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

Dave Fildes  
*University of Wollongong, dfildes@uow.edu.au*

Brian Pember  
*Healthy Cities Illawarra*

Leissa Pitts  
*Multicultural Health Service, leissa.pitts@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au*

Zaga Trkulja  
*Multicultural Health Service*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ro.uow.edu.au/ahsri](https://ro.uow.edu.au/ahsri)
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

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

Dave Fildes¹, Brian Pember², Leissa Pitts³ and Zaga Trkulja³

1 - Australian Health Services Research Institute, University of Wollongong
2 - Healthy Cities Illawarra
3 - Multicultural Health Service, Illawarra Shoalhaven local Health District
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
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:

◆ 1/3rd of time working on their own projects
◆ 1/3rd of time on group activities
◆ 1/3rd 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

SIX ESSENTIAL FACTORS FOR HEALTHY MEN AND BOYS

- Education
- Social Connection
- Positive Role Models
- Secure Employment
- Male-Friendly Services
- Mutual Respect
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved access/engagement to other community services</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the help I have received I am more connected to people</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the help I have received my relationships with my family have improved</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of the help I have received attending this service makes my home life better</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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