



Karrinyup Community Mens Shed Project: *Building inclusion and acceptance.*

Introduction

The Karrinyup Community Mens Shed (KCMS) aims to support men to engage in activities in a communal shed space to promote their overall wellbeing and social connections. This includes inclusion and acceptance of men from all walks of life and backgrounds, in keeping with the Australian Mens Shed Association principles.

The KCMS identified that there was a gap in their capacity to support people with additional needs. Therefore, a funding grant from not for profit organisation Connect Groups, was received to engage the services of an Occupational Therapist (OT) to work with KCMS members. The broad objective was to build the capacity of the KCMS to support the requirements of current and future members with additional needs in order to create a more inclusive experience for men from all backgrounds and abilities. Members involved in this process were anticipated to gain a sense of satisfaction.



Project goals

The goal of the project was to:

1. Improve the experience of current KCMS members with additional needs at the shed.
2. Build KCMS members capacity to support integration of future members with additional needs into the KCMS.
3. Provide a sense of achievement for the broader KCMS members through their contribution to the above two goals.

Project objectives

The progress with the objectives was slowed as some additional steps were required to address social restrictions associated with Covid19. This situation highlighted additional gaps in the KCMS accessibility.

An additional objective and steps were required to create communication amongst members whilst the KCMS was physically closed.

1. Educate KCMS members to understand the additional needs of others including those with less visible special needs.
2. Ensure that no individual is isolated and drawn attention to due to their unique needs.
3. Improve the engagement and experience of members with additional needs in appropriate activities.
4. Design the KCMS workspace and activities to better fit with members needs.
5. Establish a process of ongoing review and improvement within the KCMS to maintain our commitment to better outcomes for all members.
6. Ensure members are connected irrespective of their physical capacity to attend the shed.



Assessment method



- Introduction to current processes at KCMS.
- Focus groups with members.
- Informal interviews with members.
- Review of members profiles.
- Written survey.
- Analysis of membership profile data.

Findings

The findings are based on members feedback gathered through interviews, groups discussions and survey feedback. Members identified the presence in the wider community issues such as unresolved grief, anxiety, PTSD, diminished esteem, fear of incapacity and death, anger management, depression, age/ trauma related impairments, substance dependency and self-harm. OT observations were used to validate all information. The overall findings have been divided into some key areas and listed below.



Members profile and attendance:

- There is 80 members with 35 of these active and attending once or more each week, 25 on a fortnightly basis, 15 approximately monthly and 5 currently not actively involved.
- There are members of all ages with the largest attendees being 70 to 80 years old followed closely by 60 to 90 years old.
- Professionals make up the bulk of the demographic.
- There is a small waitlist to join.

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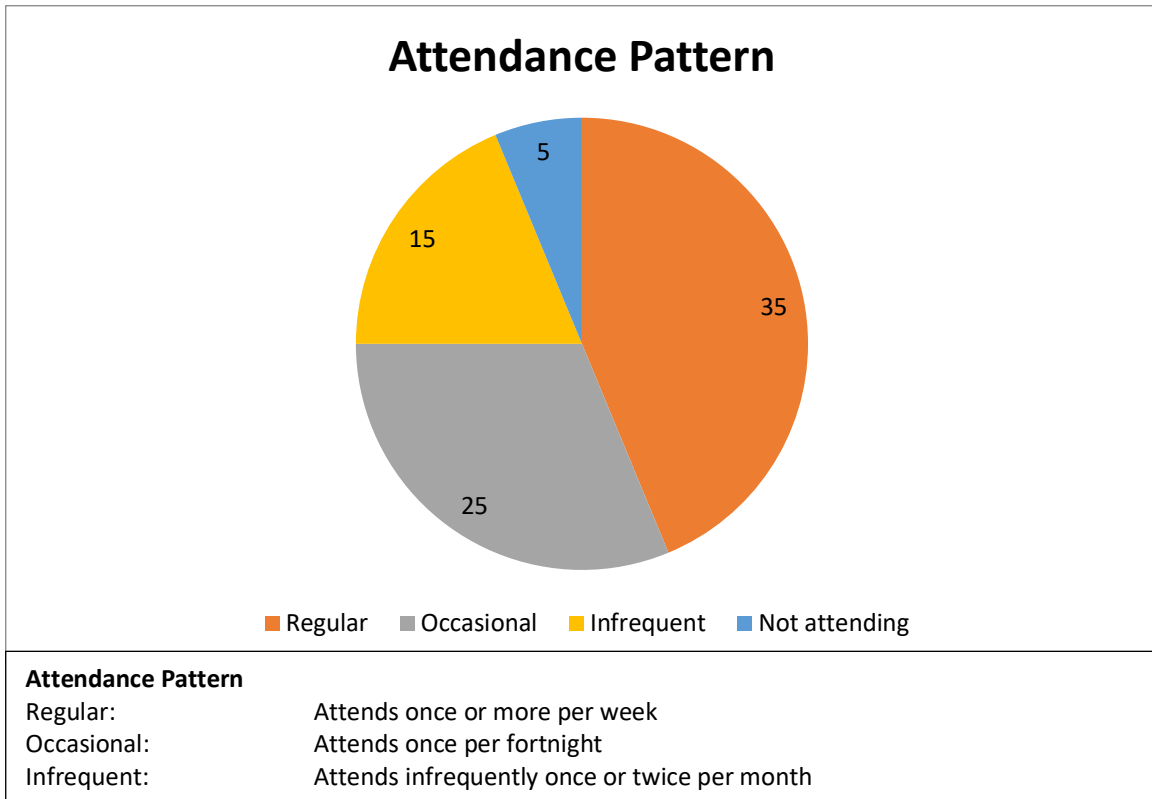
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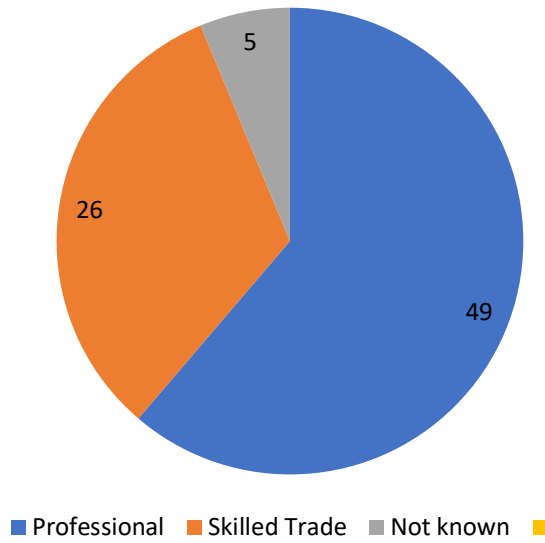
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- There is no specific process for contacting members who do not attend. It can be challenging to contact people who cease attending.
- It is unclear as to why some members join and stop attending or never commence.
- There are some highly skilled woodworkers in the group.
- A large majority of members have a partner at home.
- Members included their interests as woodworking, photography, painting, bonsai, IT, cooking, metalworking, crafts, model making, car maintenance, and games.



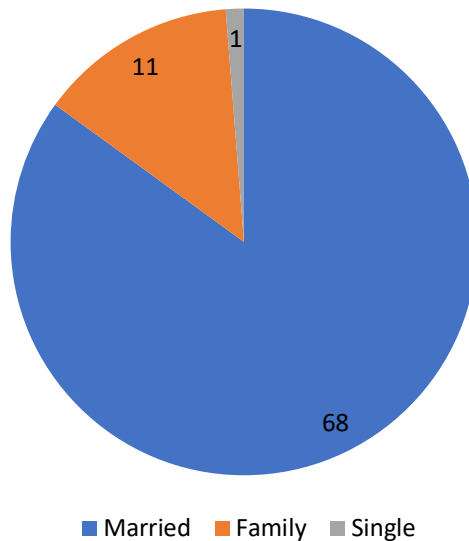
Occupational Background



Occupational Backgrounds

Professional: Managerial, professionally qualified, business proprietors, educators
Skilled Trades: Technically qualified, registered trades, experienced craftsmen
Not known: No occupation recorded

Family Support



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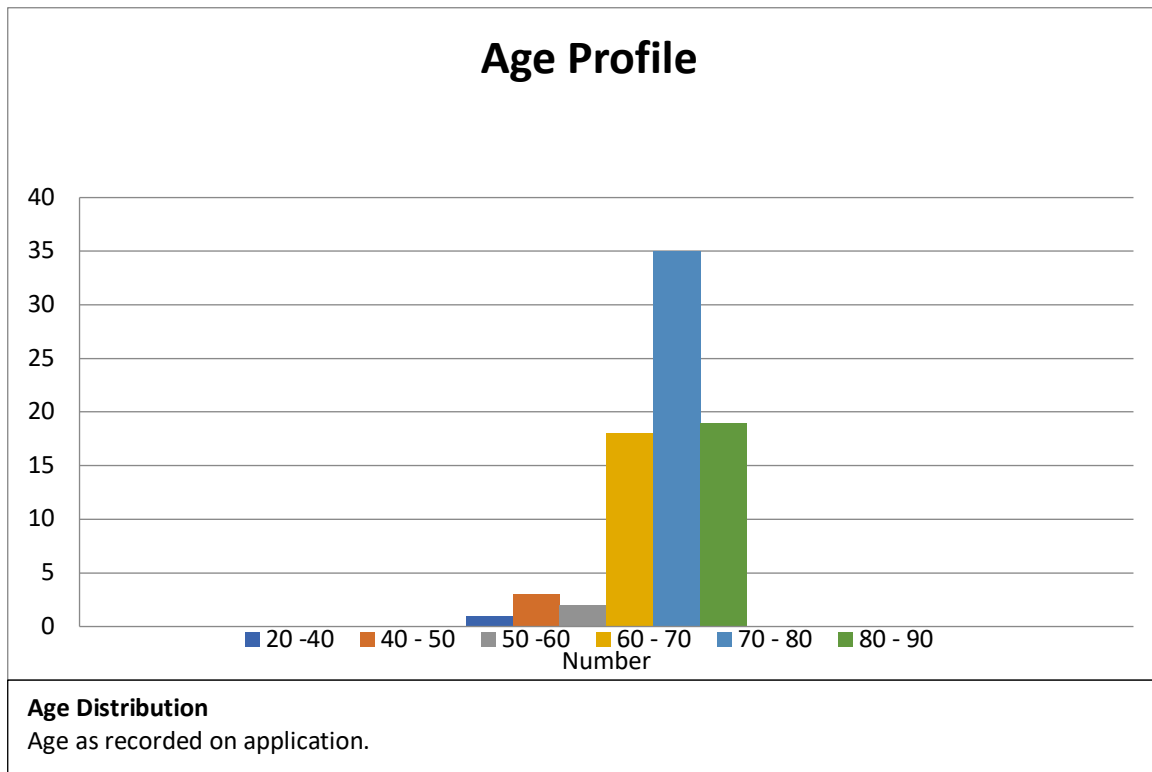
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Members perceived benefits of attending:

- Making friends.
- Socialising.
- Getting out of the house.
- Learning new skills.
- Helping:
 - Others learn new skills.
 - Others participate who require additional support.
 - Make products for the KCMS to sell.
 - Support other members emotionally.

Culture:

- There are a few key members who do a majority of the jobs required to keep the shed running.
- Members have many ideas to continue to grow and improve the venue.
- There is currently a range of activities offered and offered via word of mouth:
 - Wood working
 - Gardening
 - Teaching phone and computer skills
 - Selling wooden products at the markets
 - Model making
 - Book exchange
 - Morning tea

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- Some members are keen to expand the variety of activities.
- A few members who teach those without skills.
- All members at the KCMS enjoy woodwork.
- KCMS appears to be known as a woodworking venue for retired men. There is no active promotion with presence at the markets the main form of advertising. The general Mens Shed website also has pictures supporting this impression.
- The current culture and values of this Mens Shed is maintained by a core smaller group of members and not regularly discussed nor defined.
- Morning tea is consistently adhered to by all and is a highly valued time for members.
- Men attending are enjoying their time and do feel there are not any problems at the shed.
- There is a mismatch between members feeling they are accepting and inclusive of others and others perceived experience of support by others.
- All contact between members is in person at the KCMS.
- A few individuals at KCMS organically have volunteered their time to assist people who need support. The balance of time between the enjoyment they gain from supporting others and being able to work on their own projects is challenging.
- Criteria for attending is broad and inclusive.
- The gender of the support worker has not been viewed as a barrier to members.
- Members are not sure on how to include people who don't talk during morning tea but have begun to trial some ideas to promote contribution to the conversation.
- There are many leisure activities and tasks to keep the shed running that have evolved over time. There is no inventory of these tasks.
- There are varying opinions as to the need for improving inclusiveness.

Physical space:

- The toilets can be wheelchair accessible but currently used for storage.
- Members view the space as crowded.
- Many of the wood working machinery requires you to stand.
- There is a general consensus amongst members that there is insufficient space.
- There is a new demountable building to be added soon.
- The physical premises is tight with necessary equipment and noisy.



- Bench spaces are for standing at to complete woodwork or other hobbies. A table is set up outside for those who cannot stand to work on their project.

Access:

- The KCMS is hard to find online and not listed on the Mens Sheds website.
- The shed is open Monday-Friday 8:30-12:30
- There are costs involved to join and attend.
- There is a membership form to complete when joining.
- Members must arrange their own transport to and from the Shed.
- Support workers engagement and support of the person they are attending with varies. None of the support workers have had wood working skills.
- There is currently an informal introduction and safety instructions all new members must do.
- All interaction between members occurs at the shed.
- There is a KCMS newsletter emailed out to members occasionally.

Intervention

Following initial assessment, the process for providing KCMS members with the tools to improve inclusiveness were temporarily derailed due to the physical closure of the Shed as part of Covid19 social-distancing laws. The planned strategies required a way to re-connect the members without physical attendance at the shed. To overcome this, a meeting was held to assist some of the members to



access an online video conferencing platform. Culture and inclusiveness were topics of discussion pertaining to the Mens Shed as well as problem solving how to connect members and reduced social isolation. These men in turn trained up other men so a larger meeting of 25 members was then possible. This second meeting was used to further discuss KCMS culture and inclusiveness. The men were also provided with some simple education pertaining to communication skills when there is a physical, cognitive or psychological barrier. Some simple strategies to communicate with others irrespective of their abilities was also provided. The men then problem solved a plan for remaining connected online with a working party self-nominating for this role. A working party for exploring implementation of strategies to increase inclusiveness within the KCMS was also created. A list of strategies has been compiled by OT this group to consider and implement. These strategies are listed in Appendix 1 and are based on the feedback and suggestions made by members during the information gathering process. The KCMS were able to identify ways to

maintain current culture, improve inclusiveness and even build on the strengths of this shed.

Evaluation:

At the time of writing this report the KCMS is still closed due to Covid19. What has been achieved is as follows:

- There are plans for additional funding grants to continue with implementing strategies.
- 25 KCMS members have achieved connecting using a video conferencing platform with capacity for this to re-occur in this and other online methods. There is potential for this to be incorporated into practice long term.
- Over 30% of members have been involved in discussions surrounding the Men's Sheds principles of inclusiveness and acceptance and how it is reflected at the KCMS.
- There is a team of three members who have been identified as leaders for further developing IT methods to connect members outside of the physical shed premises.
- There is a team of four members who have volunteered to lead the plans to improve inclusiveness within the shed.
- There is a list of potential strategies developed by OT for KCMS leaders to utilise.
- 25 members have commenced education on basic strategies to improve communication with others irrespective of their individual needs. These communication methods aim to improve the sense of connection between all KCMS current and future members.

Summary:



The KCMS is made up of a relatively homogenous group of men who are proud of their efforts to date to create this Shed and a culture that welcomes and helps each other. The men are enjoying the physical, cognitive and psychological stimulation. Being part of this community has given them a sense of purpose by contributing to others through a range of ways. There are many ways to support this group to sustain this culture and experience. There are also many ways to further enhance the experience for current and future members. A list of strategies has been developed and a group of men to lead implementation has been established to increase inclusiveness and accessibility at the KCMS.

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Appendix 1

Strategies: ***KCMS building inclusion and acceptance.***

There is potential to increase the diversity of members, strengthen the culture of inclusiveness, and then sustain this growth long term through:

- Improving community knowledge of the Shed.
- Broadening and defining the variety of activities on offer.
- Improving accessibility to participation.
- Ensuring a well-defined culture and Mission with practical measures in place to achieve and preserve the culture.

The following strategies are ideas for a core group of leaders within the group can consider and develop an action plan for. The strategies come from a combination of members feedback and OT observations. The members provided feedback regarding the strengths of the shed, and their suggestions on areas for further growth.

Processes

1. Sharing members perceived benefits of the KCMS with the rest of the members in order to foster and remind everyone of the culture. Eg a poster listing the benefits expressed by others. Developing a KCMS mission statement.
2. Including a general review of the culture at the AGM to ensure the culture of inclusiveness is maintained. Include key criteria to measure inclusiveness such as physical accessibility, members demographics and attendance rates and disengagement.
3. Build on and maintain a group of leaders to foster and promote inclusiveness.
4. Broaden the opportunity for contribution and awareness of potential activities available. This may include a formalised list/menu of detailed opportunities for members and potential members to choose from including:
 - a. Key duties and roles completed by members to keep the place running that could be further shared to provide more purpose and inclusion for others and greater sustainability. Eg open up, turn on Urn, set up morning tea, make calls, check wood supply, clean up, order stock.
 - b. Activities available to do including detailed breakdown within each activity. Eg woodworking involves, making products, helping others make products, collecting and delivering items, teaching machine use, cleaning.
5. Consider advertising methods, content and target market. There is potential to increase diversity of members and community knowledge of the shed. Eg

- marketing to DVA, support workers, OTs, local community events and Facebook groups and advertising for custom orders from the general public.
6. Consider a car pooling service that could be set up to help those without transport to attend the Mens Shed.
 7. Clearly outline the safety requirements for potential members and perhaps include this in the membership form.
 8. Formalise the welcome introduction and safety instructions for all new members to include:
 - a. Expectations about culture and practical translation.
 - b. Minimum behaviour requirements.
 - c. Expectations of support worker engagement and support.
 - d. Possible activities and support duties available.
 - e. Specific safety that needs to be adhered to.
 9. Specifically inviting/encouraging members with specific woodworking skills to be of assistance to others. This may include the skilled woodworkers offering others members assisting rather than others having to ask for assistance. There may be opportunity to create a more formalised structure around members having set days they are proactively offering assistance to others.
 10. OT lead education to:
 - a. Broaden members understanding of peoples' challenges and presentations.
 - b. Increase knowledge in how to communicate and engage with someone of any background or level of ability.
 - c. Development of more discussion topics for morning tea.
 - d. Task analysis to learn how to breakdown a project into smaller tasks that can be shared with others.
 11. Safety criteria for attendance:
 - a. Required minimum behaviours.
 - b. Hygiene policy.
 12. Formal process for following up if a member stops attending, that includes:
 - a. How often and timing to attempt contact.
 - b. Methods of contact (email, phone, text message).
 - c. Who is allocated to this role.
 - d. Recording reasons for ceasing attendance.
 - e. Method to monitor, reflect and discuss changes based on feedback.
 13. Explore the interest amongst members to be employed as support workers on certain days to assist other members.

Activities

14. Developing conversation topics for morning tea to elicit conversation.
15. Consider revenue methods other than markets as a means of increasing the tangible external value of projects. Eg community and individual orders.
16. Link with local government for potential involvement in community-based building projects. Eg play equipment or garden development.
17. Increase modalities to maintain connections if not physically able to attend or in between visits to the shed:

- a. Planning phase of projects using IT to stay connected. Eg Use of Zoom, WhatsApp or Facebook chat groups and video calls.
 - b. General chat group for sharing projects and inspiration.
 - c. Consider where those stuck at home could join in with the members Eg a morning tea video call.
 - d. Formal process to set up and teach all members how to use the chosen platform.
18. Creation of simple woodworking activities with instructions for beginners to follow that even a support worker with no skills could follow. Eg making a chopping board.
 19. Consider use of hand tools for those not confident or safe with machinery.
 20. Development of group projects that a number of members can be involved in together. Each member completes a specific step to increase connections and access to contributing in simple ways. For example building dog kennels or kids mud kitchens to sell.
 21. Formalise feedback of outcome of projects Eg how much money was raised and what was sold or achieved.
 22. Develop a list of projects to improve the KCMS and create working parties to do the projects. They should be broken down into many smaller tasks so that people of all abilities and skill sets could be involved. Eg creation of garden between current Shed and new building.
 23. Explore grant options for a paid teacher in wood working skills development of support workers and members. Other skills could also be explored such as cooking. Current members could also be involved in taking on a teaching role in dedicated education sessions.
 24. Increase variety of activities available including regular access to specific activities as well as changing events. Eg cooking, Bocce, simple card games.

Access

25. Clear the toilets of stored items.
26. Consider rearranging the space. Making the dining table a dual-purpose table for members to also sit at for woodworking. Two table heights will allow members to sit in a chair or a wheelchair.
27. Re-evaluate what is essential equipment and what can be relocated to the planned new demountable. Consider how the current library and model room could be incorporated into the new space to allow for more room in current area.
28. Ensuring there remains an outdoor area and the new demountable is a quieter area free from noisy tools.
29. Strategies to link people between the two buildings. Eg Morning tea in the new building.

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18/05/2020

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