

Mens mental health and social connection.

The challenge:



Social connection and social isolation are significant contributors to men's mental health.

Eighteen percent of men experienced mental ill-health in 2021 of which the majority was due to anxiety¹.

In 2021 males aged over 85 years had the highest age-specific suicide rate, more than three times the national average and males aged between 50-54 having the highest for those under 80 years².

Access to appropriate support is limited. Only a fifth of the population in 2021 accessed professional help and of those nearly a third did not have their needs met or only partially met¹.

Social isolation and loneliness are contributing factors to mental and physical ill-health³ and healthy social connections are known to lower levels of anxiety and depression⁴.

The solution:



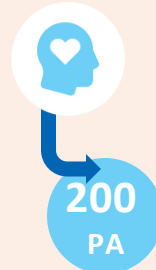
healthAbility's Men's shed is a leading early intervention program that provides healthy social connections for men and access to further mental and physical health supports.

The inclusive service supports men living in the Whitehorse local government area and will be shortly expanded to two locations, the new one co-located with a wood turning not for profit.

Our Mens Shed is targeted towards men experiencing social isolation, mental ill-health, disability, and other physical limitations that sit outside NDIS. The early intervention program provides meaningful social connections, purposeful activities, targeted health support (e.g., falls prevention sessions) and access to other health and wellbeing services from our broader team.

We also work with young people (14-17) who are disengaged from education through our partnership with [The Avenue Neighbourhood House](#).

The impact:



We create meaningful social connections at an individual, group and community level and help improve men's mental health.

We run 200 sessions per annum for a group of ten per session. Our clients regularly report the positive impact of this program on their sense of belonging and mental health, and for some it is their *only form of social connection* outside family members.

We create capacity within the community to participate, collaborate and provide additional community-based services for the Men's shed. We provide advice and support to other local Men's Sheds to help them apply our framework and lessons learnt.

In 2023 we will expand our service to include a monthly repair café to create opportunities for connection to community and provide a social connection program for women.

The opportunity:



We can replicate and expand the program nationally, to provide social connection and early intervention support for all men experiencing mental ill-health.

Our team of experts and volunteer peer supports can provide training, coaching to build the capacity and capability for other Men's Sheds and the network nationally.

The creation of online resources, tools, support and sharing of lessons learnt will enable Mens Sheds and the related parts of the health system to learn from the program.

A targeted evaluation will measure the impact of this early intervention on social connection, mental ill-health, related health outcomes and capacity building within the mental health system.

We provide:



Meaningful social connections through purposeful activities



Access to health, aged care, disability, and counselling services.



Activity-based mentoring and support for young people (14-17)



Build and repair projects for councils, schools, businesses, and the community

"When I retired, I had prostate cancer and was very sick for two years. I became very withdrawn. The shed was part of my rehab and since then has become part of my life...it helped get me through my cancer. I am honored and proud to be a member and have an emotional connection with this shed." Adrian, Client.

1. National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2020-21

2. Causes of Death, Australia ABS 2021, released 2022

3. Social isolation and loneliness, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021

4. Connectedness, Head to Health, Department of Health and Aged Care