

The Men's Shed Movement

A critical snap shot and the Scottish context in 2015

By

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With special thanks to
Professor Barry Golding



**SCOTTISH
MEN'S SHEDS
ASSOCIATION**

Faculty of Education and Arts, Federation University Australia,
Patron Australian Men's Sheds Association
for some of the information in this presentation and for being an
inspiration and mentor to me in this important work.

First principal challenge

- 1. *'... to ensure the greatest number of older people maintain the best possible mental capital, and so preserve their independence and wellbeing, both for their own benefit, and also to minimise their need for support.'* (Kirkwood, Bond May *et al.* 'Mental capital and wellbeing through life', in Cooper *et al.* 2010, *Mental capital and wellbeing*, p.7.

Second principal challenge

- 2. *'... to ensure that the considerable resource which older people offer ... is recognised and valued by society, and that they have the opportunity to realise the maximum benefit from that, both for themselves and society.'*

(Kirkwood, Bond May *et al.* 'Mental capital and wellbeing through life', in Cooper *et al.* 2010, *Mental capital and wellbeing*, p.8.

The timeliness of men's sheds

- Connect older individuals with a lifetime of skills through the creation of social networks.
- Encourage men's ability to transform themselves, other men and the community.
- Tick most of the WHO Social Determinants of Health.
- Create a 'third place' beyond discussions about work and productivity
- Link the need for lifelong and lifewide learning and wellbeing beyond paid work
- Address widespread population ageing through grassroots action at the level of community.
- See B. Golding, 'Men's Sheds: A new movement for change', Chapter 8 in *Men learning through life*, NIACE (2014)

The Men's Shed Movement

The Company of Men

- Published by [Aging & Society, a book imprint by Common Ground Publishing](#)



*Edited by Prof Barry Golding
Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Education and Arts, Federation
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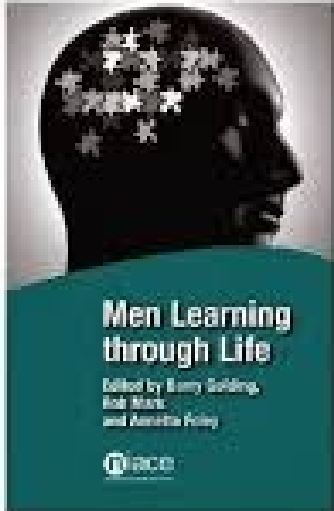
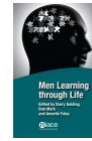
Barry has extensive research experience in all adult learning sectors. Barry is honorary patron of the Australian Men's Sheds Association and a board member of Adult Learning Australia

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- [Annette Foley](#), [Barry Golding](#), [Rob Mark](#)
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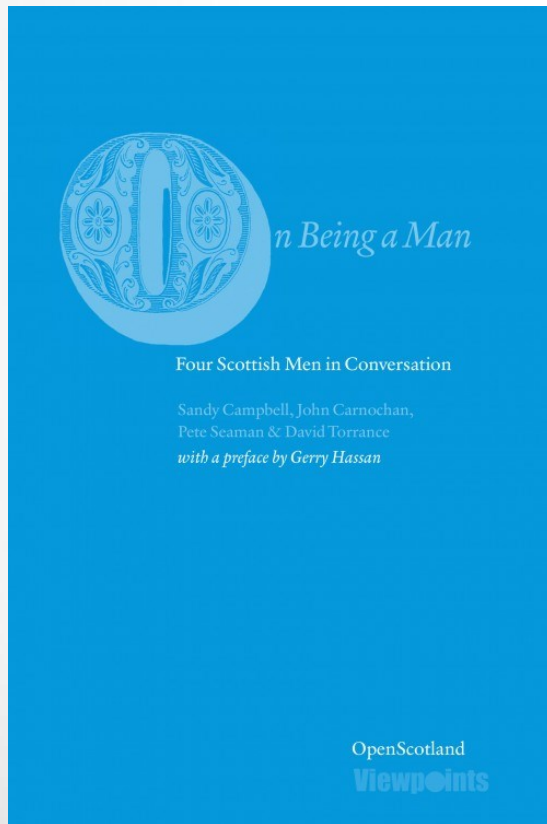
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What does 'masculinity' mean today?



By Sandy Campbell, John Carnochan,
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with a preface by Gerry Hassan

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Politics and Current Issues

The important basics:

- Sheds work because men enjoy gathering socially, regularly, voluntarily, happily, safely and do hand-on stuff together.
- *They work best when it's grassroots, local, by, for and about the local men and for the community.*
- Shedders are active and equal *participants*: not students, patients, clients or customers.
- *They are not patronizing: men are not assumed to have 'a deficit' or be seen as the problem.*
- They should be inclusive and welcoming of *all men*.
- *Not naming the shed activity provides freedom to do & talk about important other stuff (including health).*
- The outcomes are typically diverse and powerful.
- **Men bring and build on what they can do, not what they can't.**

What do 'professionals' see in a shed? A place for:

- men's health (health worker)
- masculinities (gender academic)
- learning (educator)
- counseling about behaviour (psychologist)
- retiring and ageing (a gerontologist)
- doing stuff (occupational therapist)
- men to get out of the house (a sociologist)
- social engagement & connection (community services)
- tackling substance abuse (drug worker)
- research (academic)
- wooing votes (politicians)
- **Men's lives (and needs) beyond paid work are diverse & do not fit into one, neat, academic box.**

Men's sheds have tended to thrive in:

- Post-industrial suburban areas
- Rural and regional areas (where farmers have moved to town or where ex-tradesmen are concentrated)
- Areas hit by crisis & change (with fire, drought, flood, earthquake, and lower socio-economic status)
- Areas where the proportion of older men 'beyond paid work' (unemployed, out of the workforce, retired) is higher than average.
- These are the areas and men service providers and governments have difficulty reaching.

What do men learn in sheds?

- Hands-on skills through practical, productive activity.
- The positive value of leisure activity & friendships with other men.
- Importance of health, fitness, relationships, identities as men & emotional well being.
- Coping with changes associated with unemployment, separation, ageing, disability & retirement.
- To develop, share & enjoy lives & identities beyond work & home.

**Shed practice informs health educators by
identifying factors that 'put men off' formal
services even if they are unwell & out of work:**

- previous negative experiences of schooling & service provision (sometimes gendered)
- a dislike of formal learning & literacies
- limited access to education, training & health services that match men's preferred ways of learning
- limited access to computers & internet
- age discrimination in employment & training
- sickness, disability, caring & family roles.

Men's sheds in community settings ...

1. tend not to patronize participants as clients, customers, students or patients
2. do not describe the activity or the participants in the shed (other than being men). They provide places for men to exercise agency over the shed activity as well as their lives.
3. are radical in that they promote holistic learning (without the need for teachers, curriculum, teaching & assessment) and health (without health workers).
4. are safe, health and wellbeing-promoting spaces deliberately inclusive of *all* men.
5. have been particularly appealing for older men not in paid work (median age of Australian shedders 70 years).
6. presently in Ireland a large appeal is also to younger men who are out of work – 20 to 35 years old.



- [resources/research/research-projects/research-projects/men-s-sheds-in-australia](#)
- The evaluation will identify, through qualitative and quantitative means to what degree Men's Sheds:
 1. help men regain a sense of purpose in life
 2. enhance self-esteem
 3. decrease social isolation
 4. facilitate friendship and companionship
 5. provide an environment conducive to learning
 6. improve physical health
 7. increase awareness of depression and anxiety
 8. reduce stigma of depression and anxiety
 9. increase help-seeking for depression and anxiety
 10. increase help-seeking for other health issues.

Beyond Blue -Outcomes

- Men's Sheds across Australia vary in their focus, resources, programs and membership base. However, while Men's Sheds vary, they are all thought to offer social, emotional and other benefits to men who participate in them. It is thought that the benefits of men being involved in sheds are that they:
 - help men regain a sense of purpose in life
 - enhance self-esteem
 - decrease social isolation
 - facilitate friendship and companionship
 - provide an environment conducive to men's learning.

Outcomes – cont.

- The research highlighted a number of health benefits for ‘shedders’ (i.e. Men who are members of a shed) compared to ‘non-shedders’. Shedders scored higher on areas such as:
 - physical functioning and health
 - general health
 - energy levels.
- Shedders also demonstrated an improvement in awareness of mental health issues like depression and anxiety through shed membership.

Thank You

Jason Schroeder

Founder and Chairman



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