

An Analysis of Men's Needs

In the Moreton Bay Region of Sth East Queensland

For the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre based at Lawnton.

As Part of the Pine Rivers, Redcliffe and Caboolture Family and
Community Consortium

“Thinking regional, staying local”

Conducted by Ric Colclough

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The Greek philosopher Diogenes [412BC-323BC] when asked why he would like to be buried face down, he replied with rancour and typical male logic, 'because in a little while everything will be turned upside down'.

Introduction

The feminist movement of the 1970's challenged the patriarchal western society and caused Men to look inward ... a journey few had the courage to undertake. The 'she'll be right mate' Aussie bloke sort of attitude remained unchallenged until Women vociferously expressed their need for emancipation and equality [Biddulph, 1993]. Riaz Hassan the author of 'Suicide Explained, The Australian Experience', suggested that under conditions of accelerated modernisation and women's liberation which have prevailed in Australia since the mid-1960s, it could be argued that the increasing pace of female emancipation has resulted in status loss for men. He further speculates that the high rates of unemployment since the 1960s and the relative status-loss experienced by men produced a social, psychological and economic climate which was conducive to an increase in the male rate of suicide. Men need to be valued and to have a sense of meaning especially when change can be seen as threatening to their personal security [Maslow, 1954]. The Australian Institute of Criminology [1996] in their study suggests that suicide is a product of the relationship between an individual and society. When one changes this forces change upon the other. Many social commentators argue that the disproportionate increase in male suicide reflects the inability of many Men to adjust to social change and to understand what it means to be male a contemporary male. [Donaldson & Tomsen, 2003, Healy, 2008,]. It is time for Men to get in touch with their needs [Rosenberg, 2005].

Men are responding to this new paradigm with varying degrees of success. Community based responses to Men's 'change' challenges are evident in the Moreton Bay region with what could be described as knee jerk reaction to what is perceived as Men's deficit behaviour. Anger management has become a flourishing industry. Yet during this era of change, contemporary research has shown that Men's real needs have been largely neglected. The Queensland Government is yet to have a policy on Men's Health. Stereotypical images abound in the media of Men as angry, perpetrators of violence, as ineffectual carers and incapable of fathering and as socially and emotionally inept. These sorts of portrayals do no justice to a large body of Men who are successful individuals, partners and parents.

A deficit model of male culture holds sway in the health system [King, Sweeney & Fletcher, 2008]. Surveys show men report a lack of respect from society and health services; men are crucially affected by negative social comparisons in a way women are not and men report particular and generalized loss-of-status - all may well be related to intolerable rates of male suicide [Tomsen & Donaldson, 2003]. Our challenge is to turn these negatives into positives; to head in the opposite direction, upstream; to build truly supportive environments where our community knows it's actually OK to be male. Some contemporary Men have about faced with trepidation and confusion and are in need of more support and acknowledgment of the challenges they face with change. The 'she'll be right' Aussie bloke sort of attitude is not working for them so the question remains what are Men needing to adjust to the contemporary social paradigm.

The Moreton Bay Regional Council [MBRC] comprises three districts, Caboolture in the north, Pine Rivers in the south and Redcliffe in the east and covers an area of 2011 square kilometers. The overall resident population in 2007 was 343,453, with the male population accounting for about one half of this at 157,000. The overall resident population is likely to be around 487,000 by 2026. This rapidly increasing population will challenge the Moreton Bay community.

[<http://www.moretonbay.qld.gov.au/council.aspx?id=4718>].

This analysis of Men's needs in the Moreton Bay region will throw some light on what is currently the situation for Men by providing, [a] a profile on those seeking services, [b] the services that are available to Men and those which are being accessed and, [c] recommendations to better fulfill their needs.

Initially key stakeholders in areas of Men's health and wellbeing throughout the Moreton Bay Region Council [MBRC] region were approached either by the researcher personally, by telephone or by email and a 'Men's Needs' questionnaire formulated for distribution. A partial list of stakeholders was provided by Sandy Dore, the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre Community Development Team Leader. This list provided the basis for a networking procedure to emerge and provided an opportunity to distribute the 'Men's Needs' questionnaire throughout the Moreton Bay region and for email and telephone communication to ensue.

[Stakeholders are defined as any individual, agency or group who have dealings with Men].

The canvassed stakeholders to this 'Men's Needs' analysis fell into five broad and generalised categories. They are;

1. Supportive groups of culturally diverse men who come together on a regular basis of their own volition and commonly called Men's groups. [with six groups responding to the questionnaire].
2. Federal and State funded agencies that predominately specialize in mental health and offer support to physically and psychologically disadvantaged and marginalised clients. [with six agencies responding to the questionnaire]
3. Federal and State funded agencies [one which specifically uses a reference to Men in its title] whose focus is particularly on family relationship counselling and offer educative programmes. [with four agencies and two individual counsellors responding to the questionnaire].
4. Professional Psychologists and Counsellors who counsel Men and couples and provide educative programmes as well as 'face to face' counselling across a diverse range of community members. [with five individuals responding to the questionnaire].
5. Neighbourhood Centres throughout the MBRC area that provide a wide range of community based initiatives from personal, family relationship to financial counselling and educative programmes aimed at empowering and enriching the lives of community members.

These five groups will be used as a framework in the analysis of the research findings.

Each group, agency or professional contacted was asked a number of questions and they were also asked if they were willing to respond to a formal questionnaire. The questions were asked with a view to ascertain;

1. Their perspectives on the needs of Men with whom they were in contact.
2. A profile of the Men who sought their support.
3. What services they were offering to Men.
4. Why Men accessed their service.
5. Their recommendations and comments which may improve service provision to Men in the Moreton Bay Regional Council area.

Each contact lead to further connections with many varied stakeholders within the Moreton Bay Regional Council area as well as those in New South Wales and Victoria.

The questionnaire was circulated amongst stakeholders who had a need to discuss the questionnaire with fellow workers. For example, team leaders wished to canvas information from workers prior to responding. Others had issues of confidentiality. Furthermore a number of interviewees had limited time and the questionnaire allowed them to respond at their leisure.

Sources of and Strategies for Gathering Information

Individual 'One to One' Meetings with;

Bobby Jones. Deception Bay Community Youth Association. Professional counsellor, Men's group facilitator, Redcliffe.

David Horstman. Pine Rivers Area. Professional counsellor, Men's programme facilitator. 'Dads Caring For Kids'. 'Lifestyle Management'.

Ross Adams. Margate. Professional counsellor, group facilitator. 'Couples and Relationship'. 'Anger Management' programmes

Sal Barbagello. Bald Hills. Men's Shed coordinator, Petrie .PRISM. Pine Rivers Initiative for Senior Men group. Community networker.

Matt McCracken. Caboolture and district. Better Together. Disabilities group facilitator. Men's networker.

Richard Baker. Caboolture. Family Support Worker and counsellor. Father's programme/workshop facilitator.

Chandra Easton. Caboolture and district. Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service. Community networker

Ian Watson. Murrumba Downs. Men's Shed coordinator. Community social activist. Men's group leader.
Craig Ackland. Moretonbay region. Learning and Development Consultant. Indigenous groupworker and workshop facilitator

Frank Brown. Caboolture. An Elder with the Barunga Widjung Justice Group.

Uncle Eric Caboolture. An Elder with the Barunga Widjung Justice Group.

Juliet Quinlan. Strathpine. Counsellor and coordinator of the Men's Information and Support Association [MISA].

Paul Baker. Strathpine. Counsellor MISA

Brendan McMahon. Woody Point. Psychologist, Private Practitioner.

Hedy. Strathpine. Counsellor. MISA

Jaryd Williams. Redcliffe. Redcliffe Area Youth Service, manager. Mentoring and facilitating programmes for young Men.

Gary Hunt. Sandgate. Bayside Community Options. Men's Group member Redcliffe.

Ken Wall and Gerhard Venter. Caboolture, Kilcoy, Bribie area. Mental Health Support Service, manager and team leader.

Phone Dialogue and Email Connections;

Sometimes workers preferred not to give full names due to the sensitive nature of the dialogue and they expressed their need for anonymity. In these cases *Christian names* only are listed.

Chris Van Reyk. Sandgate. Moreton Encouragement Network [MEN] member. Good Mates Meeting Good Mates, member.

Andrew Croxon. Pine Rivers. Redcliffe Men's Group member [MEN]

Mark Cotterill. Morayfield. Strengthening Family Services. TRACC Professional male support worker, group facilitator and foster care support.

Lee Heather. Pine Rivers. Counsellor and group facilitator. 'Men Acting Responsibly'.

Gary Foster. Brisbane. Spiritus Kinections Counsellor. Men and Sexual Abuse programme facilitator. Men's networker.

Shane Farmer. Brisbane. Spiritus Kinections. Men and Domestic Violence programme facilitator.

Max Whitsun. Mt Mellum. Men's Health and Well Being Association/Pathways Men's group facilitator and programme coordinator.

Paul. Caboolture. 'Men Supporting Men' Men's Group representative.

Andrew King. Melbourne/Sydney. Mensline. Programme coordinator 'Men and Sexual Abuse', and group work facilitator.

Sue Cleary, Margaret Hayter and Toni Wright. Strathpine. Counsellors with Strathpine Family Relationships Centre.

Liam Wishart. Strathpine. Team leader, Pine Rivers Health Centre.

Ken Parker. Queensland Department of Veteran Affairs. Community outreach, group facilitator and speaker.

John Smith. Pine Rivers Returned Serviceman's League. President and veteran's networker.

Ron Bayton. Pine Rivers. Development committee member of Men's Shed, Petrie.

Keith Mensline, dvconnect. Telephone counselling

Amy Caboolture. Caboolture Domestic Violence Service, support worker.

Gary Miller. Redcliffe. Sunshine Place. Manager and mental health support worker.

Cecilia Taylor. Bribie Island. Coordinator and counsellor, Bribie Island and District Neighbourhood Centre.

Meryl Caboolture. Counsellor, Centre Against Violence.

Jenny Oflus. Redcliffe. Coordinator, Redcliffe Community Association.

Heather Sandgate. Sandbag. Coordinator/counsellor Domestic Violence Service.

Cheryl Smith. Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre. Family Relationships Counsellor.

John Roberts. The Benevolent Society. N.S.W. Men's Resource Worker. MARS Programme

Gary Smith. Sunshine Place, Redcliffe Manager and support worker with mental health Programmes

Group Meetings;

Men's Shed Working Group. Petrie

Barunga Widjung Justice Group. Caboolture.

Caboolture and Redcliffe Multicultural Forum [CARM]. Caboolture.

Respondents to Questionnaire

Copy of 'Men's Needs Analysis' questionnaire in Addendum One.

Barunga Widjung Justice Group. Uncle Frank and Uncle Eric.

Deadlee Maardars Men's Group. Gene Blow.

Caboolture, Kilcoy and Bribie Mental Health Support Service. Gerhard Venter.

Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service. Chandra Easton.

'Dads Caring For Kids'. 'Lifestyle Management'. David Horstman

Family Relationships Centre. Sue Cleary, Margaret Hayter and Toni Wright.

Family Support Worker and Counsellor. Richard Baker.

Men's Information and Support Association. Juliet Quinlan, Paul and Hedy.

Men's Shed. Ian Watson.

Men's Shed and PRISM. Sal Barbagello.

Men Supporting Men. *Paul and Alan*.

Moreton Encouragement Network. Chris van Reyk.

Pine Rivers Community Health Centre. Liam Wishart.

Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre. Family Relationships Counsellor Cheryl Smith.

Psychologist. Woody Point. Brendan McMahon.

Relationship Counselling and Groupwork. Ross Adams.

Spiritus Kinections. Gary Foster.

Strengthening Families Support. Mark Cotterill.

Sunshine Place, Redcliffe. Gary Smith.

Research Findings

Men's needs, their profile, services available to them and the services they access.

Group One: Men's Groups.

Key words; sharing life experience, friendship, fellowship, on going support, crisis, anger, separation, relationship problems, talk Men's business, not too formal, hang out, safe place, non judgemental, real, depression, loneliness, money, sex, what is expected of me as a Man, health, socialisation, referral information, cultural and spiritual well being, away from family, advise, guidance, drug and alcohol abuse and gambling, social isolation, consistent connection, cooking for one.

Men's group members saw a need for connection in a supportive environment where their life experiences could be shared, a place where they could be 'real' ... an environment they felt was not available to them in the wider community. They were unanimous in saying that this place to connect and share experience needed to be safe, non judgemental and ongoing. It needed to be a place where they could discuss their issues relating to what it is to be a Man, and family relationships. Quite often a common spiritual background drew Men together. Guest speakers were welcomed to talk on Men issues.

Amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Island groups' cultural awareness, health and gambling were of major concern. It was said by a number of respondents that understanding their own culture was a prime concern and motivated them to attend meetings. Again this reflected Men's needs to have connection and a self-awareness.

The Men's Shed component of this group, as well as having needs similar to other groups, clearly identified their 'sheds' as being beneficial to the psychological and physical well being of its members and a flow on to the wider community. Men's Sheds, they said, addressed social isolation and a need for the older members of the community to have a sense of purpose and meaning which retirement largely negated and neglected. All were emphatic in their belief that their group was very beneficial to the well being of all of its members through social activity and working on projects together. There was a strong desire to 'pass on their wisdom and skills' to the younger generation in a practical sense through sharing their workshop amenities. There was a high degree of frustration expressed at 'dealing with bureaucratic hurdles' in establishing the practical component of 'shed building'.

Sharing a meal was a common factor amongst this grouping.

Advertising groups meetings in local newspapers was minimally successful in attracting new members while word of mouth was often said to be most successful. Flyers displayed in neighbourhood centres and other community meeting points proved to be moderately successful.

These men's groups expressed their need to be better informed of other Men's groups' activities. They were without exception willing to share whatever resources they had amongst others and some believed a combined centralised meeting would be beneficial to enhance connections throughout the region.

Member Profile

Age group; 17 to 80 years of age.

Cultural heritage; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Pacific Islander, Caucasian.

Marital Status; Single, separated, defacto, married.

Emotional Status; Well adjusted to depressed to 'in crisis'.

Physical Status; Fair to good, some with mobility problems.

Group 2: Federal and State funded agencies that predominately specialize in mental health and offer support to physically and psychologically disadvantaged and marginalised clients.

Although this group's clientele is mixed male and female their answers related to the males who accessed their service.

Key words; acute care, mental health, part of a team, reviews, psycho-education, family and relatives, relaxation, strategies to ameliorate relapse, intervention, referrals, financial counselling, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, anxiety, personality disorder, crisis management, high risk, mood and psychotic disorders, emergency relief, personal support, community support, health conditions impeding ability to gain employment, homelessness, building bridges.

Agencies providing mental health and physical health services all said that the needs of their clients was for community education and community based supportive programmes to assist in increasing public awareness of mental health issues. Their clients were

generally marginalized and discriminated against in the wider community due to their physical or psychological condition.

There was generally speaking a reluctance of Men in this group to seek referred help unless mandated by court or in crisis. One agency said 95% of clients were unwilling to accept a referral for counselling/psychologist while some preferred to self medicate. Almost universally workers agreed that Men waited until crisis before seeking help. Workers suggested that their clients would benefit from being in peer support groups.

Client Profile

Age group; 18 years and above.

Cultural Heritage; 'across the board'.

Marital Status; 'all types'.

Emotional Status; in crisis, at risk of self harm and harm to others, depressed, despairing, angry, overwhelmed, poor self esteem, post traumatic stress disorder.

Physical Status; poor health.

Other; drug and alcohol abuse.

Group 3: Federal and State funded agencies whose focus is particularly on family relationship counselling and offer educative programmes. [one of which specifically uses a reference to 'Men' in their service's title].

Key words; difficulty in engaging Men, family support, counselling, emotional support, advice, education, anger regulation, suicidal thoughts, probation and parole, child safety, parenting issues, isolation, what it means to be a father, family separation, domestic and family violence, sexually abused Men, relationship breakdown and enhancement, drug and alcohol abuse, 'outsider' help, grief and loss, getting back on track, supportive encouraging environment, professional 'generalist service' feel rather than that of a Men's Shed, fathers and fostering, male worker peer support, informal, welcoming, consistency.

This group dealt with a wide range of issues and recognised many needs of their male clients. The clientele were predominately mandated to the service provider and of a lower socio-economic status.

Two agencies referred to an oft-expressed male client response to the question of why they hadn't sought help earlier, 'If it ain't broke, why fix it?' All agencies in this group related to the difficulty in getting Men through their doors. Usually at the point of referral Men are in crisis, mandated or referred by a partner. One agency said that they believed having 'Men' in the agency name was 'reassuring' and added to their attractiveness [to Men].

Without exception, agency workers said that their service would be more attractive to male clientele if there were more Men involved in the provision of services to Men. There was awareness amongst agency workers that there is a need for a more 'Man friendly' environment. One agency which provided programmes and workshops for Men and Fathers argued strongly for a 'non deficit' approach*.

*A 'non deficit approach' focuses on psychological strengths and recognises that 'transitional periods' in a Man's life are periods when they are more likely to seek therapeutic or educational groups. 'Transitional periods' can be a time of family separation, relationship difficulties, immanent fatherhood and emotional crisis in a Man's lifespan. During these times Men are more likely to overcome suspicion of being judged and access support. [King, 2000].

Client Profile

Age group; 18 years and above.

Cultural Heritage; all cultures.

Marital status; single, married, defacto, separated and widowed.

Emotional status; confused, family difficulties, distressed, angry, bitter, suicidal, mildly concerned, fragile, frightened, disempowered.

Physical status; accident injuries, physically sound, fully functional to disabled, average to poor, OK.

Other; Mandated to attend, disempowered by the system, victimised by former partners, violent.

Group 4. Professional Psychologists and Counsellors whose focus is on Men and their issues and the provision of educative programmes as well as face to face counselling of a diverse range of community members.

There were one female and four male respondents in this group.

Key words; education, life skills, providing knowledge, non confrontational, safe environment, solution based programmes, fathering programmes, anger management, relationship issues, enhancing relationship, complimenting strengths, crisis, budgeting, drug and alcohol issues, unemployment.

Generally this group said that counselling was an effective strategy in which to address male issues. They often expressed the opinion that 'female focused' agencies were not equipped to interact effectively with Men. Furthermore they suggested that male clients preferred Man-to-Man counselling sessions.

The Men this group counselled were often seeking ways 'to better their lives'. Usually this was through self-awareness, understanding relationship issues and learning fathering skills in workshops or with 'face to face' counselling.

All respondents expressed concern at the negative male image portrayed in the media and the generally throughout our society. One said that widespread acceptance of 'anger management' as the dominant male issue was 'negative, inappropriate and not correct'.

The clientele for this group were primarily voluntary attendees except where the client was mandated to attend a programme facilitated by the private practitioner at an agency.

Client Profile

Age groups; mid 20's to 70 years.

Cultural heritage; all cultures, though predominately Anglo Australian.

Marital status; from all to defacto and usually in a relationship.
Emotional status; struggling, low self esteem, low to high needs.
Physical status; from poor to good, not generally good.
Other; to stay employed Men make reference to being busy particularly if they run their own business.

Group 5. Neighbourhood Centres throughout the MBRC area who provide a wide range of community based initiatives from personal, family relationship to financial counselling and educative programmes aimed at empowering and enriching the lives of community members.

Key words; relationships, anger, long term and ongoing programmes, finances and budgeting education, affordable programmes, non mandatory educational programmes, point of referral, high school education, need for healthy role models, male sexual abuse, mentoring, poverty, depression, parenting, Men in crisis, counselling, emergency relief, Dad's info.

Neighbourhood centres were excellent points of referral for Men. They offered printed information and leaflets specific to services relating to Men and their issues in their geographic area and beyond. All respondents mentioned varying degrees of difficulties in engaging Men in specific programmes such as fathering and relationship education. Couple counselling and 'one on one' sessions were moderately successful with Men. Some respondents mentioned the need to run affordable programmes.

Client profile.

Age group; across the board.
Cultural heritage; multicultural.
Marital status; across the board.
Emotional status; confused, angry, depressed.
Physical status; from poor to good.

Recommendations of Respondents

These recommendations are in order of the most commonly expressed recommendation through to the less commonly expressed recommendation.

From Private Sector [men's groups]:

1. Foster the establishment of more Men's Support Groups throughout the region. Men's sheds, Men's Groups and Peer support Groups.
2. More relationships education programmes.
3. Network the connections between Men's Support Groups and Male service providers to share information particularly relating to Men.
4. More fathering educational programmes.
5. Promote awareness on 'What is it to be a Man?'
6. Educational programmes relating to everyday finance and budgeting.
7. Conduct community programmes to educate the public in greater awareness of mental health issues.
8. Promote programmes to educate Men on their health.

From the Private Sector Professionals [counsellors and Psychologists]:

1. Education programmes dealing with self-awareness, family relationships, fathering and mental health awareness.
2. Promotion of support peer groups.
3. Promotion of more Man friendly environments.
4. Workshops to educate care workers in providing services that respect Men and their needs.
5. Financial counselling.

From the Government Funded sector:

1. Educational programmes on Men's issues for clients [self awareness, family relationships, fathering, anger, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, court procedures].
2. Promote Men's support groups.
3. More access to professional development programmes specifically oriented to educate workers in how to work with Men.
4. Minimal cost workshops.

'Man friendly'. What is this?

Reference to creating a 'Man friendly' environment has been a recurrent topic raised by quite a few respondents to this needs analysis. A 'man friendly' environment has been linked with service provider's or group's success in attracting and engaging Men and includes factors such as; environment, language, marketing, and service provision [King, 2000].

Environment: What visual cues lend themselves to a Man feeling safe and respected? Are there positive images of maleness and appropriate reading material? Are there male workers at first point of contact? Are working hours appropriate for male clients? Men's Groups exemplify the environment where Men flourish when their environmental needs are being met.

Language: What sort of language is used by service providers? Terms can be used to stereotype Men such as; abusive parent, emotionally challenged, under involved in the household, uninterested and uncaring. These terms emphasise a deficit approach to Men. Men's strengths need to be recognised. Men's Sheds are a prime example of Men having an avenue to exercise their strengths relating to their needs of active social involvement in a caring environment.

Marketing: Men respond well to phone counselling. Informality with little structure appeals to some Men where others prefer structure focussing on particular issues. Word of mouth is the most successful way of promotion as evidenced by this analysis. Men will listen to other Men with their own recommendations on where is 'safe and respectful'. Men heed respected 'gatekeepers'.

Service Provision: Men appreciate a context where they feel valued. They need to have an appreciation of the basic structure of the service provided and what is expected of them. Men are used to having a knowledge of the structure they are to work within and this knowledge can lessen their concerns in an unfamiliar environment.

Researcher Observations from this Needs Analysis.

Overwhelmingly the respondents interviewed in this analysis were enthusiastic and dedicated to furthering Men's health and well being. Without exception the Men interviewed were willing to share resources and experience, bridging cultural differences ... a phenomenon which is quite contrary to the predominant media driven image of Men as competitive and uncaring.

All respondents, whether male or female, recognised that the needs of Men have been neglected and also that more Men were needed in the 'caring' service sector [see recommendations].

Agencies in particular were described by Men who were seeking a service as ranging from just OK to friendly to hostile. Men expressed unilaterally the need to feel safe and to be in a non-judgemental environment.

All the Men interviewed, whether from Men's groups or from Government funded agencies shared a need for connection [see recommendations].

Professional workers, whether male or female, recognised a need for specialised training for all workers in the 'care' sector relating particularly how to sit with Men. Furthermore there was a need to provide more 'Man friendly' environments [see recommendations].

Generally the profile of Men seeking support was similar across the board.

Aged from eighteen to eighty five, culturally diverse and from single to coupled to separated. Their emotional status involved a wide spectrum of conditions most likely to be, for instance, being depressed, anxious, angry and overwhelmed and most of these reflecting personal struggles and problems in relationships with key people in their lives. Physical health varied; support seekers in the private sector were generally healthier than those in the public sector. Most respondents referred to a variety of mental health issues, depression being the overwhelmingly manifest condition amongst Men.

Other issues related to relationship difficulties, fathering, court procedure confusion, inappropriate expression of emotion [anger], drug and alcohol abuse.

It was generally agreed upon that Men who were mandated to attend a course or programme received little benefit. Agencies who catered to male and female clients all recognised the difficulty in engaging Men or just getting them through their doors. Crisis was suggested to be the male imperative before they sought support.

Contrary to the previously expressed notion Men who were involved in Men's groups and Men's Sheds were enthusiastic, passionate and voluntary in attendance. They openly talked of the benefits of the connections they had made at meetings and social occasions. Some of these social occasions involved their partners as well. Without exception they wished to share their life experience with other Men and support all Men in furthering their individual health and wellbeing.

Researcher's Recommendations to better provide for Men

1. Promote and foster 'man friendly' environments with service providers.
2. Educate workers in a non-deficit approach with men.
3. Listen to Men who are already being successful in connection with other Men.
4. Men need long term consistency and ongoing peer support. Men's Sheds and Men's Groups provide this service at a grass roots level. They are already successful in engaging Men. Their proliferation can be enhanced by greater exposure in the community.
5. A mobile Men's Shed [trailer] is needed to disseminate 'pertinent to Men' information and engage Men where they are safe. A facility which can go to magistrates courts, community functions, sports grounds, festivals, school fetes, market places etc. Anywhere where Men frequent.
6. Develop innovative resources in consultation with men – a Blokes Book, a Blokes Card and posters and distribute around the Moreton Bay region.
7. Highlight celebratory events in the lives of men and the community – Fathers Day
8. Design innovative projects to encourage men to participate in community – Kids Day Out
9. Conduct low cost or no cost workshops to skill Men in setting up more Men's Groups throughout the Moreton Bay region.

Men need to be invited to become involved in an environment that is masculine. Build on the strengths they have and engage them in discussions on subjects; such as hobbies, sport or being a Dad, which can encourage positive responses

Executive Summary

There are two groups of Men identified in the Moreton Bay Region. The first group comprises Men who are better equipped to face everyday challenges. They have skills which enable them to connect with others. Their degree of self-awareness and their ability to communicate with others enables this group to seek support and the social experience they desire. They are the single, partnered and fathering; Men of all ages, cultural heritage and persuasions who are reasonably content with their own lives. They know how to find the companionship, fellowship and commraderie of other Men.

The Moreton Bay region has the genesis of a vibrant Men's movement which finds its roots in this first group. They provide much needed support, both physically and emotionally to many Men. This quiet Men's movement is being driven by Men who are passionate and caring. Many of these Men have faced their own personal crisis ... they have looked inward. Now they thrive on the challenge of connection with other Men and they ready and are willing to look beyond themselves and support others. They are an inspirational group of enthusiastic Men who are taking responsibility for their own welfare and that of their community. These Men want to share life experience and resources. These Men need support to further their aims in reaching out to the male community. They have had the most success in engaging other Men. They have provided the Man friendly environment where Men have safety to explore their inner world.

The second group are less successful in having their needs met. These Men are usually at some level of crisis. They can be either mandated to seek support and literally falling apart physically or emotionally, or facing the challenges of fathering, relationship separation and job loss. These Men are often marginalised in one way or another and have a sense of being isolated. They have few skills other than those necessary for their own survival. Often these Men are confused about their own masculinity which in turn troubles their relationship with themselves and others [Addendum Two]. Self harm behaviour and suicide is most evident in this group. These Men need a safe place to engage with other Men. The non deficit approach to engaging Men understands that Men who face crisis are most ready to seek support and are most likely to handle significant change with success. This group of Men need support from Man friendly environments.

Men's strengths are to be acknowledged. The way forward is to recognise the systems that are working for men and support their growth. Men need to connect. They are already doing this successfully within the Moreton Bay region. This connection is being witnessed by the growth of Men's Sheds and Men's Groups. The growing self-awareness and passion these Men share for moving into more wholesome and fulfilling relationships and their willingness to share experience and resources is cementing the foundation at a grass roots level for the Moreton Bay community to face the challenge which accompany substantial population growth. This is a proactive approach to enhancing Men's health and well being. Men are OK and they are an invaluable resource.

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Addendum One

Questionnaire Men's Needs Analysis for the Pine Rivers Neighbourhood Centre Consortium in the Moreton Bay Region. January 2009.

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1. What would best describe the agency, you or your group?

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.....

2. What sorts of services do you offer Men?

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.....
.....

3. Why do Men come to you? What are the common presenting issues?

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.....
.....

4. Do you believe your service is attractive to Men? Yes / No

Why do you believe this to be the case?

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.....
.....

5. What sort of general profile would best describe the Men you encounter?

Age group
Cultural Heritage
Marital Status
Emotional Status
Physical Status
Any other

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.....
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6. Do you promote your services to Men? Yes/ No

If so, what do you promote and how do you promote these services to Men?

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7. On what days and during what hours do you provide your services to Men?

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8. Do you believe these days and times are appropriate to service Men's needs? Yes / No. And why?

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9. Does your agency/ self/ group engage in professional development workshops or programmes which are specifically designed to facilitate understanding of Men and their needs? Yes / No. Any comments.

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10. What sorts of workshops/programmes do you access?

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11. What sorts of workshops/programmes would you like to see promoted?

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12. What sorts of strategies have you tried or adopted to attract Men to your door?

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13. What strategies are successful in attracting Men to your door?

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14. What recommendations would you make to better facilitate services to Men in the Moreton Bay Region?

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15. What programmes have you come across that have been successful in addressing Men's needs?

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I would very much appreciate any other comments or suggestions you wish to make.

The confidentiality of respondents is assured.

Please feel free to call or email me with queries or discussion.

THANK YOU.

Ric Colclough.

Addendum Two

There is a contradiction between what Men need for connection and the stereotypical Aussie bloke. The table below gives some idea of what Men struggle with when trying to connect.

Conditions Needed For Support and Connection	Stereotypical Demands Of Masculinity
Self-disclosure	Concealment of private life
Renouncing control	Maintaining control
Non-sexual intimacy	Sexual intimacy
Revealing one's weaknesses	Showing strengths
Feeling shame	Expressing pride
Being vulnerable	Being invincible
Seeking help	Being independent
Expressing emotions	Being stoic
Being introspective	Being proactive
Confronting conflicts	Avoiding conflicts
Confronting pain and suffering	Denying pain and suffering
Recognizing failures and admitting ignorance	Persisting indefinitely, feigning omniscience