

## Why are Men's Sheds so Important?

Did you know that Buloke Shire boasts five Men's Sheds? Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake and Wycheproof each have an active, engaged Men's Shed group. So why is this so important?

Research shows social isolation and loneliness are real issues for middle-aged men. This is the reality many men face in rural communities as they head into middle age. Not only are these men lonely, their social isolation has the potential to significantly affect their physical and mental health. A study on Men's social connectedness conducted by Beyond Blue in 2014 showed almost seven in ten people (69%) agreed that most men will go through a lonely period at some stage. It also revealed almost two-thirds (63%) agreed it is normal to lose touch with your friends as you get older. Indeed those men who don't go through a lonely patch and manage to maintain contact with friends are in the minority.

Changes in family circumstances, injury, illness, mental health, finances, change in work circumstances and simply not having the time to maintain relationships were all seen as contributing to the path of men becoming dissatisfied with their level of social connectedness.

It is also a reality that men want greater openness with their friends and to be able to talk about personal problems, but admit they don't always have the skills or tools to initiate these conversations. It can also be difficult to understand how to respond when a friend opens up to them.

Studies have linked social isolation and loneliness to a whole host of health issues, including high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and depression. In fact, research has shown that people who are socially isolated have up to five times more risk of dying from almost all causes.

The modern Men's Shed is an updated version of the shed in the backyard that has long been a part of Australian culture. Members of Men's Sheds come from all walks of life – the bond that unites them is that they are men with time on their hands and would like something meaningful to do with that time.

At your local Men's Shed you'll experience a safe and happy environment where men are welcome to work on community projects, specific Men's Shed projects or personal projects in their own time and where the only 'must' is to observe safe working practices....all in a spirit of mateship.

Would you like to be involved in your local Men's Shed? Here is how to get connected:

- Birchip Men's Shed- Brian Jeffery 0421 354 556
- Charlton Men's Shed- Kevin Willey 0428 911 830
- Donald Men's Shed- Peter Vallance 5497 1707
- Sea Lake Men's Shed- Mark Gordon 0418 331 428
- Wycheproof Men's Shed- Reg Pollard 0419 575 320

