

# West Gippsland Men's Shed Cluster



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## Introduction

**Depression is the most common psychiatric condition within Australia, with 20 percent of the population experiencing symptoms during their lifetime.**

**Men's Sheds** have become increasingly popular throughout Australia during recent years, with **around 600 sheds nationally, and over 15 locally in and around Cardinia Shire and West Gippsland**. Men's Sheds provide a safe, supportive environment for men of all ages and abilities to interact with one another and participate in activities. Men's Sheds provide an opportunity to socialise which is proving effective in reducing mental health problems, and encouraging good health.

The West Gippsland Men's Shed Cluster is a group comprising leaders and members of Men's Sheds in West Gippsland around Cardinia Shire and further afield. The cluster was formed in September 2009 to provide a place where ideas, experiences and resources can be shared between sheds.

**Men's Shed Clusters have become more popular, as a side initiative to support and enhance Men's Sheds.**

The achievements of the West Gippsland Cluster include shared training opportunities, a joint publicity brochure for sheds in the catchment, shared activities and excursions, and day to day operational issues such as OH&S.

## Aim

**Statement of Purpose:** The West Gippsland Men's Shed Cluster aims to support the evolving and established Men's programs in the district by providing opportunities to share and support each other at a local and practical level.



## Method

The Cluster has been meeting since September 2009 and is comprised of paid and unpaid coordinators and member representatives of these Sheds. The West Gippsland Cluster is one of only three clusters in Victoria. Meeting on a quarterly basis, the cluster offers member sheds the opportunity to address common challenges in a consistent and coordinated manner, reduce duplication and provide the opportunity for bulk purchasing.



The West Gippsland Men's Shed Cluster can report a number of positive outcomes. The cluster facilitated mental health and occupational health training for the participating sheds.

## Results

A common publicity brochure has been produced and is used to promote all the cluster members, allowing much broader publicity. Joint activities and excursions have been very popular culminating in our "Spanner in the Works" health checks across sheds during Men's Health Week. Leaders sharing resources such as OH&S policies has been an added bonus. A regular spot in the local newspaper highlights activities across the cluster. A fairly informal operating structure for the Cluster enables action with minimal administrative support, thus increasing the sustainability of this initiative. With two cluster partners taking a leadership role, the effort involved is considerably reduced, therefore also increasing sustainability.

### West Gippsland Men's Shed Cluster Sheds and their contacts:

- **Bunyip Men's Shed** Frank Hoff Ph 5629 6096 [ceo@hillviewbunyip.org.au](mailto:ceo@hillviewbunyip.org.au)
- **Corinella District Men's Shed & Woodies Group** Kevin Chambers Ph 0418127748 [kevcham4@bigpond.com](mailto:kevcham4@bigpond.com)
- **Green Shed Emerald** Mike Allery Ph 5968 2241 [mikeallery@westnet.com.au](mailto:mikeallery@westnet.com.au)
- **Hills Men's Shed (Cockatoo)**  
Owen Deppeler Ph 59689678 [owendep1@bigpond.com](mailto:owendep1@bigpond.com)
- **Men's Shed Junction Village (Cranbourne)** Les Smith ph 59954245 [botanicgardensreception@aveolivewell.com.au](mailto:botanicgardensreception@aveolivewell.com.au)
- **Keysman Mens Shed (keysborough)** John Schwarzman Ph 0407 095 161 [schwjr@gmail.com](mailto:schwjr@gmail.com)
- **Koo Wee Rup Men's Shed**  
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- **Venus Bay Men's Shed** Don Kennedy  
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## Conclusion

Men's Sheds within West Gippsland have effectively responded to the needs of men in the local area. Whilst the overarching intention of the Sheds is to improve mental health by increasing social connectedness, the West Gippsland Men's Shed Cluster has incorporated a variety of health messages for the overall health and wellbeing of participants. Thus, sheds can be seen to **represent value for the health dollars spent**.

The Shed Cluster has played an integral role within the success of the Men's Sheds through the provision of ongoing support which has effectively optimised the cohesion of the Sheds and enhanced sustainability. **Activities and opportunities have included training including mental well being training, shared resources and equipment, combined activities and ongoing support to shed leaders.**

Cooperation, networking and joint initiatives based around our participating Sheds needs, forms the basis for sustainable action for our network. Our informality and willingness to share and cooperate will ensure a positive future.

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