

Innovative Approaches for Older Men's Community Engagement

Anthony Brown

Project Officer

Men's Health Information and Resource Centre,
University of Western Sydney

Phone: (02) 4570 1713

Email: anthony.brown@uws.edu.au

Older men want to be involved in activities that involve:

- 1) Using existing or learning new skills and knowledge
- 2) Physical activity
- 3) Contributing to the lives of others
- 4) Sharing common interests

What Older Men Want:

- ♂ To be active and contribute, not passive recipients of services
- ♂ To have a say
- ♂ "Older Men Friendly" activities and services
- ♂ To be with other men (mostly)
- ♂ To have choice - men have a range of interests
- ♂ Information
- ♂ To be invited??

Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA)

<http://www.mensshed.org/>

Fold Away Shed

Behaviour Advisory Service, Alzheimer's Australia South Australia

<http://www.alzheimers.org.au>

but... one size does NOT fit all. Not all men will need or want to be involved with a community men's sheds. Other types of community engagement also need to be available.

Tips and suggestions for working with retired men

- Use newspapers and sport, news, geographic magazines
- Have a snooker or pool table
- Have car and machinery manuals lying around
- Let it be messy
- Incorporate male staff and volunteers where possible
- Serve tea and coffee in mugs
- Use respectful, positive language
- Discuss important issues directly
- Avoid jargon, use clear and simple language
- Be honest – even when the client is emotional
- Affirm male roles
- Use open body language ...eg Shake hands
- Be aware of male 'personal space' which may be different depending on the gender of the worker.
- Give clients choices about services available
- Give clear explanations of the options available at intake
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- Use appropriate informality
- Use 'doing' language and 'active' words in promotion
- Male friendly" aspects
- Include some friendly competition, such as a pool comp or footy tipping comp
- Include questions on sport and cars in quizzes and reminiscence
- Recognise that men have something valuable to contribute
- Use appropriate techniques to reduce suspicion and concerns some men will have
- Actively request feedback from male clients and others

Adapted from King, Fletcher and Sweeney (2004) and from interviews with staff working in community and residential aged care.

Further Reading

Hall, C., Brown, A., Gleeson, S. and Zinn, J. (2007). "Keeping the thread: Older Men's Social Networks in Sydney, Australia." Quality in Ageing 8(3): 10-17.

Blokes and Sheds: Meaningful Activities for Men with Dementia in Aged Care Facilities, by Keith Bettany, Alzheimer's Australia (SA)
<http://www.alzheimers.org.au/> and search for "men's sheds"

King, A., Sweeny, S. and Fletcher, R. (2004). "A Checklist for Organisations Working with Men." Developing Practice 11: 55-66.

Zinn, J. (2002). Older Men's Business: Valuing relationships, living with change. Sydney, Finch.

Keeping the Balance: Older Men and Health Ageing (2001), by John Macdonald, Anthony Brown and John Buchanan
 Discussion paper can be downloaded from the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing www.maca.nsw.gov.au