



Curtin University

An independent evaluation of the contribution of Men's Sheds to Victoria

Make tomorrow better.

curtin.edu.au

This work is copyright. It may be reproduced in whole or in part subject to the inclusion of an acknowledgement of the source and no commercial usage or sale. If any passage from this report is quoted or closely paraphrased in a paper or written work prepared by the user, the source of the passage must be acknowledged in the work.

The suggested reference is:

Kirsten Holmes, James Clarke, & Tuba Urul (2026). *An independent evaluation of contribution of Men's Sheds to Victoria*. A report for the Victorian Men's Shed Association. Curtin University.

Whilst all reasonable care was taken in the preparation of this publication, no liability is assumed for any errors or omissions.

Acknowledgement of Country

We wish to acknowledge the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. We acknowledge the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pay our respect to the Aboriginal communities of today.

Acknowledgements

The research team gratefully acknowledges Trevor Dobbyn, Max Finlayson and Courtney Rodda from the Victorian Men's Shed Association in Victoria for all their assistance and support throughout this project. The core research team at Curtin University included Kirsten Holmes, James Clarke and Tuba Urul. The team also acknowledges the previous work completed for Men's Shed WA by Peter McEvoy, Brendan Smith, Briana Guerrini, and Vivien Chiu from Curtin University.

For further information about this report, please contact:

Professor Kirsten Holmes

School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business and Law, Curtin University.

Phone: 08 9266 7411

Email: k.holmes@curtin.edu.au



Table of Contents

A Foreword from the Chair of VMSA	6
Executive Summary	7
Introduction	8
Purpose	13
Methods	14
Health Benefits	15
Community Benefits	22
Economic Benefits	31
Limitations	45
Conclusions	46
References	48

List of Figures

Figure 1. Overview of the geographic distribution, membership profile, and diversity of Victorian Men's Sheds

Figure 2. Perceived Impact of Men's Sheds in Supporting Members During Difficult Life Events

Figure 3. Diversity of Shed Members

Figure 4. Shed Training Programs

Figure 5. Community Organisations for Whom Sheds Produce Work

Figure 6. Pathways Through Which Victorian Men's Sheds Contribute to Local and Regional Economies

Figure 7. Rent Paid by Men's Sheds

Figure 8. Local Expenditure by Men's Sheds

Figure 9. Additional Shed Operating Costs

Figure 10. Health Events Organised by Men's Sheds

List of Tables

Table I. Median Annual Direct Expenditure of a Typical Victorian Men's Shed

Table II. Median Volunteer Hours per Shed and Estimated Annual Volunteer Hours Across Victorian Men's Sheds

Table III. Victorian Government Recommended In-Kind Values per Hour (2026)

Foreword from the Chair

Every now and then I think back to the first time I went to my local Men's Shed in Ouyen in the Victorian Mallee to drop an old blacksmith's vice off for the blokes with the intention of staying for five minutes to be polite and then heading off. I was in a hurry, however I reluctantly accepted the offer of a quick shed inspection, only to find myself emerging three hours later as secretary. This reminds me of how beguiling and wonderful Men's Sheds really are.

Enriching and indeed saving the lives of many men in Sheds and run by volunteers with a higher purpose, Men's Sheds undertake thousands of projects each year which support and strengthen their communities. The real contribution made by Men's Sheds to the health and wellbeing of their members and to their communities has not been sufficiently appreciated up until now, especially by government.

This important independent report commissioned by the Victorian Men's Shed Association and undertaken by Curtin University comprehensively and diligently reveals the true value of Men's Sheds and throws a light on an important social movement which has hitherto not had its real contribution to Victoria understood or acknowledged.

The report will show that Men's Sheds make a substantial and measurable contribution to the economic, social and community wellbeing of Victoria, delivering outcomes that extend well beyond what has traditionally been recognised.

In addition, the report will highlight the significant value generated through volunteer effort, community participation and partnerships, demonstrating the vital role Sheds play in supporting individuals, families and local communities across the state.

Importantly, the findings reinforce the need for greater recognition and support from government and the broader community to ensure the continued growth and sustainability of this essential movement.

Lastly the true value of this important independent report will be in helping decision-makers, stakeholders and the wider community better understand, appreciate and support the ongoing contribution of Men's Sheds across Victoria.

On behalf of the VMSA, I thank

Professor Kirsten Holmes, School of Management and Marketing

Dr James Clarke, School of Population Health

Tuba Urul, Curtin Centre for Applied Ethics

I also acknowledge the Men's Sheds of Western Australian President Trevor Gorey and its CEO James Wild for their advice and support and encouragement.



Trevor Dobbyn
Chair
Victorian Men's Shed
Association

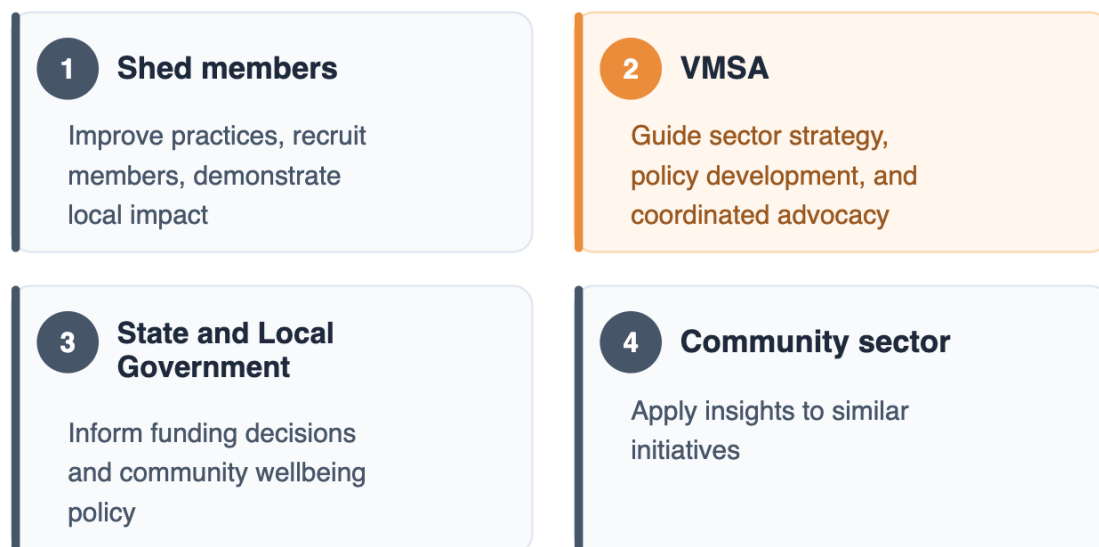
Executive Summary

What Makes Men's Sheds Valuable to Victoria?

Men's Sheds represent a low-cost, high-impact model for strengthening community wellbeing across Victoria. They provide accessible, community-based spaces where people can build social connections, maintain a sense of purpose and engage in meaningful activities, particularly at a time when social isolation, loneliness and mental health challenges are increasingly recognised as significant community issues.

Beyond the benefits experienced by individual members, Men's Sheds contribute to broader community outcomes through social inclusion, volunteering, skill-sharing, community participation and informal wellbeing support. They also generate measurable economic value through direct expenditure, volunteer labour, fundraising activities and community-based contributions, demonstrating how community-led initiatives can deliver substantial social and economic returns with relatively modest resources.

This report examines the social, health and economic contributions of Men's Sheds across Victoria and provides evidence to inform policy, funding and community investment decisions.



Introduction

The Men's Sheds Movement

Men's Sheds are community-based organisations that support social connection, wellbeing, and participation, particularly for men. Originating in Australia and now operating across countries including New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Canada, the movement was inspired by the idea of the traditional backyard shed (Australian Men's Shed Association, 2026), a place where people gather informally, share skills, and work on practical projects together (Barbagallo *et al.*, 2023).

Men's Sheds were established in response to concerns around social isolation, loneliness, and declining wellbeing among older and retired men. They have evolved over time to include a broader and more diverse membership base including women members. Sheds are either independent incorporated entities or are supported and administered by other organisations, such as local councils, health organisations, or neighbourhood houses. While activities vary across locations, many Sheds provide opportunities for metalworking, woodworking, repairs, gardening, mentoring, community projects, and social interaction.

Although each Shed operates differently depending on its size, location, funding, and membership, they share a common purpose: creating safe and inclusive spaces that foster friendship, community participation, and peer support (Nurmi *et al.*, 2018). Such spaces can be particularly valuable for individuals experiencing social isolation, retirement, caring responsibilities, or reduced engagement with formal support networks (Kenny *et al.*, 2025; Tomlin, 2024).

Research and sector reporting also suggest that the benefits of Men's Sheds extend beyond individual members (Kelly & Steiner, 2021). Sheds may contribute to stronger local communities through volunteering, skill sharing, social participation, and community engagement activities, while also supporting the wellbeing of families and carers (Golding *et al.*, 2007).

These broader community benefits are underpinned by the informal, activity-based approach that characterises Men's Sheds. This reflects broader evidence that informal, activity-based community

learning environments foster social connection, participation and wellbeing through shared practical engagement (Golding *et al.*, 2020). Rather than directly delivering health services, many Sheds operate through the concept of “health by stealth”, where social connection and wellbeing outcomes are fostered through meaningful shared activities and peer interaction. By creating opportunities for people to work together, build relationships, and engage in their communities, Men’s Sheds may help reduce social isolation and support positive wellbeing outcomes, particularly among groups that may be less likely to engage with traditional support services (Golding *et al.*, 2007).

There are now over 1,200 Men’s Sheds in Australia, with the largest number (394) in New South Wales with Victoria hosting the second largest concentration with 315 Sheds. The number of Sheds varies across each state, and it is estimated that these Sheds serve over 50,000 members nationally (Australian Men’s Sheds Association, 2026).

Growth and Development of Men's Sheds in Victoria

The Victorian Men's Shed Association (VMSA) is the peak body representing Men's Sheds across Victoria. It provides leadership, advocacy, resources and support to strengthen the capacity, sustainability and long-term development of Men's Sheds across the state.

VMSA provides guidance and practical assistance to help Sheds establish, manage and sustain Shed operations. It plays a key role in connecting Sheds with one another, community partners and government, while supporting good governance and effective practice across the network. Through these activities, the Association contributes to the ongoing development and visibility of Men's Sheds as an important community-based initiative in Victoria.

Following the establishment of early community-based initiatives, the Men's Sheds movement in Victoria has evolved over several decades. The earliest participating community groups date back to the 1970s, with several sheds established during the 1980s and 1990s before later aligning with the broader Men's Sheds movement. These early examples demonstrate that the need for informal community spaces promoting social connection and wellbeing existed well before the rapid expansion of the Men's Sheds movement.

Analysis of responses from 214 Victorian Men's Sheds indicates significant sector growth during the late 2000s and early 2010s. The highest number of establishment dates were recorded between 2006 and 2015, particularly between 2009 and 2013, indicating that this period represented the principal phase of expansion across Victoria.

Survey responses also indicate continued establishment of new Sheds between 2018 and 2025, although at a slower rate than during the peak expansion period. Overall, the findings suggest that the Men's Sheds movement in Victoria is now a mature and growing sector that remains responsive to community needs.

The Current Victorian Men's Shed Network

Today, Men's Sheds form a substantial community network of 315 Sheds across Victoria. While individual Sheds vary considerably in size, activities and membership composition, together they provide opportunities for social connection, skill sharing, wellbeing and community participation for a diverse range of members (Figure 1). These Sheds are either independent incorporated entities or are auspiced by other organisations such as local councils, health organisations, or neighbourhood houses.



MEN'S SHEDS IN VICTORIA

Growth and Profile



GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOVEMENT



Analysis of responses from 214 Victorian Men's Sheds indicates significant sector growth during the late 2000s and early 2010s. The highest number of establishment dates were recorded between **2006** and **2015**, particularly from **2009** to **2013**, suggesting this period represented the main phase of expansion across metropolitan and regional communities.



A smaller number of sheds were established prior to **2000**, including several community groups dating back to the **1980s** and **1990s**, with one group tracing its origins to **1970** before later aligning with the Men's Sheds movement. These earlier examples highlight that the need for informal community spaces supporting connection and wellbeing existed well before the broader growth of the movement.



Survey responses also indicate continued establishment of new sheds between **2018** and **2025**, although at a slower rate than during the peak expansion period.



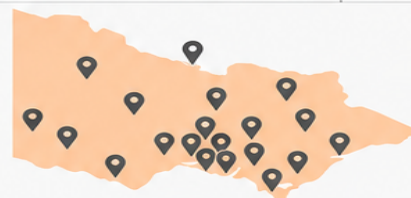
Overall, the findings suggest that the Men's Sheds movement in Victoria is now a **mature but continuing** sector that remains responsive to community needs.



PROFILE OF MEN'S SHEDS IN VICTORIA



There are **315** Men's Sheds across Victoria, distributed widely across metropolitan, regional, and rural areas of the state.



48

Mean number of members

35

Median number of members



18

sheds have over 100 members



12

sheds have less than 10 members



84%

of sheds have members with disabilities



67%

of sheds have veteran members



39%

of sheds have migrant and refugee members



21%

of sheds have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members

A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP

Figure 1. Overview of the geographic distribution, membership profile, and diversity of Victorian Men's Sheds

Across this network, Sheds offer a wide range of activities that support engagement and participation. Common activities include metalworking, woodworking, furniture restoration,

bicycle repair, gardening, cooking, arts, music and recreational activities. In addition to traditional workshop activities, some Sheds have adopted emerging technologies, including 3D printers, CNC routers and laser cutters, enabling members to develop new digital fabrication skills alongside traditional craftsmanship (Australian Men's Shed Association, 2021; Victorian Men's Shed Association, 2026).

Operating arrangements vary across locations. Most Sheds operate between two and four days per week, typically on weekdays, although some also offer weekend sessions, while a small number are open seven days a week. This flexibility allows members to participate regularly or on a casual basis depending on their interests, availability, and the availability of equipment, training and supervision.

Purpose

This report provides an independent evaluation of the contribution of Men's Sheds across Victoria, with a focus on their health, community and economic value. Commissioned by the Victorian Men's Shed Association (VMSA), the report aims to better understand the role Men's Sheds play in supporting individuals, strengthening communities and generating broader social and economic benefits.

Data Sources

The analysis draws on survey data collected from Victorian Men's Sheds, alongside findings from previous Curtin University research undertaken with Men's Sheds in Western Australia.

Areas of Analysis

The report examines:

- the structure, diversity and reach of Men's Sheds across Victoria
- wellbeing, social connection and health outcomes associated with participation
- contributions to local communities through volunteering, skill-sharing and community partnerships
- the broader economic value generated through volunteer effort, local expenditure and community activity

Methods

This report draws on multiple sources of evidence to examine the contribution of Men's Sheds across Victoria.

Victoria Surveys I and II

Data were collected from Victorian Men's Sheds to provide insights into Shed characteristics, membership profiles, Shed activities, leadership practices, community engagement, and health and wellbeing initiatives across the state. The surveys contributed evidence regarding the diversity, reach, and evolving role of Men's Sheds in metropolitan, regional, and rural communities. The data were collected through two surveys, both administered to all Men's Sheds in Victoria. A total of 214 Sheds responded to 2026 Survey I and 149 Sheds responded to 2026 Survey II.

Approach to Economic Valuation

The economic contribution of Men's Sheds was calculated through an assessment of volunteer contribution, local community engagement, operational activity, and broader community value. The report considers both direct contributions and wider social and economic benefits generated through community engagement, partnerships, and volunteer-led activities. The methods used in the economic value calculations are provided in Section 3 of this report.

WA Surveys and Actigraphs

Secondary data are drawn from Curtin University research conducted with Men's Sheds WA, which examined member wellbeing, social connection, leadership and participation outcomes across three surveys conducted in 2022 and 2023. Surveys were distributed to both Shed members and Shed leaders. Further details on these methods are available in McEvoy, Clarke and Holmes (2023), *What Makes a Thriving Shed? Men's Sheds WA Study Final Report*.

Victorian Men's Sheds operate in a similar manner and serve a comparable demographic to those in Western Australia. As such, these findings provide relevant contextual insights for interpreting the Victorian data.

Health Benefits

Victorian Men's Sheds form part of a broader movement widely recognised for their contribution to health, wellbeing, and social connectedness (Foettinger *et al.*, 2022; Holmes *et al.*, 2025). While Sheds are often associated with practical activities and skill development, research indicates that their benefits extend well beyond participation in projects. Sheds create a shared sense of social identity between members that facilitates the development of social connection, friendship, peer support, meaningful activity, volunteering, and opportunities to contribute to others. Individual and community wellbeing is supported through these activities and connections.

Many Men's Shed members typically belong to demographic groups that are at increased risk of poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. Older men are more likely to experience chronic health conditions than women and younger people, while retirement, bereavement, caring responsibilities, and changes in social networks can increase the risk of loneliness and social isolation (ABS, 2022; Kenny *et al.*, 2025; AIHW, 2026). Research also suggests that men generally may be less likely to seek support for health and wellbeing concerns through formal services (Courtenay, 2000; Galdas *et al.*, 2005). These factors highlight the importance of accessible, community-based initiatives that promote social connection, participation, and wellbeing for some men. By engaging men before problems become more severe, Men's Sheds may complement formal health and community services and contribute to broader preventative health objectives.

Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Men's Sheds

Research undertaken in Western Australia (Guerrini *et al.*, 2025; Guerrini *et al.*, 2026; McEvoy *et al.*, 2023a; McEvoy *et al.*, 2023b) found that Shed members were thriving, reporting positive outcomes across a range of wellbeing indicators, including social connection, mental wellbeing, loneliness, social anxiety, and overall quality of life. While equivalent health data are not currently available for Victorian Sheddors, there are strong similarities between the two populations. Men's Sheds in Victoria and Western Australia operate within the same social settings, share similar objectives, and provide comparable opportunities for social interaction, volunteering, skill sharing, and participation in meaningful activities. Both states also report membership profiles that are

predominantly older men, including retirees, veterans, and individuals seeking social connection and community involvement.

Given these similarities in membership characteristics, organisational purpose, and activities, it is reasonable to expect that Victorian Shedders may experience comparable health and wellbeing benefits to those observed in Western Australia. That is, members were thriving with positive outcomes across a range of wellbeing indicators, and overall quality of life. However, further research is required to directly measure and confirm these outcomes within the Victorian context.

Health and Wellbeing of Shed Members

This section summarises the health and wellbeing outcomes reported in the WA Men's Sheds surveys and includes data and comments from Victorian Men's Shedders to illustrate similarities. Men's Shed members in WA reported consistently high levels of wellbeing across surveys that were undertaken. Average wellbeing scores remained above general population benchmarks and substantially above the threshold commonly associated with major depression.

"If I did not come to the shed I don't think I would have survived, I wouldn't be here."

— Victorian Men's Shed member

The WA survey findings suggest that Men's Shed members generally maintained positive levels of functioning and wellbeing across key dimensions of daily life, including mobility, self-care, usual activities, pain or discomfort, and anxiety or depression. The survey respondents consistently scored positive outcomes across all indicating that these positive outcomes were sustained over time. Together with the wellbeing and loneliness findings, the results point to a broader pattern of positive health and social outcomes among Men's Shed participants.

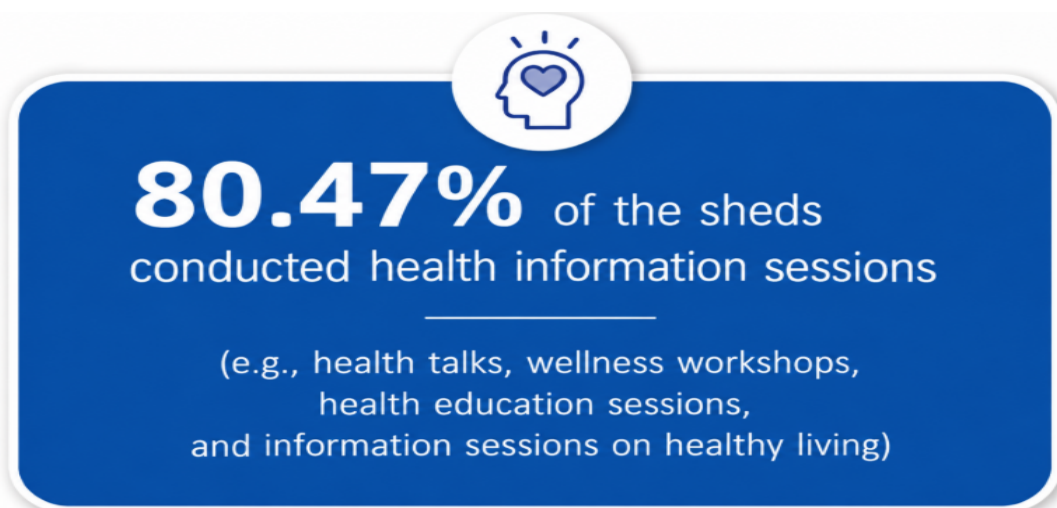
WA Men's Shed members reported consistently low levels of loneliness, with average scores slightly lower than those observed in general community samples, suggesting that members experienced comparatively strong social connectedness and support networks.

One member aged 96 said that "the presence of the Shed had extended his life by more than 10 years, by giving him a reason to get up every morning and contribute."

— Victorian Men's Shed member



The WA findings suggest that Men's Sheds provide important opportunities for friendship, belonging, and regular social interaction. By creating welcoming environments where members can connect with others, share experiences, and access informal peer support, Sheds may help reduce social disconnection and foster stronger social networks. This is important given the well-established relationship between loneliness, social isolation, and poorer mental health outcomes (Klein *et al.*, 2021).



Furthermore, WA Men's Shed members reported consistently low levels of social anxiety and depression. These findings suggest that members generally felt comfortable participating in social interactions and engaging with others within the Shed environment. The low levels of social anxiety observed may reflect the supportive, inclusive, and non-judgemental nature of Men's Sheds, which provide opportunities for social engagement, peer support, and the development of meaningful relationships (Kelly *et al.*, 2019).

“A member whose wife was badly affected by dementia was unable to attend for two years. When she finally went into care, he said the thought of one day returning to the Shed had helped him get through.”

— Victorian Men's Shed member

While Men's Sheds are not designed as clinical mental health interventions, the combination of regular social interaction, meaningful activity, peer support, and opportunities for contribution may help create environments that support psychological wellbeing and resilience and are recognised as the building blocks of psychological wellbeing (Seligman, 2018).

Supporting Members Through Health Crises, Bereavement and Major Life Challenges

Major health events, bereavement and other life challenges are more common in later life, hence among the primary demographic of Men's Sheds (Boerner *et al.*, 2024). These experiences can have significant impacts on wellbeing, with bereavement in particular associated with declines in physical and mental health and adverse psychological outcomes (Stahl & Schulz, 2014). Research has consistently demonstrated that social connection and community support are important factors in helping people navigate grief, loss and other adverse life events (Aoun *et al.*, 2020). In this context, Men's Sheds may provide valuable opportunities for companionship, peer support, purpose and belonging, which can serve as psychological resources that support wellbeing during difficult life periods.

“A recently widowed member joined the Shed and found new purpose in life. When he later had to give up driving due to deteriorating eyesight, three other members take turns to collect and return him from his home 20km away twice a week.”

— Victorian Men's Shed member

Responses

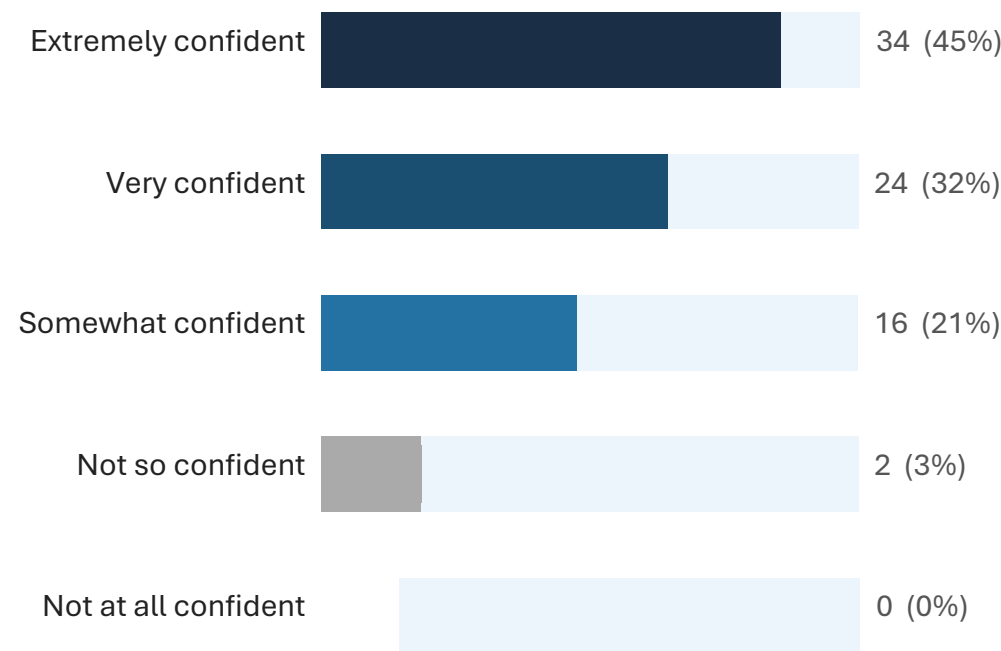
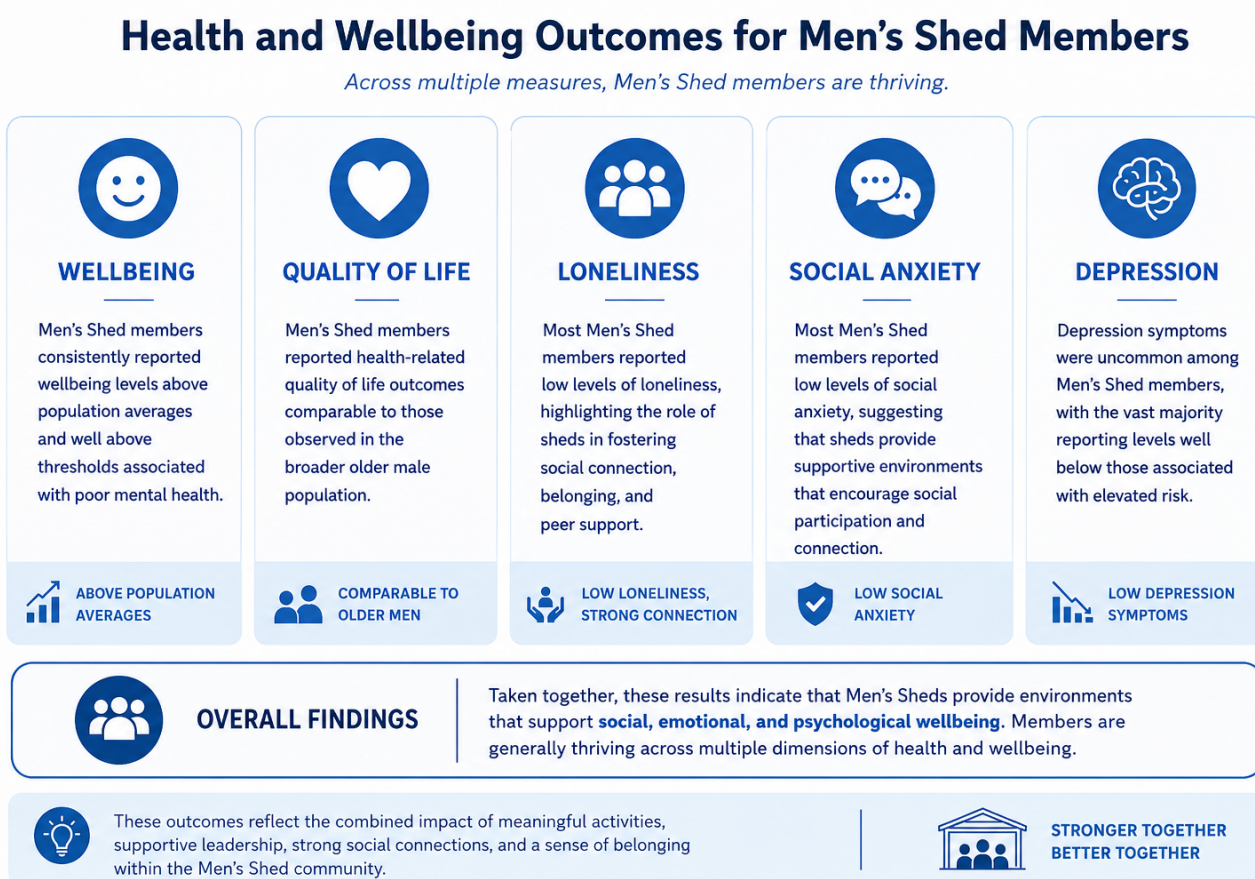


Figure 2. Perceived Impact of Men's Sheds in Supporting Members During Difficult Life Events

Among the 76 Victorian Men's Sheds that responded to this question in the June 2026 survey, nearly all respondents (98%) were at least somewhat confident that their Shed had helped members navigate major health crises, bereavement, family loss, or other traumatic life events. More than three-quarters of respondents (77%) reported being either very confident or extremely confident of this impact (Figure 2).

Summary of Health Outcomes

The evidence presented in this section suggests that Men's Sheds provide important environments for supporting health and wellbeing. In previous research members have reported higher levels of wellbeing and health-related quality of life, alongside lower levels of loneliness, social anxiety, and depression. Collectively, these findings indicate that many **“Men's Shed members are thriving”** and experiencing positive social, emotional, and psychological wellbeing. This is summarised in the infographic below.



The findings also highlight potential pathways through which these outcomes are achieved. Research from the Western Australian Thriving Sheds Project (Guerrini *et al.*, 2025; Guerrini *et al.*, 2026; McEvoy *et al.*, 2023a; McEvoy *et al.*, 2023b) suggests that positive, inclusive, and consultative leadership styles are associated with stronger social connections, greater psychological safety, and a stronger sense of belonging among members. Members who participated in a wider range of Shed activities also reported higher wellbeing, lower loneliness, and stronger identification with their Shed community. These findings reinforce the importance of meaningful participation, supportive social environments, and a sense of shared identity within Men's Sheds.

This pattern suggests that participation, belonging, and identification with the Shed community may play an important role in supporting member wellbeing (Clarke *et al.*, 2025; Guerrini *et al.*, 2026; Haslam *et al.*, 2019; McEvoy *et al.*, 2023b). More broadly, research has shown that maintaining meaningful social group memberships during later life is associated with improved health outcomes and a reduced risk of premature mortality, highlighting the importance of opportunities for social connection and community participation among older adults (Steffens *et al.*, 2016).

At the same time, a small proportion of members reported outcomes indicative of poorer mental health and wellbeing, suggesting that some individuals may benefit from additional support. This highlights the ongoing importance of creating welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environments that enable all members to participate and thrive, while also assisting those who need additional support to access appropriate support and resources.

Victorian survey findings further demonstrate the role of Men's Sheds in promoting health awareness and wellbeing. More than 80% of responding Sheds reported providing health information sessions for members, while many also offered activities such as first aid, CPR and defibrillator training, dementia and chronic disease awareness programs, mental health and wellbeing sessions, suicide prevention initiatives, cooking and food safety workshops, and exercise-based activities. Together, these activities illustrate the broader contribution of Men's Sheds to community health promotion and preventive health efforts. Expanding these initiatives across more Sheds and encouraging their continued development may further enhance the health and wellbeing benefits experienced by members and strengthen the contribution of Men's Sheds to preventive health within local communities.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the value of Men's Sheds extends beyond practical activities alone. Through social connection, meaningful participation, supportive leadership, health promotion, and a strong sense of community, Men's Sheds contribute positively to the wellbeing of members and the communities in which they operate.

Community Benefits

Men's Sheds generate community-level benefits that extend well beyond individual members and contribute to stronger, more connected, and more resilient local communities. Research shows that Men's Sheds build social capital, strengthen community networks, and create value that flows to families, neighbourhoods, and community organisations (Golding *et al.*, 2007; Wilson & Cordier, 2013). Community-based, accessible “soft-entry” spaces have been recognised as important mechanisms for supporting wellbeing, reducing social isolation, and facilitating early engagement with support, complementing rather than replacing formal health and community services (Nelson *et al.*, 2025). Opportunities for participation, volunteering, and community engagement are also recognised as important protective factors against loneliness and social isolation (AIHW, 2026). These factors further reinforce the health and wellbeing benefits associated with participation.

Evidence further highlights that Men's Sheds strengthen social cohesion by fostering belonging, shared identity, and meaningful participation (Guerrini *et al.*, 2026). National policy sources recognise Men's Sheds as important community assets that improve wellbeing, strengthen local engagement, and contribute to public value across Australian communities (Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, n.d.; Australian Men's Shed Association, 2026). Collectively, these community-level impacts create tangible public benefits for local governments and the Victorian community.



Welcoming Diverse Members

While Men's Sheds were originally established to support older men, many Victorian Sheds now welcome people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences including women. An example of this evolution is the Hurstbridge Community Shed in rural Nillumbik, which transitioned from a traditional men's-only model to an inclusive community shed (Nillumbik Shire Council, n.d.). The Shed now welcomes people of all genders and is led by President Lara, reflecting a broader commitment to inclusion and community participation. Survey responses indicate that Sheds support veterans, people living with disability, carers, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and individuals experiencing social isolation or disadvantage. Although each Shed operates independently, research indicates that thriving Sheds are characterised by inclusive governance, welcoming environments, and a strong sense of belonging among members (Holmes *et al.*, 2025). Creating spaces where people feel valued, respected, and able to contribute has been identified as a key factor in the success and sustainability of Men's Sheds. By providing accessible and supportive environments, Sheds foster participation, connection, and inclusion for people who may otherwise have limited opportunities to engage with their communities, helping to strengthen both individual wellbeing and community cohesion.

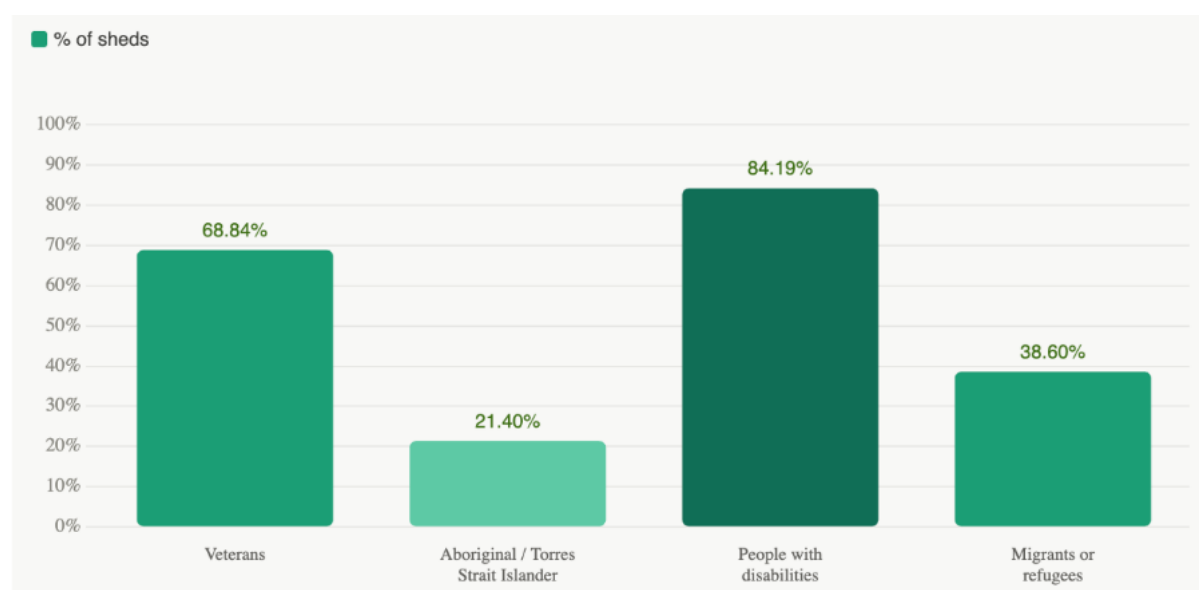


Figure 3. Victorian Men's Shed Association · 2026 Survey I · Diversity of Shed Members · n = 214 sheds

Survey findings further demonstrate the diversity of people participating in Victorian Men's Sheds. More than four in five Sheds (84.2%) reported including people living with disability, while 68.8% included veterans. Around two in five Sheds (38.6%) reported participation by migrants or refugees, and 21.4% included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members (Figure 3). These findings highlight the important role Men's Sheds play in creating accessible and welcoming environments that support participation, inclusion, and social connection for a broad range of community members.

Supporting the Wider Community Through Projects and Programs

Men's Sheds frequently contribute beyond their membership by supporting local organisations, community projects, and volunteer initiatives. Many Victorian Men's Sheds contribute directly to their local communities through volunteering, practical projects, and community programs. Survey responses demonstrate that Sheds regularly undertake activities that benefit schools, community organisations, hospitals, age-care facilities, sporting clubs, and charitable groups.

These activities include, but are not limited to, building and repairing community infrastructure, producing items for community use, supporting environmental initiatives, fundraising, and participating in local events. Such contributions allow members to apply their skills and experience in ways that create tangible benefits for others. Previous research has highlighted that Men's Sheds generate positive outcomes not only for participants but also for families and communities through volunteering, social participation, and community engagement (Golding *et al.*, 2007).

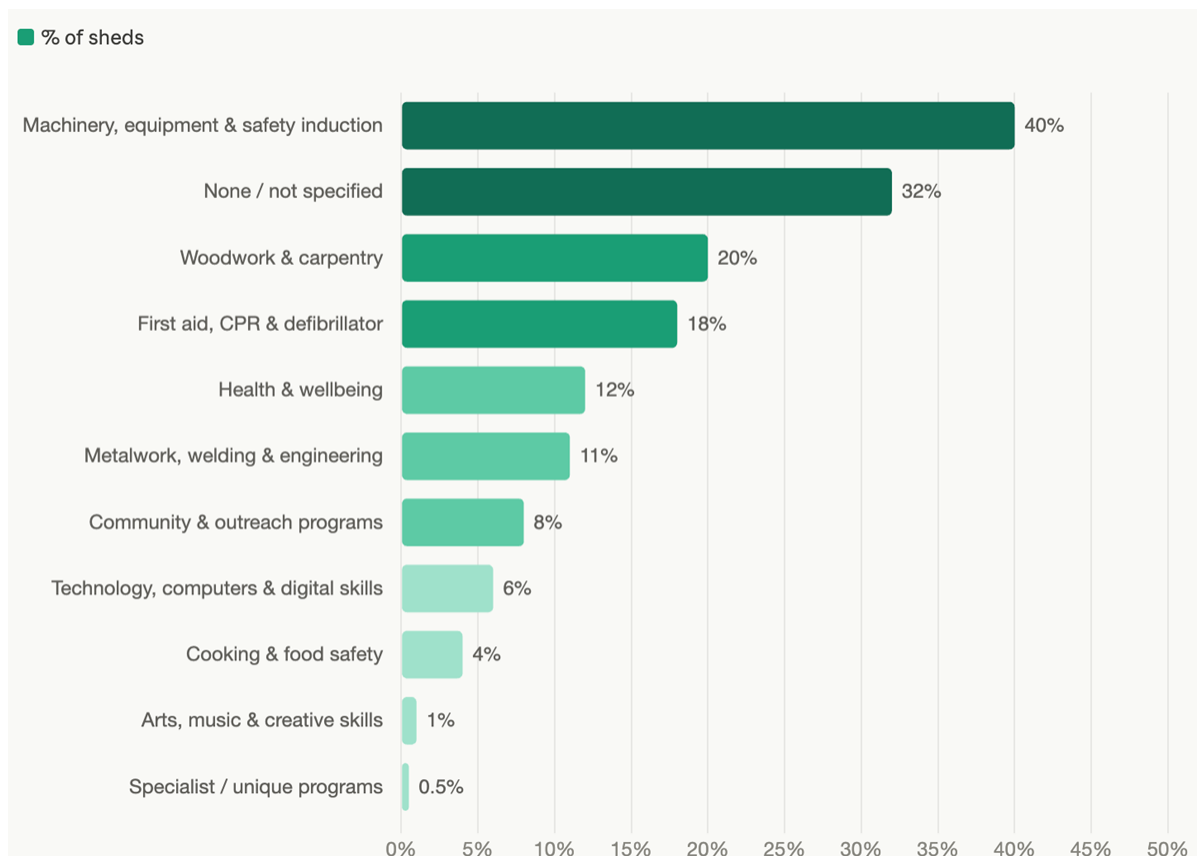


Figure 4. Victorian Men's Shed Association · 2026 Survey Report I · Shed Training Programs · n = 214 sheds

Survey findings demonstrate that Men's Sheds contribute to community development not only through projects, but also through education and skills transfer. Training activities are common across Victorian Sheds, with 40% providing machinery, equipment and safety inductions and 20% delivering woodworking and carpentry training (Figure 4). Health-related training also featured prominently, with 18% of Sheds offering first aid, CPR and defibrillator training and 12% providing health and wellbeing education (Figure 4). These findings highlight the role of Men's Sheds in building practical skills, promoting safety, and strengthening community capability.

Supporting Other Community Organisations Through Partnerships

Partnerships play an important role in extending the reach and impact of Men's Sheds. Survey responses indicate that Victorian Sheds frequently collaborate with local governments, schools, health services, emergency services, neighbourhood houses, community organisations, and other not-for-profit groups. Some Sheds also share facilities with community organisations or make their spaces available for meetings, programs, and local events. Research on community organisations suggests that partnerships facilitate the sharing of knowledge, resources, expertise, and networks,

strengthening organisational capacity and improving community outcomes (Rathi *et al.*, 2014). Through these partnerships, Men’s Sheds contribute to stronger local networks, improve community capacity, and support collaborative responses to local needs.

“A Shed has established a small music group (band) that performs regularly for residents of aged care facilities and at community events. The band includes one female associate member and has performed at VMSA Roadshows and local Ageing Well Expos.”

— Victorian Men's Shed member

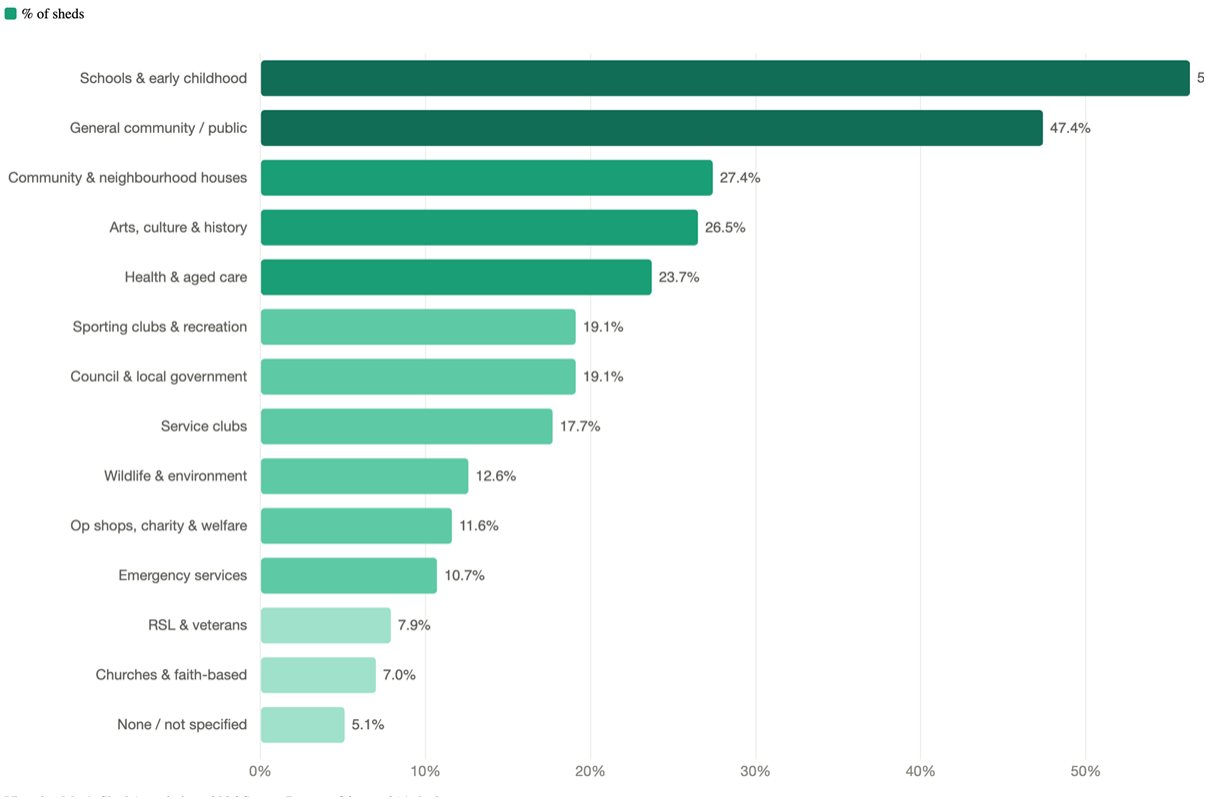


Figure 5. Victorian Men's Shed Association · 2026 Survey I · Community Organisations For Whom Sheds Produce Work · n = 214 Sheds

The breadth of organisations supported demonstrates the extensive reach of Men’s Sheds across Victorian communities. Figure 5 demonstrates, more than half of all surveyed Sheds undertake work for schools and early childhood organisations (56.3%), while almost half support projects benefiting the broader community (47.4%). Sheds also contribute to community and neighbourhood houses, arts and cultural organisations, health and aged-care services, sporting

clubs, local government initiatives, and environmental groups, highlighting their role as active contributors to community wellbeing and local development.

Acting as Community Hubs

Many Men's Sheds function as important community hubs, particularly in rural and regional communities where opportunities for social participation and connection may be limited. Beyond workshop activities, Sheds provide places where people can meet, learn, share experiences, access information, and build relationships.

The Shed provides a space and activities for men who require some level of support, freeing their spouse for a few hours each week. "We often overlook that helping and supporting a man has significant impact on the spouse, his family, neighbours and the community."

— Victorian Men's Shed member

This quote illustrates that the broader principle that supporting men's health and wellbeing contributes to healthier households, with positive implications for partners, families and caregiving dynamics.

Research identifies mutual-aid organisations such as Men's Sheds as important contributors to social capital and community connectedness (Holmes *et al.*, 2025). Recent evidence also highlights the role of Men's Sheds in providing safe spaces for people to socialise, develop skills, contribute to their communities, and strengthen social connections (Guerrini *et al.*, 2026). In addition to supporting members, these activities create opportunities for community participation, informal support, and local engagement. By fostering a sense of belonging and participation, Men's Sheds help strengthen the social fabric of local communities and create opportunities for people to remain actively engaged in community life.



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

New Peninsula Mount Martha Men's Shed

Building stronger communities, one project at a time.

Established in 2014, the New Peninsula Mount Martha Men's Shed works closely with local organisations and community groups to deliver practical support and create a positive impact across the community.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE LOCALLY



Refurbishing for a purpose

Donated bicycles and toys are refurbished by members and given to disadvantaged children through local schools and community networks.



Supporting local initiatives

The Shed produces equipment for local organisations, assists community groups, and contributes to projects that benefit families and children.



A place for people

The Shed provides a welcoming and supportive environment for individuals who may be socially isolated, unemployed, retired, or living with disability.



Strengthening community connections



Creating opportunities for all and fostering inclusion



Practical skills making a real community impact



Building a stronger, more caring community



The Shed is more than a workshop. It's a community hub where we can give back, share skills and support each other.

– New Peninsula Mount Martha Men's Shed



Source: www.mtmarthamensshed.org.au

The New Peninsula Mount Martha Men's Shed provides a practical example of how Victorian Sheds function as community hubs. Through partnerships with schools, community groups, and local organisations, members refurbish bicycles and toys for disadvantaged children, contribute practical skills to community projects, and create opportunities for social participation and inclusion. These activities demonstrate how Men's Sheds can simultaneously support individual wellbeing and generate broader community benefits.

Summary of Community Benefits

The findings in this section show that Victorian Men's Sheds strengthen local communities in ways that extend well beyond their members. While Sheds are often recognised for practical activities and skill development such as woodworking, repairs, and cooking, their greatest contribution lies in the connections they create the opportunities they provide for participation, and the sense of belonging they foster. These benefits are summarised in the infographic below.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Men's Sheds strengthen communities by building connections, supporting inclusion, and creating value that reaches far beyond our members.



STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Men's Sheds build social capital, strengthen networks, and create inclusive spaces that reduce isolation and support wellbeing.

They are valued community assets that improve wellbeing and contribute to public value across Victoria.



WELCOMING EVERYONE

Sheds welcome people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences, including veterans, people with disability, carers, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and those experiencing social isolation or disadvantage.



SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

Men's Sheds contribute through volunteering, practical projects, and programs that support local organisations, schools, aged care, health services, sporting clubs, and environmental initiatives. They also provide training that builds skills and community capability.



STRONGER TOGETHER

Partnerships with local governments, schools, health services, emergency services, and community organisations extend the reach and impact of Men's Sheds and help build stronger, more collaborative communities.



COMMUNITY HUBS

Sheds are more than workshops—they are places to meet, learn, share, and support one another. As trusted community hubs, they foster belonging, encourage participation, and help keep people connected to their communities.



THE IMPACT

By fostering connection, inclusion, and community participation, Men's Sheds create lasting benefits for individuals, families, neighbourhoods, and the Victorian community.



Stronger communities. Greater connections. Lasting impact.



Across Victoria, Men's Sheds create welcoming and inclusive spaces where people can build relationships, contribute their skills, and remain connected to their communities. These environments are particularly valuable for people experiencing social isolation, retirement, caring responsibilities, disability, or other life changes that can reduce social participation. By providing accessible, community-based spaces, Sheds encourage inclusion and help people from diverse backgrounds remain actively engaged in community life.

The contribution of Men's Sheds is also reflected in the practical support they provide to the wider community. Members regularly volunteer their time and expertise to assist schools, aged-care facilities, sporting clubs, charities, community organisations, and environmental initiatives. Through these projects, Sheds create tangible benefits for local communities while enabling members to continue sharing their knowledge and experience in meaningful ways.

Partnerships further amplify this impact. Collaboration with local governments, health services, schools, neighbourhood houses, emergency services, and community organisations allows Men's Sheds to respond to local needs while strengthening community capacity and extending the reach of community programs. These partnerships reinforce the role of Sheds as trusted and valued contributors within local communities.

Beyond their practical activities, many Men's Sheds also serve as informal community hubs, particularly in regional and rural areas where opportunities for social connection may be limited. They provide places where people can meet, learn, exchange knowledge, support one another, and develop lasting friendships. In doing so, they help foster participation, strengthen local networks, and encourage ongoing engagement in community life.

In summary, these findings demonstrate that Men's Sheds are valuable community assets that generate benefits extending well beyond their members. By fostering connection, inclusion and community participation, Men's Sheds create lasting benefits for individuals, families, neighbourhoods and the Victorian community.

Economic Benefits

The economic contribution reported in this section represents one dimension of the broader value created by Victorian Men's Sheds. Contemporary approaches to impact assessment increasingly recognise the importance of considering economic, social and wellbeing outcomes together when evaluating community organisations (Alomoto *et al.*, 2022). In addition to supporting members, as detailed in earlier sections of this report, Men's Sheds contribute to economic activity through local spending, operational expenditure, fundraising, donations and volunteer labour (Figure 6).

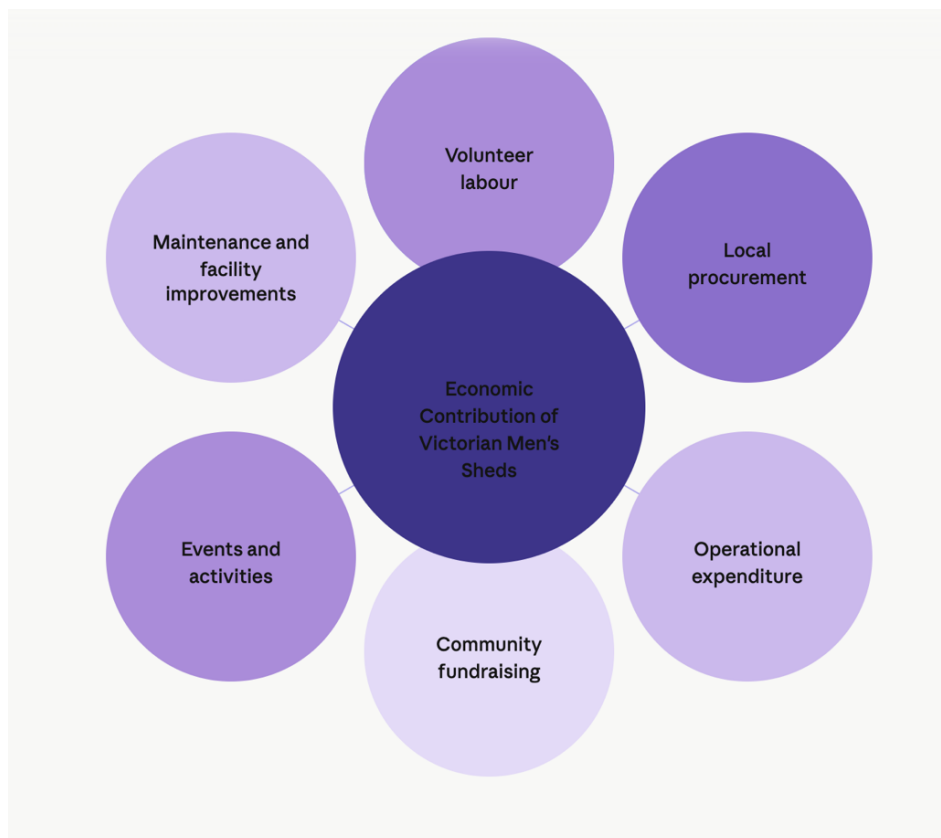


Figure 6. Pathways through which Victorian Men's Sheds contribute to local and regional economies.

Economic contribution refers to the gross economic activity attributable to an organisation, industry or sector within an existing economy (Watson *et al.*, 2007). While the primary role of Men's Sheds is improving men's health and wellbeing, their activities also support local and regional economies through the purchase of goods and services, engagement with local suppliers and extensive volunteer participation.

Traditional economic measures primarily capture financial transactions and market activity. However, community organisations also rely heavily on volunteer labour and other in-kind contributions that may not be fully reflected in financial records. Consequently, assessing both direct expenditure and volunteer contributions provides a more complete understanding of the economic value generated by Victorian Men's Sheds. Volunteer labour represents productive work that would otherwise need to be purchased or replaced and is therefore commonly included in assessments of community economic contribution (Bowman, 2009).

This section examines both direct financial expenditure and the economic value of volunteer labour to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the contribution of Victorian Men's Sheds.

Direct Economic Activity

Community organisations are increasingly recognised as significant economic actors through their expenditure, service provision and mobilisation of community resources (Salamon *et al.*, 2003). Direct economic contributions arise through organisational expenditure on goods and services, operational activities and the purchase of resources within local economies (National Council of Nonprofits, n.d.).

The expenditure estimates presented in this section are based on median values rather than means. Median values were selected because expenditure varied considerably across Sheds and included several extreme values. Consistent with guidance from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and standard statistical practice, the median provides a more representative estimate of typical expenditure in skewed data by reducing the influence of outliers (Field & Field, 2019).

Survey findings demonstrate that Victorian Men's Sheds contribute to local economies through ongoing expenditure on equipment, materials, tools, food and refreshments, stationery, clothing and other operational requirements (Figure 7, 8 & 9). These purchases support local suppliers while enabling Sheds to deliver activities and community projects. Collectively, these activities sustain economic activity across local businesses, community organisations and regional economies throughout Victoria.

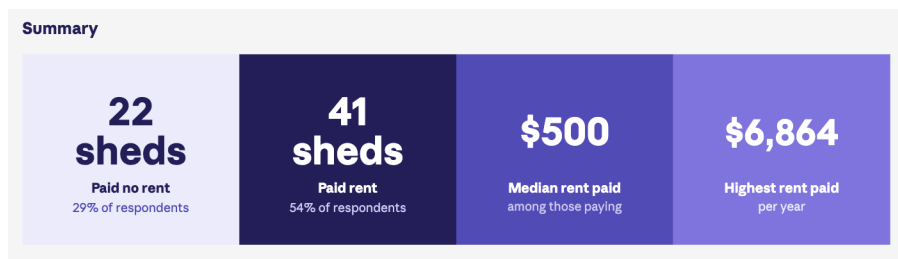


Figure 7. Victorian Men's Shed Association · 2026 Survey II · Rent Paid by Men's Sheds Q7 · n = 76 Sheds

The strongest areas of local procurement reported by participating Sheds were food and other refreshments, equipment, and materials, indicating that sheds regularly engage local businesses and suppliers as part of their day-to-day operations. Many Sheds also reported expenditure on tools, stationery, clothing and other operational supplies, further contributing to economic activity within their communities.

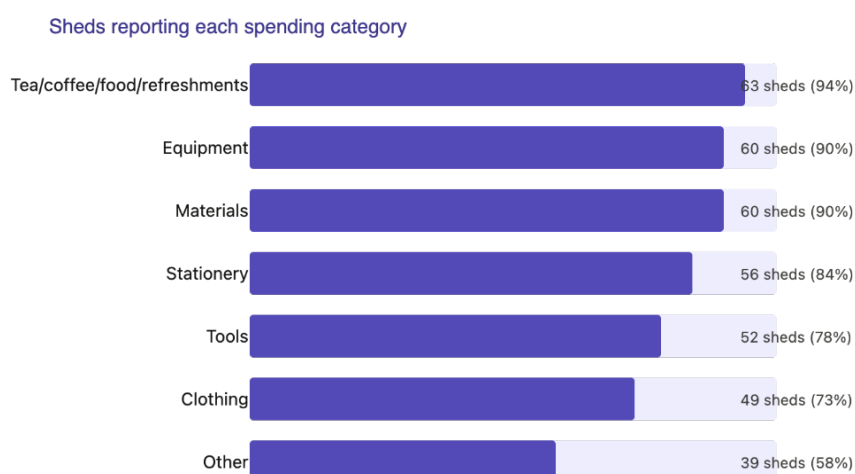


Figure 8. Victorian Men's Shed Association · 2026 Survey II · Local Expenditure by Men's Sheds · n = 67 Sheds

In addition to procurement expenditure, Sheds contribute through facility maintenance, repairs and improvement projects. These activities often require the purchase of building materials, equipment and specialist supplies from local providers, generating additional expenditure within local economies while supporting the maintenance of valuable community infrastructure and assets.

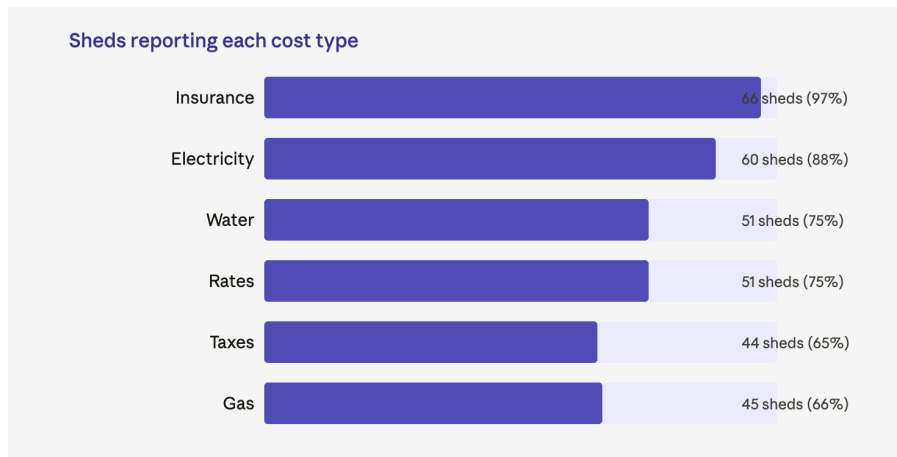


Figure 9. Victorian Men's Shed Association · 2026 Survey II · Additional Shed Operating Costs · n = 68 Sheds

Estimating Direct Economic Activity

To provide a clearer indication of the scale of these contributions, an estimate of typical annual direct expenditure was developed.

Based on reported median expenditure values in Table I of Survey II, a typical Victorian Men's Shed contributes approximately \$16,223 annually in direct economic activity through operational expenditure and local procurement. The largest areas of expenditure were equipment (\$3,658), other local purchases (\$2,156) and materials (\$1,959), highlighting the role Sheds play in supporting local suppliers and businesses. Regular spending on food and refreshments (\$1,569), insurance (\$1,847), utilities and facility-related costs further demonstrate the ongoing economic activity generated through day-to-day operations.

Among the 149 Sheds represented in Survey II, this equates to approximately \$2.42 million in direct annual expenditure.

$$\$16,223 \times 149 \text{ Sheds} = \$2.42 \text{ million/ per year}$$

Extrapolated across Victoria's network of 315 Men's Sheds, this represents approximately \$5.11 million in direct economic activity each year through operational spending and local procurement.

$$\$16,223 \times 315 \text{ Sheds} = \$5.11 \text{ million/ per year}$$

Expenditure category	Monthly equivalent of reported median (AUD)	Reported median annual expenditure (AUD)
Rent*	\$41.67	\$500
Insurance	\$153.92	\$1,847
Electricity	\$116.67	\$1,400
Water	\$50.00	\$600
Rates	\$23.67	\$284
Gas	\$22.92	\$275
Equipment	\$304.83	\$3,658
Materials	\$163.25	\$1,959
Tea, coffee, food & refreshments	\$130.75	\$1,569
Other local purchases	\$179.67	\$2,156
Tools	\$72.00	\$864
Stationery	\$28.00	\$336
Clothing	\$64.58	\$775
Total	\$1,351.93	\$16,223

Table I. Median annual direct expenditure of a typical Victorian Men's Shed.

While expenditure varies considerably between individual Sheds, these findings demonstrate that Men's Sheds make a meaningful contribution to local economies through the purchase of goods and services required to maintain facilities, deliver activities and support members. These

estimates capture direct economic activity only and exclude the value of volunteer labour, fundraising, donations, grants, and the indirect or induced economic effects that occur as expenditure circulates through local businesses, supply chains and households.

Fundraising, Donations and Local Economic Contributions

Fundraising activities, donations and grants represent important sources of income for many Victorian Men's Sheds and support their capacity to deliver community activities and services. Survey responses indicate that Sheds both receive and generate financial resources within their local communities, supporting operational activities, community projects, events and charitable initiatives. These financial activities represent an additional pathway through which Men's Sheds strengthen community networks while contributing to local economic activity.

A total of 66 Sheds reported income received through donations, grants, fundraising and other external sources during 2025. External income ranged from \$0 to \$105,000, reflecting substantial variation in the financial circumstances of Victorian Men's Sheds. Half of all participating sheds reported annual external income between \$1,200 and \$7,280, with a median of \$3,245. This indicates that most Sheds operate with relatively modest levels of external financial support. The highest non-outlier value was \$15,424, while eight Sheds reported substantially larger amounts ranging from \$45,000 to \$105,000. One Shed reported receiving \$105,000, highlighting the influence that major grants or funding opportunities can have on individual Shed finances.

Qualitative responses further illustrate the variation in how Sheds generate income to support their operations. While some Sheds reported receiving grants, donations and philanthropic support, others relied primarily on fundraising activities such as community barbecues, raffles, product sales and repair services. Several Sheds indicated that fundraising represented a major source of operational income, highlighting the important role of community support in sustaining Men's Shed activities. Previous research suggests that reliance on member-led fundraising can place additional pressure on participants, potentially introducing stress and constraining engagement with the social and wellbeing benefits of the Shed (Kelly *et al.*, 2019; Hansji *et al.*, 2015; Holmes *et al.*, 2025; Robinson, 2019).

One Shed reported that:

“Total income raised was \$11,522. This supports a range of community activities.”

— Victorian Men's Shed member

Given the substantial variation in reported funding levels and the presence of several large grant recipients, these findings should be interpreted descriptively rather than used to estimate total funding across all Victorian Men's Sheds. Nevertheless, the results demonstrate that Men's Sheds attract meaningful financial support from governments, local communities, businesses and philanthropic sources, reflecting their recognised value as community-based organisations and contributors to local wellbeing. As a result, the Sheds are able to generate additional economic activity for the community when those funds are spent locally.

Economic Contribution of Volunteer Labour

While direct expenditure and external funding represent important components of economic contribution, a substantial proportion of the value generated by Men's Sheds is created through volunteer labour. These contributions are typically not reflected in financial records but represent productive work that would otherwise need to be purchased or replaced. Volunteer labour represents a significant form of in-kind contribution and an essential resource supporting the operation of Men's Sheds across Victoria.

Volunteer labour is typically absent from organisational financial statements; however, assigning a monetary value to volunteer time is a widely accepted approach for recognising the full economic contribution of community organisations and avoiding substantial underestimation of their impact (Bowman, 2009). The valuation of volunteer labour is commonly used to capture the economic value generated through unpaid work and to provide a more complete assessment of organisational and community contributions (Stötzer & Kaltenbrunner, 2024).

Volunteers are central to the operation of Victorian Men's Sheds, contributing to governance, maintenance, mentoring, community engagement, and the delivery of Shed activities. The analysis demonstrates that these contributions represent a substantial economic resource, enabling Sheds to operate at a scale that would otherwise require significant financial investment. Even under conservative valuation assumptions, the economic value of volunteer labour exceeds \$16 million

annually across Victoria, highlighting the critical role volunteers play in sustaining Men's Sheds and the communities they serve. (Table III).

How the Estimate Was Calculated

Volunteer hours varied substantially across reporting Sheds, ranging from 10 hours per month to 1,200 hours per month. Such variation is expected given differences in Shed size, membership, facilities and community activities.

As outlined earlier, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (n.d.) recommends the use of median measures where data contain substantial variation or extreme values, as the median is less influenced by outliers and provides a more representative estimate of a typical organisation. The median estimates of 180 volunteer hours for Shed operations and 35 hours for community activities per month, reported by the 72 Victorian Men's Sheds that responded to this question in Survey II, were extrapolated across Victoria's network of 315 Men's Sheds to estimate statewide volunteer contributions (Table II).

Median Volunteer Hours Reported	
Activity	Median Hours per Month
Shed Operations	180
Community Activities	35
Total	215
This equates to:	
Activity	Annual Hours per Shed
Shed Operations	2,160
Community Activities	420
Total	2,580

Extrapolated across 315 Victorian Men's Sheds:

Activity	Annual Hours
Shed Operations	680,400
Community Activities	132,300
Total Volunteer Hours	812,700

* Median estimate based on responses from the 72 Victorian Men's Sheds that answered this question in the 2026 Survey II and extrapolated across all 315 Victorian Men's Sheds.

Table II. Median Volunteer Hours per Shed and Estimated Annual Volunteer Hours Across Victorian Men's Sheds

Estimated Monetary Value

The Victorian Government (2026) recommends valuing volunteer contributions at:

- \$20 per hour for general volunteer labour
- \$45 per hour for specialist labour

The lower-bound estimate assumes all volunteer hours are valued at the general volunteer rate, while the upper-bound estimate assumes all hours are valued at the specialist rate.

Applying these rates produces the following estimates:

Valuation Method	Annual Economic Value
General Volunteer Labour (\$20/hr)	\$16.3 million
Specialist Volunteer Labour (\$45/hr)	\$36.6 million

* Median estimate based on responses from the 72 Victorian Men's Sheds that answered this question in the 2026 Survey II and extrapolated across all 315 Victorian Men's Sheds.

Table III. Victorian Government Recommended In-Kind Values per Hour (2026)

Volunteer contributions represent a substantial component of the economic value generated by Victorian Men's Sheds. Volunteers contribute hundreds of thousands of hours annually to

maintaining facilities, supporting members, mentoring participants, delivering community projects and strengthening local communities.

Even under a conservative valuation, volunteer contributions alone represent an estimated \$16.3 million annually. Across Victoria, Men's Sheds contribute an estimated 812,700 volunteer hours each year, equivalent to approximately 391 full-time jobs (based on 2,080 hours per annum). Using the Victorian Government's recommended volunteer valuation rates, this contribution is valued at between \$16.3 million and \$36.6 million annually (Table III).

Cost savings Beyond Traditional Economic Measures

In addition to direct expenditure and volunteer contributions, Men's Sheds generate economic value through avoided costs. Survey responses indicated that Sheds regularly undertake repairs, maintenance, community projects and practical support for schools, community groups, sporting clubs, aged-care facilities and local residents. These examples illustrate how Men's Sheds provide practical services that would otherwise require paid labour or additional financial resources, thereby generating economic value through cost substitution.

Previous research highlights that community-based services can generate broader economic benefits by reducing demand on more costly formal services and creating value beyond direct financial transactions (Merollini *et al.*, 2024). In this context, Men's Sheds contribute to local economies not only through spending and labour, but also by providing services that substitute for paid work and reduce expenditure for organisations and individuals.

For example, Sheds reported providing practical repair and maintenance services to community organisations, including:

“The Shed provides assistance to other NFP entities in the area at cost plus expenses. Recent projects have included building tables for a local disability training centre and providing training aids for aged care homes.”

“Providing repair and maintenance services to local community groups, kinders and schools.”

— Victorian Men's Shed members

These activities therefore substitute for services that would otherwise require financial resources to deliver.

While this highlights the economic value of cost substitution, economic assessments primarily capture financial contributions such as expenditure, income and volunteer labour. However, contemporary wellbeing-based approaches recognise that many forms of social value are not fully reflected through economic indicators alone. Outcomes such as social connection, belonging, resilience, purpose and improved wellbeing are increasingly recognised as important contributors to community value and quality of life (Frijters *et al.*, 2024).

Consistent with this perspective, many Sheds reported delivering health promotion and wellbeing activities, including welfare checks, mental health training, health information sessions and outreach to members experiencing illness or isolation. While the financial value of these activities cannot be directly quantified, they contribute to broader public value by supporting healthy ageing, social connectedness and early intervention. These benefits may extend beyond individual members to families, communities and public services.

These preventative and wellbeing-focused activities are reflected in survey responses, with many Sheds reporting engagement in health, safety and community support initiatives (Figure 10).

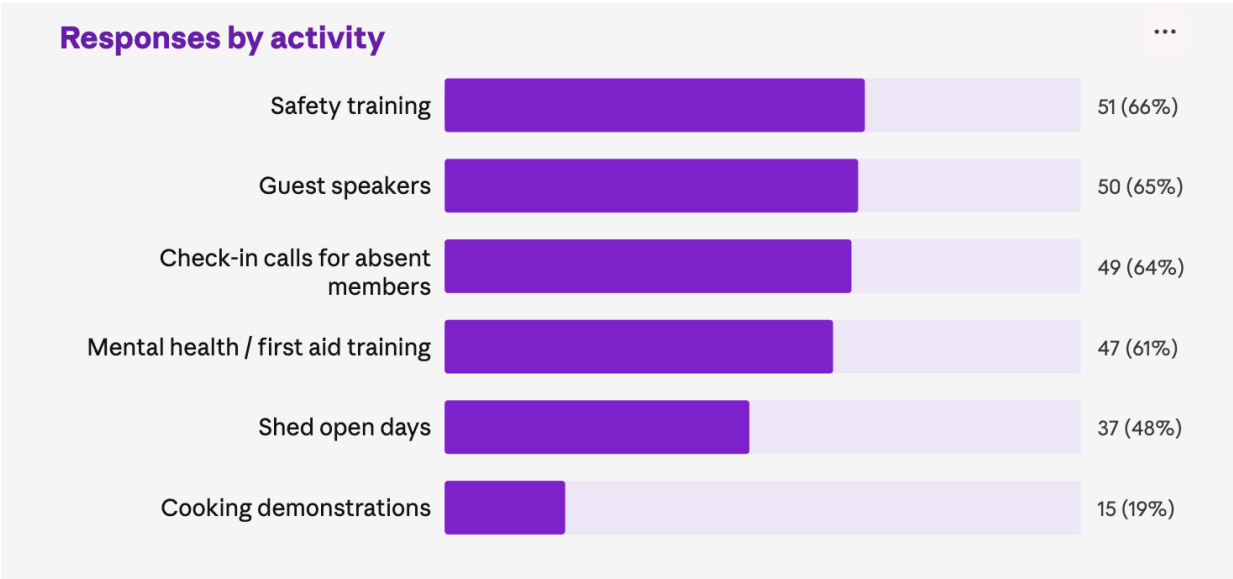


Figure 10. Victorian Men's Shed Association · 2026 Survey II · Health Events Organised by Men's Sheds · n = 77 Sheds

While cost substitution captures part of the economic value generated by Men's Sheds, it does not fully reflect their broader contribution. Many important outcomes, including social connection, belonging, resilience, purpose, and improved wellbeing, extend beyond conventional economic measures.

Value of Statistical Life

The Value of a Statistical Life (VSL) is an economic measure representing individuals' willingness to trade income for reductions in mortality risk and is widely used in cost-benefit analysis of health and safety policies (Office of Impact Analysis, 2026). Importantly, VSL does not assign a value to an individual life but rather reflects society's willingness to pay to reduce the risk of death across a population. Australian studies suggest a VSL of approximately \$7.0 million (2017 values), with more recent government guidance indicating a value of around \$5.87 million (Ananthapavan *et al.*, 2021; Office of Impact Analysis, 2026). In the context of this study, qualitative evidence suggests that Men's Sheds may contribute to protective factors associated with reduced mortality risk, including improved mental health, social support and reduced social isolation. These qualitative accounts should not be interpreted as evidence that Men's Sheds directly prevent mortality. Rather, they illustrate the types of outcomes that wellbeing economics and VSL frameworks seek to recognise when considering the broader societal value of community-based interventions, as illustrated below:

"A member went through a traumatic relationship breakdown and attributed the Shed for his survival. In appreciation he donated \$20,000 to extend the 'brew room', which he said was the thing that saved him."

Leading up to an AGM, a member said: "We need good people on the committee because this Shed has saved my life." Another responded: "It hasn't saved my life, but I am glad it is here." Profound statements made in front of approximately 30 members.

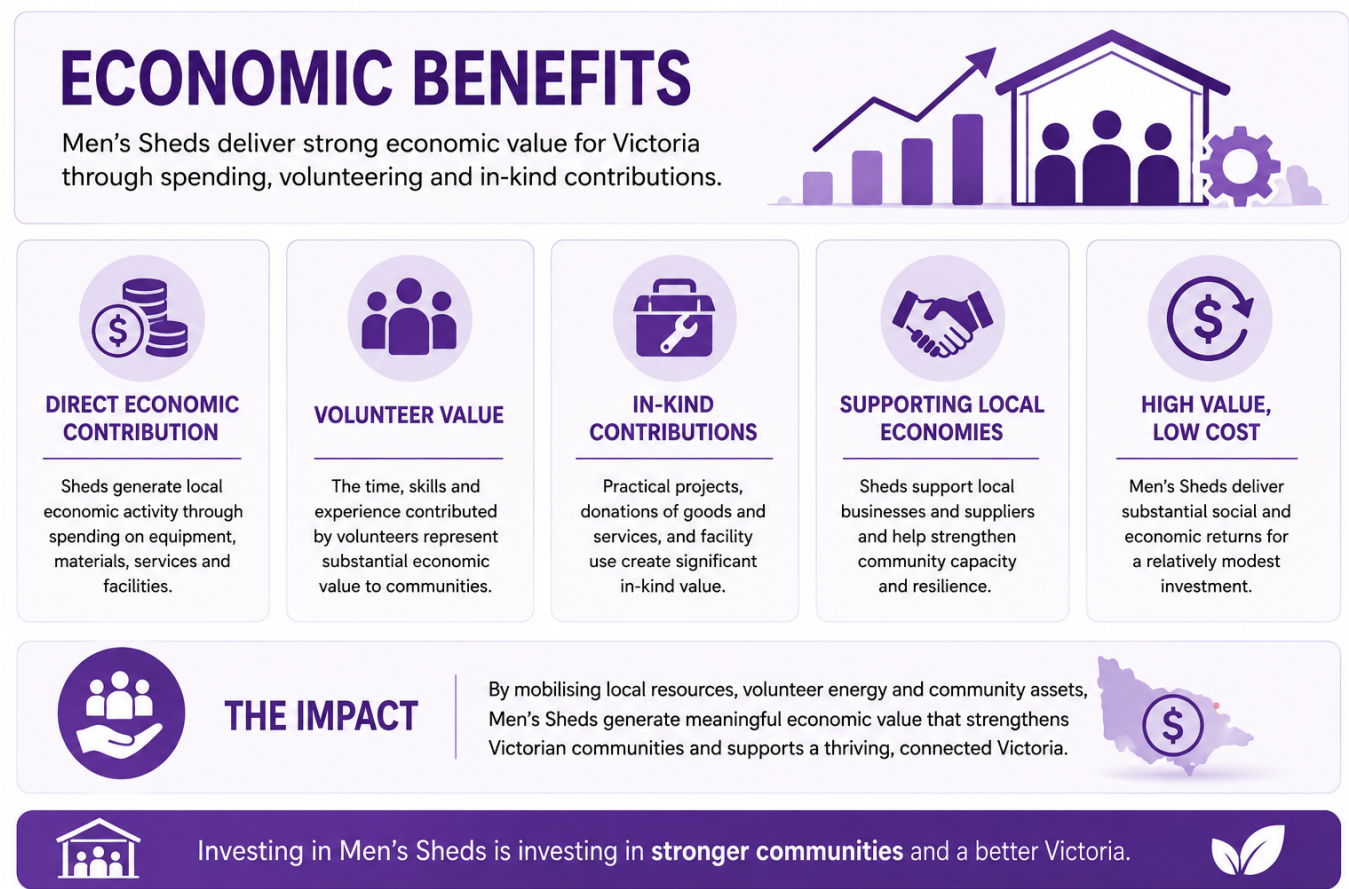
— Victorian Men's Shed members

Building on this, the prevention of premature mortality represents a significant societal benefit when assessed using the Value of a Statistical Life (VSL) (Office of Impact Analysis, 2026). In

addition to this, improved mental health and wellbeing may reduce demand on healthcare services, including GP visits and specialist care which is especially valuable for rural Victoria (AIHW, 2025; Kelly *et al.*, 2021). Evidence suggests that social support is associated with improved healthcare affordability and reduced financial barriers to care (Jacobson *et al.*, 2025). While these health system savings are not captured within VSL estimates, they represent an additional layer of economic benefit and may contribute to improved access for other individuals within the health system.

Summary of Economic Benefits

The findings presented in this section demonstrate that Victorian Men's Sheds generate meaningful economic benefits across multiple dimensions. While the primary role of Men's Sheds is social and community-oriented, their activities also contribute to local economies through direct expenditure, financial flows, volunteer labour and broader community-based contributions. These economic benefits are summarised in the infographic below.



Direct economic activity generated through operational expenditure and local procurement represents one significant pathway of contribution. In addition, fundraising, donations and grants support the ongoing delivery of activities and provide financial resources that circulate within local communities. Beyond these financial contributions, volunteer labour represents a substantial source of economic value, reflecting hundreds of thousands of hours of unpaid work that supports Shed operations and community engagement.



Across Victoria's network of
**approximately 315
Men's Sheds,**

these expenditures represent a
substantial collective economic contribution.

Direct economic activity is estimated to **exceed**

\$5 million annually

through operational spending and
local procurement.



Victorian Men's Sheds contribute an estimated
**\$16.3 million to \$36.6 million
annually**
in volunteer labour.



This is based on approximately **812,700**
volunteer hours per year across Victoria.



Equivalent to approximately **391 full-time jobs**
(based on 2,080 hours per year).



Even under the conservative valuation (\$20/hour),
volunteer contributions alone represent more
than **\$16 million** annually.

 Estimates are extrapolated across approximately 315 Victorian Men's Sheds
using median survey responses from Sheds that reported data.

Collectively, these findings highlight that the economic contribution of Men's Sheds extends beyond direct financial transactions. Sheds also generate economic and social benefits through cost savings and broader public outcomes by providing services that would otherwise require paid labour and by supporting preventative health, wellbeing and community engagement. Taken together, these dimensions show that Victorian Men's Sheds contribute to local economies not only through direct expenditure, but also through the mobilisation of community resources, volunteer effort and preventative social value. As such, their economic

contribution should be understood as part of a broader framework that encompasses both measurable financial activity and less tangible, but equally important, forms of community value.

Limitations

This report seeks to provide a comprehensive assessment of the contribution of Men's Sheds across Victoria. However, a few limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Although all Victorian Men's Sheds were invited to participate, not every Shed responded to the surveys. A total of 214 Sheds participated in 2026 Survey I and 149 in Survey II, representing a substantial proportion of the Victorian network but not its entirety. In addition, not all participating Sheds answered every survey question. Consequently, the sample size varies between analyses, and some findings are based on smaller numbers of responses. While median values were used where appropriate to reduce the influence of extreme values, the results should be interpreted as indicative of overall patterns rather than precise estimates for every Victorian Men's Shed.

The economic analysis focuses primarily on direct expenditure, volunteer labour, fundraising, and reported community activities. Although the report recognises broader public value, including avoided costs, preventative health benefits, and strengthened social capital, these longer-term impacts were not comprehensively quantified. As a result, the economic contribution presented in this report is likely to represent a conservative estimate of the overall value generated by Victorian Men's Sheds.

Conclusions

This report demonstrates that Victorian Men's Sheds make a substantial contribution to the health and wellbeing of individuals, the strength of local communities, and the Victorian economy. Although often recognised as places for practical activities and skill-sharing, the evidence presented throughout this report shows that their contribution extends far beyond the workshop. These many benefits are combined in the infographic below.



For members, Men's Sheds provide welcoming environments that foster social connection, meaningful participation, and a strong sense of belonging. Research shows that members experience positive wellbeing and quality of life, alongside lower levels of loneliness, social anxiety, and depression. Together, these findings highlight the important role that accessible, community-based initiatives can play in supporting health and wellbeing.

The benefits also extend well beyond individual members. Through volunteering, practical projects, partnerships, and community engagement, Men's Sheds strengthen local organisations, build community capacity, and create opportunities for participation across diverse groups. Many also serve as trusted community hubs where people can connect, learn new skills, contribute to their communities, and support one another, particularly in regional and rural areas.

The economic contribution of Men's Sheds is equally significant. Their value is reflected not only in direct expenditure, volunteer labour, fundraising, and community projects, but also in the avoided costs generated through practical services that would otherwise require paid resources. Importantly, many of the benefits created through improved wellbeing, stronger social connections, and increased community participation extend beyond traditional economic measures, representing broader public value for Victorian communities.

Altogether, these findings show that the true value of Men's Sheds lies not in any single outcome, but in the combination of benefits they generate. They improve health and wellbeing, strengthen community connections, build local capacity, and create economic value through volunteering, local spending, and practical community support. As governments continue to respond to the challenges of an ageing population, social isolation, mental health, and community resilience, Men's Sheds provide a proven, community-led model that complements formal services while delivering lasting benefits across Victoria.

Continued support for Men's Sheds should be understood as an investment not simply in community organisations, but in healthier men, happier families, stronger communities, and a more connected and resilient Victoria. The findings of this report demonstrate that Men's Sheds deliver substantial benefits across health, community and economic domains, highlighting the importance of sustained support to enable these impacts to continue and extend to more communities.

References

- Alomoto, W., Niñerola, A., & Pié, L. (2022). Social Impact Assessment: A Systematic Review of Literature. *Social Indicators Research*, 161(1), 225–250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02809-1>
- Ananthapavan, J., Moodie, M., Milat, A. J., & Carter, R. (2021). Systematic Review to Update ‘Value of a Statistical Life’ Estimates for Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(11), 6168. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18116168>
- Aoun, S. M., Keegan, O., Roberts, A., & Breen, L. J. (2020). The impact of bereavement support on wellbeing: a comparative study between Australia and Ireland. *Palliative Care and Social Practice*, 14, 2632352420935132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2632352420935132>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (n.d.). *Guide to understanding employee earnings and hours statistics*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/guide-understanding-employee-earnings-and-hours-statistics>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *National Health Survey, 2022*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/national-health-survey/latest-release>
- Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. (n.d.). *Men’s sheds*. <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/mens-sheds/about-mens-sheds>
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2025, November 20). *Rural and remote health*. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2026, May 12). *Social isolation and loneliness*. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). <https://www.aihw.gov.au/mental-health/topic-areas/social-isolation-and-loneliness>
- Australian Men's Shed Association. (2026). *Australian Men's Shed Association*. <https://mensshed.org/>
- Australian Men's Shed Association. (2021, March 15). *Calling all Shedders interested in 3D printers and CNC routers*. The Shed Online. <https://mensshed.org/the-shed-online/calling-all-shedders-interested-in-3d-printers-and-cnc-routers/>
- Australian Men's Shed Association. (2026). *Foothills Men's Shed Inc*. Retrieved June 12, 2026, from <https://mensshed.org/sheds/foothills-mens-shed-inc/>

- Barbagallo, M. S., Brito, S., & Porter, J. E. (2023). Australian Men's Sheds and Their Role in the Health and Wellbeing of Men: A Systematic Review. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 2023, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/2613413>
- Boerner, K., Stokes, J., & Jansen, T. (2024). Widowhood and bereavement in late life. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 55, Article 101748. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101748>
- Bowman, W. (2009). The economic value of volunteers to nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 19(4), 491–506. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.233>
- Clarke, J. J., Haslam, S. A., Sharman, L. S., Guerrini, B., Holmes, K., Talbot, R., Wild, J., & McEvoy, P. M. (2025). Leading by Example: Identity Leadership and Mental Health in Men's Sheds Members. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 44(5), 815–824. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07334648241289020>
- Courtenay, W. H. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: a theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), 50(10), 1385–1401. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536\(99\)00390-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(99)00390-1)
- Field, A., & Field, A. (2019). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (5th edition.). Sage Publications.
- Foettinger, L., Albrecht, B. M., Altgeld, T., Gansefort, D., Recke, C., Stalling, I., & Bammann, K. (2022). The Role of Community-Based Men's Sheds in Health Promotion for Older Men: A Mixed-Methods Systematic Review. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 16(2), 15579883221084490. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15579883221084490>
- Frijters, P., Krekel, C., Sanchis, R., & Santini, Z. I. (2024). The WELLBY: a new measure of social value and progress. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), Article 736. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03229-5>
- Galdas, P. M., Cheater, F., & Marshall, P. (2005). [Rev. of *Men and health help-seeking behaviour: literature review*]. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 49(6), 616–623. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03331.x>
- Golding, B., Brown, M., Foley, A., Harvey, J., & Gleeson, L. (2007). *Men's sheds in Australia: Learning through community contexts*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research. <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/mens-sheds-in-australia-learning-through-community-contexts>
- Golding, B., Foley, A., & Weadon, H. (2020). Community learning through adversity and disaster : An Australian case study of rural adaptation and resilience beyond paid work. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 60(3), 515–537.

- Guerrini, B., Clarke, J. J., Haslam, S. A., Sharman, L. S., Holmes, K., Wild, J., Talbot, R., Ashley, J., & McEvoy, P. M. (2026). Social Identification as a Predictor of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Could Men's Sheds Be a Potential "Social Cure" for Older Men? *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 2026(1). <https://doi.org/10.1155/hsc/5575511>
- Guerrini, B., Clarke, J. J., Smith, B. J., McVeigh, J. A., Holmes, K., Wild, J., Talbot, R., Ashley, J., & McEvoy, P. M. (2025). The impacts of engagement in men's sheds on incidental physical activity and wellbeing outcomes. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 36(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.958>
- Hansji, N. L., Wilson, N. J., & Cordier, R. (2015). Men's Sheds: enabling environments for Australian men living with and without long-term disabilities. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 23(3), 272–281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12140>
- Haslam, C., Jetten, J., Cruwys, T., Dingle, G. A., & Haslam, S. A. (2019). *The new psychology of health : unlocking the social cure*. Routledge.
- Holmes, K., Clarke, J., Guerrini, B., Wild, J., Ashley, J., Talbot, R., & McEvoy, P. (2025). What Makes a Thriving Mutual-Aid Membership Association? The Case of Men's Sheds. *Voluntas (Manchester, England)*, 36(5), 802–813. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-025-00767-7>
- Jacobson, I., Rydberg, K., Swendener, A., MacDougall, H., & Henning-Smith, C. (2025). The relationship between low social/emotional support and health care affordability among rural and urban residents. *The Journal of Rural Health*, 41(2), e70034-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jrh.70034>
- Kelly, D., & Steiner, A. (2021). The impact of community Men's Sheds on the physical health of their users. *Health & Place*, 71, Article 102649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2021.102649>
- Kelly, D., Steiner, A., Mason, H., & Teasdale, S. (2019). Men's Sheds: A conceptual exploration of the causal pathways for health and well-being. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 27(5), 1147–1157. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12765>
- Kelly, D., Steiner, A., Mason, H., & Teasdale, S. (2021). Men's sheds as an alternative healthcare route? A qualitative study of the impact of Men's sheds on user's health improvement behaviours. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), Article 553. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10585-3>
- Kenny, L., Doherty, N., Doherty, A. S., Lawlor, B., O'Sullivan, R., & Leavey, G. (2025). The relationship between retirement, social isolation and loneliness: A longitudinal analysis using the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing. *BMC Public Health*, 25(1), Article 3733. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-24472-8>

- Klein, E. M., Zenger, M., Tibubos, A. N., Ernst, M., Reiner, I., Schmalbach, B., Brähler, E., & Beutel, M. E. (2021). Loneliness and its relation to mental health in the general population: Validation and norm values of a brief measure. *Journal of Affective Disorders Reports*, 4, Article 100120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadr.2021.100120>
- McEvoy, P., Clarke, J., & Holmes, K. (2023a). *What makes a thriving shed? Men's Sheds of WA study final report*. Curtin University.
- McEvoy, P. M., Holmes, K., Smith, B. J., Bullen, J., Chiu, V. W., Wild, J., Ashley, J., & Talbot, R. (2023b). Pathways from Men's Shed engagement to wellbeing, health-related quality of life, and lower loneliness. *Health Promotion International*, 38(4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daad084>
- Merollini, K. M. D., Nabukalu, D., Flynn, T., Linn, J., Davis, C., & Rosenberg, J. (2024). Feasibility and economic benefits of community-based palliative care in regional Australia: A case study with cost analysis. *Progress in Palliative Care*, 32(4), 257–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09699260.2024.2374604>
- National Council of Nonprofits. (n.d.). *Economic impact of nonprofits*. National Council of Nonprofits. <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/about-americas-nonprofits/economic-impact-nonprofits>
- Nelson, H. J., Munns, A., Angus, B., Arbuckle, E., & Burns, S. K. (2025). Facilitators and barriers of accessing community health services for children in the early years: An Australian qualitative study. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 81, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedn.2025.01.009>
- Nillumbik Shire Council. (n.d.). *Hurstbridge Community Shed*. <https://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Community/Diversity-and-inclusion/Gender-equity/16-Days-of-Activism-Against-Gender-Based-Violence/Hurstbridge-Community-Shed>
- Nurmi, M. A., Mackenzie, C. S., Roger, K., Reynolds, K., & Urquhart, J. (2018). Older men's perceptions of the need for and access to male-focused community programmes such as Men's Sheds. *Ageing & Society*, 38(4), 794-816. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X16001331>
- Office of Impact Analysis. (2026). *Value of statistical life guidance note*. Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-02/value-statistical-life-guidance-note.pdf>
- Rathi, D., M. Given, L., & Forcier, E. (2014). Interorganisational partnerships and knowledge sharing: the perspective of non-profit organisations (NPOs). *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 18(5), 867–885. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-06-2014-0256>

- Robinson, J. D. (2019). *Working well together: The roles of rural men's sheds in the lives of their members and the life of their local communities* (Master's thesis, Massey University). Massey University Research Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/10179/15851>
- Salamon, L. M., Sokolowski, S. W., & List, R. (2003). *Global civil society: An overview*. Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, Institute for Policy Studies, The Johns Hopkins University.
- Seligman, M. (2018). PERMA and the building blocks of well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(4), 333–335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1437466>
- Stahl, S. T., & Schulz, R. (2014). Changes in routine health behaviors following late-life bereavement: A systematic review. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 37(4), 736–755. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-013-9524-7>
- Steffens, N. K., Cruwys, T., Haslam, C., Jetten, J., & Haslam, S. A. (2016). Social group memberships in retirement are associated with reduced risk of premature death: evidence from a longitudinal cohort study. *BMJ Open*, 6(2), e010164. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010164>
- Stötzer, S., & Kaltenbrunner, K. (2024). In-kind donations – peculiarities and challenges of product philanthropy. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 21(2), 395–414. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-023-00388-0>
- Tomlin, C. (2024). *Men and care: Capturing the experiences of informal male carers using photo-elicitation, and the impact of caring on mental wellbeing and masculinity* (Doctoral thesis, Edge Hill University).
- Victorian Government. (2026, April 30). *Grants – understanding in-kind contributions*. Victorian Government. <https://www.vic.gov.au/grants-understanding-kind-contributions> <https://doi.org/10.1159/000376585>
- Victorian Men's Shed Association. (2026). *Innovation at Wyndham Vale Men's Shed*. <https://www.vmsa.org.au/innovation-at-wyndham-vale-mens-shed/>
- Watson, P., Wilson, J., Thilmany, D. D., & Winter, S. (2007). Determining Economic Contributions and Impacts: What is the difference and why do we care? *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy*, 37(2). <https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.132414>
- Wilson, N. J., & Cordier, R. (2013). A narrative review of Men's Sheds literature: reducing social isolation and promoting men's health and well-being. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 21(5), 451–463. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12019>

