create and write this concept. David Dyke, Pat Higgins, Vida and Dom Carlino, Jeremy Ingham, Wes Carter OAM, and Dr Alan Hancock. All have made substantial contributions to the document. Deep ongoing thanks and appreciation for your trust and support, and particularly Pat's tenacity early on, in keeping me on track and for his outstanding research, Alan's exceptional editing skills, Vida's unique perspectives, and Michael Efford for his typographic design. Thanks also to our peer assessment group, who have generously contributed responses and advice towards the documents' final outcome?

What you are reading was originally prepared in 2007 as an idea on a men's group blog. This version was researched and developed in this format, beginning 2017. It now seeks a practical outcome, and our aim is that as a result of reading it you will want to do the same.

Purpose of this document

This is a source document. It is an opportunity to examine a very obvious world-wide issue.

It has a practical objective and is a call to action.

It is about the link between some dominant masculine behaviours and how they preclude us from prioritising the wellbeing in creating a better world.

It is about finding practical ways in which we can restore, value, and share our deeply sourced gender cooperative spirit to bring about change.

It is also designed to stimulate thinking about the potential of healthy masculine and feminine characteristics.

We are all now forced to consider the impact of climate change. This document examines another global issue that demands awareness and action – the causes of unacceptable male behaviour and its effects, on Women, Men, Children, and the Planet.

It outlines why and how this topic is now a priority for us all to work together to create a better world.

It also sets out what we can do towards making this happen.

It requires cooperation and willing support to reshape and reconfigure parts of the masculine construct. Can we create together a model of masculinity removed from its often-destructive patterns? Then we will fully share the potential and wisdom of both men and women.

This is a massive topic, compressed into 25 pages. As we investigate it, we may encounter doubt, misinformation, opposition, scepticism, intolerance and inconclusiveness, along with common knowledge that is held to be true, but may well not be.

I intend to offer you a common-sense appraisal of what has led us to this turning point in the human journey.

While it is openly acknowledged that the meaning of gender expression is now varied and expanded, this document primarily chooses to use the description, feminine and masculine and family to mean all gender settings.

What you can expect

The Momentum Concept: Vision statement

- » A world where women, men, children and the planet are equally valued.
- » Women and men equally share in the responsibility of looking after one another, all children and the planet.
- » Through co-operation, women and men see one another as a gift.
- » Where the core value of our governance is non adversarial respect, honesty and truth.
- » Where gender inequality does not exist.
- » Where gender dignity is an inalienable right for everyone.

I will take a series of snapshots of significant moments in the behaviour of humans for the last 100,000 years of our 300,000 year existence. We will look at how our behaviour has been designed and what that design looks like now in the 21st Century.

I will contend that half of the planet's human potential - that of women - has been unrecognised. It hasn't been used to create a balance between men and women in the way we take responsibility for how the world works. There are reasons why this was so in the past, but these reasons are no longer valid.

We will look at what took men away from a place where they could readily recognise and value a safer masculinity. How has it come about that good fathering, the crucial model for healthy and tolerant masculinity, is dangerously low on fuel?

We will look at why many men are fearful of other men, and why their primary life concern is how to survive in a 'man's world'. Many women have the same concern. I want to look at why men are complicit in enabling dominant male power, only to suffer from its effects. And I will argue that while good men (and some less good) are longing for change, they don't know how to make this happen.

Implicit within my reasoning is that *both* women and men are diminished by the social order we have constructed; an order that we now see is beginning to crumble before us. We could be celebrating our abundant cooperative potential, but instead we are going down a path of adversarial and self-serving argument – claim and counter claim, politicised and divisive. All that this has achieved is to create a gridlock, blocking a way forward for both genders. We now find ourselves in a place that we weren't designed for. We are forgetting how to use the source of our humanness survival and reconciliation.

This document is designed to look at the nature of male domination. While this influences us all, I have decided to focus more on its roots in masculinity, and its effects on men. I want to understand how men have arrived in this place where they are calling the shots, and are capable of displaying such a bewildering array of contradictory behaviours.

I don't want to dismiss the obvious: the enormous and varied roles of women in our joint development and survival so far. Rather I want to look at what has *not happened* for the benefit of us all as a result of the repression of women's role in society. My aim is to explore one central question: how can we bring our world back into balance, and proportion?

And yes, there will be some answers and ways forward. Much depends on how you choose to respond.

In advance, an apology, and no apology all at once, to those who care to disagree with the reasoning outlined ahead of you. Correctness and common-sense can be duelling banjos.¹

There is much for us to consider, even reject, so all of your objection, enlightenment and curiosity is welcome here. There will be many questions for which there are no definitive answers. There are always reasons for the status quo to exist. It is, in its way, the safety net that enables ideas to flourish.

Let's also acknowledge that mostly there is good news. In the past six decades much has been accomplished to improve human development, alas with some notable exceptions. More about this later.

But a new world order where we cooperatively share responsibility for all of us and for the planet, that's some trapeze act!

1 Deliverance and the Duelling Banjos (Denny, 2008)

Part One

Another world that made us who we are

Humans have evolved over 300,000 years. Around 100,000 years ago we started migrating out of Africa. By 25,000 years ago we inhabited most parts of the planet.

Our success at being human was based on our adaptability, curiosity and cooperative skills. For 90% of our recent, post migratory 100,000 year evolutionary journey, we depended on interactive skills and teamwork to maintain survival. Nature's patterns and distinct gender roles governed and ensured a cohesive social order.²

A snapshot of human culture and life style on any favourable part of the planet 35,000 years ago would show a clan of around 40 members, composed of family groupings, and a clearly defined adaptive hierarchical social order.

Creating shelter, sustenance, safety and protection were the prime survival objectives against animal attack, inadequate food, disease³, weather conditions, interaction and hostilities with other clans. Similar to us in the 21st Century, they had many practices that we would find unacceptable today and it is certainly true that patriarchal and hierarchical dispositions prevailed, the full outcome of which will become evident further into this document.

In a sense, nature itself was the Internet of their essential and forensic appreciation and respect for the natural world, as well as a source of wonder and curiosity. This was variously celebrated through art, dance, chant and storytelling - an indication of a rich and rewarding leisure time. Their honouring ancestral worship provided a background of meaning, stability and perpetuity.

Ancestral Worship

Ancestral Worship was - and remains - the planet's most perennial belief system. It is adaptive, and purposeful, governed from the inside of the cultural traditions of the clan or family. It maintains influence and guidance in upholding durable social values and behaviours. It encompasses three domains, past present and future. It is coming back into favour in western cultures through ancestry websites.

Men, Women and Cooperation in another Era

How did men and women behave towards one another back then? They had some distinct advantages, particularly related to the size, scale and nature of group settings. In most cultures there is a pattern of specifically oriented educational development and preparation for adulthood.

Generally, girls and boys had differing models of development directed towards the roles they would both eventually play in the survival of the clan. The primary distinction between the male and female gender journey has its origin in the physiology of women and men.

A women's life journey was punctuated by what happens to her physical body through the steps towards puberty, menstruation, motherhood, childcare, menopause and elder status. Along with learning practical tasks expected of them, these rites of passage were celebrated through, women's stories, lore, secrets, and clan culture. *This is often called women's business.*

2 Darwin's Hunch (Kuljian, 2016)

3 Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind (Harari, 2011)

The major rite of passage for men is separation from the mother, circumcision and/or wounding at puberty, to learn hunting and survival, clan culture, ritualised aggression, fathering skills, mentoring, lore and eventually, eldership.

Men's primary physical change happens at puberty. From then on, their bodies maintain a steady level of function until the onset of later age. Through modelling, separation, storytelling, ritual, boundaries and challenge, the mentor and elder created an expectation of the purpose and world for boys and younger men to step into. *This is often called men's business.*

These implicit aspects of our gender development persist as an expectation in our psyche and remain powerfully with us. Clearly we would not want to go about re-creating men and women's business from the romantic notion that back then they had it sorted. We are planetary citizens not a clan. Rather, within this construct we do maintain behavioural dispositions from back then, useful and unuseful. The useful parts we are examining are the function and focus of role modelling, and its importance in the development of children, along with a respect for nature and its bounty.

These aspects remain in our design. They are readily accessed even today. It is the key to future change.

It is what we still bring from a world we stepped away from when we moved from a 'gatherer hunter' era into the agricultural male dominant era and was at odds with how we had evolved and existed over the previous 290,000 years... back then.

What happened?

Climate change. The 'gatherer hunters' had to hunker down for around 10,000 years as the most recent significant glacial event froze much of the planet. We were obliged to live in more temperate zones. As the ice receded, more favourable conditions prevailed. This sped up adaptation, innovation and development, encouraging permanent habitation.⁴

Agricultural practices took root in the Middle East and elsewhere.⁵ What follows is a rapid shift toward settlement and a social order focused on cultivation and animal rearing. This in turn required buildings, protection and security.⁶

This is the birth of the Neolithic Era, the single most significant development in human history. It changes the way we exist forever.

The Agricultural Revolution

At the beginning of this period of transition to agricultural economies, the remaining hunter gatherers lived a richer, healthier and probably happier existence than their agricultural contemporaries. The latter had to adapt to back-breaking repetitive labour in the fields, limited and less nutritious diets, and the effects of contagious diseases made more prevalent by crowded living conditions. Except for the elite – priests, aristocracy, property owners – the great mass of the population were worse off as peasants than their ancestors had been as hunter-gatherers.

As Hariri (2011) claims in 'Sapiens': 'Rather than heralding a new era of easy living, the Agricultural Revolution left farmers with lives generally more difficult and less satisfying than those of foragers... [It] translated into population explosions and pampered elites... The Agricultural Revolution was history's biggest fraud.'

4 Human Origins: How diet, climate and landscape shaped us (Compton, 2018)

5 The Development of Agriculture (2018)

6 Hunter-Gatherers to Farmers (2018)

Urban Living

Around 8,000 BC, Jericho is a walled community of 2000 citizens moving in and out to tend fields, gather, hunt and trade. There are granaries and fortifications, allocated social roles, tasks and class stratification. The use of metal tools and weapons increases efficiency and innovation.⁷ Elsewhere, similar groupings occur.

The close clan model dismantles, as the scale and diversity of activity becomes more complex. Men assume work roles in agriculture, trade, negotiation and protection. The resulting level and shift towards intensified male responsibility that diverts away from cooperative order and isolates the status of women, stratifying men's roles to a harsher pecking order of power, privilege and patriarchy. The cooperative 'contract' between men and women of the previous Palaeolithic era becomes broken.

From here, we are all well schooled about the formation and landmarks of our ancient 'empires' and towards modern events of 'civilisation'.

Along the way the conduct of social order becomes shaped by male made events and hurtles across 'the pages of history' towards us. It is a timeframe when women's role in the management of our future was all but ignored and when religions and paternalism appropriated sanctity over our behaviour.

This rollercoaster however, also heralds rapid changes in discovery and accomplishment, education, innovation, creativity, science, invention, technology, culture, and imagination, offset with an increase in disease, slavery, squalor, subjugation, inquisition, fundamentalism, suspicion, racism, endless wars⁸, barbarism, extinction of species, dogma, colonisation, resource grabs and separation from and disregard for the planets wellbeing.

In global terms, we can choose any time frame across these brief eight millennia and it's not a good look, for almost everyone unless they are from a privileged class and most likely to be a man.

1788: a snapshot

For example, in 1788, Australia was the last great land mass 'colonised' after 60,000 years of habitation. Its indigenous population, the world's longest existent, intact 'pre historic' culture began its encounter with the masters of a group of unwanted criminals from the abundant prisons of England.

Elsewhere other indigenous groups had succumbed to colonisation and exploitation. Competing European countries, eager to exploit its resources, were carving up Africa, where slave raiding, disease, poverty, ethnocide and dislocation prevailed. South America had met the same fate two centuries earlier. The United States of America, newly independent, was decimating bison herds and Indian first nations. Europe, an entanglement of sovereign states, was engrossed with land grabbing wars, where men were press ganged towards their doom. The French revolution was brewing and Russia was in the grip of total relentless serfdom. The Russians were also ruthlessly conducting a comprehensive colonisation of Siberia and lands to the south. In China the Qing were decimating raiding nomads and India was in continuous skirmish with the British.

In this 18th century there are an estimated 18 million unnatural deaths, 10 million related to the slave trade. Even in Europe, disease and malnourishment and malnutrition caused reduced expectancy. This is from a world population that had reached 1 billion by the end of the century.

7 Early Jericho (Ramos, 2016)

8 Statistics of Wars, Oppressions and Atrocities of the Eighteenth Century

Families had little say in how they existed. Few had opportunity to better their lives, their stability unpredictable. Positive generational role models of leadership and mentors were scarce, religions self-serving, moralistic, even predatory, the wealthy uncaring and the law unscrupulous.

This century was named – with no sense of irony - ‘The Age of Enlightenment’. The term ‘enlightenment’ refers to the arrival of science, reason and individualism and a challenge to dogma. It is however the genesis of humanism as reformers began to address the immense social issues of the time.

The Rights of Man

In his 1791 publication ‘The Rights of Man’ Thomas Paine sets the tone for the movement towards radical political change that continues to our present day. He declares that, “Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good.” His words relate to so many of the concerns expressed in this document, more than two centuries later.

Modified Masculine

It is from here, with the shift into the steam and then electrical age of the industrial revolution, we see the spread of inhuman and relentless working conditions in mines and factories. This creates the dislocation of community, and the exploitation of ‘the common man’. The family unit and a struggle to maintain grip on the remaining sanctity of hearth and home prevailed against a background of hierarchical indifference. This brings about the first political moves towards the rights of the family and workers. As these circumstances morph towards the 20th century and men are sent to the Great War, it leaves a further generational trail of fractured male bewilderment even into the postured wealthy classes. There is little worthwhile modelling that fathers can offer their sons. As this already mauled masculine spirit is hauled towards the Depression, the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam, the exterminations in Russia, Africa, China, and Cambodia further generations of men are numbed in a futile, distracted and questioning void. (Democide⁹ alone accounted for approx. 200,000,000 deaths in the 20th century).

Never had it been more obvious that masculinity is a fragile construct when disengaged from the source and values it has carried from its evolutionary origins and purpose. This is the century of information and reportage about social change and wars. More people now understood what was happening. Masculine dislocation and futility did not affect every man directly, but it accumulated and by the mid to late 1960’s, it was globally seen, felt and understood well beyond its direct victim’s anguish. There was little for many men to trust. By mid-20th century, a sense of identity crisis prevailed. What was a good man? Men did not know it then, but at source, a sapped masculinity was yielding to shifting winds of positive change for both men and women compared with the earlier part of the century

So far, we Homo Sapiens have experienced two major versions of ourselves. The long almost 300,000 year evolutionary, migratory and developmental rise and behavioural embedding of our species and the short 10,000 year, audacious and gender preclusive period of the Neolithic up until now.

In hindsight, given both the benefits and detriment of this unbalanced period, it is absurd to think that this present model of our existence could ever be comprehensively successful and beneficial to us all.

⁹ Rummler (1996) defines “democide” as the intentional killing of an unarmed or disarmed person by government agents acting in their authoritative capacity and pursuant to government policy or high command

Change, at last: the Ascent of the Feminine

Contraception released a sense of freedom, choice and possibility for women. The pill enabled women to be in charge of their own bodies.¹⁰ The assumed male hold on our social order had a new and powerful adversary. Within two decades a *vision* of regaining status with men was enhanced, realised and organised into action.

This happened against a background of earlier emancipation struggles: voting rights, improved education and social freedom for Western women.

Women's rights, human rights, civil rights, the rights of the child, wage equality and gay activism all emerged in the last four decades of the 20th century against a background of unrest, violence, protest and conscription. Even a 'Men's movement'. Young people, mainly at universities, in the 'developed world' found the voice of activism. Woodstock promised people power and John Lennon's 'Imagine' gave us vision and hope.¹¹

It did so against a backdrop of what was predominately indifference from men, a default position of the domination model. As journalism and the press expanded awareness, networking skills of women gained substantial traction and power to create change, action and moral imperative in a quest for social equality. A sense of positive change and possibility now pervades.

Since the 70's many women have untethered themselves from the imposed restraints of their gender, freed to envisage a domain of attainment previously unavailable and now enabled to flourish. Their potential is demonstrably greater than the commonly held qualities attributed to them. This is true of men also.

Let us not forget however that the majority of the world's women still exist within some form of subjugation.

Considerations

How do women reconcile their emergence after such a long period of deference to the masculine? The paradox between the term 'good men' and 'the masculine' becomes amplified with this question. 'Good men' can mean just that, the everyday, well-meaning bloke that constitutes the vast majority of the men women commonly encounter, interact, work beside and marry.

The 'masculine' now holds a more sinister meaning and has come to represent the generic gender baseline of male behaviours, good and bad. When seen from a feminine perspective it includes a great wariness of the dangerous, and unpredictable aspects of male behaviour that women have experienced, past and present. This is not helped by the universalising term 'toxic masculinity'.

There is confusion as to what a 'healthy male' might really mean. *Many men share this confusion.*

Some women have learnt not to trust 'the masculine' and have felt underestimated in the face of masculine ambivalence. Some men feel devalued not knowing how to behave within the emerging 'correctness' of this equalising evolution. It is complex and unsettling.

¹⁰ Introduction of the pill and its impact (Tyrer, 1999)

¹¹ Greatest Protest Songs from the 60s and 70s (2018)

Part Two

Getting Together

*A person is a person through other persons
I am because you are
We are because the planet is
I participate; therefore, I am*

(Ubuntu: an African saying.)

In the past three decades women have courageously and legitimately claimed their place. Improved changes in human development and a reduction in global aggression¹² has meant that men born in the nineties have fathers who have at least not lived in the shadow of darker times. In a still disparate world, common threads of a new humanism are rapidly emerging.

We can see Humanism today as a collective effort. It can hold governments, civil society, the private sector and human individuals equally responsible for the world that we are creating. It can show the way forward with its values, to a sustainable society that is based on economic, social and environmental development. New humanism describes the only way to create a world that accounts for the diversity of identities and the heterogeneity of interests.¹³ Most importantly it can direct us to an approach that is based on inclusive, democratic and, indeed, humanist values.

- » Since the 70s there has been a sizable shift in the status of women mainly in the developed world.
- » Many of the world's social 'issues' are recognised.
- » Human and minority rights are recognised.
- » Workplace and domestic gender parity are an implicit objective.
- » Women in 'developed' countries have a voice.
- » World health conditions are improving.
- » Global population growth rates are declining.
- » Global education levels are improving.
- » Internet and social media create the potential of freedom of thinking and ideas about what really matters for the individual. This access to choice has separated us from institutionalised dogma and authoritarian control.

Conundrum

Imagine that there are two political parties, the women's party and the men's party. Men and women could vote for either party - regardless of gender. The issue is: which party would successfully lead us towards a sustainable future for us all and the planet.

As well there are X factors at large about the potential of a new humanism:

- » The world is 'unsettled', tense, unpredictable, waiting for something to happen.
- » Many men have a 'knowing' that they are an obstacle to change.
- » Men 'know' that there must be change.

¹² Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress (Pinker, 2018)

¹³ New Humanism and Sustainable Development (D'Orville, 2015)

- » Women 'know' there must be change.
- » There is a questioning about how we must change.
- » There is a longing for a better world.
- » New humanism becomes an objective of democratic reformation.

Torvill and Dean

Our shared gender characteristics are our biggest untapped asset to assure a better world order.

Do we *really* know about the potential of women? Their subjugation for the past 10,000 years gives us all only a limited view of what a world will be like when all women are universally fully empowered. It is uncharted territory. We have explored it only from inside the confines of the domination paradigm.

It is a current human and planetary condition that urgently needs to be addressed and reformed. It will take the intention of us *all* to resolve this cooperatively.

Equality and cooperation have differing potentials.

Gender equality is being of equal status and value. It is persons based on their merit, and not as inferior or superior. This is a worthy objective. But it does not directly seek to additionally celebrate the *difference* between our genders and take into account the possibility of the difference being a key to a beneficial future for us all. The political environment around the word 'equality' is amplified when women feel they need to 'act like men' to be heard from inside a 'male dominated' adversarial politicised system.

Gender Cooperation is valuing the qualities and characteristics of both genders *because of their difference* and what they can *jointly* contribute towards the wellbeing of us all. We already know that obviously we share in common, *much more than we don't*. We are men and women, and of course this is so. Our biological interdependence, family structure, progeny and the resultant social order that this establishes are testament to our survival. We have already established a contextual background to this from our assertion that this is part of our design as humans.

Men and women are obviously more than physically different; many would assert that they are also behaviourally different.¹⁴ This widens the potential of both genders to cooperatively survive. We would not survive if both genders did the same thing or thought in the same way. Men and women 'transmit' separately, particularly in differing settings. Unconditional and respectful celebration of our gender difference is a vital part of a cooperative social order. Then each can celebrate a mutually attained respect for the contribution they bring to a common wellbeing.

This is the Torvill and Dean outcome. The duality of their ice-skating skills captures and celebrates that distant echo of how we can be with one another.

Our quest is to find a way to bring this back into how we cooperate with one another.

Can we find a respectful way, where contemporary men's and women's business are a re-established component to finding that sweet spot between us? What would this look like in a modern setting? Surely this question demands enquiry and an answer.

¹⁴ Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean, British ice dancers who were Olympic (1984) and World champions (1981-84), who created a sensation with their remarkable partnership.

Benefits for Men

It is in men's best interest to change. By welcoming gender parity and cooperation, men will feel improvements in their own lives and relationships with loved ones, community and workplace. Men gain when the lives around them feel safe and fair. They gain the freedom to explore an authentic masculine. They achieve and understand respect and encouragement. They expand their ability to connect on an equal footing; they become part of a solution, not a problem. It is a win-win situation. Deep down most men already know this, but it is as if there is a tipping point needed where this is universally revealed and understood as an objective by men and women together. Can a healthy 'yes this is right' moment that releases spurious assumptions and fears and enable men and women to engage with an expanded appreciation and possibility for both genders and the gender spectrum.

Thinking it through: Gender Cooperation

We, all of women, children, men and us are diminished when others are humiliated, oppressed, and treated as if they were less than who they are.

The socialisation and acceptance of this however has become 'normal'. It is a *central influence* on the behaviours, beliefs and actions of adults as well as children that keeps us 'stuck' or indifferent to the issue.

Cultural shifts are evident throughout our history. This is one of those times. We seek to transcend and challenge the limitations of cultural norms that are predicated on notions of gender roles and, in particular, on unhealthy male behaviour. There are now no reasons for the current default culturally defined gender roles to exist.

We, both genders, are very good at being, simply men and women. Our characteristics - feminine and masculine - are complementary. It is in our design. Recent social changes have allowed both genders and gender preferenced persons to contribute to our future wellbeing equally. We also contribute as individuals through the welcome and mutually respected, balanced and undiminished characteristic of simply being human.

Summary

We seek to create an inter-related community that is based in gender cooperation which

- » recognises that each individual's humanness is complementary and shared
- » understands the potential of inter-connectedness
- » prioritises social empathy
- » welcomes gender parity
- » holds healthy family development as a priority
- » enables individual life choice
- » values and endorses social diversity as a natural process of cooperation
- » withdraws from the culture which breeds, for example hedonism, nihilism and narcissism
- » promotes custodianship that sees humanity as an integral part of the eco-systems that lead to a communal responsibility to sustain life's share of natural resources on a principle of equity among and between generations¹⁵, and promotes care for the bush, soil, air, water, and the wetlands.

15 The Bushman Winter Has Come (Myburgh, 2013)

Remarkable us and why we exist

We handle cooperation much better than conflict. The extent that we already cooperate is extraordinary. Adaptation to dense urban life is miraculously possible even with our seven billion population. To help one another we practice agreed avoidance as a cooperative act (think traffic protocols). Yet when called upon we employ inspiring unifying skills and empathy towards great world events and tragedies. Think of 9/11, Diana's death, the trapped football boys in Thailand, the Olympics, Live Aid and the Apollo11 moon landing. This is now enhanced through social media.

As well as these moments of us thinking globally, it is our local 'social atom' of physical community, family and friends mostly remains clan sized in scale. We do this to be ordinary, so we can get on and safely celebrate life. It creates a sense of belonging. This is the 'glue' of our implicit humanness and amplifies the human spirit. It is gold.

Family and Parenting

Stability, safety or uneventfulness is a core factor in enabling families to flourish. It could be in a rural setting, a big city, a desert or a jungle. From a 'developed' country or the 'developing' world, a unifying factor about a stable family setting is an increased likelihood that the father [or father figure] has time to model non-absent healthy masculinity. He has time to educate his children with behavioural guidance about how to be a responsible member of the family and community.¹⁶ The father will know that his son in particular will be looking to him as a role model. The mother will have understood her similar obligations towards the daughters of the family, in sharing and completing a family matrix.

Although the family may endure hardship and may have to adapt as they traverse their lives, three factors will remain intact. They are stable, safe and fulfilled. From here they can be, positively enabled, a gift to themselves and their community. They will know they have created a background of relatedness and purpose with their life. This is the 'contract' we make with life, death and perpetuity.

A stable family environment is our primary human right.

Our most important asset, the family, requires our undivided attention. It is from here that everything else follows. There is no escaping the relationship between stable, well-parented and modelled upbringing and a resultant favourable well-adjusted future generation.

This is the basic foundation of a need for cooperative change for our future.

It is a priority which if left unattended, creates unpredictable and massively damaging instability to our social order. There is much to consider here. Do we provide sufficient coaching around responsible parenting? Is there sufficient interface created between formal and family education and time made for this to happen with our education systems? Are the 'signposts' of positive family development understood at the outset of parenting? Much as we would wish it differently, it is no longer possible to depend on this happening 'naturally' without enhanced remedial support provision.

A family law court is the last place a child wishes to know that their parents' conflict determined an embittered future for every member of their once safe haven. Irrespective of blame or justice, all are victims.

¹⁶ Biddulph (2004) asserts that 30% of men never 'knew' their father, 30% have a strained relationship, 30% have a tolerant relationship that lacks depth, and only 10% have a great relationship.

Fewer prisons?

In an article entitled 'Three charts on: Australia's booming prison population', academics Russell and Baldry from UNSW analyse the data and note: our remand population grew by 87% over five years, our Indigenous prisoner rate has increased at a greater rate than in the past decade and the number of women in prison in Australia has increased by 77% over from 2007 to 2017.

It is massively expensive to 'fix up' people who are a result of unstable family environments. When we have 'damaged' adults within families, their children will often inherit this damage. They will tend to adopt a wide range of harmful and damaging behaviours. This requires rehabilitation - medical, welfare and psychological support - to help modify and 'bring back' victims. By the time this falls into the dangerous domains of addiction, crime, homelessness, suicide, family violence, family and criminal law policing and incarceration it costs us all many billions of dollars. This far exceeds the cost of introducing highly objective, realistic and practical educational methods where family modelling becomes a priority. What would this look like? Can we dare to imagine fewer prisons?

Children.

*History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children.*¹⁷

Children have an impact on us all. They claim our attention, concern and delight. From an evolutionary perspective children are what we live for. They are wordlessly eloquent by just being children. We are captured in their innocence, curiosity and grace. They are our purpose and our responsibility. They demand our care, and in return provide us with the deep nourishment and wonder of being human. Their preciousness and tender grasp hold an expectation and dependency that we will give them a world where everything we wish for them will be so.

They deserve no less.

So why are we still so far away from creating the world we would wish for all families and children and indeed the planet that holds us? And what keeps us from this being the ultimate uniting purpose of us all?

Arseholes and toxic power¹⁸

When a collective noun has developed about a condition, it rings true. Its meaning somehow claims our reason, where before it was confusion.

We don't have a polite name for men who are being really nasty, sleazy or bullying; here is one, arseholes.

We have names for categories, and laws against awful, mostly male behaviour, like rapists and murderers but we seem to resist the big one... that ugly, dominating, toxic, scary, unreasonable,

¹⁷ Nelson Mandela (2002)

¹⁸ Definition of "arsehole": Someone who acts like they own the place and that the whole world revolves around them. They look after number one, and everyone else is low on the priority list. If you know the arsehole well, often even just their presence can make you feel small and insignificant, and generally they treat you like something they stepped on – Urban Dictionary: www.urbandictionary.com

dangerous, powerful, threatening, eloquent, persuasive, righteous, bigoted asshole. This is the dominator, who slips in under the radar and often decides well beyond his reasoning how to hold power over a country - or a household.¹⁹

Arseholes thrive inside of legitimacy and entitlement. They gather power usually by stealth and malignant audacity or through a certain charisma.

This spills over appallingly into the domestic arena as family violence. Bullying, a breeding ground for arseholes, is now a major issue. Child abuse, disturbingly prevalent, remains mostly undisclosed.

This ugliness, until recently, has become a 'culture' concealed and condoned as a behavioural pattern of approval that was unspoken or 'unmentionable'. It even gains a status to a point where it slips pervasively into the everyday of our thinking as acceptable, so we lose sight of its impact and we 'live with it'.

Characteristically an asshole is one or a group of (usually) men holding gratuitous and spurious power over an individual or group of others.

This legitimisation of the intolerable has been happening for a long time. It is the end game of two recent centuries of dislocated masculinity but is a trait embedded and celebrated in our history and culture. (Think of Macbeth for instance, Jack the Ripper or Hannibal Lecter.) Excessive character extremes are morphed and laced into our lives as entertainment, often set in contrast to legitimate or benign settings. From late night TV mayhem to tea-cupped Midsomer Murders, the media peddles violence as diversion and we become numbed by its sanctioned persistence.

Violence as entertainment and on social media is often associated with and celebrated by drinking, drug taking and violent games. It has its primary source however in upbringing. It shoots at us from the distance of our inadequate parenting with an indiscriminate impact. And when socially accumulated and sanctioned as 'entertainment' this violence becomes a 'norm'. It creates a cycle of permissions that proliferates beyond the scope of fictional worlds, and changes attitudes, language and deeds into the real world. This is where the damage is done.

When corporatized it is often morally indignant, self-sacred, belligerent and bigoted. It is even 'admired' and emerges stealthily in words and deeds into advertising, business, leadership, politics, debates and pervasively, in corporate attitudes, law enforcement, banking, religion and sport. For example, one sports team 'crushes' the opposition, a politician declares a 'war' on tax dodgers, or a company 'shoots down' the claims of a competitor. Violence lives in our everyday language.

This is an emerging realisation now in open debate on the extent of its malignancy, due to the Me-Too movement and commissioned investigations about the abuse of power in institutions. Its impetus is gaining momentum. It is a primary shift that indicates what we *all* will need to look at together: the dark side of our humanity.

So, as a shortcut, let's look at changing us, to manage them, the arseholes and run them out of town.

Arseholes were all children once. They didn't just happen; they were made. They were, all of them, either poorly fathered, mentored, mothered, institutionalised or a product of inconsiderate entitlement.²⁰

This is the 'Rosebud' outcome - from Orson Welles' classic film 'Citizen Kane' - which unfolds from a boy's shattered childhood moment into a relentless pursuit of power.

19 Naming the Condition (Efford, 2007)

20 Orson Welles was an American actor and film maker

Quarantining dominant power: Emperors without Clothes

“What power have you got?”

“Where did you get it from?”

“In whose interests do you use it?”

“To whom are you accountable?”

“How do we get rid of you?”

These five questions²¹ help us to identify and manage asshole power against both genders, or indeed a country.

It questions the hothouses of power, corruption, corporate criminality and political domination (dictatorship) as prominent issues. We are learning to address these.

It's good to let them know that they are assholes.

But let's not forget, we all have an asshole.²²

‘In whose interest do you exercise your power?’ is a potent question none of us should be slow to ask. Can we ask it of ourselves? What does my power look like? Can you openly ask this question of another?

The superstructure of power is up for review. It's nearby, in our face, maybe in your household, bleating out of the television, in the movies, in advertising, social media, in emblems of status and envy. This is the fuel upon which much power over safety and happiness exists.

Get out of its way like it's a very bad smell. Name it and leave, don't mess with it. It will diminish you. Assholes are fuelled by compliance: don't give it.

If we don't want violent dominance-oriented entertainment, Hollywood and advertising will comply. You are in charge here. Don't complain – act. Do by not doing what they want you to do. We are change agents.

Power need not be a negative word; it can be a product of integrity and found in competence, creativity, leadership and authenticity.

For many normal men, relinquishing needless power will be the hardest things they will ever do. It's called *letting go*.

Those without a Voice

In much of the world people have no access to confronting dominant, hierarchical power or assholes. Those marginalised by poverty, need, hunger, poor education and tradition are often fully caught up in overcoming all the obstacles they face in their daily lives, in spite of who or what caused them. They have little time or energy to ask questions about how power operates. In these environments, women seek empowerment to provide the most basic needs for their family, while their men are often away from home looking for work. They are unable to model masculinity and father properly. This is the ground zero of our humanism. Here we witness the dignity and resilience with which so many women and men engage daily with the obstacles confronting them. It is largely through their efforts that families hold together. Their resilience is remarkable. Look closely; they are getting on with it. There is much to be done.

²¹ Tony Benn and the Five Essential Questions of Democracy (Nichols, 2014)

²² If by now you are feeling squeamish about this metaphoric terminology coming out, it's strange that this benchmark term of the vernacular is inappropriate in the media but is in such common usage.

Those with a Voice

Gender debate has become highly politicised to a point where, at one extreme, there is a gender civil war being waged. There is power at play here. The spotlight is held by highly specific arguments, by polemic and point-scoring, at the expense of a broader conversation about the way forward. There are no 'victories' in these confrontations, just entrenched positions and a general recalcitrance. We all suffer within this circumstance. The resultant 'neutralization' of constructive debate and an insistence on 'correctness' means that we fail to see the value of blamelessly evaluating a balanced way forward. The family, particularly the well-being of children - the core purpose of our existence - requires an unselfish and unified undertaking from all of us. We can work towards gender reconciliation by using our voices unselfishly and with joint purpose.

Summary - the Journey so far

- » We are primarily designed to be gender cooperative and adaptive to survive.
- » Men have not been flash at running the world by themselves.
- » Women have been largely precluded from contributing to how the world works.
- » In modern times humanity has been operating on half power.
- » Women and men can now share in the responsibility of making a better world.
- » Some of this is already happening but not fast enough.

Part Three

The Status Quo: Women, Men, Children, the Planet and arseholes

Commonly held notions and assumptions about our characteristics can be contentious and spurious. They are changing. We now know of the expanded potential of *all persons* regardless of gender. We are likely to be more in agreement of the characteristics of children, the planet and arseholes than that of men and women per se. No one should feel obliged to 'be' a certain way. Our 'Human Spirit' regularly reminds us of our potential to be greater than we might think us to be. You might have your own insight into the present characteristics of gender. What is the zeitgeist of the emerging 21st Century and what gender behaviours govern the mood for change?

About Women

- » Women who have a voice are collectively and individually claiming their rightful place in how the world works.
- » Women trust and 'know' the bond they hold with one another.
- » Women have a strong natural 'way of being' with one another.
- » Women willingly express their empathy and wisdom.
- » Women have the courage to love wholeheartedly.
- » The form of women carries and gives birth to life.
- » Much of what women have is missing in our world.
- » Women can experience a 'purpose paradox' of choices in their lives.

- » Elder women are important role models who 'carry a culture.'
- » Many women experience fear of men.
- » Women want better, masculine men.
- » Some women feel they must be 'masculine' to compete in a 'man's world'.

Women - Insight

"For so long our organisations, power systems, social structures and success models have been cultivated only in the masculine.

Qualities like productivity, competitiveness, control, power, drive, independence have been valued and accepted as normal. These are valuable qualities and they certainly get things done.

But without the feminine qualities of empathy, creativity, honesty, love, kindness, understanding, intuition, compassion, adaptability being equally valued and utilised, oppression and inequality flourishes and society misses out.

It is natural for us to move towards what we perceive is valued, so as women we have had little alternative but to adopt the qualities of the masculine in order to achieve, to be heard to make a difference. What we are accustomed to hearing and seeing becomes our normality. Men have looked around the boardroom and seen no women and thought nothing of it, as it was the norm.

That is why in the past so many female models have had to act from their masculine side which can leave aspiring women feeling they have no choice but to adopt the same masculine qualities.

I honour the qualities of the masculine equally with those of the feminine and believe neither has the same value in isolation.

The masculine way of doing things has not served the greater good of this planet and its inhabitants."

Vida Carlino, public talk 2018 Perth WA

About Men

- » Most men are good men.
- » Men enjoy working co-operatively, in a team.
- » Men long to 'get it right'
- » Men enjoy challenge
- » Men seek approval/ blessing from other men and women.
- » Some men change their behaviour to 'fit in' to group settings.
- » Boys and young men long to have good mentors.
- » Most men respect women.
- » Elders are important role models.
- » Men have strong protective qualities
- » Men have courage, but hold in their emotions unless they feel safe.
- » Men want women to feel safe.
- » Men are often fearful of other men, particularly arseholes.

There is a 'sense' that 'the masculine must change', be adaptive, but they are not sure how to do this or what is expected of them. We should be careful that this is not a baby and bathwater situation. Between these two sets of gender 'characteristics' mentioned above is an untold range of shared potential presently not fully realised. Much between the two is interchangeable and the opportunity of this has the possibility to bring about the Torvill and Dean effect mentioned earlier.

We are conditioned to see the world through the lens of the current patriarchy and belief that domination is human nature and that the only way to maintain this belief is through displays of power so that a 'status quo' is maintained to a point where objection to this is a heresy.

In today's world, it is easy to understand why men default towards this existing condition rather than generate a personal strength required for independent thought, direction and change.

If we are to survive a new paradigm is required. The status quo is demonstrably self destructive and capable of damaging the planet to the point where it will struggle to support humanity. It is my belief that we have what it takes and that we are all in this together. To find a way to value each other equally, see the inherent goodness and equal value of all humans, create cooperative, collaborative and compassionate ways to engage with each other, we may well be able save our humanity - and this planet that provides us with the physical platform for existence.

My own life includes many examples of individuals who are moving towards a new humanism, thinking outside the constraints of the existing patriarchy and generating opportunities for others to join them.

Jeremy Ingham, Personal Perspectives 2019

About Children

- » Children are eloquent and truthful.
- » Just one child has the power to speak to each of us on behalf of them all. Few adults have this quality any more.
- » They create meaning and purpose.
- » Children are vulnerable.
- » They hold the key to our longing for a better world.
- » Children don't judge, they trust.
- » We can all learn their ways. They are teachers.

About the Planet

- » The planet is our mother.
- » The planet is ambivalent to our behaviour.
- » If we don't care for it, it will cause us to disappear.
- » It has nothing to lose by not having us.
- » It is willing to cooperate.
- » It has unconditional power.
- » Don't mess with it.

About arseholes

- » Women know much more about arseholes than men.
- » Men haven't learnt ways to deal with arseholes, or they would have already done so.
- » Arseholes hold a bewildering, negative audacity.
- » Arseholes often use stealth, legitimacy, entitlement and pervasive power.
- » Arseholes are human - they are most of the reason we do not have a world that works for everyone.
- » We all have arseholes.

Part Four

The Stage is Set

Planet, Children, Women, Men and arseholes are the primary players in the 10,000 year drama rapidly reaching a conclusion. Their characters are well separated. They are restless. The stage is unstable, polluted. The dust is settling. The scenery is shifting. The women are moving centre stage, the children expectant. The men are wary, tired, confused, expectant - the arsehole belligerent. The audience, preoccupied, are on their phones, waiting for something to happen.

Who is running this show? The sponsors have lost the plot. There is no program. It doesn't make sense anymore.

A spotlight above the women glows and becomes brighter.

In this moment, we, you and I, the reader are poised in the dress circle, above, looking down at this tense, but resolving pageant. A turning point?

Elephants and Rooms

We are all aware of the range and variability of subjugation that is still present on the planet. In principal, in western cultures, women hold rights of equality. But as we all know there are gaps, even chasms that will require sturdy bridges over which *all* women and men can walk cooperatively in shared responsibility for the wellbeing of us all. Countries are like rooms. Many have resident Elephants. In some countries the Elephants are easier to see, and deal with. So, if we are to create change, it won't happen unilaterally. It needs to be modelled. 'We need to start by identifying the Elephants, one by one.'

Australia does this well

I am writing this document in Australia. It is a remarkable place in a number of ways, even before we take on how it can be a role model for change in other countries.

It lives in a very good neighbourhood at the bottom of the planet. It's a very old, good-looking bit of geography and is the planet's only great habitable landmass that politically does not share a border. It is all one country.

Australia is ranked in the top 10 countries for its social progressiveness, stability and tolerance. Its enormity and diversity are its cultural bedrock, profoundly so for its indigenous people.

Australia never lets its inhabitants forget its untameable power. (Australia *is* climate change on a regular basis.) This is celebrated with an enduring, roughshod and frank grace that abounds in its literature, arts and community. It's inclined to celebrate the 'underdog'.

Australia's glories are often found in its failures, a laconic disrespect for pomposity, authority and a belief in a 'fair go'.

Australia is good at change. From a 'White Australia Policy' prior to the 50's it shifted to a 'populate or perish' post war migrant influx, which in turn established a pride in its now celebrated multiculturalism. And all this within 60 years.²³ It was a massive beneficial shift in Australia's cultural climate. We made it happen.

In 1996 the Port Arthur gun massacre in Tasmania took 35 lives. Australia's resulting gun laws are now the toughest in the world. We made it happen.

We are part of the community of 26 countries where same sex marriage is now legal. We made it happen.

We are, however unable yet to fully acknowledge our indigenous people.

Australia has an outstanding history and can-do approach to matters that simply make sense. If something is wrong, we fix it. We are clever and resourceful and admire this in us all. Public service campaigns convince us to stay out of the sun, drive safely, drink moderately, exercise, quit smoking, avoid AIDS, be tolerant, respect the elderly and health challenged, celebrate diversity, hotline depression and suicide, stamp out drug abuse, report potential terrorists, stop bullying, stop social and domestic violence.²⁴

A characteristic of all of these campaigns is their ability to speak directly into the 'fair go', cut the crap, finger out, let's do it attitude.

We are proud of our no nonsense, approach to our right for a fair go. Fair Go holds a meaning far broader than its two words and sums up a cornerstone of our culture. We know when a fair go makes sense, and if we see it's not happening, we know what to do about it. There's a fair go that's not happening yet. It's time to take a look at it.

What can Australians do? The challenge to change.

Can we jointly summon up our already impressive 'can do' attitude to create a seismic shift in creating an unambiguous and cooperative fair go for us all?

We have already seen that Australians take readily to change and have the resources to make it happen. There are major advantages in getting rid of all of the bluster around both women and men's issues in Australia, and together shifting the social landscape.

*Human rights, equality, domination and Me Too are gender issues far too serious to just remain a floundering gabfest. **In the final analyses, this is about our boys.** Their deficiency is the inadequacy of modelling and quality fathering. It is in the lack of suitable mentoring for young men, who need education in awareness of what constitutes acceptable male behaviour. These are parallel social factors that are currently seen to be unrelated 'ships in the night'. They are not. They are inseparable.*

This is at the heart of the Momentum concept. It's a challenge, for Australian men and women to create a circuit breaker to make change happen - and do it so well that it becomes a model for other countries and cultures.

- » It is a call for agreement and Gender Cooperation and a strategy to get the job done.
- » This means dropping uninformed opinions, beliefs and blame to mobilise our 'fair go'

²³ End of the White Australia policy: National Museum Australia

²⁴ Campaigns: Australia.gov.au and Dept of Health

attitude. Deconstruction of what happened to bring us to this situation can take us only so far. Regardless of blame...Houston...we have a problem, a very big one.

- » We know what it is, lets fix it.
- » First up is education - getting us all on the same page and seeing our opportunities instead of differences
- » This requires unbiased accuracy of information about the damage and cost to our society and planet if we continue to ignore these issues, and the social benefits of getting the job done. Let's get real about the cost of the damage we continue to create. Research is needed.
- » Thanks to Me Too we can also have We Too - meaning Women, Children, Men and the Planet together getting the job done.
- » It requires vigilance. There are arseholes out there.
- » It requires acknowledgment, of whom we all are together in the will to get the job done.
- » It is a celebration of win-win.
- » It will mean examining our shadow, 'sorry business' and reconciliation.
- » It means focus of intention, purpose and creativity.
- » It means blokes who are bold enough to say, 'Yeah, let's get it done.'

Thank you for reading this document.

If you have got this far, you are clearly interested in what is being said. I respect whatever opinion you have gained from it. At its very least this is an idea. A call for action. It is a call for quality reasoning about the issues and circumstances raised.

Shall we flounder unmindfully in a way that avoids realisation and change? Or shall we boldly recognise, prioritise and act to *create* change in being human, in a way that works for us all? In its own way this is just as important as what we are doing to counter that other great issue of our time – climate change.

This is the pointy end of a continuing process of development of this idea. Our goal has been to create a robust cohesive background resource document. We would like people to use it to create a pathway of reasoning to shape our future social environment.

My objective is to stress that equal and cooperative relationships and status between men and women is the key to the doorway into a more favourable future for us all.

What you read here is a personal vision of a way forward. Does it sit sufficiently well to inspire action and change? I hope so.

Let's get started.

Background – History

The Momentum Concept has been developed under the auspices of The Menswork Project Inc, established 2001 (MWP) a well-respected, not for profit organisation in Western Australia whose lineage and formation goes back to 1994. Its motto is 'Better men, better world'. MWP creates practical programs and workshops for men and women as well as incubate initiatives and innovative workshops and ideas such as this which are related to 'men's issues.

Peter Efford is an artist, thinker and facilitator. He retired as Senior Lecturer in Design from Curtin University in 2000. He was Chairman of The Hunger Project (Australia) 1987-1990. He is a founder member of MWP and has been working, co-creating and presenting workshops with men for 25 years mostly with friend Wes Carter OAM. His times with, and experience of indigenous Noongar, Narinyin and Balinese cultures have informed his appreciation of our humanism. He started writing about men's issues in 2007 primarily to support 'The Elders Way' as part of the Men in Bali programs. This enabled him to promote and explain men's issues via the MWP website, maintain its archive and support other initiatives, such as The Western Australian Men's Gathering. He regularly hosts a bi monthly Sunday breakfast and open men's group at his home since 2008. At 77 he is 'stepping back' from active and public participation on behalf of MWP, but maintains an elder's advisory role within the WA men's community through mentoring and background encouragement with men. Since 2001 he co-organised a successful life drawing group and maintains a popular website about life drawing and his work. He is a founder member of the Pondok Saraswati Project [1991/2017] keeps his regular contact with Bali by taking small groups of Artists on retreat twice a year. He and wife Georgia Efford OAM have two children and live in the hills outside Perth.

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