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# The Coniston Men's Shed: more than just a place to play with wood!

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# The Coniston Men's Shed: more than just a place to play with wood!

## **Abstract**

Men's sheds and health outcomes

- They are seen as a positive approach to men's health and social needs
- They are relevant to contemporary health promotion practices as they focus on individual empowerment:  
++ self-esteem -> ++ personal control -> ++ health outcomes

## **Keywords**

play, wood, place, just, than, more, shed, men, coniston

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# The Coniston Men's Shed: More Than Just a Place to Play With Wood!

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# Men's sheds and health outcomes

- ◆ They are seen as a positive approach to men's health and social needs
- ◆ They are relevant to contemporary health promotion practices as they focus on individual empowerment:

+ + self-esteem → + + personal control → + + health outcomes

# Men's sheds and policy

- ◆ National Male Health Policy
- ◆ Man Therapy Campaign
- ◆ NSW Men's Health Plan Health (2009-2012)
- ◆ DVA and FaCSHIA
- ◆ State and Territory based peak bodies

# The Coniston Men's Shed

Operating a men's shed for three groups of men:

- ◆ Multicultural men's group
- ◆ Middle eastern men's group
- ◆ Homeless men's group

# Area covered by the project







# Goals and aims

- ◆ Build up and enhance self-esteem, social support, sense of purpose and community connectedness
- ◆ Develop and refine practical skills
- ◆ Connect men into community projects and activities in which they can actively participate.





# Men's background

## Membership overview:

- ◆ 40 men
- ◆ 38 main income from Centrelink or DVA
- ◆ 19 culturally and linguistically diverse
- ◆ 17 receive disability pension
- ◆ 8 young parents

# Shed management

- ◆ We employ project facilitators with experience in community cultural development
- ◆ Casual trainers are also employed as required (e.g. welding, health education sessions).
- ◆ The program is designed in consultation with the men

# Referrals

We receive referrals and placements from:

- ◆ NSW Health – Mental Health and Multi Cultural Services
- ◆ Centrelink
- ◆ St. Vincent de Paul, Barnardos, Uniting Care
- ◆ Wollongong Family Relationships Centre
- ◆ Illawarra Retirement Trust – Senior Solutions
- ◆ Illawarra Transitional Aged Care Service (ITACS)

# Activities

We split the men's activities into thirds:

- ◆ 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of time working on their own projects
- ◆ 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of time on group activities
- ◆ 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of time working on community projects







# 2005 – 2007 Evaluation Results

Evaluation results demonstrated improvements in:

- ◆ Self-esteem
- ◆ Social connectedness
- ◆ Feelings of Health and well-being
- ◆ Improvements in health status (incl. mental health)
- ◆ Men's community participation and capacity

Fildes, D., Y. Cass, et al. (2010) *Shedding light on men: The Building Healthy Men Project*. Journal of Men's Health. Vol. 7(3): pp.233-240.



## SIX ESSENTIAL FACTORS FOR HEALTHY MEN AND BOYS



*Better education paves  
the way to a healthier,  
better life. So learn all you  
can about the life you've  
been given.*

# Better education

- ◆ Mental Health Session
- ◆ Physical Health Session
- ◆ Family/Relationships Session
- ◆ First Aid Training Session
- ◆ Practical skills – woodwork, metalwork, welding and paving







*Social connection* keeps  
you as part of the world of  
life. Stay with us, stay  
connected. We need you  
here with us.

# Social connection

Question	Number of responses	Positive	Negative	Don't know
Improved access/engagement to other community services	24	16	0	8
As a result of the help I have received I am more connected to people	25	17	0	8



# Social connection

The men make connections with their local community through:

- ◆ Participating in community events
- ◆ Through local project activities
- ◆ Participating in workshops
- ◆ Through the provision of goods

# Social Connection and Family life

Question	Number of responses	Positive	Negative	Don't know
As a result of the help I have received my relationships with my family have improved	25	17	0	8
As a result of the help I have received attending this service makes my home life better	25	23	0	2

*Positive role  
models* give us  
someone to look to  
in a world of  
change. Find a role  
model or be one.

## Positive role models

*“Men don't talk  
face to face; they  
talk shoulder to  
shoulder”* Barry Golding

*Employment* means  
everything to us, it keeps  
us going, it gives us  
purpose, it's why we're  
here. It's more than a job,  
it's your purpose in life.

# Employment

*“Work enables a man to meet the social norms for masculine attitudes and behaviours”*

*The loss of work can “threaten a man’s sense of masculinity and impact negatively on health and well-being”* Gradman (1994)

# In conclusion

Men's sheds can address many issues relating to the social determinants of health through:

- ◆ Promoting healthy lifestyles
- ◆ Enhancing their practical skills
- ◆ Providing links to the community and supporting social connectedness
- ◆ Providing opportunities for employment



