

'Men's Sheds' boost members' mental health

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“The fact Men’s Sheds are the fastest growing grassroots organisation in Australia is testament to the fact it is a formula quite well fitted to our Australian culture,” A/Prof Cordier says.

Health researchers say the popularity, geographical spread and proven ability of Men's Sheds to relieve depression in older men makes them a perfect vehicle to deliver other life-saving health messages.

Curtin University Associate Professor Reinie Cordier is part of a research team conducting a series of studies into the shed's effectiveness and potential.

There are more than 1000 Men's Sheds across Australia which are community-based organisations accessible to all men and are designed to advance the member's well-being and health.

A/Prof Cordier says men aged over 75 have the second highest suicide rate in Australia, with those living in regional areas at greater risk.

He says part of the problem is that men are often reluctant to talk about health issues, preferring to keep them private.

"It was surprising then, that this very masculine Men's Shed environment really lent itself to men feeling more free to talk about health issues, because so many of the sheds have a very specific focus of creating a candid environment where they feel safe to talk," A/Prof Cordier says.

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The researchers conducted in-depth interviews and administered the Becks Depression Inventory-II to 12 men from three sheds who reported depressive symptoms.



Mentee Alexander (Alex) Baker with mentors from the Kalamunda Men's Shed.

This was triangulated with observations by a field worker in different shed environments.

The research found men's participation decreases symptoms of depression. The activities and social focus helped them rediscover purpose and self.

"A major factor is the link between depression and retirement; for many men their identity is embedded with prior employment and with that gone, men feel they have lost their sense of direction and purpose, and struggle to deal with the consequences of retirement," A/Prof Cordier says.

"We wanted to have an understanding of Men's Sheds because as health researchers we see them as potential community partners because of the geographical spread—all states have Men's Sheds.

"Already a vast majority of sheds have a formal men's health component where they get people to come in from time-to-time to give talks on things like prostate cancer and other health issues.

"Not all Men's Sheds are interested in engaging with health researchers but many are.

He says if they can build relationships with Men's Sheds and demonstrate their effectiveness for retired [men](#) it holds promise for future engagement with health researchers.

More information: "Men's Sheds and the experience of depression in older Australian men." Aust Occup Ther J. 2015 Jun 8. [DOI: 10.1111/1440-1630.12190](#)

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