

# Men's Sheds

HELPING BUILD STRONGER LOCAL COMMUNITIES



## Minister's message



We recognise the many benefits to be gained by individuals and local communities by providing mature aged men with places where they can meet, make friends and contribute to their local communities.

In Victoria, men's sheds are crucial in helping reduce social isolation for mature aged men, no matter where they live.

They give men from all backgrounds an opportunity to meet others, engage in activities that interest them and access information on a range of health and wellbeing related issues.

Studies show that most men involved in men's sheds are aged over 50 years, with many having experienced life changing circumstances, such as leaving the paid workforce or having significant health problems.

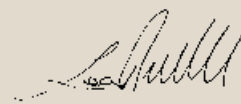
Men who participate in activities at men's sheds can draw upon existing capabilities or develop new skills to create things that are of benefit to others in their local communities. Many men's sheds engage with local

schools and community groups, providing help with projects ranging from installing disabled access ramps to helping local students building billy-carts.

Because the sheds are often established as part of a broader community organisation, such as a neighbourhood house or community learning centre, they also offer men a variety of opportunities to get more actively involved in their community, such as becoming a volunteer.

Many men say they feel more comfortable in the sort of relaxed and supportive atmosphere that men's sheds offer – this is why 71 men's sheds have been established across the state in recent years and the Victorian Government has announced \$2 million in grants to establish more sheds in areas of need.

These grants and the ongoing support of the Victorian Government recognise the valuable role men's sheds play in helping build stronger, more active and resilient local communities across Victoria.



**Hon Lisa Neville MP**  
**Minister for Senior Victorians**



## What are men's sheds?

A men's shed is a place where men can meet new friends and mates, gain and use their practical skills and knowledge to make or fix things as well as sometimes just have fun.

In Victoria, there are now about 70 men's sheds groups, with many part of a local neighbourhood house, community health centre or attached to an adult community education organisation or church.

The Victorian Government will contribute funds to build 25 new men's sheds throughout the state over the next four years.

In most cases, men's sheds are just that – a shed or a converted garage that has a workshop or work space. Some are mobile, just like a mobile library, while others are a room specially set aside for men's shed activities in an existing community centre.

*Many of the Men's sheds projects provide a way for groups of men to put their skills to use for the benefit of the community, such as by mentoring young people, building community gardens, providing maintenance services in local areas or undertaking building projects for community groups. For example, the Keysborough Men's Shed built the Keysborough Learning Centre's new disability access ramps for just \$8,000 – a saving of \$22,000 on a commercial quote.*

*One younger man who was renovating an old house said "... there is a vast bank of skills here. No matter what I needed to do, there was someone here who had the knowledge, trade ability and experience, to complete the task. These skills would be lost forever if it was not for these sheds ... I am so grateful for the help I received from the older gents at the shed."*

## What happens at a men`s shed?

The sheds are generally run by a supervisor, who may be paid or may be a volunteer, who works with a group of "core" shed volunteers.

Most sheds are equipped with tools that are used to make things in the shed, and to complete projects being undertaken away from the shed. The tools are also used for classes where men can share practical tips as well as learn new skills.

*Mansfield hosts an annual festival which features a billycart race to raise money for the local hospital. Students from the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning program at Mansfield Secondary College built their own billycarts at Mansfield Community Shed to race in the event. This has been so popular that other students, including a group of girls, also want to get involved.*

Men`s sheds also offer the chance to get involved in other activities, some that are purely recreational, as well as others that can lead to new work or volunteering opportunities.

Lots of information is also made available through men`s sheds, including information about health and well being.



## Who goes to men`s sheds?

Men`s sheds are for all men of all ages and nationalities, but they are especially popular with older men (over 50 years) who often are experiencing health issues, social isolation, retrenchment or other life changing experiences.

Research shows that the majority of men who participate in the sheds have recently retired or have involuntarily withdrawn from the paid workforce. About 20 per cent are war veterans and about 75 per cent are on some sort of pension or benefit.

In July 2007, 23 core participants from two men`s sheds (Keysborough and Mansfield) were surveyed about what involvement meant to them.

They gave a range of reasons why they become involved. Some were retired and were looking for an interest outside of the home to keep busy, fit and healthy and to avoid becoming depressed. Some came to meet people and be part of the community and some to use the equipment for home projects. Others said they wanted to give back to the community and do something worthwhile.



*The Mansfield Musical and Dramatic Society enlisted the help of the men's shed to build the sets for 'The Gondoliers by Gilbert & Sullivan'. Ian, the organiser was asked to construct a set for the show which was to the effect of 'moving waves'. Such was the task of building the set required for the show that the services of the shed were required. According to Ian, the set would definitely not have been built without the services offered by the shed. They provided the area, equipment, help, and advice required to get the job done. He also said the Society would have really struggled with the production without the shed.*



## What are the benefits for men, their families and local communities?

Much of the work done by the men who come to men's sheds is for their local community, although some men come to work on projects for their own homes.

Men's shed projects can help other men, the organisations that support their shed, local groups, clubs and individuals in their local community that are in need of practical help and support.

Other benefits are gained by the individuals who come to men's sheds. These include trade skills, new opportunities to work or volunteer, develop friendships and the opportunity to share ideas, the benefit of wisdom and confidence to do more.

## How can I find out more about men's sheds?

To find out more about men's sheds please visit the Department of Planning and Community Development website:  
[www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/sheds](http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/sheds)

Thanks to the Mansfield Community Shed and the Keysborough (Keysmen) Men's Shed groups.

This document is also available in PDF and Word format on the Internet at  
[www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au](http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au)

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