

The Fathering Project vision

Vision: To give every child the opportunity of input from a strong and appropriate father figure.

What we deliver:

1. We help men and women realise that a strong father figure will improve their child's future wellbeing.
2. We provide the resources required to help men become better father figures
3. We develop and evaluate new approaches to achieve this goal in different demographic groups.

NB. We define 'father figures' as biological dads and/or other significant men, eg. stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers, sports coaches, teachers, youth leaders etc. who can speak into a child's life.

Our vision is to have a fathering project program established in half of the Primary schools in Australia within 5 years.

Through our internet presence we aim to be engaging with >100,000 fathers every month.

We also aim to have established specialised programs promoting father/father-figure involvement in

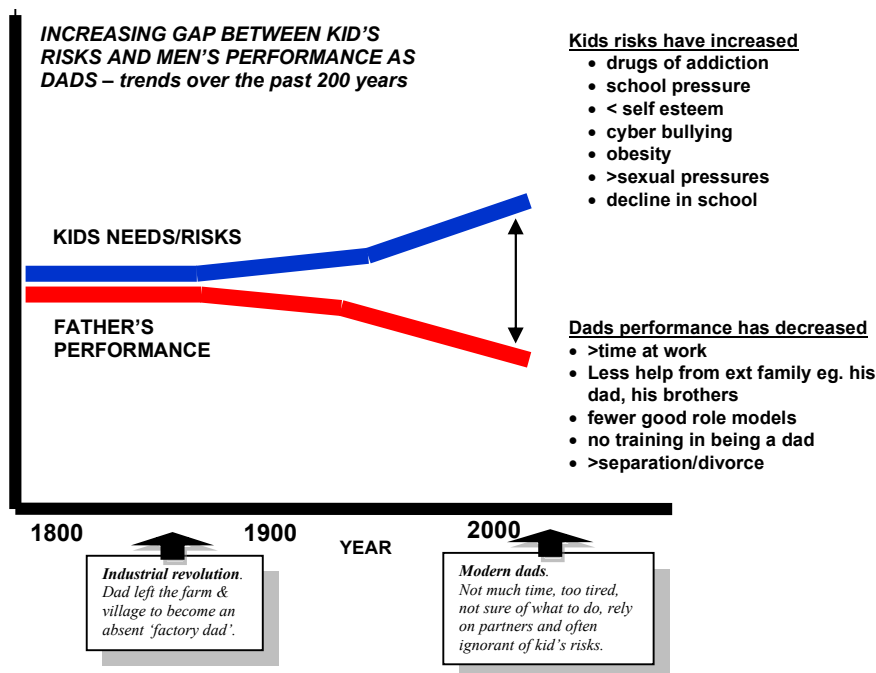
- education – love of learning & positive attitudes to teachers
- managing the FIFO work lifestyle positively
- aboriginal childrens' development and role modelling
- promotion of healthy lifestyle, exercise & avoidance of drug abuse and binge drinking
- building values of integrity and community service
- role of father figures in confidence building in girls i.e. encouraging women into future leadership
- improving workplace support for fathering
- assistance to incarcerated fathers

Value proposition summarised

The Problem – More children today lack strong appropriate father figures than ever before. This lack of father figures is occurring at a time when children's needs and risks are great. Thus this 'dad deficiency' increases children's risks of substance abuse, bullying, crime, poor attitude and reduced performance at school, low self esteem, depression, suicide. This lack of father figures is not being effectively solved and it is estimated to cost Australia over \$12 billion per annum.

Our Solution: We have a new and different approach, different in terms of timing, strategies, use of networking, audience-targeting, quality of the program and branding. This means we have a real chance of making a major difference and we currently the only program that can do this. Importantly, our evidence-based non partisan approach is widely accepted, including by mothers. Our aim is to effectively deliver this program throughout Australia.

The problem - the worsening gap between kid's risks and father's performance as dads.



Other wonderful groups/organisations do try to help dads, but we have a different approach

- schools (teachers, chaplains, school psychologists)
Have "the 3 minute problem" – they have a maximum of 3 minutes per week per student to deal with personal issues and are often reacting to problems rather than being able to be proactive. By targeting father figures we target someone who has hours per week, not minutes
- church groups
Have some advantages but in an increasingly secular society they have limited appeal, and religion based organisations tend to frighten many fathers off. We work with all community groups but are secular and independent so there is certainty of our motives and agenda. This is articulated in our charter, openly available on our website.
- other fathering groups (Fatherhood Foundation NSW, Focus on the Family Melbourne, Family Action Centre Newcastle Uni, Mens Advisory Network WA, groups for separated dads, etc)
Do excellent work but do not have the reach, penetration and approach that TFP has (see below)
- family groups (Relationships Australia, Australian Institute for Family Studies etc)
Often deal with problems after they have arisen or do research which is largely academic – our research is more closely linked to best practice and immediate changes. Also, we focus on fathers rather than mothers or both parents together.
- mentoring programs for troubled kids
Limited effect on the overall population and again, tend to be reactive not proactive- by targeting father figures we capture men who 'don't need to be recruited and who already love the kids'.

Our approach to improving father-figure performance

Our strategy has 3 component, *resource generation, outreach and research.*

a. Resources – we have already produced successful DVDs, books, booklets, website and social media resources which has high take up rates. We are also developing imilar high quality resources specific for specific situations eg. FIFO workers, as listed on our website.

b. Outreach – none of the above will be effective unless it actually impacts men. We have a track record of success at getting to men and changing their knowledge and behaviours. We have presented to >17,000 people in live audiences via via schools, workplaces (workers and board rooms) and community groups (councils, sporting, churches, synagogues etc) as well as >100,000 through via our website, weekly emails and twitter.

c. Research – we have University credentials, experience with the required research methods and strong publication records. We are well placed to accurately study the current problems (personal and economic) as well as evaluate the effectiveness of our resources and outreach.

Why our approach is likely to succeed

1. OUR TIMING – the “vaccination strategy”

We don't wait until problems arise, but rather we intervene early on, when kids are just starting schools. This is similar to a vaccine for a disease such as polio – it is much cheaper and more effective to take a vaccine *early* compared to trying to treat polio victims with calipers, physiotherapy and iron lungs etc. *after* their problems have become manifest and chronic. It is the same with kids and dads – we intervene with father-based strategies that work before the kids end up with problems like drug addiction etc. Another way to describe this is that whereas most other organisations are ‘mopping up water’, we are ‘turning off the tap’.

2. OUR APPROACH IS BASED ON ‘RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICE’

Our academic background underpins our approach, including:

- only basing our recommendations on best evidence
- only using established experts on our team
- undertaking careful, peer reviewed evaluation of current and new approaches [do current approaches work, where are the real needs? etc]
- using creative, new approaches based on new research approaches
- being independent of politics, religion and targeted interest groups

This also generates a high level of public confidence – Universities are trusted

3. OUR STRATEGIES ARE NOVEL

- high quality website material, DVDs, father-friendly booklets
- direct access to fathers via schools, workplaces and community groups
- promotion of father roles via school programs
- incentivisation of dads – creating a new peer pressure that makes it ‘uncool’ to be an overworker
- program customization to different demographics
- access to novel strategies through our links with the related groups overseas
- we don't wait until dads ‘ask for this help’ [we do it so well that they start to want it - in the same way that Apple created the ipad, ipod etc and people wanted to use it]
- use of high quality IT networking eg. website, facebook, email, twitter
- use of personal networking eg. groups of dads becoming ‘champions’ of fathering in schools
- use of existing facilitators eg school chaplains, mothers, community groups

4. BROAD TARGETTING

- via schools (fathers and teachers)
- via workplaces (workers and board rooms)
- via community groups (councils, sporting, churches, synagogues etc)
- supportive of the family as a whole [mums, ideas for family fun, suggestions for games, family jokes, whole of family tips]
- we don't just cover intact ‘typical’ families but all groups, including separated dads and men in all demographics and racial groups

5. WE HAVE EXCELLENT BRANDING AND TRACK RECORD

- involvement and endorsement of Australia's experts in the field (e.g. Steve Biddulph, Prof Richard Fletcher, Prof Donna Cross etc)
- involvement and endorsement of prominent individuals (e.g. Hamish Blake, Justin Langer, John Anderson, Steve Biddulph, Dennis Lillee, Fiona Wood, Michael Chaney, Tim Costello)
- affiliation with the University of Western Australia and other universities
- an existing high quality track record of resource outputs, seminars and linkages
- an existing media presence (TV, radio, print media)
- strong support from Education departments in all states
- strong community support

Thus we have a creative and different approach to other groups and are thus more likely to succeed. This combination of an urgent need to help father figures plus an ideal project to do this makes this an ideal project, one which could make vastly more difference to the future of Australian children than many other projects.

I have personally been helped by the Fathering Project and I am absolutely convinced, and have been since the Project started over 10 years ago, that this is something Australian dads need, and their kids need - and because these kids are the future of our country, our country needs it as well.

Hon John Anderson, AO, former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia.