



***Senior men's learning and wellbeing
through community participation in Australia***

Report to the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre

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Executive Summary

- This is a major field-based study for National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre by a research team from the University of Ballarat.
- It is an exploration of the benefits of older men's (age 50+) learning through participation in community settings *other than* those understood as having a vocational or educational dimension.
- It is based on an analysis of extensive audio-recorded and transcribed interviews and surveys in 48 organisations in six diverse sites across three Australian states.
- The six community organisation types explored were: adult and community education; sporting; religious, Indigenous and cultural; voluntary fire and emergency services; age-related and disability and men's special interest organisations.
- As a major learning related study it is unique in two senses. First, it is informed solely by older men as participants in community-based organisations. Second, it analyses older men's learning as a wellbeing phenomena with diverse and important wellbeing outcomes.
- The first part of the results comprises an analysis of quantitative survey data (N=219) related to older men's learning and wellbeing by organisation type and employment status.
- The second part of the results uses qualitative data from interviews to look closely at what learning and wellbeing are experienced by older men. It does this by means of participant narratives about learning and wellbeing related to participation in the six community organisation types.
- The research provides new evidence of the acute need for organisations providing adult learning in community settings to consider how to engage more men and to promote older men's wellbeing more effectively.
- Conversely, the research suggests the need for health and wellbeing organisations to enhance older men's wellbeing through learning in ways that might avoid the need for social, behavioural, medical or clinical intervention in their lives as a first step.
- Informal community involvement, where older men become co-participants in a shared activity, has the advantage of avoiding the problematization and patronising of senior men as students or clients from a skills deficit or ageist model. Community men's sheds do this particularly well.
- The research recognizes and celebrates older men's multiple identities, not only as workers, but also as experienced, wise and knowledgeable individuals who have the capacity to add value to community organisations in diverse spaces and places.
- The research identifies evidence of the capacity for a wide range of community organisations to address many of the internationally recognized Determinants of Disadvantage for older men, particularly: social exclusion, unemployment, stress, substance abuse and inadequate nutrition.
- The research confirms and explores the important role that all community organisations examined play, in providing contexts in which all aspects of lifelong and lifewide learning can be practiced and enhanced.
- Community-based organisations are found to provide unique and powerful contexts in which older men can develop and express all aspects of communication identified in the Australian Core Skills Framework. These include expressing their multiple identities, interacting in groups, performing tasks, using tools and technologies, interacting in organisations and with the wider community.
- Community-based organisations play a particularly important role in older men's productive ageing as a bridge to later life and a means of enhancing lifelong learning and wellbeing beyond paid work.
- We provide evidence that learning at any age through community organisations has the capacity to greatly enhance older men's wellbeing.
- There is considerable scope for a wide range of community-based organisations to acknowledge and promote older men's wellbeing as a primary purpose, to engage a wider range of men and to value and respect men's preferred and sometimes different ways of learning.

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- *Noarlunga (South Australia)*: Aldinga Community Shed, Christie's Beach High School Adult Re-entry, Christie's Beach Meals on Wheels, Elizabeth House Over 50s Woodwork Shed, Hackham Golf Club, Hackham West Community Centre, Men's South Talk, Port Noarlunga Bowling Club, Southern Men's Group and the Salvation Army Noarlunga Community Church.
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Introduction

This National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre-funded research is one of two major Australian field-based studies of men's learning and wellbeing beyond the workplace. Unlike our other major, parallel study for Western Australia Department of Education and Training (Golding, Brown, Foley & Harvey 2009) that is inclusive of men of all ages in one Australian state, the current research is directed to older, senior men aged over 50 years in three Australian states. It investigates and compares men's attitudes towards and experiences of learning, and in particular non-formal and informal learning in six diverse sites in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. It is one of the first of several Australian and international studies of learning by men not in work.

Most educational research is based around mainly younger people and adults who are learning formally and being assessed in order to gain work, obtain a work-related qualification or to change employment. Such research tends, unsurprisingly, to identify men as 'missing' from most adult learning organizations once they are older and in work. Research from a range of fields shows that men's wellbeing and learning are often very tightly associated with their paid work, and that men sometimes struggle with adverse changes to their identities and wellbeing as they age. What is less well known is what men learn beyond the workplace, including once they become unemployed, withdraw from the workforce or retire. While deliberately inclusive of men still in work, our study investigates older men's learning experiences associated with their involvement in community-based organizations. Our first intention is to explore senior men's learning that is not related to paid work and that is often less formal. Our second and related intention is to simultaneously examine wellbeing implications and outcomes of that learning that are rarely examined or considered. By talking with and surveying men voluntarily involved in a wide range of community organizations as well as in adult learning organisations across Australia, we were able to gain perspectives about and compare learning and wellbeing for a wide cross section of organizations and older men.

Our main purpose was to analyze the nature and benefits of learning related to the wellbeing of the men, their families and communities. The overall aim was to find out what is attractive, common and different about group settings that work for men, including but not restricted to men not in paid work, to identify better ways to engage and benefit men in learning through active community involvement beyond the workplace.

This research into older men's learning through informal community contexts is considered timely in the context of:

- concerns about older men's attitudes to and involvement in formal, lifelong, community and adult learning
- concerns about wellbeing for the growing proportion of older men (particularly those men between 50 and 65 years) not involved in the paid workforce (unemployed, working voluntarily, retired or with a disability)
- a poor knowledge of what difference community involvement makes to older men's productive ageing and wellbeing, and the role learning plays in ageing
- pessimism about the value of formal, lower level training for re-integrating older displaced males into the workforce
- perceptions that skill shortages may be associated with some older men's early withdrawal from the workforce, ageing in regional and rural communities and retirement
- a recognition that low labour force participation, particularly amongst older men, is not only affected by but is likely to be causally related to a decrease in wellbeing.

Research questions and rationale

The research questions were:

- What shapes attitudes towards learning and work of older men not in paid work in socially disadvantaged communities in Australia? How are these attitudes affected by location, class, culture and men's different masculinities?
- Which learning environments engage economically inactive older men, for what reasons and with what outcomes?
- What learning roles do different types of community organisations play for older men?
- What is the relationship between informal group affiliation and learning in community contexts, and the wellbeing of older men, their families and communities?
- What can be done to positively re-engage older men (including men not in work) in learning through community engagement?

In order to answer these questions a field-based, mixed method study investigated older men's attitudes towards learning in Australia. Six sites in six regions of three states were selected that are characterized by social disadvantage and where male economic inactivity rates (the proportion of men not in paid work) are above average. The intention was to identify and study contexts in which men over 50 years were likely to already be learning informally through engagement in community activity.

The research adds to the body of knowledge of the learning and wellbeing-related role of community-based organisations for older, isolated, often 'working class' men. The research helps explain why some older men are not in paid work and not formally learning. The insights and findings about why some older men of working age don't work and don't want to learn have potential significant benefits to vocational education and training (VET) providers including some private registered training organisations (RTOs) in Australia that target older disengaged men between 50 and 65 as a 'disadvantaged group'. It adds to the body of knowledge about how men's learning might benefit men as well as their partners, children, families and communities, that are sometimes subject to some men's frustration, hostile attitudes and violence and that are often tightly associated with social disadvantage and unemployment (Vinson 2007).

One other anticipated outcome of the project is an identification of learning strategies that are positive and therapeutic for men. The research starts from the premise that men not in work can *pose problems for themselves, their families and their communities*, but that men in this situation are not necessarily *the problem*. The research design therefore has the potential to identify ways of breaking intergenerational cycles of unemployment for men through community involvement. One final but important anticipated outcome of the project is an identification of opportunities for marginalised men who are 'living on the edge' to develop positive masculinities and to enhance informal earning through mentoring with other men in community contexts.

Our research approach is field-based, grounded and mixed method. We relied on site interviews and surveys exploring the learning and wellbeing related experiences of men as participants in community-based organizations. We used audio-recorded and transcribed focus group interviews and a six-page survey, handed out by a contact person in the organization and returned by mail. Our research design (rightly) anticipated that older men involved in diverse community organizations would be diverse in terms of their learning interests and work status. We are not able, using this method, to draw conclusions about other older men not in work, not in adult education and not involved in community-based organizations. We can only surmise that such men are more likely, through their apparent community and vocational disconnection, to be restricted in their everyday interaction to family and friends and be much more vulnerable than the men we have researched and written about. Such men are also very difficult to ethically reach and actively involve in research.

Context for the research and its method

The multi-site and multi-organisation research design used in the current research follows up on research from Golding, Harvey and Echter (2005) in Victoria, the most similar, previous comparative study of learning through community-based organizations in Australia. While the 2005 study did not involve interviews, it did include surveys of men in somewhat similar organizations: in adult and community education (ACE), volunteer fire brigades, Australian rules football clubs, landcare organizations and senior citizens clubs.

Fire and emergency service organizations had already been separately studied as learning organizations in small and remote towns in Hayes, Golding and Harvey (2005) using somewhat similar, mixed method research. That study included fire and emergency service organisations in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. The *Men's sheds in Australia: learning through community contexts* research (Golding, Brown, Foley et al. 2007) for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) also used mixed field research, involving community men's sheds in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania to provide a window into the learning needs of some older men. This new field research, based on interviews conducted in 2009 seeks to extend that research to wider areas of men's learning and community involvement.

All men over 50 who participated in six types of community-based organizations were invited to take part in the current research, on the assumption (backed up by the results) that many men over the age of 50 years would not be in paid work. Indeed, only 21 per cent of respondents identified that they were 'currently in the paid workforce' and 67 per cent were retired from the paid workforce) that many men involved would not be in the paid workforce. This method was chosen as it would enable us to compare the responses of men not in work (retired or unemployed), with responses of men in work. A very small number of men who completed the survey (3 per cent of the total survey sample; 6 men) were aged less than the minimum target age of 50 years. A decision was made to exclude this very small number of younger men in the analyses along with two other men whose age was not given.

The research method and instruments proposed are tested, effective and highly ethical. Like other projects led by Golding since 2001, we deliberately sought to work *with* communities and community organisations and feed the information back in ways that respects and values respondents and their organisations. This method, combined with prior, on site reconnaissance and working through known and trusted informants leads the observed relatively high response rate of 57 per cent.

While designed as a stand-alone National Seniors Productive Aging Centre project in six sites, the research method was deliberately designed to, with data from a parallel Western Australian Department of Education and Training (WA DET) study of men of any post-school age in Western Australia, to contribute a comparable Australian data set to a wider, international study. The international study is envisaged to eventually include sites in some or all of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Australia and Republic of Ireland. That research already involves a number of overseas collaborating universities, researchers, adult and community organization (ACE) organisations and overseas bodies including the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) in the UK.

Limitations of the research

Interviewing and surveying men involved in community organizations in three regions and six sites is insufficient to provide a comprehensive picture of learning and wellbeing for such men in Australia. The achieved survey sample (N=219) with a relatively high response rate of 57 per cent across 48 organizations in six categories is nevertheless sufficient to provide a view of learning that is seldom glimpsed. As Gallacher, Ingram and Field (2009, p.226) recently observed in an

international critique of our wider research endeavor, including this project, in *Researching transitions in lifelong learning*, an important aspect of our work

... is that it brings out the importance of activities that would not normally be defined as learning, in that they are not part of any formal learning structures, but they provide valued opportunities for the men involved to make transitions from their working lives, and the activities that have engaged them there, which are in many ways familiar to them, but provide new learning opportunities as well.

Another limitation is that apart from the community-based ACE (adult and community education) sector, we have not looked for or included learning through other forms of more organized, formal, vocational or higher learning in our analysis, such as in TAFE, private providers and university. Our focus on learning and wellbeing for older men *beyond* formal learning organizations is very deliberate. Other research demonstrates an under-representation of men (and boys) in formal education, as well as in community-based adult education, particularly for older men. Focusing only on the experiences and attitudes of older men in Australia who are learning formally and often successfully in tertiary institutions in the larger cities, despite men's overall under-representation, would provide a very narrow research snapshot.

Our arguably biggest gap in this project is twofold. One is not hearing, recording and analyzing the experiences of women. The second is not hearing, recording and analyzing men not involved in *any* community-based organization. When we set out to design this project both limitations were obvious, but we think defensible. We restricted our study to men learning through diverse community organizations partly because men are often wrongly regarded as not being involved and not learning. We set out, in a sense to create a rich body of data about men that can be analyzed and theorized further and perhaps later compared to similar groups of men (or women) by others, including internationally. Our intention was never to make direct comparisons with women's experiences in such organizations, though that would make an interesting and important subsequent study.

An earlier draft of the research design focused on men not in work and deliberately included groups of men not involved in any community-based organizations including learning through ACE, as well as men who were. Our decision not to include groups of older men not involved in work, learning or community activity was partly because of the ethical and logistical difficulties of reaching and involving a comparable sample on men. How would one validly and ethically select a legitimate sample of such men in each site? Our decision was also partly based around our presupposition, to be tested in this research, that learning and wellbeing are associated with community involvement. What comparable questions could we have asked men about learning, beyond the 'about you' questions?

A final limitation relates to an inevitable bias in a site, organization type and organization sample that was not randomly chosen. We set out to look at six discrete organization categories in each of six selected sites. The organizations we actually selected for study, from the large number of available organizations (particularly sporting organizations) in each site within each of the categories, though not made randomly, aimed to provide evidence of the diversity rather than being representative statistically. In the larger cities the available choice was much larger and our selection was based more on trying to represent diversity across the sites and organization categories rather than to provide a representative sample within site. Inevitably, our sample was also restricted to those organizations and men willing to participate in the surveys and interviews. By ethically setting up interviews in collaboration with informants within each participating organization we tended to deal more with, and also interview more older men holding responsible (though voluntary) positions within those organizations. It is likely also that men who volunteered for interview, and particularly to complete the survey, were more formally literate and more interested in the issues being explored. Some interviews were inevitably held at times that precluded the involvement of some men with paid work, community or family roles.

Despite these difficulties, the survey response rates (and also number of returns), to a survey ostensibly about learning, were almost counter intuitively significantly less from older men involved in adult and community education than from organizations that are less likely to be conventionally regarded as learning organisations. It is surmised that even the men that *are* involved as participants in ACE in Australia are less connected or actively involved in the organization as men

in the other categories of organizations. Presumably they were also harder to recruit as interviewees and less likely to complete or return surveys. By contrast, the response rates from fire and emergency services, churches, cultural and Indigenous organizations were approximately twice those of the returns from ACE organizations.

Literature review

Recent literature (Lattimore 2007) shows that Australian men who are economically inactive comprise a large and growing proportion of all men. Apart from the significant loss of economic activity associated with men's non-participation in the labour market, it has a devastating social impact on men, their families and communities and requires costly social welfare intervention and support. Lattimore (2007) has identified a reduced tolerance in contemporary economies for employing men with disabilities and lower skills as well as the feminisation of many new forms of work as some of the factors affecting men's non-participation in paid work. Lattimore also showed that economically inactive men tend to group together spatially. Golding's recent research cited below shows that un-partnered men, men without other community connections and men who did not enjoy or benefit from school are particularly vulnerable to labour market withdrawal. Golding's research also shows that such men benefit socially and in terms of their attitudes to learning from regular and informal community involvement with other men. The particular issue for ACE and VET is that the very men who appear most to need formal literacies and vocational retraining are the least likely to have the attitudes and skills necessary to participate in and benefit from it.

The research was framed in the context of the relatively pessimistic international literature on the value of formal training for re-integrating displaced older males in the workforce (Lattimore 2007, p.187) and the perceived need (COAG Feb 2006) to improve educational opportunities for adults with no formal qualifications in order to improve their employment prospects. The research set out to identify and examine the benefits of community involvement, particularly improved attitudes towards learning, for socially disadvantaged men who are not in paid work. The deliberate emphasis was on men who are not in paid work in relatively disadvantaged locations and regions in Australia. For this reason, the site selection criteria was for six places in three states in three regions, with a diverse range of accessibility/remoteness indicators (measured objectively by ARIA+: Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia), all of which have more men not in the workforce than the corresponding state averages.

This research rationale, design and sample locations were informed by intersections between Golding's suite of Australian field research into aspects of men's learning, and very recent findings by both Lattimore (2007) and Vinson (2007). There is a striking similarity between the distribution of men of prime age not in work (in Lattimore) and the distribution of social disadvantage (in Vinson). Research into ageing (Ageing Australia 2001; Productivity Commission 2005) suggest that while men age 40-49 years are the largest ten year age cohort in Australia they are increasingly likely to leave paid employment early. These economically inactive men of working age are much more likely to have no formal post-school qualifications and live or move to areas of concentrated and intersecting social and labor market disadvantage similar to those targeted by this research.

This research was also framed in a way that answers questions about men's adult and vocational learning in Australia that census data cannot. It builds on findings about benefits of community-based learning from research into men in socially disadvantaged and geographically isolated areas (Golding, Harvey & Echter 2004). It was also informed by Australian research through NCVET (both of which were inclusive of South Australian, Tasmanian and New South Wales sites) into learning by men with low skills and negative attitudes towards learning and training who are involved as volunteers in fire brigades (Hayes, Golding & Harvey 2003) and as participants in community-based men's sheds (Golding, Brown, Foley et al. 2007).

By deliberately focusing on men's learning, the research also has the potential to directly inform studies of men's vocational, adult and community education and training for men in disadvantaged

regions seeking work-related training. It also adds to the knowledge associated with links between the benefits of learning and men's sense of wellbeing (Stanwick, Ong & Karmel 2006), including their health, employment and fatherhood. The research is innovative in that it enabled us to 'hear' what men have to say about their experiences of active engagement in 'safe' spaces and voluntary organizations, often but not always with other men. By collecting data in different regions in Australia with higher than average levels of social disadvantage, we are able to identify factors (such as access to education training, access to computers, remoteness, age discrimination in employment, sickness and disability, caring and family roles) that can and do make men vocationally redundant and reluctant to learn, and that can be addressed by ACE, VET and family-friendly government policies (HREOC 2007).

The inclusion of health and wellbeing in educational studies has been a relatively recent trend but is supported in the literature. The Council for the Ageing (COTA 2008, p.1) Victorian report recognized that

... the concept of health embraces not only physical, but social and psychological factors also, the following definition of the World Health Organization has been employed, with health being: the total physical and social wellbeing of individuals and communities and not merely the absence of disease.

Accordingly, the concept of good health includes sound physical and mental health, and general wellbeing through positive interactions within one's physical and social environment. ESREA (2009, p.2) acknowledged in Europe that 'educational training programs can and have to contribute to staying healthy and independent up until very old age in order to prevent the overburdening of the system'.

Field (2009, p.14) identified 'good reasons for considering well-being to be among the most important outcomes of adult learning'. Field concluded that apart from the importance of wellbeing for the wider community and the learners themselves, 'well-being is also associated with better health, higher levels of social and civil engagement and greater resilience in the face of external crises' (p.14). Recent findings in Australia (AMP 2009, p.2) that 'more than half of working age Australians who [self-report] poor health are not participating in the labour force, while just under a third are in full-time employment.' The same study found that 'poor health appears to have a greater impact on labour force participation as people get older' (p.11). Indeed in Australia in 2007 three quarters of men (and women) age 55 to 64 years and suffering poor health are not in the labour force (AMP 2009, p.11).

Because average income and labour market participation are also closely linked to education levels there has been a tendency for government policies to assume that early withdrawal of older people from the full time, paid work can and should be addressed directly by vocational retraining. The AMP (2009, p.27) study concluded that even in the recent economic boom years in Australia (2001-2007). Average earnings of people 'with "persistent poor health" continued to diminish over time irrespective of gender, education and the area people lived in', and surmised that 'such individuals may be among the segment of the population hardest hit by the current economic downturn.' Our previous research, some of it through men's sheds, has shown that many men not in full time work actually withdrew from work for very good health reasons which was related to damage caused by previous work, and that more formal learning about work may not be what they need first and foremost in order to safeguard their health and wellbeing and the wellbeing of their families. What men we studied wanted to learn most about was, unsurprisingly, to learn how to stay fit and healthy.

Finally, the research is consistent with international developments through OECD (2001, p.66) that identify all learning environments as important for adults. Kearns (2006) reviewed international experience with equity in adult learning and concluded that equity objectives will be best achieved by integrating social and economic objectives with a focus on the adult learner rather than on vocational objectives alone. Access Economics (2005, p.22) provided evidence that Australia lags behind in best practice on participation at all mature age cohorts above 25 years. Given other evidence of men's lack of participation in both VET (Lattimore 2007) and ACE in age cohorts over 45 years, there are particularly good social and economic arguments for raising participation by men in adult learning generally in the context of an ageing population, particularly for those Australian men unable to work, for whatever good reason. As Schuller, Hammond and Preston

(2004, p.192) concluded, 'Huge costs are incurred where learning is absent including poor physical and psychological health, malfunctioning families and communities lacking in social cohesion'. Schuller, Hammond and Preston (2004, p.192) also concluded that 'Learning outcomes should be assessed within a framework which goes beyond the acquisition of qualifications and includes the learner's capacity to sustain themselves across a range of domains.' The learning opportunities examined in this research through men's community involvement are seen as important pathways to many domains which include but go well beyond paid work and which are consistent with Australian government policy in that they are both economically rational and equitable.

Methodology

Sampling frame

The main selection criterion was regions in Australia with a higher than average proportion of men over 50 not in the paid workforce. These regions are, not surprisingly, approximately coincident with regions of lower average socio-economic status as identified by Lattimore (2007). Vinson (2007) identified Australian socially disadvantaged locations (postcodes, SLAs, regions) through existing social and census data. Vinson's (2007) objective and measurable indicators included social distress, health, community safety, economy, education and community engagement. Four such regions in Australia were selected. These included suburban areas of three capital cities (Sydney, New South Wales; Adelaide, South Australia and Hobart, Tasmania, one regional city (Lismore, New South Wales), one rural town (Oatlands, Tasmania) and one remote town (Ceduna, South Australia) as summarized in Table 1 and as shown in Figure 1. These cities and/or towns were selected to account also for size, industry and employment profile and accessibility to services (Vinson 2007). This resulted in a total sample of six cities and towns in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas of Australia where older men were less likely to be in paid work, and much more likely to be socially disadvantaged than average.

Table 1 Sampling frame for selection of Australian regions, cities and towns

States	ARIA+	Cities and towns (ARIA+, SEIFA)
<i>NSW, SA, Tasmania</i>	Inner metropolitan	Blacktown (0.0, 973); Noarlunga (0.00, 993); Bridgewater, (0.55, 871)
<i>NSW</i>	Regional	Lismore (1.86, 964)
<i>Tasmania</i>	Rural	Oatlands (4.74, 940)
<i>South Australia</i>	Remote	Ceduna (10.74, 911)

KEY: ARIA+: Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia. The lower the ARIA+ score, the higher the accessibility and lower the remoteness to population centres with a range of services; SEIFA= Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas. The lower the SEIFA index, the greater the socio-economic disadvantage (ABS 2008)



Figure 1 The six Australian sites included in the study

Focus group interviews took place with up to four fully informed and consenting older men (age 50+) in up to six selected organisations types in each city or town. The selected organisation categories (whose classification is discussed below) were inclusive of men across the community including:

1. adult and community education (ACE)
2. sporting
3. religious, Indigenous and cultural
4. voluntary fire or emergency service
5. age-related and disability
6. men's special interest organizations.

Field methods

The benefit of working through community organisations is that they provide a means of ethical access to older men – both in and out of work - who have not necessarily had recent education and training experience, who could be invited to participate in surveys and interviews. This method involved men from six different targeted organisations. The method produced around 25 hours of rich, fully transcribed interview data from a total of approximately 150 men, and survey data from a total of 219 men¹. This number of surveys was sufficient to undertake sub-group analysis including using tests of significance. The transcript data were analysed for key themes and by groups allowing for rich understanding and accounts of men's experiences with learning in different organisations and contexts.

The method required two separate site visits by researchers each involving at least one day in each town or city. The first site visit was preceded by reconnaissance via phone calls, the internet, letters and emails, mostly with prospective organisations. The method to be employed for recruiting, interviewing and surveying was discussed and finalized in an on site visit and discussions with organisation representatives and some potential interviewees. The second site visit (typically a few weeks later) involved participant focus group interviews and surveys. The survey was modeled on items and techniques successfully used by the research team in previous research but were adapted to address the new research questions. The methodological detail for these previous studies is available in the Golding, Brown, Foley Harvey & Gleeson (2007) research report and supporting documents.

The participant and organization survey instruments and protocols

The participant survey instrument (with results added as a percentage of all respondents) is included as Appendix 1. It focused on older men's experiences of participating in the organisation, attitudes towards and experiences of learning and perceived outcomes from participating. The organisation survey instrument (with results added as a percentage of all organisations) is included as Appendix 2. It sought to explore a diverse range of key characteristics of the organisations included in the study, together with the nature of the organisation, a profile of participants, its location, layout, facilities, activities, funding, resources and relationships.

Our decision in the participant survey to explore older men's knowledge of the closest '*community organisation where adults can go to learn things*' (in Question 7) was deliberately and carefully worded. We avoided the terms researchers tend to use such as ACE, VET or TAFE since in many Australian communities those terms and the associated organisations were either not present or unlikely to be locally used or commonly understood. We framed this adult learning organisation survey question (Number 7) to get an idea about how older men (other than those already undertaking an ACE program) felt about hypothetically accessing learning (as distinct from education) through that organisation. In reality, older men who answered the question may have been thinking about different organisations and sectors, particularly in capital and regional cities

¹ Six survey respondents who were less than 50 years of age and two other men whose ages were missing were excluded from the survey analysis.

where there was more learner organisation choice, including several learning organisations that might have fitted the generic adult learning organisation description.

The interviewers brought sixteen participant surveys to each organisation, with the header customised for each particular organisation plus reply paid envelopes (see Appendix 1). One survey was given to each of the older men who took part in the interview and was invited to complete and return the survey afterwards. The person who set up the interviews was offered the balance of the surveys but was only encouraged to take the number of surveys that could realistically be distributed and returned by men over 50 who participated in that organisation.

The person who set up the interview completed a separate and different organisation survey about characteristics of the organisation. The results of this organisation survey have been added to original survey template in Appendix 2.

The recruitment of interviewees (ideally 3-4 in one interview) was organised by a known and trusted informant in each community organisation. The interviews typically took place at the organisation or in another place familiar to the participants. Interviews were audio recorded, typically for approximately 30 minutes. All interviewees were fully informed and had previously consented to the audio-recorded interview by signing the Statement of Informed Consent (Appendix 3). Each participant took away a one page Plain Language Statement with project, University of Ballarat research ethics and researcher contact details. Interview questions applied to men as active participants in a particular community organisation.

Focus group interview schedule and protocols

The interviews followed a semi-structured format based around an exploration of the following research questions.

1. Tell me about this organisation and what you do when you come here?
2. What benefits do you get out of participating in the activities associated with this organisation?
3. Do any of these benefits flow on to others, such as to your families, work and communities? Tell me about those benefits?
4. What do you learn through coming here and participating in these activities? Give some examples.
5. What advice would you give to similar organisations in order to attract, involve and benefit older men?

Classification and selection of organisations

The apparently simple predetermined classification of particular organisations into the six ideal types from above was more difficult in practice. This section includes an explanation of some of the difficulties in objectively selecting organisations for study and achieving a balanced or representative survey sample through informants and organisation participants with busy lives outside of the organisation being studied.

In the case of *adult and community education (ACE)* organisations, it was difficult in some localities to identify community owned and managed ACE as a separate form of provision as recognized in many western countries and in some other Australian states including Victoria and New South Wales. In Ceduna, non-vocational access programs provided in TAFE (Technical and Further Education) were identified as the closest equivalent. While the Tasmanian state government manages a network of On Line Access Centres in Tasmania, our research suggests that in locations such as Oatlands where the facility is part of a secondary school very few older men are involved. Indeed the On Line Access Centre in Oatlands was not able to identify a sufficient number of men over 50 men as clients to be interviewed and was therefore unable to fully participate in the study.

The diversity of available organisations in some organisation categories in larger cities made objective sampling difficult. *Sporting* organisations were the most diverse and relatively easy to

identify and contact. The main difficulty, particularly with sporting organisations and churches in the larger cities, was deciding which organisations to approach and to include in the study.².

The most diverse, and therefore the potentially least coherent organisation category was our *religious, Indigenous or cultural* group. While there was a wide choice of Aboriginal organisations in Ceduna, in Oatlands there was none. Similarly there was a wide range of multicultural organisations in Blacktown to choose between but very few in several other sites: in Oatlands there were none. We are therefore aware that our achieved sample under represents the one quarter of Australians who speak another language at home (our sample included only 5%: 10 respondents) and also Indigenous Australians (our sample only includes 0.5%: one respondent).

The age-related component of the *age and disability* group was relatively easy to identify through organisations in all sites including through over 50s organisations, particularly in South Australia. While twelve per cent of all informants (26 men) reported a disability, no disability-specific organisation was included in the sample. However one men's shed in the Noarlunga site specifically catered for men with dementia.

Volunteer *fire and emergency service* organisations (in which we include ambulance, coastal and surf rescue) are ubiquitous in all parts of populated Australia away from capital cities. We have included one 'Meals on Wheels' organisation in the Noarlunga site in South Australia in this category because the nature of its essential, voluntary service fits better there than in other categories.

The final group, *men's special interest* organisations was created to be inclusive of a diverse range of organisations catering only or almost exclusively for men. Such specialist men's organisations were present in all sites but were more numerous and diverse in larger cities. While community men's sheds were either present or in the planning stages³ in all locations only three sheds: in the Bridgewater, Noarlunga and Lismore sites, were included in the achieved sample. In common with shed practice in Australia, several of these sheds included either some women or children. Other organisations included in this very diverse group were a men's and family centre in Lismore, a gay and bisexual men's social group and a men's discussion group in Noarlunga, a men's swimming group and gay men's pottery group in Blacktown, an older men's activity program in an 'adult activity centre' in Ceduna, a gardening and war veteran's groups in Bridgewater comprising mainly men and the 95 per cent male Rotary club in Oatlands.

While some of these groups were exclusively or mainly male, it is evident, even from this brief introduction, that in many organisation types and organisations, membership was not restricted to men or older men, and that aspects of masculinity and age played different roles in different organisations. An exploration of these different roles is one of our aims in this research. So too is an attempt to find alternative and better ways of assigning organisations to categories in ways that recognize the different roles age and masculinity may or may not play in enhancing older men's learning and wellbeing.

It is important to note that while an attempt was made to secure a sample which included at least one of the six organisation types in each of six sites, in two sites (Lismore and Blacktown) practical considerations resulted in one organisation type ('Indigenous religious or cultural') not being sampled. Additional organisations in some categories were included where feasible in several other sites in anticipation of this problem. In the Blacktown site no fire or emergency service organisation was included, making the total achieved sampled in this category five organisations rather than the target of six.

A profile of participating community organisations

Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of achieved organisations sampled by survey and interview by site and organisation type.

³ The general selection criteria was for organisations that had been active for at least 12 months.

Table 2 Achieved sample by organisation type

Type	<i>Bridgewater</i>	<i>Oatlands</i>	<i>Noarlunga</i>	<i>Ceduna</i>	<i>Blacktown</i>	<i>Lismore</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>ACE</i>	2	1	2	1	2	1	9
<i>Sport</i>	1	1	2	2	1	1	8
<i>IRC</i>	2	1	1	2	0	0	6
<i>Age</i>	1	1	1	1	2	3	9
<i>FES</i>	1	1	1	1	0	1	5
<i>Men's</i>	3	1	3	1	1	2	11
ALL	10	6	10	8	6	8	48

Key: ACE = Adult and community education; IRC= Indigenous, religious, cultural; FES= Fire or emergency services.

Results

A profile of adult learning in the communities

Formal opportunities for adults to learn in the six diverse sites are closely related to accessibility and remoteness (ARIA+). The larger cities have the biggest range of accessible and publicly facilitated education and training services and programs and infrastructure on TAFE and university campuses. The smallest and least accessible centres have relatively limited learning opportunities and sometimes ICT (information and communications technology). This section briefly summarises the adult learning options (including non-formal and informal opportunities) available in each site with particular reference to options available for older men. The sites have been ordered from lowest to highest remoteness / highest to lowest accessibility (increasing ARIA+).

Blacktown (ARIA+ 0.00; population approx. 271,000)

Blacktown City is located in the western heart of Greater Sydney, lying half way between the Sydney CBD and the Blue Mountains. Blacktown City is the largest retail and commercial centre west of Parramatta. With a host of international attractions and major sporting venues and events each year, Blacktown City LGA has the largest urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in NSW with 7,055 Indigenous people making up 2.6 per cent of the population. In addition to this, Blacktown's population is culturally and linguistically diverse with over 184 Countries and 156 Languages represented within its community.

Blacktown is the home of the TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute's Blacktown College. Programs running at the college have an emphasis on business services, information technology, tourism and automotive trade courses. To service the area's socially diverse population, the college has built a strong reputation for English language and literacy and tertiary preparation. Blacktown also has a wide range of Adult and Community Education programs running through community centres, one of which includes the Macquarie Community College Blacktown, where Adult Migrant English Programs are offered to a range of recently migrated residents to the area. Other adult community learning opportunities are through the local RSL, leisure and hobby groups and the Salvation Army.

Noarlunga (ARIA 0.00; City of Onkaparinga population approx 117,000)

Noarlunga is a district name for a cluster of rapidly expanding, coastal suburbs within the City of Onkaparinga approximately 25km south of the centre of Adelaide. The newer suburbs around Port Noarlunga and south to Aldinga are concentrated on the relatively flat, coastal plain east of the southern extension of the Mount Lofty Ranges within the catchment of the Onkaparinga River. The 2006 census data for the City of Onkaparinga identifies relatively high concentrations of people in more densely settled suburbs that are unemployed or without post school qualifications. Around one third of all residents over 15 years old are not in the labour force.

The post-school offerings other than through TAFE include Adult and Community Education, such as through the Hackham East Community Centre, and a wide range of vocational programs

through Christies Beach High School Adult Re-entry and Adult Education Centre, Southern Beach Vocational College, as well as Southern Adelaide and Fluerieu Trade School.

Bridgewater (ARIA 0.55; population approx 10,000)

Bridgewater is a small, outer suburb of Hobart located approximately 20 km north west of the city in the local government area (LGA) of the Municipality of Brighton. The LGA also includes the town of Brighton, the historical towns of Pontville and Tea Tree and the suburbs of Old Beach, Gagebrook, and Honeywood. Brighton itself sits on the northern bank of the Derwent River, connected to Hobart mainly via the landmark steel bridge and causeway that is the source of the town's name. The main road through the town is the busy Midlands Highway, connecting Launceston to the north of the island State with Hobart in the south.

Around 1993 the municipality of Brighton began to change significantly as part of a government strategy of modernisation. This changed this area's demographics from being a rural, farming area close to the city into a residential area on the edge of Greater Hobart. Bridgewater has numerous residential estates, some of which were established as public housing, some small industrial estates and some remaining small farms on the outer edges. It has a number of schools, shopping centres, a library and a thriving community centre. Bridgewater is one of the lowest socio-economic areas of Hobart. It has above average unemployment and above average crime figures. It also has one of the highest birth rates in Australia. While the median age across Tasmania is 39, for Hobart it's 37 and for Gagebrook it stands at 22.

Bridgewater has the lowest SEIFA (Socio-Economic Index for Area) of all six sites and also the lowest SEIFA in Tasmania (871), indicative of high relative socio-economic disadvantage. It also has the lowest Index of Education and Occupation (EDUOCC) of all six sites (840), again the lowest in Tasmania and the 23rd lowest in Australia. EDUOCC summarises variables in terms of the people in an area who are unemployed, their level of qualification and if employed, the type of jobs they are employed in. This low EDUOCC score indicates that the area has a lower proportion of people who are well educated, employed in professional occupations, proportionately higher unemployed people and more people in low skilled jobs (Adhikari 2006).

Lismore (ARIA+ 1.86; population approx 45,000)

Lismore positions itself as 'the heart of the Rainbow region' of Northern New South Wales. Being only 40km inland from Byron Bay, 90 minutes to the Gold Coast and 2 hours to Brisbane, the bustling regional city has more affinities with some parts of coastal, south-eastern Queensland than to many other areas of New South Wales. Its attractions include its mild climate, 'vast array of educational, shopping and sporting facilities' and close proximity to diverse, attractive and well-watered landscapes, rivers and forests, local 'villages' and the coast.

Lismore is relatively rich in terms of its wide range of formal and less formal adult education options. Apart from being the site of the major campus of Southern Cross University Lismore and North Coast Institute of TAFE (with an active Aboriginal Learning Partnership), Lismore also has a very wide community education opportunities available to and inclusive of older men. These include ACE North Coast, U3A Northern Rivers, Lismore Over 50s Adult Activity Centre, Lismore Senior Citizens Club and Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Club. Lismore is unusual in that it has a long running and very active Men and Family Centre directed specifically at men's needs. Several community men's sheds are active in surrounding towns and one is planned for Lismore itself.

Oatlands (ARIA+ 4.74; population 540 in 2006)

Oatlands, 83km north of Hobart and 115km south of Launceston is one of Tasmania's oldest rural towns, with many buildings in its impressive main street dating from the 1820s. The Black War between colonial invaders and local Aborigines took place in the surrounding districts. In 2009 Oatlands is a small rural town in the Southern Midlands Council, noted for having the largest collection of colonial (mainly Georgian) sandstone buildings in a village environment in Australia,

but also having an ageing population, very limited cultural or ethnic diversity, town businesses highly dependent on the passing tourist trade and a relatively high proportion of retirees. Given its small size, many of the numerous service organisations in Oatlands are struggling to maintain members and office bearers.

Oatlands District High School provides schooling to Year 10. As in many parts of rural Tasmania, students who are able to go beyond Year 10 at the local school study away from town. The Oatlands On Line Access Centre (OAC), operating since 1998, is located on an extension of the High School library and opens around 24 hours per week with volunteer assistance. It appears to be the only active, publicly supported adult education resource in Oatlands, since the prominently signposted *Oatlands Community House* and *Central Tasmanian Community College* are effectively inactive. The Oatlands OAC, according to its 2007-8 Annual Report, is part of 'a network of 66 Online Access Centres established throughout Tasmania and is supported by the State Government through the Department of Education'. While these Centres were perceived to be part of Adult and Community Learning Services in Tasmania they have undergone a series of reviews and restructures. While the Oatlands OAC Centre has previously offered Certificate II in Information Technology and Business, in its early 2009 form, the Oatlands Centre was not providing realistic 'second-chance education and training opportunities' as the government originally intended. While a small number of women appeared to be using the ICT services supported by a team of volunteers (most of the activity involving 1:1 assistance) very few men are involved. Too few men over 50 were using the computer and internet service in the Oatlands OIC for it to participate in the current study.

Ceduna (ARIA+ 10.74; population approx 3,800)

Ceduna is a small and remote town on the Eyre Highway picturesque Murat Bay approximately 800km east of Adelaide on the Great Australian Bight. The town and region, highly dependent on the agricultural, mining and seafood sectors is the last major town on the 1,900km drive to Perth and the first after crossing the Nullabor Plain from the West on National Highway One. It positions itself as the 'business hub of the far west coast' as well as the 'Oyster capital of Australia'. The nearby Port of Thevenard is an important export point for salt and gypsum and likely to play a future role in mineral sands development in the far west region. Being a regional service centre for the surrounding areas the town also has a high proportion (24%) of Aboriginal people and services oriented to them. Ceduna has the second lowest SEIFA (Socio-Economic Index for Area) of the six sites and also the second lowest SEIFA in South Australia (911), indicative of high relative socio-economic disadvantage. The town also has a large number of active community organisations and a relatively large proportion of retirees and 'sea changers' attracted by the coast and the relatively mild, sunny weather all year round.

Ceduna has a sizeable Campus of South Australian TAFE on a site approximately 1km south of the centre of town which includes an Aboriginal and Islander study centre and which provides some adult education programs. Apart from the Ceduna Adult Activity Centre, run as an outreach of the Ceduna District Health Service there is otherwise no dedicated adult or community education access in Ceduna, and no obvious, public place for local adults to gather to learn or to regularly access computers or the internet. The Ceduna Senior Citizens Village, adjacent to the Hospital, as well as the Seaview Village Aboriginal Aged Care Village cater for the relatively high and growing proportion of older retirees unable to live in their own homes.

A profile of organisation participants and their survey responses

The participant survey summarised in Table 3 by site and organisation type achieved an overall response rate of 57% (219 respondents) from 48 diverse organisations in six sites.

Table 3 Achieved responses (number & per cent) by organisation type and site

Type	Tas URBAN Bridgewater	Tas RURAL Oatlands	SA URBAN Noarlunga	SA REMOTE Ceduna	NSW URBAN Blacktown	NSW Region Lismore	Totals Response
ACE	9/19	1/3	17/22	0/5	1/7	11/11	23/40 58%
Sport	8/16	5/9	23/25	6/13	0/3	5/9	38/65 58%

<i>IRC</i>	3/6	6/6	1/12	4/5			14/29 48%
<i>Age/Dis</i>	0/16	3/6	3/10	5/5	4/4	22/34	37/75 52%
<i>FES</i>	3/7	6/6	5/10	2/10		7/7	23/40 58%
<i>Men's</i>	6/13	5/7	21/38	9/9	4/5	14/32	
Totals	29/77	26/37	62/117	26/47	9/14	59/93	219/385
Response	38%	70%	53%	55%	64%	63%	57%

Key: ACE = Adult and community education; IRC= Indigenous, religious, cultural; Age/Dis = Age-related or disability; FES= Fire or emergency services; Men's= men's special interest organisations; fractions represent number of surveys returned over the total number distributed (less those returned blank). Response rates express these fractions as percentages.

The participant survey achieved an overall response rate of 57% (227 respondents; 219 of whom were over 50) from 48 diverse organisations in six sites. The response rate is such that the responses can be seen as an approximate indication of participant attitudes, though not fully representative of all organisation members. The analyses that follow are restricted to the 219 men over 50 (six men under 50 and two men who did not identify their age were excluded from the analysis).

Because many of the organisation contacts were relatively active, literate office bearers in the organisations as well as participants in the surveys and interviews, the achieved sample is slightly skewed towards relatively educated, older men and one quarter (26%) had completed Year 12 at school). The men surveyed mostly (83%) identified as 'active participants' in their organisations. Around on in four (42%) held 'a leadership role' within the organisation and 59 per cent had been active in the organisation for more than two years.

Using the data from accessibility remoteness (ARIA) classifications for the six sites, there were similar proportions of respondents from major cities (Blacktown and Noarlunga: 36% of respondents) or inner regional areas (Lismore and Bridgewater: 40% of respondents). There were equal proportions in the total respondent sample from an outer region (Oatlands, 12% of respondents) and from a remote/very remote region (Ceduna, 12% of respondents).

Returns were received from each of the six organisation types (ACE; sport; Indigenous, religious, cultural; age-related and disability; fire and emergency services; men's and special interest). The smallest number of returns (and smallest proportion of the total sample) was from the 'Indigenous, religious, cultural' group (n=14, 6% of total returns) and the 'fire and emergency services' organisation type (n=23, 11% of total returns). The largest number of returns (and biggest proportion of the total sample was from the 'men's and special interest', 'ACE' and 'sporting' group types: (50, 48 and 47 returns respectively: 23%, 22% and 22% respectively of total returns).

The responses to each question are not discussed in detail here, but have been added to the original survey instrument as a percentage of all valid responses to all questions and sub-questions in Appendix 1. This section summarises important, overall findings from the survey.

Firstly most respondents were very positive about their experiences in the organisation. Around two thirds participated either a few times a week (36%) or weekly (27%). They particularly enjoyed being involved 'when they want to' (98% agreement). They also recognized the critical importance of the role of the organisation leader (96% agreement). Respondents were very positive also about most of the outcomes 'as a result of' participating', most notably 'doing what they really enjoy' and 'giving back to the community'. They were least in agreement about 'expecting to get more paid work' (88% total disagreement, including one third [34%] who strongly disagreed) or 'getting access to men's health information' (46% total disagreement) as a result of participating. Men overwhelmingly viewed the community organisation in which they were surveyed as a place to meet new friends (93% agreement), keep them healthy (89% agreement), give back to the community (88% agreement), learn new skills (84% agreement) and 'to be with other men' (77% agreement). Seven out of ten men (70%) also saw it as a place for them to 'get them out of the house'.

Being over 50, most men (81%) were married or previously married, with children (86%) and around three quarters (73%) still lived with a wife or partner. While most older men (78%) were 'satisfied with life generally' in the past five years, life had thrown up a number significant changes

for men in the same interval. Four out of ten (42%) had experienced retirement and one in three (32%) had experienced 'a major health crisis'. Around one quarter (23%) had experienced a 'significant loss' in their lives or a new impairment or disability (22%). Around one in five (19%) had experienced depression. Other family related changes in the past five years included a new personal relationship (16%), separation from a partner (12%) and separation from children (9%). Unlike in surveys of men with younger average ages (such as our WA DET study), difficulties with a financial crisis (12%), unemployment, or difficulties with a business or job (3%) were at much lower frequencies.

While only ACE and fire organisations typically incorporated formal learning or training, more than half (57%) of participants recognized opportunities for learning hobby or leisure skills through the organisation and more than four out of ten recognized opportunities for learning team or leadership skills (43%), safety or health skills (44%). One third recognized opportunities through the organisation for 'learning about computers or the internet' (37%) as well as communication or literacy skills (34%). Many of these skills, and particularly health skills, internet and computer or communication and literacy skills were seen to transfer usefully to home, work or the community.

Learning by participating was perceived very favourably. Almost all (94%) of participants agreed that they were keen to learn more, would like to improve their skills (95%) and that 'being part of the organisation' helped them to learn (91% agreement). Around one half (48%) agreed that their 'organisation should offer more opportunities for learning' and 47% of participants agreed that they were hypothetically interested in participating in further learning. Importantly, a further 36 per cent left open the possibility of participating with a 'maybe' and only 17 per cent registered an outright 'no'.

Men expressed a wide interest in a range of preferred learning styles *within* their organisation, with an overall strong preference for hands-on learning (72%) within the organisation (76%) from a fellow organisation member with the appropriate skills (63%) or outsider 'brought in' (31%).

Asked about their *general* learning preferences, and given a wide multiple choice, most men agreed that they enjoyed learning 'in practical situations' (95%) and 'by doing' (97%), or 'in a mixed group including women' (89%). Nevertheless around two thirds (64%) of men also agreed that they 'generally enjoyed to learn in a group with men'. Interestingly, while computer mediated learning has made recent rapid inroads with younger people, around two thirds (64% of) these men over 50 disagreed that they enjoy to learn 'via the computer or internet'.

Older men's attitudes towards the local adult learning organisation were very mixed. Most (82%) agreed that it was 'held in high regard by the local community' and 'would use it anytime if they really needed to' (85%), though 27% 'would not feel comfortable going there'. While around three quarters (74%) of men saw the closest adult learning organisation as 'a useful place for them to do courses', only around one in five (22%) of all men had attended a formal learning program in the past year.

Men were asked to identify possible learning impediments. The strongest agreement was very pragmatic: they would be more likely to be involved in learning 'if there was something they really wanted to learn' (86%). A majority (61%) identified the importance of having programs or courses available at times that suited them. Importantly, a similar proportion (58%) would be more likely to be involved in learning to if there was 'somewhere locally they considered a good place to learn'. Gendered learning issues were present for a significant minority of older men; 43% would be more likely to learn 'if there were more learning situations where men were encouraged' though only one quarter (23%) saw the local availability of 'more male tutors or teachers' as an impediment to them learning. Around four out of ten of these 50+ men (42%) saw their age itself as a learning impediment and a significant proportion identified either their health status (39%), their confidence (31%), the availability of shorter courses (30%) or proximity to their organisation to where they lived (31%) as an impediment to their own learning.

Participant perceptions of learning by organisation

Older men participating in fire and emergency service organisations

The relatively small number of fire and emergency service organisation respondents (N= 23) expressed a relatively strong interest in learning and recognized strong opportunities to learn through the organisation about safety and health skills and also about communication or literacy skills. Their preference is for learning practical skills in outdoor settings. This group expressed concern about a very strong, unnecessary emphasis on learning and being formally accredited things they can already do.

Older men participating in age-related and disability organisations

Age and disability organisation participants (N=37) recognized the value, particularly in the home context, of learning about computers or the internet. They have strong preferences for learning in by doing, in groups in practical situations. Given that many men in this category spend much of their week at home they are more interested than other groups also to learn on their own from books and other written materials.

Older men participating in ACE

ACE participants (N=47) were most likely of all groups surveyed to expect to get paid work as a consequence of participating, though this expectation was still negative (an average of 2.4 on a 4 point scale, where 4 is strongly disagree). On average they recognize and value opportunities to learn about computers or the internet through the organisation and the usefulness of this learning to their home situation. They were most likely of all groups to defend their local learning organisation, presumably the organisation they were surveyed in, as being held in high regard in the community, a useful place to do courses and a valuable resource. Unlike with other participant groups, most ACE participants had relatively short periods of association with the providers: for around eight out of ten older men for less than five years and for three out of ten for less than one year

Older men participating in sporting organisations

Men participating in sporting organisations (N=47) were much more likely than other groups to have access to learning a hobby or leisure skill through the organisation and enjoy learning outside. This group of men were much less likely than other groups to regard learning about computers or the internet as useful and were least likely to know much about or use the local adult education provider.

Older men participating in Indigenous, religious cultural organisations

The small number of respondent in the diverse *Indigenous, religious cultural* group (n=14) across five organisations in the group limits confident group characterisation in relation to learning. Participants perceived strong opportunities for learning 'team or leadership skills' and 'communication or literacy skills'. They were much more positive than any other group examined about accessing learning 'through a local community learning centre or neighbourhood house' though much more likely to recognize the limitations of learning locally.

Older men participating men's special interest organisations

The similarly diverse but relatively numerous respondents (N=50) in the men's special interest group are particularly (but not universally) interested in learning with other men. They particularly recognized the availability through the organisation of learning technical, trade or craft skills. They also recognized the particular usefulness of these skills at home. Equally with fire and emergency services organisations, they were particularly interested in hands-on learning. These men were least likely of all groups to go to ACE or feel comfortable going there. They were most likely of all

groups to perceive the lack of male teachers or tutors, a lack of encouragement for men's learning and program availability at inappropriate times as an issue affecting their own learning.

Participant perceptions of learning by employment status

This research provides a unique opportunity to directly compare the experiences and perceptions of men not in the paid workforce (unemployed or not in the workforce) from men who were in paid work (see cross tabulation in Table 4.

Table 4 Paid workforce and retirement status of survey respondents

		I am retired from paid work		
		No	Yes	Total
No	Count	31	144	
	% within I am currently in the paid workforce	17.7%	82.3%	100
	% within I am retired from paid work	38.8%	100.0%	78
Yes	Count	49	0	
	% within I am currently in the paid workforce	100.0%	.0%	100
	% within I am retired from paid work	61.3%	.0%	21
Total	Count	80	144	
	% within I am currently in the paid workforce	35.7%	64.3%	100
	% within I am retired from paid work	100.0%	100.0%	100

KEY: This cross table considers all respondents to the survey including five men whose age was either less than 50 or not given.

In summary, a significantly smaller proportion of men who participated in community organisations in our research were in paid employment (n=49; 22%) that those retired (n=155; 64%), with the balance unemployed (n=32; 14%). The discussion that follows summarizes key differences between these three groups.

Men in paid employment in community organisations

Men in paid work, most of whom were in their 50s, were much less likely to have stayed on at school and completed some form of post-school training. Unlike unemployed and retired men they are significantly more likely (39% agreement) to prefer additional opportunities for learning through the organisation to be provided by bringing in tutors or trainers from outside their town or suburb (5% agreement for each) rather than using a member of the organisation with appropriate skills. Men in work are more constrained by lack of free time to engage in learning but are most actively engaged in the community organisation including in leadership roles within the organisation. Men in paid employment are significantly less likely to have experienced a wide range of difficulties in the past five years, particularly depression, than men who are retired (21%) or unemployed (27%).

Retired men in community organisations

Men who are retired (mostly in age classes over 60 years) are more likely than other men in community organisations to be on a pension and be married (or previously married). Being older there is a greater likelihood of having left school very early (before Year 9). They are much more positive about the benefits of participating in community organisations than men who are in paid work or unemployed. They most enjoy being able to participate socially, when they want to and particularly benefit from mentoring others in the organisation. They consider that as a result of participating they have made good friends. Other positive outcomes from participation include having a say as to how the organisation is run, the activities trip and outings. Retired men are most positive about being able to give back to and more accepted in the community and getting access to men's health information. They are most likely of the three groups to see the organisation as a

place to be with other men and meet new friends. Importantly most (61%) heard about the organisation through friends.

The learning available to them through the organisation particularly includes hobby or leisure skills but also includes learning about computers or the internet, the latter that is seen to be a particularly useful skill in the home. Retired men generally prefer to participate at set times and on set days and have a strong preference for learning from within or brought into the organisation, and a strong preference for delivery within the organisation itself.

While a relatively high proportion (81%) said that they had 'experienced satisfaction with life in general' in the past five years, in the same interval they have been at much greater risk of having experienced a number of often difficult change circumstances: 59 per cent have retired, 37 per cent had a major health crisis, 28 per cent a significant loss in their lives, 27 per cent a new impairment or disability and 21 per cent have experienced depression. Nearly one in five (18%) have had a new personal relationship.

Unemployed older men in community organisations

Unemployed men are, unsurprisingly, more interested than men in the other two groups to get more paid work and most likely in this older age cohort to be in their 50s. Around one half are specifically interested in a course to get a qualification and around one quarter in learning as preparation for further study. They are also far more likely than other groups to agree that opportunities for learning elsewhere in the community are limited, that members of the organisation need more opportunities to learn, and specifically that the organisation should offer more opportunities for learning. They would prefer any new learning opportunities to be provided 'in house' in the organisation.

Men identify a number of mainly external barriers to learning. They perceive a lack of other local opportunities, situations and resources to learn locally at convenient times. They are also more likely to identify the lack of assistance from a partner and their health as barriers to learning as well as relatively few situations where men are encouraged to learn.

As a result of participating they acknowledge that their social skills have improved. Like retired men they have a desire via the organisation, to 'give back to the community'. Around one in five (18%) have an impairment or disability and one in five left school very early (before Year 9). A significant proportion had also experienced difficult circumstances in the past five years particularly relating to their wellbeing, particularly their relationships. Around one quarter (27%) had experienced separation from a partner or depression and 17 per cent had experienced either separation from children or a family home. They were more likely to recognize a wide range the available learning through the organisation, particularly of 'technical, trade or craft skills' as well as 'hobby and leisure skills'. Unemployed older men valued the acquisition of computer or internet skills at home.

Participant perceptions of wellbeing outcomes by organisation

1. Though a relatively small group to make firm conclusions about, *fire and emergency service* organisations participants appeared to provide very positive wellbeing outcomes associated with participation. What was apparent from the surveys analysed, and backed up by the interview data from five sites was evidence of opportunities (typically a few times a week) to actively participate over many years, take on leadership roles, mentor and mix with participants of different ages and a high level of enjoyment associated with participation. The role of a responsible leader in fire and emergency service organisations was seen as particularly important. Participants recognized that as a consequence of participating that they had learned new skills, given back to the community and that their organisation skills had improved.

2. Two thirds of *age and disability related* organisation participants were over 70 and one quarter were over 80. These older men were more constrained by the perceived desirability of participating on particular times and days, and were most likely to enjoy the 'trips and outings'. However they were also more likely to sense that their communication or literacy skills, social skills and

confidence had improved as a consequence of participating. There was a very strong sense that the organisation was perceived as a place to get out of the house, meet new friends and keep healthy. Around one half of men who *were* interested in more learning opportunities were interested in learning where they could meet other people. A relatively high proportion of participants had recently experienced a disability (28%), around one in eight were dependent on others to get to the organisation and a high proportion (71%) heard about the organisation through friends. Men had typically been associated with the organisation for many years: for around three quarters of men for at least five years.

3. *ACE (Adult and community education)* participants were much less likely than any other group to currently live with a wife or partner: more than four out of ten currently lived on their own and two out of ten had no direct access to a car. In the past five years, on average, this group, whose modal age was in their 50s, had had relatively difficult lives. Less than one third expressed satisfaction with life generally, one half had had a major health crisis, one third had experienced a significant loss in their lives, around one quarter had experienced a new impairment, disability or depression and one in five had experienced unemployment or a major financial crisis. A relatively high proportion of ACE participants had experienced enhanced access to men's health information as a consequence of participating. One in five had been referred to ACE by a health or welfare worker.

4. Men participating in *sporting organisations* particularly highly valued being able to participate, enjoyably and socially, 'when they wanted to'. A relatively high proportion, around one half, were current or former tradesmen and most were in their 50s or 60s and very active in the organisation. They particularly valued the good friends they had made in the organisation over long periods of time. One third had been involved with a similar organisational since childhood and around two thirds had been involved for between 10 and 40 years.

5. The small number of respondents in the diverse *Indigenous, religious cultural* group across five organisations in the group limits confident group characterisation in relation to wellbeing. Participants were typically in their 60s, been involved for periods of greater than 20 years took part at least weekly. They reported a strong sense of 'feeling at home' in the organisation and 'having a say as to how the organisation was run'. Friendships made through the organisation were very strong and men were very comfortable about women participating. Participants reported a very strong sense of being 'satisfied with life generally' and of 'giving back' to the community.

6. The *men's special interest* group were, equally with the ACE group, most likely to get access to men's health information as a result of participating. They were most likely to regard their organisation as a place to be with other men and to learn new skills. A relatively high proportion (27%) had experienced depression in the past five years. Consistent with the relative recency of the men's sheds in this group, a high proportion of men had become involved in the organisation in the past five years.

Impact of age on learning and wellbeing

The number of respondents age classes of more than 80 years is insufficient to make valid comparisons with these ages. This brief general summary is based on data available for the range 50-80 years. At the higher age ranges men who left school very early, by contemporary standards (Year 10 or less), comprise a significant majority of participants. Toward the older end of this range where the likelihood of retirement from paid work is higher, older men share many similar perceptions and experiences of life and learning. Older men enjoy the social aspect of learning particularly if the environment is homely. Older men typically report having less say over how the organisation is run and fewer chances to mentor others. They are more likely to regard the organisation they participate in as a place to keep them healthy and connected. Older men are much more likely in the past five years to have experienced a major health crisis, a new impairment or disability. However with less likelihood in the same interval of having experienced difficulties at work, in unemployment, a business or with their finances or with personal relationships, they report reasonably high rates of general satisfaction with life (78 per cent per cent).

The skills available to them through older men’s organisations are much more about hobby and leisure skills and much less for most other skills. Definite interest in more learning decreases with age. What declines more markedly is an interest in courses that lead to qualifications or preparation for further study. Interestingly, preferred learning styles and locations do not change much with age. Older men are more likely to favourably regard the local learning organisation. The perceived barriers to learning, as with retired men have more to do with age, health, proximity and suitable class times rather than with the availability of free time.

Learning narratives from the six organisation types

This section of our report departs from comparisons of the quantitative data generated by the surveys. It looks closely at what individuals *within* organisations, seen to be representative or illustrative of the six organisation types, are saying in the focus group interviews about the learning and wellbeing they experience *through and within* the organisation.

We have chosen to write narratives for 15 organisations: around one third of all 48 organisations that we have transcribed interview data for, including at least one organisation in each site and each organisation type. For each organisation, summarized in Table 4, we have started with a ‘brief picture of the organisation’ to introduce the site, establish a context for the interview and to help understand the learning and wellbeing being reported by interviewees. We then look specifically (and usually separately) at the learning and wellbeing being reported, before turning to some of the gender issues identified by older men. The ‘Standing back’ sections seek to critically link the learning identified in each organisation type to the Australian Core Skills Framework as well as to the World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage (and some alternative opposites). These particularly include social exclusion (social inclusion and community engagement); unemployment (employment and productive voluntary work); early lives (later lives) and stress (re-creation, exercise, relaxation and enjoyment) as well as food and substance abuse.

Table 4 Learning narratives by organisation type and site

Sites & Types	Adult & community	Sport	Church	Fire & Emergency	Age-related	Men’s Sp.I interest	TOTALS
Blacktown		Swimming				Pottery	2
Noarlunga	Comm. Centre			Meals on Wh.			2
Bridgewater		Anglers	Combined			Garden	3
Lismore	ACE			SES		Men’s Shed	3
Oatlands		RSL Bowls		Fire	Health Cent.		3
Ceduna			Uniting		Adult Activ.		2
TOTALS	2	3	2	3	2	3	15

KEY: Comm Centre= Community Centre; RSL=Returned Services League; Meals on W= Meals on Wheels; Health Cent= Multipurpose Health Centre; Adult Activ= Adult Activity centre.

Our narrative reporting conventions and limitations

In order to personalise the men’s accounts but retain confidentiality, in some cases we have given the men pseudonyms in some cases. All organisations selected for these narratives have checked and approved the text relating to their organisation to ensure its factual accuracy, the appropriateness of the men’s accounts and to avoid unwanted personal identification beyond the individuals or organisations.

Most citations are direct quotes from the original interviewee transcripts. Where words have been added by the researchers to improve or clarify meaning, they are indicated in square brackets. In some cases sections of text from the same informant that were separated in the interview have been cut and pasted to improve the flow. Where less important material has been deleted (and in some cases, where comments, sentences or phrases were not clear or audible enough for accurate transcription), three dots (...) have been added. Care has been taken in this process to ensure that the perceived interviewee meanings and original expressions are retained. Nevertheless the researcher ‘voice’ that prompted the interviewee comments and that actively

guided and 'shaped' the interview both beforehand and during the interview are missing in this account.

Inevitably and finally, our narratives are only as rich as the interview data contributed through our active interviewing by the participants. Our selection of organisations is perhaps more reflective of the success of the interview for all parties rather than on the success of the particular organisation. In some fascinating organisations, and despite our careful, advance preparation, a range of practical factors conspired 'on the day' against us achieving either a large enough (or 'representative') sample of interviewees, tapes that were able to be transcribed or in a few cases any interview at all.

In order to check that our organisation narratives met the confidentiality conditions of our university research ethics approval, we circulated a copy of a final draft of this report by email or postal mail to each organisation. We identified the pages we were asking to be checked, approved or edited before publication. Appendix 6 provides a copy of this request to organisation representatives to check the narratives in the report draft.

Structure of the narratives

For each organisation examined, we have, where appropriate, written under several broad headings: *A brief picture of the organisation*, *Learning through the organisation*, *Wellbeing through the organisation* and *Men in the organisation*.

For groups of like organisations we have added reflective *Standing back* sections. In these sections we do two things. Firstly, we reflect on what the narrative data tell us about the learning opportunities available to older men through a convenient and widely recognized Australian theoretical filter: the six aspects of communication identified in the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). Secondly, we critically examine the opportunities for enhancing health and wellbeing available through a convenient and widely recognized international theoretical filter: the nine World Health Organisation (2003) 'Determinants of Disadvantage' (and some alternative opposites). We return to examine these filters in more detail in the *Discussion* section.

Adult and community education organisations

ACE is an acronym: used widely and often loosely in Australia to refer to Adult and Community Education. In most Australian states, the word is not understood by most adults, even those adults who might be learning through a community-based or other 'provider' that is seen as part of the adult and community education sector.

Various described also as further education, access or community education, basic education, literacy and numeracy, adult and community education can be facilitated in a wide variety of settings, but principally those where the intent is about learning but the likely, direct outcome is not vocational. To illustrate the differences in approach to non-vocational learning, we have selected two quite different providers of non-vocational access-type programs. One is the *Hackham West Community Centre* in the Noarlunga site. The other is *North Coast ACE* in Lismore.

Hackham West Community Centre

A brief picture of the organisation

The Hackham West Community Centre (HWCC) motto on the masthead of its quarterly newsletter is overtly welcoming: *Where you enter as a stranger and you leave as a friend*. As one of the older men who work as volunteers said,

We have a motto that we don't judge anybody who walks in the door, you can have disabilities, you can come in a wheelchair, everyone is made welcome, we will fit them in wherever!

Located in a quiet, treed suburban rise opposite the Hackham supermarket with a vista over a suburban park and plenty of parking, the Centre is well located. The foyer is large and welcoming. Its fully equipped *Café Cuisine* serves cheap (\$3.50) meals as an important part of its community

outreach, in an area that otherwise has no adjacent shopping strip. The organisation's roots into community are deep. Its newsletter lists 23 different 'funders and sponsors'. On the tennis court fence outside is a large sign advertising a recent HWCC 'Community Carols and Fireworks' events sponsored by local politicians, Reynella Kiwanis and several local businesses. Aside from being generally welcoming, its A3 newsletter and its foyer noticeboards are packed with Community Centre program and service options for people of all ages, from Under 5s and Children, to Men/Women/Families as well as Community Groups. A wide range of community groups regularly uses the centre to meet and to run programs.

The Hackham West area is, on average, significantly disadvantaged with evidence of intergenerational unemployment, as one of our interviewees explained.

There's a very big drug problem. We get some of them here who come and see counsellors. ... There's not a lot of work here. ... Part of the problem is that a lot of the parents here have never worked, so they don't have those skills in work, so the second generation of children don't get a job, the parents say "We don't have a job. What do you want a job for? You're alright on the dole". ... The oil refinery shut down and the car manufacturers shut down and you have hundreds of people out of work and they have nothing else to do with themselves.

The three over 50 men interviewed had all come into the Hackham West Community Centre 'off the street' and like the slogan says, stayed on to help as friends of the centre. 'Trevor', 59 was now a volunteer in the kitchen. 'Ned', 54, was a volunteer youth worker but had secured some paid work in the Centre's Buildings and Maintenance with a previous work background in painting and decorating and had been there the longest, around seven years. Lawrie, 66 was a volunteer in Operations.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Ned explained that he had learnt and done heaps in seven years.

I came to the Centre with workplace injury, not under Work Cover. I got sick and tired of sitting at home doing nothing for six months, and came here and said "What can I do?" and they said "Make up fliers on the computer", and I said "I can use the computer but I don't know how to make the fliers. And they said, "We will show you how to do it". So for the last seven years I have been on management running the core organizing of the centre and making decisions on finance, financial structure, program structure, how a program runs. Then we changed the Board over and now I run operations, building maintenance. ... If things need fixing, I sort it out and if things need building I get the Council to do it. The Hackham West Community Centre supports disability programs, children's programs, teenage programs, the whole gamut.

Trevor originally came to the centre with anxiety and depression, and his ongoing voluntary participation is part of his recovery and enjoyment.

I was in the house for six months and then got out of it ... I had depression and anxiety and I went to a course at the Noarlunga Centre 'health and wellbeing' something like that, it was a long time ago and they brought me here to the centre and I started coming one day a week just to see how I would go and I got in touch with this bloke and he counselled me ... I get a lot out of [volunteering in the kitchen], if I didn't I would be a bundle of nerves. [I get] enjoyment, a feeling of being wanted, friendship. I would rather be here than at home. ... My wife left me 15 years ago. I have two daughters and five granddaughters and a grandson and we all get on. Except for this place I would be in a big rut. If anybody mentions this centre I would say 'Go for it, go do it'. It's the best thing they could ever do.

Ned agreed and illustrated how people are deliberately folded into the Centre by 'working themselves up'.

That's the good thing about all community centres. We have got a philosophy here, if you walk in the door, we will find something for you to do, regardless [of] whether you are putting bins out or sweeping floors. We don't only do that, we train people up to do other work. I run a kitchen and [Trevor] was one of my staff. A couple of years later I needed to step down to do other things but [Trevor] has taken over the kitchen. ... When [Trevor] came here he was peeling potatoes and washing dishes. He has gradually worked himself up.

Lawrie 'split up' from his family 20 years ago and moved to the Hackham area three years ago when his daughter moved there. He has been taken on and actively worked himself up with positive mentoring.

I came to this place ... 12 months ago and I had an interview. They asked me what could I do, and I said "Well I worked with kids" ... First I started the Breakfast Club and then [Ned] has taken over and I gradually worked myself up to [other] activities [like] men's breakfasts, and also I (inaudible). Its been really good, I have had a lot of support from [Ned] and [Trevor] since I have been here. They have shown me the right way to go and I really enjoy it. I like the atmosphere, I like the people and I like to meet people when they come into the Centre. ... I have achieved a lot. I have achieved more [here] in 12 months than I did in my working life.

Ned elaborated on how volunteers are formally trained for volunteering in the Centre with possible future pathways to TAFE and further education.

Being a volunteer here you don't have much choice about doing the courses. There are about ten courses you *have* to do: it's called Mandate of Notification training. It's now [called] Child Safety Environment training. Everybody that comes along here *has* to do that. We have a police check. We do training, health and safety training, we do customer service training and we are the first community centre that does it but every community centre will be doing it. The whole idea of people coming to the centre is we like the volunteering, we like teaching things. [We run] Certificate 3 [here] through TAFE, That was offered to all the volunteers here and they pay for it. They are now doing Certificate 3 for \$25 a module. [We do it so] that the people who have never been to TAFE will get the experience of TAFE, so they can go on to further education.

Ned had also learnt that about people skills and treating volunteers lightly

When I first came here I was a painter and decorator and I always thought I was a good boss and I thought I had lots of people skills until I started working here - and I found that I had none. They put me in charge of the kitchen and said "You need to get that kitchen running properly" and I didn't know how a kitchen was supposed to run, like health and safety and they said 'This is how its done' and left me alone. In a kitchen you have to treat people lightly. These people have been here for years they know how to do their job and you have to have people skills to work here. If you don't have people skills ... that's what I like about it is having the people skills.

All three men identified significant wellbeing benefits. Trevor considered that the learning ... changes your whole life, you become a totally different person. These days I tend to listen to what someone else has to say rather than just the blank wall.

Older men in the organisation

Unlike in many community centres, there have been several recent options overtly inclusive of older men, many of which involve food. Some of these programs are facilitated by a male *Fatherhood* worker who has an active men's program role. There is a monthly *Men's Breakfast* as well as a seven-week *Dad Factor* course for 'fathers, grandfathers, uncles and other male carers' that includes free supper. There is a *Silver Citz Over 50s Group* and an advertisement seeking volunteers for *The Shed* Southern Community Project nearby. For 'Dads with Kids' there is fortnightly *BBQ and Play*. 'For the young at heart' there is also Seniors and Over 50s Meal Country and Western Night. It has not always been like this. 'Ned', one of the interviewees and seven years a HWCC volunteer, said "When I started it was all women"

Ned explained things were happening and changing for men in the Centre.

We have a men's breakfast once a month and the last one we had last Friday we had 43 men. A fellow from the Council comes here and he talks about Council. He will put a topic up, [but] you don't have to discuss the topic. You can sit around table and you can talk about the weather or whatever, which I think a lot of them do. Most of the guys are in their 50s and they need to sit down with men and talk about men's issues, which going back 10 years ago or 15 years ago men didn't get into that side of things. They would sit at home and they wouldn't open up how they felt about things. Here where it's all men. ... Some people are a bit shy when they get in there and you put your hand up and say "Look this happened to me 20 years ago". When they sit with people and hear their stories they then come out and tell their story and feel better about that as well.

Ned put part of the change down to changes in the Community Centre.

This place has been here for 26 years, but in the hay day it didn't run all the stuff it runs now We put a lot of literature out there on the programs we have got and people come and access those programs. I went into a program last night called Dad Factor, it's Dads that need help raising their children. It doesn't matter if it is their children; it's for grandparents, it's how do you look after your grandchildren and that had about 10 people in it. That included young Dads, Godparents, grandfathers, great grandfathers, it involves the whole lot. Anyone can attend that Dads Factor once a week.

While Ned described himself as an 'accidental attendee' in the Dad's factor program and had stayed on to learn and contribute, he was also interested in boy's learning.

I was attending something else and I was here and I thought I would just duck in. It's a learning experience. As much as I can learn something from it I will probably give something back to the core group itself.

Part of the change to male inclusive programs was about having some more men on the Centre management committee, as Ned explained.

We [used to have] a management here which was made up of 14 people and only two men ... My boss said "Would you like to join management?" and I said 'Why would you want me to do that that?' and he said "I think you have the skills for management, but also we need more men on management, because as much as management is a great thing, if it is all women on management you are going to get a lot of women's stuff and we need more men in there to get the men's side of things going" ... So I think that's where it all stemmed from. We got more men on management [committee] and we started thinking about more men's programs and our boss holds a church thing once a month with a lot of men and he got a lot of men's programs happening and that's where it stemmed from.

I actually run a children's breakfast program and it's teaching them life skills as well as giving them breakfast. I am the now first male that has ever headed the breakfast program. It's always been for the last 20 years a woman. They brought me into the program specifically because they felt the boys in the program needed a male person.

Ned had a hypothesis, based on his experience of men in Centre programs, about the prevalence of back and medical problems.

[Just about] everybody that has come through the program for the last seven years, they have had back problems ... or some medical problem.

Trevor gave a few tips to other Centres for getting older men in the door.

Put a program in place so that they turn up. They don't spread the word enough, there are not enough pamphlets delivered to the older men ... because if they don't know what's going on they won't go, but if you deliver a pamphlet and they can see what is going on, they are more likely to go have a look see.

Ned passed on what they had learnt about the importance of using a cheap meal, welcoming conversation and friendship as a bait for men, flagged in the introduction.

We are quite sneaky in this community centre too. We will invite people in for lunch and when they get here ... we do up to 90 meals some days, and we will take some time and talk to the people at the tables and find out why they are here like "Can you tell me why you are here" I haven't seen you before, what brought you here?" ... "Oh, we just come for lunch we have heard the lunch is good" ... 'Oh would you be interested in coming to this program, we have a senior citz program on Wednesdays" ... so its really getting it out there that we do stuff here. ... We close down during the school holidays and we go to the local shops and see these old men and they're saying "Can you please hurry up and open the Centre for lunch" because it's their main meal for the day, they don't cook at home, they come here. ... That's important. It's their life, and they come up here and make friends. We have now got people coming who had never spoken to each other and are now friends and they say "We are just waiting for friends to turn up"

ACE (Adult Community Education) North Coast Inc Community College, Lismore

A brief picture of the organisation

ACE North Coast Inc main College (it has other Colleges in Tweed Heads, Kyogle and Casino) sits on a busy corner in the middle of the Lismore City CBD. Located in an historic brick building from a previous and smaller local government era, 'Terania Shire Council 1927' is permanently written into the masonry above the entrance, below which is the more recent sign 'ACE North Coast Inc',

with the slogan 'meeting our community's training needs'. While the provider has a history going back to 1992 with an 'Adult Community Education' focus, the newer terms 'College' and 'Community College' have more recently been inserted into the printed leaflets, and brochures, along with the slogan 'Real jobs for real people'. Despite being part of the widespread shift across Australia in adult and community education towards the accredited vocational and business end of the spectrum on multiple campuses, the provider still offers and promotes some 'leisure' and 'lifestyle' courses on its Lismore campus.

The Lismore College has a relatively formal and businesslike front office and foyer. Its infrastructure is oriented more toward serious classroom learning and training than to socializing. Its course brochure boasts 'eight training rooms including two fully supported computer labs with 20 designated training computers'.

Unlike many smaller centres, Lismore, being a reasonably large city, has several other vocational, adult and community education options with which North Coast ACE presumably competes for students. Apart from the major Southern Cross University campus in Lismore, the main North Coast TAFE Institute campus, the Lismore Over 50s Learning Centre, Lismore Senior Citizens Club and the Men's and Family Centre are all only a few blocks away. There is also a very active U3A Northern Rivers (University of the Third Age) in Lismore. Each of these organisations also offer some leisure and lifestyle courses.

There is nothing obvious in the North Coast ACE promotional material and course brochures which is suggestive of gender equity or that points to men-specific, male oriented or age-related courses, other than indirectly or by implication through the indicated courses of study. Approximately one third of its advertised offerings are 'vocational qualifications' (offering 300 different training modules) and one third are 'foundation and supplementary skills' courses. The other one third are 'leisure and lifestyle courses', most of which are oriented more to discretionary and alternative lifestyle, personal discovery, environmental, cultural and leisure programs than to basic health and wellbeing. While course costs vary, many of its courses of five weeks or longer courses cost in excess of \$100.

All of the five men selected for interview had initially undertaken non-vocational courses, were aged between 51 and 76 and were either unemployed or semi-retired. 'Ed', 51 was an ex-TAFE teacher who had done a progression of access courses leading recently to accredited training. 'Paul' was 53 and started with Life Drawing. 'Will', 63, 'Carl', 71 and 'Pat', 76 had all started with basic computer courses.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Pat, 76, a semi-retired ex veterinarian had done two computer-related courses at ACE North Coast to build up his skills. He came to ACE rather than to the nearby TAFE because he regarded TAFE as being "for the more serious".

I've done one two courses here ... [The first] was on computing and the more recent one has been on using Photoshop... I have done it because younger people are au fait with computer techniques and methodology generally but the past generations are not and I wanted to improve my skills in those areas. ... When I was in the workforce and when I needed help with computing there was always someone down the corridor or in the building, IT people, who I could call and they could sort out my problem. But now that I work from home ... there is no one at home during the day when I want advice who can help. ... My two sons and daughter are computer literate and they help me, but they are not living in Lismore anymore.

I didn't get as much benefit out of the two [courses] as I should have, but that was largely my fault. I was lazy. We were given homework to do on our own computers at home [which I didn't do]. I probably [only] got ten per cent out of it, but I think it was worth it to get that much, and you can build it up.

[I] differentiate between structured learning and other learning. I think structured learning is very satisfying because it gets you a job often and a promotion and I think self-satisfaction to be able to say

that you did well or topped the class or something like that. It's like being selected to the local footy team or the cricket team.

Paul, 53 was an artist at home and spent much of the workday week building his own house. He had recently done Life drawing, MYOB ('Managing your own Business') and music classes at ACE North Coast. Paul benefited from meeting people with similar interests as well as the discipline.

... an artist at home. ... The best thing with doing the [Life Drawing] course is you get access to models rather than have to organise it yourself. The MYOB I hadn't done for a while. I was doing a job where I needed it so I got the latest version.

With the different types of courses and [different] locations, you could turn up and do the work and get the paper [and nothing else]. ... We help each other but its not playtime ... [While there] you find people you know and tend to go back. It's great to find people with similar interests. Most of the stuff I have done is music and it's actually nice to get with people who don't do the same as you. It also gives you discipline because if you have to be here at 8 o'clock it makes you do stuff ... It's the discipline that I need.

[Learning] gets you a comfortable life, it gets you a good job, helps you grow and get your qualifications up and that kind of stuff makes you who you are.

I found with the ACE courses ... the music course [in particular] was in a non-threatening atmosphere. And those words stuck with me because [they are unlike] the advanced computer courses ... I would ... think "Gee they're going to be full of whiz kids". That non threatening atmosphere rang home with me and I enjoyed it.

Paul elaborated that he saw some formal and higher level courses as competitive, which he saw as a "male bloody thing. It's a non competitive atmosphere [in ACE]" which should be less threatening and more attractive to him as a man. Ed agreed.

I would [seen as] be a failure if I said I don't know something, I would be a failure if I said I had better go and learn something else, it would be a failure for the Australian male would say 'Gee ,someone else might know something'.

Will, 63 had previously been an optical dispenser before being made redundant close to retirement age. The Basic Computer course at North Coast ACE was part of the eligibility requirement for income support. Whilst unemployed and looking for work, Will was doing volunteer work with community transport as part of Work for the Dole.

I am going through Centrelink and it's a requirement. ... My wife ... got cancer so I want to get back to finding a job. So now I am Working for the Dole and then I came around here to do a Basic Computer course and going on from that I do a voluntary job in community transport in Lismore.

The basic computer course doesn't give me enough nous to actually go out and apply for a job. Anywhere I would to go to with my skills they would say 'Go jump' so that was really the social contact benefit. ... I was hoping that somebody would take me on, not in my chosen field, but in some other field for a few hours a week. I [can] work only a three days a week [because of my wife's hospital needs].

Ed, 51 was a visual artist and ex-TAFE teacher, before a life-changing, emotional breakdown. While he had most recently undertaken an accredited Community Services Certificate 3 course and the TAA (Certificate 4 in Training and Assessment) course as part of a Work for the Dole requirement,

... before that I done lots of 'hobby' courses, lifesaving, singing, dancing, whatever, so 'lifestyle' courses. ... About four years ago there was a fairly significant event. I had an emotional breakdown [while] I was teaching in [a regional city] and life changed dramatically for me. I was in a relationship and when that crashed I went to the Men's [and Family] Centre in Lismore to get my mind back on track. So my life changed. I [now] want to gain more skills to navigate this particular culture.

[While I hope to go on in] that area of social health I am not sure that I can cope with that. I don't know how I will personally go. ... The Certificate 4 in workplace training got me a job ... teaching drawing at TAFE ... and that's fantastic.

While the important courses for me are usually some sort of vocational advancement or change, what I get out mainly, as well as the qualification is the group contact. I think that is really important to me.

Through that group contact I am able to have some sort reference on how my life is going and I find that the most valuable factor. ... I use [other] people as some sort of guide as to how I am going. How people respond to me is a pretty big part in how I measure how I am getting through the world.

Without [group contact] I would be more narrow minded, more black and white, probably racist, probably sexist, probably everything else. Because I am isolated [at home] ... I avoid isolation in those [group] surroundings.

Carl was 71 and a semi-retired ex carpenter had tried a few things at North Coast ACE, mainly 'to challenge' himself as well as to develop networks.

You have to challenge yourself I reckon. Otherwise you become an old man at 45. You have to keep trying. ... A while back I did Basic Computing just to catch up on the jargon for the kids and grandkids. I did a Guitar course ... All because I am 69 and I want to learn to play before I die (laughter). I also [did a Surfing course]. With the Surfing courses, there's a couple of blokes I still meet and we surf together.

Everyday at school I was told I was stupid all the way through. ... We used to get belted. ... Anyone who did the slightest wrong thing got flogged ... I left and joined the Navy thinking I was stupid. ... Once I left the Navy ... I just blossomed and blossomed and blossomed and I got my HSC and University entrance and I just kept it up and learned advanced mathematics and navigation and advanced electronics and became a good footballer and good swimmer.

Standing back

The two ACE provider narratives provide quite different glimpses of learning and wellbeing

Hackham West Community Centre has demonstrated creative and successful ways to welcome and involve men as co-participants in the organisation. This participation ranges from involvement as community members in community events and participation in programs, to work as volunteers in the organisation. Older men get opportunities to develop and practice all aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Frameworks. Through participation, they get ongoing opportunities to restore and renew identities damaged by life events, perform tasks that are useful to the organisation, interact in groups and in the organisation and interact with the wider community. Importantly, older men in Hackham West Community Centre are positively embraced by the organisation in ways that actively address men's wellbeing consistent with several of the World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage. The organisation is socially inclusive of older men, produces opportunities for meaningful employment as well as productive work, healthy and regular eating.

ACE North Coast is one of a large number of possible places older men can go in Lismore to learn. It specialises in a wide range of courses oriented either to discretionary leisure and lifestyle programs or to short, vocationally specific courses designed to provide skills to get professional, and para-professional men back into the workforce. This ACE provider has a professional and relatively formal 'feel'. It appears to have no obvious need or desire to target students by age or gender and has few strategies or programs evident to involve men as co-participants in the organisation. While men involved in programs get to practice the skills they encountered in the courses they enrol in, they are treated essentially as enrolled students and paying clients rather than as participants in the organisation. The benefits they get tend to be individual, though men clearly develop and grow networks through friendships developed as students within beyond the courses. The main World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage addressed for these older men in ACE North Coast are programs and opportunities which enhance wellbeing by reducing the stress of not being in work and providing opportunities for social inclusion and community engagement. Programs are available which enhance older men's leisure and lifestyle choices through an emphasis on re-creation, exercise, relaxation and enjoyment.

Sporting organizations

Sporting organisations are so diverse that we have selected three very different organisation narratives as illustrations of that diversity. We have chosen the *Bridgewater Anglers Club Inc*, the *RSL Bowling Club* in Oatlands and the *Original Cocoon Club* in Blacktown.

Bridgewater Anglers Club

The Bridgewater Anglers Club has been in operation for a century or more. It is reputed to be one of the oldest in the country and was reconstituted in 1936. Over the last decade the club meetings have moved around: having met at Coronation Hall for some years they moved and used the CWA rooms, and currently meet at the library. This club is known for its connections to the community. Twenty odd years ago it was one of the host organisations for the World Fly Fishing competition. They have been involved in assisting fisherman who use a wheelchair to access fishing spots and invited and assisted older people and very young people to go fishing in their local area. Some members talked about having assisted young children and teenagers to experience fishing for the first time in their lives.

The club arrange fishing trips where they camp for a few nights, field days, information nights and working bees. A favourite part of the experience of fishing is talking about it and reliving the experience. So when they get together they talk fishing. All the club members I met were male and over 50, some were retired and some were more active than others. The club prides itself on being welcoming to member's families, visitors, and anyone else who wants to come along on any club activity.

We did that for a seniors group. If they haven't been fishing before they can come and learn about it. They can come to the meetings when we have a speaker or they can come to the camp and enjoy that side of it as well.

Learning and wellbeing in the organisation

The men speak about sharing their knowledge and understandings about fishing. They talk about fishing techniques and the gear that they use. They discuss new equipment as it becomes available and new ways of setting up their gear. The fishermen report that they never stop learning new things. They explain that they enjoy getting together socialising and developing their friendships. Even at a recent annual dinner members came along with rods and gear to show others and discuss some thoughts.

They often have a guest speaker come along to their meetings and give presentations and talks about topics related to fishing. At a recent meeting one of the members gave a talk on safety and gave a demonstration on letting off a safety flare. A previous speaker spoke about fishing in Hawaii. One of the members who recently retired spoke about learning to make and tie his own flies. They also learn from field days, competitions and working bees when they get together and build or refurbish a shack that is located in the bush at a popular fishing location. Yet another explains that there is a challenge in understanding and predicting the behaviour of the fish. There is an acquired knowledge in matching location, with current weather and environmental conditions and with predicted fish behaviour. You have to know what they are likely to be feeding on at this time of the year, under these weather conditions, at this location in order to select the right fly or lure. Clearly for these men fishing is their passion and it holds a special place in their lives

. . . I am 65 years young in August and I caught my first trout when I was 17 and through fishing I have learnt many other skills outside of fishing. When you are buying your boat you have to get your boat set up, it becomes people and product all the time. So those connections and at different times of your life there are different pressures . . . obviously you are young and getting married and at the age we are at now, '60 plus,' we are coming into retirement and it's a big thing for me to fall back on. If I didn't have this as my hobby in sport. I am pretty passionate as you can tell, but if I didn't have that to fall back on life would be pretty empty at present. Like we have said I am still making mistakes. I have been fishing for 48 years and now we have this new soft plastics thing coming through, and new flies, there's always something new. Droughts and weather conditions change and the population eventually changes.

One of the members made the point that as a club they are sometimes involved in political activities. Mostly these take the form of submissions, passing on knowledge, lobbying and guided

visits of politicians. One project they had been involved in was the making of a fish trap to monitor fish numbers as well as their age and condition. In our discussions it became obvious that they had a love of the environment and countryside that they visit when they go fishing. When asked about their conservation and environmentalism they explained that they often find themselves between the environmentalists and the politicians. Their agenda is one of conserving and using the environment, which for them includes maintaining sustainable fish stocks for fishing.

Men in the organisation

This club is mostly men over 50 years of age. They enjoy getting together, socialising and talking about fishing and the outdoors. They explain that they have been friends for a long time and clearly enjoy each other's company. They like the tranquillity of the places that they go fishing and the state of mind that this provides.

The Blacktown Original Cocoon Club

A brief picture of the organisation

The Original Cocoon Club comprises a group of seniors and was formed fifteen years ago by people who were interested in gathering together in the morning to swim. The Original Cocoon Club meets on the first Thursday of every month at Blacktown Swimming Pool. Weekday swims are held from 7am to 9am. Aqua fitness is held Fridays from 7.30am. The Original Cocoon Club has an AGM which is held in March. When asked about the club, one member explained how the Cocoon Club got its name:

The pool manageress at the time had just seen the movie 'Cocoon' and she said to us 'gee you mob are getting better every day, you are just like that movie I saw Sunday' and that's how it started. It grew to about 60-80 members. We are an organization which teaches swimming on a Saturday morning through the summer, we teach 100 children to swim and on Saturday morning and Monday and Wednesday nights we teach adults to swim. On Wednesday night we have also incorporated a swimming comp which provides exercise ... I was going down to Queanbeyan this weekend to swim in a carnival down there against other swimming clubs. We are also involved in volunteering for the Cancer Council with marathons and anything other thing that is coming up through the Council and we keep pretty busy, very busy.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

There is evidence from the interviews that the Original Cocoon Club provides direct health benefits for its members which are associated with regular exercise through swimming and water aerobics. Along with these health benefits there is evidence that the club provides for its members the opportunity for friendship, regular contact with people and connecting with the local community. For one member, the importance of friendship and regular connection with club members provided the security of having members watch over each other:

To me it's keeping an eye on the other person too, if they get sick or something you go and give them a hand or pick them up.

While for others the added incentive of being involved in a group activity was a motivating factor to keep involved:

There are many times on a Saturday morning that we have to be here at 6 am to start a swimming club and over the past few years it has got harder and harder to get up, but you know damned well once you get here you will feel 100 per cent better.

The over-riding response from the men in the club when asked, "What do you get out of coming here?" was 'friendship'.

It's a network of friends and keeping contact And we enjoy our outings and we enjoy the things we do together.

The Original Cocoon Club is a volunteer group of people, open to both men and women often involving husbands and wives, who are interested in friendship and fitness. 'Anyone can join; we

are looking for members all the time'. The club advertises in the local paper and members are encouraging of new members:

Yes we put ads in the paper, because what we want to do is keep the thing going, we are 15 years older than what we were when we started and we want it to keep going ...

The members interviewed were also keen to describe how the club gives back to the community. One member was keen to describe how the club got started through giving back to a community member in the early days of the formation of the club:

You would be interested how we started ... we started here very early when this pool opened and there was a bloke and he was the manager and he said to me 'you're not a bad swimmer' and I said 'you must be blind because I am a shocking swimmer'. The Small Frogs didn't have a pool and they wanted to teach handicapped kids, and he said 'what about her' and I said "Yes" ... so they gave me a little girl with polio and they had irons on those days and I used to carry her down and take the irons off her and I would put her in the water ... her Mum said "She can only do breast stroke" and I said 'Why?' and she said "That's all she can do" ... so I was teaching the breast stroke and she was going good and I used to come down at special times during the day, I didn't teach her with the adults because she only had one pupil ... and I said how about the breast stroke and she said "Yes, I like breast stroke but what about free style, I never learnt free style" and I said 'when your mother is here I will teach you" ... so we taught her ... anyway one day I said to the mother "We have got a big surprise for you" and she said "What is it?" and I said 'Come in, right away you go" and she swam 50 metres free style ... I thought the mother was going to collapse. I don't talk a lot ... but a couple of years later I happened to be in Wrest Point and this girl came up to me and said 'How are you going Harry?' and I said "You have got the better of me" I couldn't place her and then the mother came over, it was the young girl, a most beautiful girl.

Oatlands RSL Bowls Club

The Oatlands RSL Bowling Green is located on the edge of town behind the Oatlands Ex-Servicemen & Women's Club, with its dining room and bar. As President, Peter explained

The Oatlands RSL and Bowls Clubs are all combined into one club. For bowls we pay an extra sub[scription], social members pay a different sub and we have got our sub-branch of returned men. The Bowls and Club itself is run by one committee, and the sub-branch is run by a second committee. We have got a bit over 300 members ... a lot of them social members, people who have been here in the area and then retired to different places but they still like to keep in touch. ... With active members we would have 150, half of them would be active in the Bowling Club club. ... The club was original set up as a Returned club and like all Returned Soldiers Clubs, numbers dropped off and it's more of a community club now with the Sub Branch as a base.

Consistent with the community image of bowls as a mainly older person's game and Oatlands' ageing demographic, around three quarters of Bowls Club members are over 50, around 60 per cent are men and very few are now returned servicemen. The older men saw bowls as generally affordable.

Once you get your gear and pay your sub at the beginning of the year which is \$120, that covers you for the year. Apart from that there is no other real cost.

The main bowls season is from October to the end of March, though the introduction of a synthetic green soon was likely to change that as well as the need for 'Bruce', the voluntary greenkeeper. Other changes are afoot, so to speak.

We run Farmers Day, and that is more of a fund raiser social day, but there is something they call Barefoot Bowls which we will be getting going when we get our synthetic green and with Barefoot Bowls you have the rules, but you can walk up and down the greens with a stubby in your hands, it's just a real social night. It's really picked up in other clubs, especially around Hobart they are making a fortune out of it. A lot of young people are coming into it.

Some bowling activity happens several days a week in season as Peter explained.

We practice on Thursday nights, then Saturday we play Pennant. We are in the STBA, which is the Southern Tasmanian Bowls Association. We fill two teams which is 32 players every week, we have got roughly 40 registered players and we have a game at home every week and a game away somewhere.

At Oatlands it's currently a 'men only' competition through the women get to play on a 'special day'. The ladies club folded three years back through lack of numbers. On a typical day of men's Pennant competition, as the greenkeeper explained, it's a mix of serious competition and serious socializing.

It starts off in the morning. The green keeper comes down and he cuts the green and he rolls the green and he does the outer area. He puts the mats out and puts the flags up and the team that plays in Pennant head off and then we start here at about 12.30-12.45 and then we play half way through 21 ends and then we have lunch. The [canteen] ladies [that are rostered on] are usually part of the playing group. And then after we finish, we social with the opposing team and retire to the bar.

Apart from president Peter and Bruce the greenkeeper, active members 'Ross' and 'Cam' were interviewed, the latter new to Oatlands and an ex-Army Vietnam Veteran. The four men interviewed ranged in age between 59 and 68.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Peter, the Club President and local Councillor identified many reasons why he was involved and what he got out of being involved.

I have always been interested, and you only do things because you like doing them and I get a lot of enjoyment out of helping other people. The company and the good friendship really evolve from my interest. I have made a lot of good friends through the club and I like to think that I have got no bad friends and also with playing bowls, that's one of the greatest things about playing bowls, is the people you meet, the contacts you make in different walks of life you are involved with all walks of life and I love my sport. ... It's just a part of you. It's just a diversion from other things. It's the team participation, you are not just out there playing for yourself, you are playing for your three other playing partners and your club.

When I first joined the bowls club ... there were all a lot of older people than I was which I respect, most of them were farmers or business people. Thank goodness more average working blokes got into it like myself, I don't mean to be nasty but things have changed. ... When two or three of us got in there, there were more average, working guys and knock-about blokes that started to join - and thank goodness they did, because I don't think would have been here only for them. Personally I have built up a lot of confidence in myself, which is really helpful.

Ross learned a lot by mixing socially.

Having a beer or two, the social side of it or having dinner in the restaurant up there and you talk to different people every day about different subjects. [I hear] a lot of stories of different parts of the world that I have never been to. There are other interesting things that you learn.

Ross particularly benefited from "The company of the other members and people from other clubs. It's the friendship."

I am ...an amputee ... a widow, and I look after the father-in-law, he's a widow too, he's 87. ... He's a returned man. ... He's a good old fellow. ... It's my time out, my wife passed away about three years ago and to be with the members here, they have helped me a hell of a lot. I went through a bit of a black stage a few months back. ... Very depressed ... actually OD'd ... but I am over that ... and bowls is really great joining in.

Bruce was divorced.

I'm on my own, so I'm a free man and I can come and go and do what I want to when I want to. I have got other interests. I have got two girls that I reared from 5 and 7 when the wife took off and one's married now and I have got two grand kids and the other daughter ... bought her own home last November and [is] doing good. I'm proud of my kids.

Bruce regarded bowls as ...

... a good way to meet people. I am a regular in the club between 5.15pm and 7.15pm every night. It gives you an idea of what they're like. ... You get to know people and it's a good day out. When you go away too, you are meeting people all over the southern areas [of the Stare]. 95% of people are pretty decent blokes and they enjoy everything and enjoy your company and its played in good spirit.

[I enjoy to] to socialise with other people and to get away from my own little thing at home. I used to play golf and I had problems with arthritis and I scaled down to playing bowls and I like the competition with other participants and I just enjoy being with the bowls folk.

Cam too, in retirement, found bowls to be

... one of the important parts of my week, I look forward to a practice night on a Thursday night and I look forward to the game on Saturday. ... [My partner is] mad into gardening and stuff like that and she does her own thing, she might slip down and play the pokies for a while.

I think it gives you a deeper insight to the community or the people within the community. I am virtually a newcomer and you might say "Hello" to someone you pass in the street, but when you are actually playing bowls with them and you see the way that they react in different situations it gives you a greater insight into other members of the community I think, and you can appreciate them more. It just gives you a good insight into people and hopefully that continues in the club after we are not here.

[Some locals] have known people for a longer amount of time, and I think places like the bowling club where that's broken down more and you can be part of the community as a result of that. I think that's important.

Standing back

The Bridgewater Anglers Club, while focused in part on learning about the technical 'art' of fishing provides rich and ongoing opportunities for men of all ages, particularly older men, to learn, practice and develop all aspects of communication contained within the Australian Core Skills Framework. There are opportunities for older men to develop and express positive identities as fishermen, interact in groups, perform tasks, interact in organizations and interact with the community, apart from using tools and technology in the fishing activity. The organization also positively addresses several of the World Health Organization determinants of disadvantage for older men, particularly by providing opportunities for wellbeing, social inclusion and community engagement, through productive, relaxing, regular and enjoyable outdoor activity as well as recreation and exercise.

Unlike the Anglers Club, The Original Cocoon Club equally involves men and women. Older men therefore get opportunities, with women, to develop and practice a number of aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Framework, particularly interacting in groups and interacting in the organisation. The Club provides direct health benefits for its members, which are associated with regular exercise through swimming and water aerobics. Along with these health benefits the club provides for its members friendship, regular contact with people and connecting with local community. In these senses, the organization actively addresses several of the World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage for older men, particularly social inclusion and community engagement as well as regular recreation and exercise, relaxation and enjoyment.

Sporting organisations like Oatlands Bowling Club provide opportunities for the development of several aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Framework. Being essential comprised of older men, it provides important opportunities for older men to express and share their identities both as bowlers, as men and particularly as older men. While the activity is based around a sporting skill, the opportunities for older men to compete in groups both 'at home' and 'away' provides opportunities for regular and therapeutic interaction in groups, within the organisation, with other organisations and with the wider community. It simultaneously addresses several of the World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage: including social inclusion for many older men who are otherwise socially isolated and some men who are prone to depression. It provides a new activity in later life that is re-creational, regular, relaxing and enjoyable.

Religious Organisations

Because of restrictions on space and despite the ubiquity of churches, we have limited ourselves to two religious organisation narratives: one from several of the Bridgewater Churches on the outskirts of Hobart, the other from the Ceduna Uniting Church in remote South Australia. While illustrative of some issues to do with learning and wellbeing in faith communities, these two organisation narratives are in no way illustrative of the diverse range and complex nature of religious organisations. We could equally well have selected the *Oatlands Uniting Church* or the *Salvation Army Noarlunga Community Church*.

The Bridgewater Churches (Catholic, Uniting and New Ministry)

A larger number of religions and churches have a presence in or around Bridgewater. However a distinction needs to be drawn between participants practicing their religion, the presence of religious organisations that are involved in welfare and pastoral care in this area and religions with churches as public places where regular gathering and worship takes place. This narrative is based on interviews with representatives of the Catholic and Uniting churches, that both have churches which are clearly noticeable from the highway, as well as with the New Ministry Church, that does not occupy a dedicated church building, but rather shares and operates out of a Community Centre. Other churches such as the Salvation Army are active in the area but not not have a permanent presence or hold regular church services in Bridgewater.

As part of their commitments to their religion, some of those interviewed spoke about their involvement in volunteer work aimed at material assistance and pastoral support to members of the wider community who were in need. For example, one person had been involved in volunteer work through St Vincent's de Paul and another through the local 'Op Shop' for nearly 30 years.

I am a member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. We are part of the Catholic Church. We are volunteers, we do home visitation to people in need in our area and we have what we call 'conferences' in various areas so that those people look after the people in those areas. We go as pairs to visit these people for known reasons, like young mothers ... if you went on your own, you could be vulnerable. So we go in pairs, visit the people and find out their needs, their problems and we help them in the various ways that we can ... whether it's with food vouchers, maybe its helping them through their Hydro [power] or their telecommunication bills which we pass on to the office. I think one of the unique parts of our organization is the fact that ... other organizations do great jobs too, but we are ... the only organization [I know] that will go and visit people on a personal basis in their own homes. Other people have to go to the organization: we go to them. . . . The advantage of that is that people don't get embarrassed if you go to their own home. They're [otherwise] going to a [public] place where other people are looking at them, like "They're in need, so they have come here". We go to their place casually dressed, we go to work and come home as though it could be a friend or a relative, to people in the street. It's very seldom that someone will not accept you into their home and I have explained to them "Look. Can we please come in, because there are people in the street and you don't want them knowing your business?". We find the people ... feel comfortable for you to go and visit them rather than go to an agency with other people in a room. We pride ourselves a little bit that we are on a personal basis with the people in their own home. We provide them with the necessary needs. ... It is mainly with food, but a lot of times it is because they are old and lonely and the food sometimes only comes as a second nature. They probably don't see anyone much and they may not get out so we go and talk to them in their own home. For a lot of them it's loneliness, especially the elderly. They like someone to come and have a talk to them. We work in various ways with that and we can help people not only with a food thing but as a personal thing, it's a get together. . . .

Besides the home visits there is some work out on the streets as well.

We also have Louey's van which is pretty much Australia-wide, like the soup and sandwich van run by St Vincent de Paul that goes around. They do that on a Friday night here so if we are not busy with visitation and going to the homes we will help out with Louey's depending on the number of calls. You like to spend 10-15 mins per visitation ... sometime you spend more, sometimes people are not quite as open, but we never push it, we never talk religion unless they ask us something about religion, we never push it on to them. They are the talkers, we are the listeners when we go there

Learning and wellbeing in the organisation

The above participant made the point that they don't look for personal recognition, though it all goes towards making him who he is.

In the Society we do not want recognition for anything we do, so we don't want badges for 20 years service. I think it just becomes part of your life, you do it, you don't want any recognition, you accept it. The biggest part I think is the fulfilment it gives you being able to help someone out.

Another participant explained that he was 66 years old and remained active and connected to the community. He does some bookkeeping for a number of community organisations. Though semi-retired, he doesn't want to be retired.

I like to keep my brain active and that's why I like doing the bookkeeping and also meeting people. I'm doing Certificate 2 and 3 in Aged and Child Care in Community Services ... which are run at the Centre. The mothers can do these courses while their child is looked after ...[at] no cost to them. We get a grant that funds these and I have to keep the books.

Another makes the point that he too is very active in a number of organisations and roles.

I am with the Uniting Care Parish Mission at Gagebrook and we run an Op Shop. We distribute about \$120,000 of Commonwealth Government emergency relief plus between \$30,000 and \$50,000 a year from the wider Uniting Church. I am chairman of the church council, my wife is normally secretary so I am secretary as well. I do things like repair furniture, organize building maintenance, take worship when the Minister is not available. I have been involved with community stuff except for the nine years when I was in the Navy most of my life. I was with Colony 47, I was Chairman for a while and I was on the Board for five odd years, but I have recently resigned from those and I am Hon. Sec. of the Royal Naval Association.

The learning of communication, public speaking and social skills are consistently mentioned as areas where personal development occurs through participation in church and religion. As one interviewee remarked, you mainly "...learn a lot about people and how to interact with them." Interestingly, some of the participants mention learning about, and working with people with diverse community opinions and lifestyles.

Men in the organisation

Older men were difficult to locate in the churches. Indeed it was very difficult to obtain a group of any more than four participants from any one of these religious organisations in Bridgewater who fitted the sample profile of male and over 50. When asked about how other organisations might go about attracting more men to join in, one participant suggested,

I don't think you can just go into an organization without having thought about it for quite some time. ... So join the organization and don't make a decision the minute you are in there. You have to go along with the flow a little bit. Even through St Vincent de Paul we have had quite a bit of turnover with [volunteer] numbers and it might not be their cup of tea so they leave. I am sure that is the same with most organizations. I would say the main thing would be for people to have an interest, I think you must have an interest in what you want to do and do. I suppose a lot of it is up to the individual person, so they can say "Yes. I think that might be what I want to do". I am sure with any organization there is always friendship, you always find that if you are in something 99 per cent of the people always remain good friends and you have a common interest of things to talk about and things to do and expand in that organization.

Ceduna Uniting Church

The Uniting Church in Ceduna is one of at least six separate and active churches in town. Under the apparent parallel tracks there is something fraternal going on between the Ministers, who include the female Ceduna Uniting Church minister.

In this town all the church Ministers pretty closely rely on each other, It's the Ministers 'fraternal' type of thing and there is little difference between each ideology I suppose. But generally they seem to be doing the same track and yet we can't seem to all get together.

Apart from the one-hour weekly, Uniting Church service each Sunday at 10am there is the socially important morning tea afterwards. The Minister also does outreach through Chaplaincy at the Ceduna Area School and the Aboriginal 'Town Camp' amongst many other pastoral roles. Like the Anglican Church almost directly opposite, the Uniting Church runs an Op Shop in town.

While the four men in the interview with age ranges between 61 and 78 shared a Christian faith, the younger men in the group particularly shared an interest in the long running (11 year) social table tennis competition organized through the church, largely across denominations, in the

adjacent Church Hall. It transpired that men in the church are outnumbered by women by around four to one, and those that are actively involved tend to be older.

'Doug', the Minister's husband along with 'Harry' and 'Jed', all in their 60s, were avid table tennis players. In fact Jed was an Anglican from across the road. George, 76 was mourning the recent death of his wife and was drawn even closer to the church recently though the need for fellowship and companionship.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Jed had a tertiary education in agriculture which gave him something of an open mind to new ideas.

I quite enjoyed it. ...I think that probably sets a precedent to educate me to be perceptive of new ideas... All our farming life we had to keep up with the researchers and what they offered ... You could be a disbeliever or you could say "I have got an open mind" and we see what they do and give them a go ...

However Jed, at 67, was feeling the pressure of not using the internet but had held out to date.

More and more stuff is becoming only offered on line ... I am not frustrated, I can't receive it On Line but I will bypass on that. I think that if it gets to a point where there is no written communication [I might have to]. ... I am also a retired farmer and most of the information we got was the written stuff, farm journals and magazines and stuff and now my son gets most of his information off the web, whatever he wants to do, buying machinery or checking out machines. It's all on there, second hand machines ... I had to read it all in the stock journals. I sit and watch him sometimes and he brings up the weather stations and gets about three different formats all around the Nation and tells us what is going to happen ... It is all interesting that stuff.

The relaxed and accessible nature of the church service is important, as Jed, from the 'Anglican side of the road' admitted.

[The Minister] is very informative in her approach and people are very relaxed in the services. Most people after a service comment how uplifting it has been and its quite good. The message that she puts through is simple and on a down to earth basis and is really appreciated by the people. ... Being Anglican many people on our side of the road consider that [the Minister] has been really straight forward and talking our language and explains things ... probably better than we have done with our own people.

The morning tea after church and the social side of it are important, as Jed explained.

The bonding side of it gives us a chance to meet the visitors [to town] and they really appreciate having the contact. We have had lots of people coming to church and we might strike up a conversation and quite a few of them have finished up with a meeting and have a cup of tea later on and we have lunch with them and we show them around the place. We have quite a lot of good contacts through the cup of tea after church.

Asked about what he got out of the church, Jed figured it was about 'peace of mind'.

I go, not every Sunday, but quite a number. I just think it helps reinforce the doctrine of the church and the prayers that are offered just help remind us that there is a code to live by and we all have to strive to try and live to that code and it's just a reminder each week. I think that that is the way we ought to conduct ourselves.

Interesting, the men agreed that they could not really see why there were different churches and recognized it was sort of 'the team you were born into'. Jed talked about religion, doctrine and faith.

I am not sure why we continue to be different, because basically I think religion gives us a doctrine to live by and I reckon, I don't know with other religions, but the Christian religions do that and I think that's what it means to us as a way to live ... how to treat your neighbour and how to treat other people. Some framework of morals. ... Faith seems to be on all different levels. We can go to church and live by its code or delve much more deeply into the faith and believe in religious matters, but personally it is just a reinforcement of how we want to be living our lives. It doesn't really matter whether I go to the Uniting Church or the Anglican Church. I was brought up an Anglican and that's probably why I go there. If I came from somewhere else I might well attend the Uniting Church if I grew up in that church.

George, a retired farmer saw links between lifelong learning and farming after a positive school education experience

I did enjoy school and I was lucky enough to have three years in a boarding school down in Adelaide and that was a great experience, both a learning experience and the social side of it and the contacts you made down there. I am a retired farmer and that is certainly a learning experience ... an ongoing learning experience, and if you are not prepared to learn about what is going on then you just fall by the wayside. It is a very exciting occupation at the moment so long as you can hang in there, but as far as the technology that is involved, in the farming game, its unreal these days and the whole life is a learning experience from the day you are born until the day they plant you 6 ft under.

George contributed to the deepening discussion about tradition and conviction and also about the social and family value of the church.

The difference between the two churches, one each side of the road as far as I am concerned is negligible and we think we should become one and I think down the track maybe because of the declining congregations we may be forced into that situation, but I think everybody would be happy if that situation did arise. Why we go to that church is strictly tradition. [Jed] was brought up with the Anglicans and I was brought up in the Uniting Church and we just follow on in that tradition. I guess that's the reason we go to church. It's more a tradition than a matter of conviction ... Sometimes I ask myself "Why do I bother going to church?" but I still do get a lot out of it from the moral issues, from the social side of it and the bonding within that church group is terrific. If somebody has got problems then everybody comes around and that 'church family' as we call it, well that's terrific to have that support around the place. That's the reason I go ... It has a good singing group and that gives the church a bit of momentum and uplifting and its good - and with the cup of tea afterwards we go out and relax and be rude to each other and things like that and that makes it good.

For George it was also the sermons and the reciprocity.

The sermons are quite inspirational and you can take them on board and make a mental note of two or three words of the main subject matter and try and keep that in the back of your mind to think about in the future, of the way to run or organize our lives. In return for that, I like doing a few jobs around the church from time to time to repay what I get out of it.

Harry reflected on what he learnt at school and considered himself a lazy learner, but unlike Frank and Jed (who declared themselves computer illiterate) used the internet 'all the time'.

I was always half way between the clever ones and the dumb ones, pretty average, I do enjoy learning. ... Because [farming] was my work you learn something and remember it ... I learnt the basics and stuck to the basics whereas some of the more intelligent ones would go beyond that and try different ideas. whereas I would stick to the tried and trusted and that did me well. Basically I was too lazy I guess to do anything else.

Harry frankly admitted, "I don't go to church, I don't believe, but I believe what is happening in the church." He enjoyed the companionship of other Christians and saw the church as setting 'a standard' in the town.

There's the comradeship and there's a bit of a level there and there are standards in the human race in this town and you shouldn't vary from those standards. I suspect even though I don't go to church, if I am around about that level I can't be too bad and I think it sets a bit of a standard for us I think, the church.

Harry particularly experienced the comradeship through the sport of table tennis.

It's an activity and there's no pressures on us. It's a social game and there is no pressure to turn up and perform. It's just an enjoyable evening and the comradeship ... well you always want to beat that fellow, and if you are beaten you have to beat him next week. It's a bit of a challenge.

In this interview there were many mentions of the 'outreach' of the church beyond the individuals involved, as Jed elaborated.

Outreach is through the Op Shops. ... To my mind that is a great outreach for the community because the biggest percentage of their customers would be the Aboriginal population and that allows the ladies in the Op Shop to maintain a rapport with the Aboriginal community and that's pretty useful outreach. Its not only the Aboriginals, there are a lot of travellers that come through the town and they also patronize the Op Shops and have chats with the ladies and get to know our community. As far as the Uniting Church is concerned our outreach is through [the Minister] because she is a very community minded lady. She has been here for

10 or 11 years and is very respected right through the community and so that's great outreach. The singing group also get around too and they sing at various other functions that are not affiliated with the church so that's another outreach.

Older men in the organisation

There was broad agreement that men were in significant minority in the church in a ratio of around one to four, only part of which could be explained by women and widows living longer. No one had an easy answer as to 'Why?', but Doug shared his realized table tennis dream.

When I started the [Table Tennis] Club a few years ago I had a dream that people would come through that. I am not an Evangelist or anything like that, I'm a believer and I was asked to start a club somewhere else in the town. My dream to have it in the church hall and I was told that it wouldn't last for long and now it has been going eleven years. The lady who ran [table tennis] in SA said "I don't think you need to have it affiliated with Table Tennis SA. I think if you just have it social it will be fine". So they can just come along and have doubles together and singles together whereas other clubs have structured nights and have to get there on the night ... that is good, but I didn't think with the psyche in this town that it would work. She agreed and guided me that way. We have had a couple of Masters Games that we have just run here for the first time a couple of weeks ago and we had an older couple come to that and I think they [will] continue to come and enjoy it. We had an older lady say goodbye last night they are going back to Victoria. I hope that having it in the church hall with some of the Anglicans around the place that it might rub off and I think in many cases people feel comfortable on church property. We are not scary people

Standing back

Religious organisations like those examined in Bridgewater and Ceduna provide many opportunities for the development of several aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Framework. Being essentially comprised of people of similar faith, Churches provides important opportunities for older people, including a minority of older men, to express and share their identities as Christians through worship and community activity with people in their own Church, and in the case of ecumenical organisations, with other churches and faith communities. While the activity is based around regular interaction in common faith groups, there are ample opportunities to perform a wide range of Church functions with other organisations and with the wider community.

Churches like those examined simultaneously address several of the World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage: including social outreach, inclusion and community engagement for some older men who are otherwise socially isolated. The church provides continuity of religious practice and a range of activities in later life that can be engaging spiritually as well as regular, relaxing and enjoyable.

Voluntary fire and emergency service organizations

Fire and emergency services organisations (including surf and coast rescue along the coast) are necessary and ubiquitous wherever there are populated localities in Australia as well as along all major highways. We have chosen to present narratives on organisations in three very different locations and States with three different emergency functions: the *Lismore City State Emergency Service*, the *Oatlands Fire Brigade* and *Christies Beach Meals on Wheels*.

Lismore City State Emergency Service (SES)

A brief picture of the organization

The Lismore City SES has a spanking new, extremely well equipped station on the picturesque flank on a deliberately elevated site not far from the Lismore CBD. The huge elevated and illuminated sign outside with ARE YOUR GUTTERS CLEAN in big red letters, TRIM TREES in black and an 'Emergency Flood & Storm' 1300 number was prophetic. A few months after the interview the SES Unit has a very busy time dealing with the aftermath of severe rainstorms and floodwaters on the floodplain that much of downtown Lismore is built on. It is no accident that many

houses in the flatter areas around Lismore are elevated, and no surprise to find that the unit is typically busy, in an average year doing 4,000 voluntary response hours of mainly storm and flood requests.

The Lismore City SES volunteers are one of 225 SES Units with around 10,000 crew located in New South Wales. Its volunteers are trained by the SES as a Registered Training Organisation to national accreditation standards, not only in flood management and storm damage control, but also in rescue, search, community education and emergency services liaison. This diverse accredited training happens on site every Monday night. More than half of the volunteers are women and unlike the men interviewed, most are younger than 50.

Many of the seven men in the interview, particularly the 74-year-old Controller 'Matt', almost live at the SES in their 'spare' time. The five 'younger' men between 60 and 71 who are retired had loads of time and fulfilled various responsible roles as Deputy Controller ('Brian'), Media Officer ('Ken'), Trainer (Vince), Rescue Officer ('Ted') and Crew ('Stan'). 'Steve', was younger and an invalid pensioner, who had been actively mentored to play a range of ancillary roles as part of an Offenders Program. The SES slogan sums up the tenor of the account that follows. *The worst in nature, The best in us.*

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Matt, the SES Controller, explained how the training works.

We have official trainers. Trainers undergo training themselves and then on Monday nights or on weekends we present courses to members and when they pass the training they become fully accredited ... and they get certificates. I am only able to allocate people to jobs who have the necessary qualifications.

Ted, now the Rescue Officer has greatly expanded his skills through the training and learned to become more tolerant working with volunteers.

I came to SES with a background in outdoor education which was where I thought I could contribute initially, but of course as I have progressed with the service I have undergone a lot of training courses which has expanded my skills enormously and has enabled me to become a trainer as well in certain areas ... I assess trainees. So in that regard it has expanded my skills. [I also get] a great deal of satisfaction. It is also good to watch the people who are training as they progress through the organisation and take on more and more responsibilities because their abilities increase.

I think probably what I have learned most is to be more tolerant. I have always been in a role where I have been a trainer, so I have always been the 'head' of an organisation in the social sense, but SES has taught me I think to be a lot more tolerant of people's abilities and their attitudes and their personalities. It has made me a strong more rounded person. There were times when I was less patient. I think it is a tolerance thing ... Working with volunteers is different to what most people have experienced in their other lives. We might have some need in an emergency and we want something done and we want it done now and for the bulk of the organisation you just lower the expectations and timeframes ... The job will get done but it won't get done in the time frame you might wish.

Ken the Media Officer identified career paths through the SES.

A number of [younger] people use this as a career path too. You get the necessary skills and accreditation to move on to other aims which they have, e.g. police force, armed forces and so on.

Matt elaborated on the transferable work benefits for trainers.

We have had three people who have got experience here and are now in a paid position as learning and development officers. Some of our team leaders have been able to carry that skill and qualification over to their work as well. It has helped them with their progression through their point of employment.

For Colin, and ex Manager at the local University, participation fulfilled a need for ongoing focus and affiliation post paid work as well as ongoing learning.

It has benefits for me personally. I am retired so it has a function to keep me focussed on a certain regimen of behaviour. ... I do enjoy coming along to the training nights and it meets the need for

affiliation, as a lot of people would be around. Sometimes it can be a down side being at a particular place at a particular time, but [our] children have left home and my partner is still working and there is no problem there at all.

I was a lecturer ... in areas of Management and just before I finished up there I was working in professional education where we were working on programs for industry. When I knew I was going to have a bit of spare time I came down here to do a job which led on to another job which led on to another job ... so I am still here.

It [fulfils my] need to be with people who have some interest to you and the need for achievement that I probably had in the younger part of my life. The 'like kind of people' is probably the best way of expressing [affiliation]. Being with them, [with] similar values, similar focus, similar levels of responsibility and similar levels of ... [putting] something back into the community. It's becoming a bit of a cliché but it is none the less true with our organisation.

There is a high degree of affiliation. ... The learning in the organisation is a lot more practical to what people are used to working with theoretical stuff. ... The learning we do here is mainly skills and knowledge and we are starting to impact on ... attitudinal things go, so affective learning. Also getting people to maintain safety wherever they go, so again [an emphasis on] attitudinal things ... rather than 'do it on impulse', to apply what we are trying to pass on to the members here.

There is [also] a managing diversity aspect, ... different genders, although we are almost 50/50 ... the age profiles, we do have a couple of school students who are here and they can't be employed in the field so we have to find things for them to do to keep them fulfilled. We have that maturing age group though from 25-45 and that would probably comprise the bulk of our members. Again we have to deal with ways to keep them motivated and keep them rewarded. There's a lot of learning to be done for a lot of people.

Vince found a similar sort of satisfaction after working for 40 years in the full time Ambulance Service and for 45 years as a volunteer with the SES.

What I get out of it is the satisfaction of being able to pass my skills. Being a State Trainer here at the Division, passing my skills. The other satisfaction is that when you are out on jobs you are able to assist and help people in need and offer our services.

I like people around me. ... It's a lot of the work that you do, you are mixing with a lot of people ... you are getting committee work and you are meeting with people at management level. I find that stimulating with the kids with their brain ticking over. I must say that's been the biggest sort of thing, looking at the younger ones coming along and being able to delegate the authority and see the growth in them. ... The public have probably a vague estimation of what we can do and they impose on us overly at times, but it's nice to be able to assist people in need in floods and storms and to do it well and to be trained up so the members can do it and the gear is ready ... I think we do a pretty good job.

For Matt being actively involved as the SES Controller post-retirement was essential to combat underfoot syndrome.

I am a sort of a people person and when I left job at the Uni where I had been dealing with young people for years and years and years I needed to have contact with people. The first six months when I retired I can vividly recall my wife telling me when I was at the kitchen table that I had to lift my feet up so that she could sweep under me. It wasn't a time when I went to my shed sort of thing and I was driving her mad.

Stan was 71, but having recently retired as a bus driver and relocated to NSW from Western Australia, saw himself as ...

... a new boy here. ... I joined up with the SES when I arrived here, just retired at that stage. ... They took me on as their equal and that's good. You don't get that in every organisation.

Ken had 'found himself' in other voluntary community involvement but particularly benefited from the camaraderie in SES that was otherwise missing in retirement.

I have had experience in community organisations at various levels being Secretary, President and so on right through Apex and I have found myself in community groups all along. I [was previously in] SES for 15 years as member of the flood crew which I enjoyed ... After National Service I enjoyed the type of camaraderie you get in there. I was involved in a job with the Department of Education which took me away from that because I was out of town most of the time and in that time I developed a

number of skills, which when I retired I found I wasn't being able to employ and I felt frustrated about that. A certain person ran in to me one day and asked "Would you like to join again" and I did. I have been here again using those skills ... I was a media officer with the Department of Education for quite some time ... and I brought that here and have been able to apply it and get a great deal of satisfaction out of it. ... I spend a lot of time on [as Media Officer] not necessarily at the unit but at home on the computer. I can't spend as much time as I would like, like most of these positions they're full time jobs but we don't have that.

It does wear a bit thin at home at times, like the blast I got ¾ hr ago "You filled in the wrong square". which I did ... I signed in for Friday. I do get a great deal of satisfaction out of it. I like to use the skills I have. I would hate to see them pass away or die. I am in community radio too at the moment and that keeps me pretty busy, but I am maintaining SES because I like it and its just another mountain to climb.

I enjoy being in the Unit and it should be realised from the community that what they actually see in the field is only the 'tip of the iceberg.' There is a lot of time goes in behind the actual up-front in training and the organisation. I enjoy it, I would like to put a bit more time into it, but I have too many irons in the fire to keep me out of mischief.

Ken single 'big gripe' was about the lack of recognition of prior learning (RPL) in the SES.

I have picked up quite a few skills which I didn't have before ... [but] there is no RPL, recognition of prior leave and I am not going to do courses that I have run for years myself just to get a bit of paper, so they can get !!!

The commitment and some of the tensions it can cause for other men's families were exemplified by Vince's effort to attend the research interview.

I have just driven home from Brisbane to be at the meeting here today and have lost a few 'brownie points' because the wife wanted to stay a few more days I think she realises that she can't win all the time. It's one of those things.

[My wife] is an unofficial member, she fields the phone calls and whatever ... I would come here possibly at least four times a week, maybe it might be 1- 1½ hours but often that blows out to a ½ day and so on and that wears a bit thin [with her] from time to time. She's not a driver so I am not at her beck and call as much as she would like ... [Though] she's has always encouraged me to stick with it, but I think she is a bit pleased that I am standing down [soon] so she will have a bit more of my time and we can do some more family things like visit kids and camp around and things like that.

Vince particularly benefited from and enjoyed the training nights on Monday.

You do storm training, first aid training, the general rescue and road rescue... . You are learning all the different aspects of it and updating your skills. A lot of the skills change over the years. ... Some of the skills I learnt back here in 1965-67 are totally different to the skills now. [You work] with the different men and pass your skills on. Someone might not be conversant with road rescue or ropes or something like that where I can come into the first aid side of it and vice versa. I really enjoy coming along Monday nights to be with the other members and have a bit of a joke.

For some men, having other family members participate minimizes the adverse effects on family of voluntary commitment. For Ted,

My wife is a member of the unit and my son is a member of the unit, so it's very much a family affair. I was here first but they decided that I wasn't going to have all the fun so they came along too.

Steve was 50 and his story was quite different. At times in the interview his mentor, Matt helped out on the detail. It transpired that Steve had been on a second offender drink driving charge after a serious, accident, had only one good hand and was brain damaged.

I get a real lot [out of it]. I am an invalid pensioner and [Matt] brought me in. I bring a lot into the society of the SES and people bring a lot in to me. I do the second offender drink driving [through] the court ... and I got brain damage.

Matt explained that when he

... met [Steve] five or six years ago he was really down. And I thought there should be a role for people like [Steve] in our service and I asked him to come along and be my 'man Friday' and explained to him things I needed and he's like a bull terrier now with those jobs I do with the roster clerk and he's a great chef ... I have got a lot of satisfaction watching [Steve] grow over the last years.

Certainly when he first came here he didn't say much and now he's even been insubordinate at times. ... It has been great to see the skills that he has and the regard that other members have for him and nobody touches the BBQ without asking [Steve] first.

Steve had recently (proudly) completed and passed his rescue certificate, which everyone agreed was a big achievement. Everyone acknowledges that ...

... because of [Steve's] physical disability, there are some tasks that he cannot do but we are flexible. Dare I say it, but we couldn't do without him.

Steve had most learnt ...

To be with people. They are an exciting bunch, a bunch of guys and a bunch of women. I get along so fine with everybody. ... I'm over 50 years and I quite like being over 50.

Matt was particularly fascinated by, and had made it his mission to research, Lismore's flood prone status and the consequences of a likely, future 'big one'.

I have memorised 'trigger points' for most of the district at what height, grades, bridges and things to do with every flood. ... It's good to have those triggers there so you can predict what is going to happen. We have had a levee bank system which has never been overtopped. ... I am always looking forward to the overtopping of the CBD levy bank so as to predict what will follow. ... I don't think the Civic fathers in the town [know] what to expect.

Oatlands Fire Brigade

A brief picture of the organization

Oatlands Fire Station, like most fire and emergency service organisations, is centrally located, seldom needed but always ready. As in many smaller towns, the number of people, mainly men involved as volunteers is small with volunteer Fire, SES and Ambulance services in Oatlands the proportion of the community involved is high and there is some crossover between roles. In the case of a road accident within their operating areas on the busy Hobart - Launceston Highway and with the possible need for fire suppression, all three services often attend and closely collaborate. The jobs require more than technical skills and some community service work, which is challenging for SES volunteers, as the SES team leader stressed.

Some of the stuff on the side of the road is really gruesome. We have to cut bodies out and pickup the bits and pieces up and clear the bodies of cars. ... But that's part of the game, the community service and support.

While 70 per cent of the volunteer ambulance work in Oatlands involves 'domestic' work, 30 per cent of it is sometimes horrific road trauma.

As in many smaller towns with ageing populations, these emergency service volunteers are no spring chickens and have multiple work and community roles. The five men interviewed included men from all three services and ranged in age from: 'Les', 54 and Fire Brigade Captain; 'Noel', 55 and SES team Leader; 'Colin', 56 and Fire Service member; 'Ray' 64 and Volunteer Ambulance Officer, to Fire Service member. 'Jack' who was 67, a former police officer, the only retired interviewee the most recent volunteer. Most of the men had long histories in this or similar voluntary fire or emergency services organisations. Les and Colin went back 30 years as volunteers with the Oatlands Brigade and Ray 35 years with the Oatlands Volunteer Ambulance Service.

While it is currently 100 per cent male in fire and SES services in Oatlands and only one female Ambulance volunteer there is no sexism or ageism in the organisation in relation to volunteers.

There are members who are in their 70s and 80s who have 20 or 30 years in the fire service as a volunteer, they are still members but they may step down from active duty, they attend all practices and sweep the station or make coffee but they still remain brigade members. ... In an active role they would probably go into communications on a big fire day rather than go out into the more strenuous roles.

Learning through the organisation

Les explained a bit about the training, the fire brigade's role and the minimum training needed to get on the truck.

We have a two-hour practice on the first and third Tuesday of every month ... We have a run, ensure that things are clean and tidy, reports up to date, the gear on the trucks is working properly. ... We are basically an urban and bush fire brigade combined, so we handle all fires. Also we cover the Midlands Highway for close to 50 km from Tunbridge to Spring Hill which is Highway No.1 in Tassie and we have a high incidence of vehicle accidents on that Highway as well. [The minimum level of training is the] Basic Fire Fighting Course. It's a two-day run through of everything after an Introduction to the Brigade. Some brigades do it on Station but we feel it is better to be done with the professionals because there are backstops if someone is not fully up to scratch.

The training is more 'hands-on'. It is important that new members not only come up with the personal competencies but that they can work with the team. As Noel the SES team leader put it, it is critical that you "... come up with the skills and ... you mesh with the crew".

Les described the typical fire training and assessment track.

Basically what happens with the training is that if someone comes along with interest we have a self-assessment here where we have a program over a period of weeks or months that we basically put them through up to a level that we feel that they are ready. Then we opt to send them away to our fire service [Headquarters: HQs] to do a full weekend, to do everything formally and when they come back they qualify. ... Then to go on as firemen and ride the truck and then from there on they pick the courses that they require going up the level into pump and fire suppression and eventually go through the course and keep going right up ... they can go through to officer levels and hazardous chemicals, they can go right through.

In the case of the ongoing training for the ambulance service, Ray explained that ...

Our supervisors come down from Burnie every second Wednesday of each month. ... They keep you up to scratch with your training and most of the time we assess ourselves on jobs and come back and say what we could have done right and what we did do right and talk about it and go from there. A few years ago it was run by the Local Council ... Now it is run by the Hobart Ambulance Service and we now are under strict supervision from them and they say to go, when, where and why ... and sometimes we question why we should be going but if they say 'Go' we go regardless. We might find something horrific and we might find something very minor, but you have to go.

Ray at 64 had been in the volunteer role for more than half his life and being on call every second week, sensed it was time for him to step aside but it was hard to find new members with the commitment and 'stomach' for the difficult work.

I have been here far too long now and I want a rest but I can't because no one wants to take it on, that's a problem we have. It's hard to find volunteers, no one wants the gory job, but I mean someone has to do it. When I took over in [19]75 there were ... just two volunteers ... we got a few more going but they didn't last very long. We did have up to six volunteers at one stage. [Currently there are] three ... we have got one coming up, hopefully we can put him on. At the moment I am on call every second week.

Colin reflected on what he had learned on his several decades of fire service.

Probably the most important thing is that you learn that everyone is human ... Different people have got different capabilities, different people have got different levels that you can put them to ... I mean I know [Noel's] skills, he knows mine I guess, and that flows into the day to day jobs and I know that I can go and say to [Noel] "Can you do this?" whereas it might be a totally different role to what I would ask [Jack] to do.

I guess [you get] satisfaction knowing that you have done something great or good. ... [You learn] control, being able to have control at the scene of an accident. [A while ago] this senior guy called me in [after an incident] and when I walked away he shook hands and said "Good job mate" and I think that is comradeship. That is where the rewards come as far as I am concerned, just knowing that you have done a good job, or done it to the best of your ability that is the most important.

Wellbeing through the organisation

Jack explained he was involved in the fire service because it was an extension of his previous paid work role and the right thing to do.

I came down 4 years ago from Queensland and I am an ex-police officer and being a small community ... there is a lack of volunteers for these sorts of things and it seemed the right thing to do at the time as a community service So that is what I am getting out of it, being part of the community. And I think it is necessary. If nobody turns up to a house fire here, then we have got big problems. You need to get to know people in the community and I think it's an ideal way... . Primarily it is a service that I have always been paid to do and now it just seems the right thing to do. I mean they won't let me join the police here, they don't want new coppers! (much laughter here)

Active volunteering in older retirement was not easy on Jack's family.

I was injured a while ago and I have found it a bit debilitating, the physical side of it. ... Not only am I in the Fire Service and quite a few other organisations also it is becoming a bit of a hurdle for my wife, the fact that a lot of my time is spent away. Her health is not the best so I think she feels it.

The only benefit I have is that you are doing something for the community, somebody has to do it and you are there with your mate and I am there to help put the house fire out down the street. The sad part about it is if ... when we have danger we're not home, so that falls back on the wives ... So you have to train the wives with fire fighter suppression, so I suppose they get a little bit out of that. But any other plus, 'No,' because they have to be able to put up with the hours that we are in an out of the way place. I mean we see some pretty horrific things and obviously you don't really discuss them, but if you did want to sit down and talk, they have to take the full brunt of that ... but you don't and then it happens. I don't think for your wives or your partners that there is any benefit at all.

Colin, Second Officer in the Oatlands Brigade and a voluntary Group Officer for a number of other brigades as well as his current, day job as a bus driver, explained why he got involved and also the difficulty attracting young, new members.

I was born and bred up and grew up here and then went away for a few years to work and then after being married coming back in '76 I figured that it was something that I should give to the community. Even though I was a member of the football club and a lot of other things, I just felt that was something that was needed and as my family come on and had two daughters I felt more that we had to put some involvement back in and it has just continued on from there. I think it is something that we have got to have and it would be the furthest thing on my mind to leave the Fire Service. One reason for that is the same old thing that happens everywhere in Australia. We cannot really get any new members to come, the younger ones I mean. With the role that we play, once they see the accidents they are not interested in coming.

They don't like the idea of doing it. ... They don't want ... a volunteer commitment. I have said to them "What happens? You are a young married person, you have a home, you have children. What happens if there is an emergency in your house?", and their attitude is 'That's alright, the fire services comes' ... And that's the problem that we are facing - and that's the reason that I am here and I will be in it as long as I can.

Les explained what he got out of the challenge of volunteering (apart from a wife: he separately explained to hilarity that he originally joined because he was dating the fire chief's daughter!)

It's a change for me every day and when the [fire] party goes off, whatever we have got, it's a challenge, each call is a challenge on its own ... As soon as you get out of bed you have a picture of what you think you are going to do, just by the pager messages of what you will possibly get, you are still doing a sum up of what you might get and then you get the real picture when you get there. I have been 39 years in one job so it does break the monotony a little a bit ... If I get too many daytime calls the wife has to do too many hours and she doesn't really like that, so that goes on to the family disadvantages.

Les elaborated about the different reasons at both ends of the age spectrum that most of the active fire service members tend to be older and born and bred in Oatlands.

It's just the phenomena of young people these days. Its' just all too hard and they are commitment shy. ... [Older people who have retired to Oatlands] have probably been involved in something before. They come here and they switch off.

Noel explained that he enjoyed

... the camaraderie ... the wife is the local GP so she is out most of the time. The Fire and Rescue fills in that bit of my life that is missing, it's a continuation. You meet a lot of people ... There's a different bunch of guys with different attitudes.

Ray acknowledged satisfaction of being a volunteer 'ambo' but elaborated on the difficulties of both the commitment and the trauma experienced, sometimes with people volunteers know in a small community.

I [get] satisfaction. I mean if you have done something really good to save someone's life it makes you feel pretty worthwhile. I remember a couple of years ago myself and one of the nurses had to go [to a] pretty horrendous [situation involving a woman] ... The first thought is to turn back and you can't ... We got there and we got the woman out and came back down really slow and we transferred her on to Launceston and about a month later this lovely letter came from this woman saying how she greatly appreciated what we did on that particular night and that's what gives you a kick at the end, even if it is a kick at the end of the line, it does give you a bit of a kick. As in the family it can be tough there, the kids have grown up now anyway of course, but at the moment because of lack of numbers I am [rostered on] every fortnight, so it's a bit tough.

[But it does] give satisfaction. I mean it could be your next door neighbour, it can be a family friend. I think as you get older the toughest thing I find is if you get a call early hours of the morning. You hit the floor running and you are supposed to save a life. ... It sounds scary but you block that out. A couple of times I ... had a [relation] and he got smashed in the face with bar or something, and years ago I attended the shooting of my next door neighbour and that's tough ... The horrific trauma afterwards and that the tough call and then they didn't [used to] have anyone come around and talk to you about.

When we come back [now] from a road trauma or something bad and we sit down and ... talk about what we do and what we didn't do. ... For the bad ones the fire brigade and SES get together for a debriefing and air any problems. But the grief debriefing has only come in more so in this last 10 years here. Before it was just doctors and nurses and we would look after ourselves ... That's the way it goes I guess. I have been wanting to get off it for a little while now, but like the rest of them. who does it if I don't? And if we lack numbers the [Ambulance] unit will surely go ... like the SES and the fire brigade. So it is a community thing and we all pretty much to work together as a team.

On the end of the interview Les walked to the Fire Brigade noticeboard to illustrate how the fire and emergency services work and learn together – and why it was all worth it. A recent hand written card to said

This is just a note to say how much we appreciate firstly what a fine, professional skilled job you do to ensure everybody's safety. Secondly the willing, caring and practical assistance and logistical advice and all the back up you give to us. It enables the best possible outcomes for our patients. Its such a lift to see you at the scene and we know you are often there with duties long after we have departed, but each time we feel the strength of being part of a great team, SES, fire, ambulance, doctors, emergency service, so thank you and take care. [name] Oatlands 706 Ambulance staff and doctors.

Christies Beach Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels in Christies Beach sits on a prominent corner block in a mixed suburban street. Consistent with its role as described by volunteer and Staff Officer 'Boris', a 64 year old former merchant seaman, the voluntary service that the large team of men and women provide in cooking and distributing meals has two important emergency functions.

We are here to provide nutritious daily meals for elderly and infirmed people who are not able to cook for themselves at home. This allows them to stay in their own homes rather than being shifted to hospitals or nursing homes. That is our primary purpose. Our secondary purpose that goes is that we act as a security, probably for some of them, you are the only person they see all day. If there are occasions when you can't gain entry to the house. We then follow up to make sure they are all right. So we act as a safety chain or link.

In South Australia, Boris explained that

The clients pay \$6 per meal which covers our running costs and preparation and renewable stocks. We do get a very small assistance from the Government but it is minute, compared to the cost of it all, but we do manage with that because we are a not for profit organization. ... For the drivers who deliver our meals [in their own cars], we pay an allowance of \$9 per round.

Boris', as Staff Officer has several voluntary responsibilities.

My prime responsibility is to organize the rosters for all the [two sets of] volunteers and I also do recruitment of new volunteers and I organize functions. The kitchen starts at 7 am and basically has to

have their meal finished by 10.45am ... the deliverers rock up generally around 10.45 and leave [from] 11.00am to deliver the meals out to the people [and finish around 1 pm].

All four men interviewed, including volunteers 'Colin', 'Ian' and 'Stewart' were aged between 59 and 65 and had retired early to help out in this five days a week service, except on public holidays and a week over Christmas. The volunteers came by word of mouth, but also from promotions at a stall at a supermarket, local advertisements in the papers and referrals from Centrelink as part of the two day a week 'New Start' arrangement which regards the voluntary work as work for the purposes of government income support benefits. More than half of those involved at meals on Wheels in Christies Beach were referred as volunteers via Centrelink. As Stewart, now 65 and formally retired explained, people involved tend to be "In the age bracket where no one is going to decline [Centrelink] , because they are obviously too old for the workforce but not old enough to get into the pension side of things".

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Boris acknowledged

... a great deal of satisfaction in doing something that I believe is a very good cause. I also learn a lot here, I have learnt a lot of people skills, particularly since I have got into this job. I started here cooking in the beginning in the kitchen and driving delivery.... The *real* satisfaction comes when you go out talking to these people who we supply the food too.

Stewart, now 65 retired early, having been retrenched twice he recognized ageism in terms of business hiring practices.

... retired early at 61 ... I was retrenched twice in three years One was a job finishing here in South Australia, they transferred everything to Victoria and the other one was a cut back in work and I was one of the early ones to go. The firm wanted young people so you get put on the scrap heap. ... So I gave it away and decided I would go through Centrelink and I am on NewStart. I chose to come here. I just had enough of middle management, the business was changing roles and they were asking things and I wasn't prepared to jeopardize my business ethnics and it was opportune that I walked away from that. For those four years I haven't worked in business at all and have only ever worked here. ... [It was a good move] from a health point of view and sanity point of view. ... My wife and I actually retired on the same day, she worked in another environment and she was 59 when she retired and we both came here.

I am an assistant kitchen supervisor and I do cooking and also one day a fortnight I do deliveries. I oversee cooking the two days I am here and I assist in menu planning, ordering, that side of things

... I wanted to give something back to the community for what they had done for my mother-in-law. [I] started working here two days a week both in the kitchen and also driving. At the moment since I am 65 I am only doing one day a week ... in the kitchen. It's not an official role but it's a senior role. You tend to try and keep an eye on what is going on behalf of the other kitchen supervisor and try and make things work reasonably harmoniously in the kitchen.

Stewart puts a lot of his previous middle management skills into his voluntary role, gets considerable satisfaction back and has learnt a lot.

[I get] the satisfaction of being able to help the older people. I try to use my skills in handling people on the Tuesday when I actually work in the kitchen to do the functions they have set for them and try to mediate between people who don't always see eye to eye.

The things I get out of it are self-satisfaction of assisting in the community [and] doing something different. I enjoy cooking and the days here are so much fun because people are here because they want to be here. We have a real good quorum. I get [the] satisfaction of putting something back in and I get something out of it too.

[in] the workforce you tell somebody to do something and you expected them to do it ... Here you ask people to do it and that's very relevant. When you are working in a volunteer situation you can instruct people who aren't expected to do it. You still have a supervisory role but it is a different way of handling people ... It's an 'ask not a tell'. It is a volunteer thing ... most people come here [as volunteers] and need to be treated with respect.

Colin, now 59, had been in car manufacturing and reluctantly took early retirement at 57.

I used to work at Mitsubishi Motors and back then we were working five days a week and then they started working 3 days a week, and the 3 days became 2 days and I couldn't survive. I was taking two and three odd days out of my long service just to make ends meet and when they brought packages out I didn't take that very lightly so I got all the information I could and I spoke to my wife and said 'what do you think' and she said 'well the place is going to close down anyway' ... I took early retirement from Mitsubishi.

I spent the first six to nine months travelling around, and after that I thought I would get bored sitting at home doing nothing all day. I was speaking to a friend of mine and he suggested trying Meals on Wheels and I said "OK" and I came down here and signed up as a volunteer and then I went over to Centrelink. ... I have been here for two and a bit years and I am enjoying every minute of it.

In between the cooking, [I've] probably [learned] a bit of people skills too, I spent two years in National Service and in those days you didn't get spoken to, you got yelled at. I have learnt a heck of a lot since I have been here, people skills, how to speak to people properly and just generally getting on with my fellow work mates here, my team members.

You are always learning people skills when you are dealing with new people. I am dealing now with people a lot older than I have been dealing with in the past and they're different. [You experience] the familiarity which comes from being part of a big group. It's a big part of a team, and trying to assist where you can in making that teamwork.

Colin reflected on the learning he had encountered, particularly through the delivery work.

During the course of your life there are all new learning curves: the different aspects of handling people, different aspects of kitchen work and this and that, but out on the road you keep an eye on things while you are delivering. I know one person I delivered to one day scared the living heck out of me. He asked me for assistance to 'knock himself off' and he was quite adamant about it ... In a case like that you stop and think "Will he or won't he?" and in a case like that it was either a case of ringing back here to let them know what was going on or to return yourself. You need to keep an eye on different things, there might be serious accidents somewhere where you might be able to assist, some people could have a heart attack or need the slightest bit of first aid to help them and at the same time your mate is on the phone to the ambulance.

When Colin first came to work at Meals on Wheels in Christies Beach he was only...

... interested in the delivery side of it, but I [now] put in two days a week now in the kitchen and out on the road. I have made a lot of friends here and have got a better knowledge now of cooking. I actually have to do 'the Centrelink bit' of 15 hours a week. ... It's just the satisfaction I get when I meet the elderly folk that we do the meals for ... In fact there was one particular elderly woman up at Secret Rise and she wanted to adopt me as a son. Some of the elderly are real characters and they are glad to see you there ... It's unfortunate that when you get there you ask them how they are and they start chatting away and you're looking at your watch and saying "Look I have got to go".

Stewart, now 65 had previously been a middle manager which included

... formal training in the workforce I try to apply those rules and regulations that I have learnt over the 40 odd years that I was working ... You never stop learning and you have to keep your mind active and if you can assist other people in helping them through issues in life, not only outside of this place, but particularly here. ... I find that rewarding and it's also a challenge. Sometimes it's very humbling to talk to people and help them through issues that they may have on their plate. Generally it's an important facet of life ... We have got grandchildren growing up now and you try and teach them some of the basics of life. Sadly some people you deal with later on in life don't know the basics and you try and help them through that as well.

Standing back

Fire and emergency service organisations like the SES examined in Lismore and the combined services examined in Oatlands provide extensive and rich opportunities for the development of all aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Framework for adults of all ages, including older men. Each fire and emergency service organisation has its own distinct identity. Being relatively small organisations there are ample opportunities for older men involved to learn skills and take on specific and important roles and identities over many years. There are ample and

regular opportunities for learning and training. It is essential that men also develop bonding social capital to trust each other in teams that in practice, can be about life and death. There are rich opportunities through the regular training and drills to perform tasks, use tools and technology, interact within the organisation, with a wide range of other organisations and with the wider community. These opportunities are similarly available and demonstrable through parallel research in Western Australia involving Coast Rescue organisations and Surf Lifesaving clubs.

Organisations like Meals on Wheels in Christies Beach provide lesser opportunities for the development of many similar aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Framework for adults of all ages, including older men as part of mutual obligation arrangements as something of a substitute for full time, paid work. While all Meals on Wheels volunteer activity involves and requires some teamwork, more teamwork appears to be involved in coordination and kitchen roles than in delivery. By contrast, home delivery roles require people able to work more on their own.

Fire and emergency services, like those examined in Lismore and Oatlands simultaneously address several of the World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage: particularly community engagement but also inclusion of older men with limited formal education and some men who are otherwise socially isolated. Active involvement in these services encourages men to remain relatively fit and healthy and also to regularly exercise to ensure they are able to respond to unknown, future emergencies.

Age-related organizations

While 'age and disability organisations' formed one of the organisation target categories, in practice the achieved organisation sample in all sites were age-related. Two organisations: a rural Tasmanian residential care facility *Oatlands Multi-Purpose Health Centre* and the *Ceduna Adult Activity Centre* in remote South Australia have been selected to illustrate the learning and wellbeing benefits of age-related organisations to older men.

Oatlands Multipurpose Health Centre

The Oatlands Multipurpose Health Centre is a low, pink complex of mainly weatherboard buildings set on a large grassy block behind the main street. The three men in permanent residential care who volunteered for the interview were collected from various parts of the complex including Errol, 79 who as a result of a stroke required a wheelchair and only had one good arm, but which was still good enough to take part in the gardening. As for the men in the Ceduna Adult Activity Centre to follow, several of these older Oatlands men had recently decided to set up a vegetable garden on part of the Health Centre lawn. The Centre kitchen was using the produce and the men proudly showed it off after the interview.

Frank had been a farmer and was very polite and quietly spoken. There weren't many things Wally, hadn't done in his 67 years, including woodcutting for 15 years and serving as a Vietnam Veteran, before being brought to the Centre in the middle of a wild and stormy night in desperate need of care. More than in most narratives, this account has been pasted together with often short, one sentence fragments from the men's typically short but thoughtful comments and responses.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Errol, now 79

... had that stroke and they wouldn't look after me at home so I had to go somewhere didn't I?

Errol was understandably frustrated but satisfied by the 'limited amount' he could still do with one good arm from a wheelchair, including hoeing their vegetable garden.

[It's] exercise of a different sort, like moving your arm mightn't seem much but it's doing good somewhere isn't it? ... You feel satisfied when you achieve something, don't you? ... We have had 2 or 3 feeds of new potatoes and green peas.

Errol still goes up the main street on a good day.

Well I find if I feel all right I go for a walk up the street if it's a nice day. go window-shopping ... There's an antique shop up here, its very interesting to look at the junk or whatever. [On a wet day] I read ... there's nothing much else you can do ... I watch TV. ... If there's football on I like to watch that, and if it's raining I listen to that, it hasn't rained for six to seven years.

Wally, now 67, gave a potted history of his life.

Teaching in the Army, working with books, sorting, working ... in Melbourne as a metal worker at South Melbourne, that's about all. I came out of Tunnack. I was there for 15 years and I have been here [in the residential facility for] a year. [I came here because] I was spending more time at the Royal [Hobart Hospital] and at the hospital here [than at home]. ... I would like to be [home] but I can't be ... As soon as I get back home I would probably be on the phone for an ambulance. ... I am a lot better since I have been here. ... Now I get benefits straight away - and that's good for the ambulance, it's just down the road.

Wally later disclosed he was a Vietnam Veteran. A few years after returning from war service ...

I [was] on medication and when I drank beer I would go off my head and start fighting and end up in the lockup and that sort of thing. ... I didn't [associate it with war service] at the time, but probably do now. A lot of the blokes that I was with there either committed suicide or have 'gone of their trolley' at one time or the other. Most of the blokes that I know, if they are still married, they are not living with the same wife as they started off with.

Wally was now involved in the garden, described what was in season and reflected philosophically on the sudden onset of retirement and his recent life in care.

Silverbeet, lettuces, capsicum, cabbages coming along nicely, broccoli, rhubarb, garlic. ... I go around and deadhead the roses and chop anything down that looks as though it wants chopping. ... I don't get involved [in programs]. ... The most I do is a residents meeting or BBQ.... Bingo doesn't grab me at all.

[Retirement] comes all of a sudden ... it's inevitable, it's going to happen to everyone isn't it?

I think if we accept what we have got and should be grateful. There would be something that you would want but we must accept what we get and that's it because it is good enough. I would like to go out the bush every day with a chain saw and get some wood but I have to accept that I can't go. ... Well that's what I have always done. That's the biggest problem, I think, is to change from one life to an entirely different one ... But we have to accept what we've got and I think everyone has and we are thankful for it.

Frank had done a lot till it 'came to a sudden stop' when he moved to the Health Centre in Oatlands.

I started farming, when the boys grew up for higher education and moved to town. I had several jobs down there, one at the University and the Mail Exchange for quite a few years. Two or three various jobs. [Then I] just kept the farm going until I moved in here and then came to a sudden stop. ..., When you retire, you retire. ... I took up reading .. The [Hobart] *Mercury* ... magazines. ... Physical exercises in the day room. ... twice a week... Kicking balloons around from one to the other so you have got your presence of mind. ... [I most enjoy] sitting in the sun and reading. I don't [enjoy the social activities]. ... I don't join in at all.

Frank, divorced and now 83, talked about how he came to be at the Centre and how he felt as a 'solitary person' about being there.

I grew up with elderly parents. I am not quite myself and wanted to make sure that my son didn't have the worry of the parents, I was living on my own I woke up after three days of rather a mess and at least coming in here my son doesn't have the worry of the parents carking out on them. They were pushing for [me to come here]. ... They seemed to get sick of me and thought it was a good idea for me [to come here] anyway. ...

When I was down in Hobart in the Royal [Hobart Hospital] there were five with strokes and each one us have lost our wives in the eight months period prior to when we had the strokes and they reckon that's the cause of the strokes.

If you could go back to what you used to do, well [Wally] would have had his occupation [too]. If he could go back and do that for say only two or three days it would feel different altogether, wouldn't it mate? (Spoken to Wally)

Wally replied to Frank.

He would like to go back to that bloody farm. That's how I feel now, I used to get up every fortnight and take the dogs and the gun and go recreation shooting. Well there's nothing I would like better than that ... But it's something that you have to accept that you can't do, you have to accept [this ...] a cup of tea in the conference room, don't you?

[I don't have privacy or freedom here]. Being a solitary person, it doesn't go down well.

When you go back to what your normal life was out in the bush and do the things you used to do, you feel entirely different ... its natural isn't it?

The three men were asked what they got out of doing the garden. Wally found that it ...

Fills in the time. [It's] better than sitting in my room by myself. You get sick of reading or watching videos, well I do anyway. Plus you can go around and torment anyone else that is around. ... I like reading the big gardening books and that makes a difference. Yes I have still got a couple up there. Peter Cundells' not there.

Frank played down his role in the garden when asked what he did.

Not much. Just pick a few weeds.

The men were asked what there was to do for them now in the centre in Oatlands. Wally replied:

Well if you are able to walk there's the Street, or like [Errol] you can be pushed around there, up the street there. There's a men's shed, which I don't think they have got going yet.

Their recent highlight (with picture to prove it) was the visit by a man ...

right up in Rotary and a big landowner. He took us all for a ride in the helicopter.

Older men in the organisation

The men spoke briefly about why there were only a few other men in residential care, and in the social programs in particular. Errol said that

There would be sewing or something or other, things that women are more interested in ... Like women are more interested in going to the day room for St Patrick's Day and all that sort of thing.

Wally reasoned that it was about relative physical handicap.

... the ladies here are not as physically handicapped as us, no way ... We're physically handicapped, well I am. And that's why we can't join in too many activities. No good me going to bingo because I wouldn't be able to see it or hear it, but there's no good crying over that. ... There is plenty here if you are capable of doing it. I could walk down there [to the garden] and have a shovel or a fork instead of one hand then it would be a lot better, but physically I can't do those sort of things.

Ceduna Adult Activity Centre

A brief picture of the organisation

The Ceduna Adult Activity Centre sits opposite the Ceduna Hospital where Highway 1 heads towards Western Australia, and one block from the Seniors Village where many of the men were permanent residents. Apart from the prominent Ceduna Adult Activity Centre sign, another sign on street frontage advertises that 'Our gifts make great presents' to passers by. A third sign about some possible 'Activities' woos prospective participants: 'Woodworking, Ass[orted] Crafts, Exercise Room & Beyond'. The older men who participated in the interview around the large activity table ranged in age from 76 ('Ken') who had only been 18 months in the Seniors Village to 'Jack' (88) who had been a resident for 17 years. 'Jock' was 79 and 'Douglas' was 82.

There had been a brief attempt some time back to set up an informal men's shed space in a small and uninviting tool shed but that was now locked up with two Hazchem signs on the door. What the men mostly did and enjoyed on their regular Tuesday was the Coffee the Table tennis, the eight ball and the barbecue. The universal stand out was the 'men's day', monthly bus trip. Jim explained that the men decide where the trip goes. The Activity Centre coordinator organizes

... a meeting and the men talk amongst themselves and they decide amongst themselves where we will go for a trip ... down to Wudinna, down to The Trombones and down to Streaky Bay and a lot of places around, down around where all the little schools used to be.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Ken, 76 and a lifetime, passionate gardener had come to the Senior Citizens Village 18 months ago after developing Parkinson's Disease and separating from his wife. Ken was already well known there as the 'vegie man'. Ken explained the sequence of events

... I was a good gardener, which I have been most of my life and I have grown commercially. I grew vegetables [in] Coolah in NSW. ... I grew nine acres of tomatoes one year. ... I arrived here with my daughter who is married to a Ceduna guy. ... My marriage broke up. ... [I] was married for 49 years. ... I was very much in love with my wife, and I still am but she found herself an earlier model and traded me in. It left a big hole in my life because I had been happily married. ... Twelve years ago I developed Parkinson's disease and I wasn't very well for a while,. The bad times must have turned her off me. ... I didn't want to go out because I had Parkinson's and was a bit jumpy and she was attracted to someone.

My daughter said "How about coming to live with us". So I came here and didn't know too many people. I suggested if she could find somewhere suitable to live I would come and live here. I got a phone call and there was a unit available at the Village so I jumped on a plane and came down 18 months ago. When I arrived here [at the Village] of course I said I came from a vineyard, and she [they] said "Well, I have got a garden here which hasn't been used for a while." [It's become] a bit of a passion for me and I am very proud of it. ... There's two of us [gardening]. Jim who is 90 but he is pretty active and he is the 'flower man', a flower garden, he doesn't do the vegetables.

I get, as I say, great satisfaction out of seeing things grow. I have always had a garden since I was a little fellow. I had commercial growing and ended up growing tomatoes pretty well. I suppose it's the satisfaction of producing something. ... I get companionship out of coming [to the Activity Centre]. ... I have always had an enquiring mind, I like to do things that I enjoy and it's affected my life in as much as I like to know makes things tick. I have got an enquiring mind.

[I'm] mostly at the Village... I come down here the same as everyone else if there is a BBQ on or the bus trip. ..[Now I'm separated] ... I find it very lonely, I was married for 49 years, married in 1960, and even now at the Village I find it very lonely, but I busy myself my days. I spend half an hour in the garden almost every day. ... I have [also] got a leatherwork outfit, I make leather belts, I have got a little room up there at the Village and I make belts and sell them for a modest profit, so that interest for the afternoons take care of that. ... There's a lady who works almost opposite us at the Village, she ... comes and sees me almost every day. ... The night times are quiet. ... After I finish my tea I go down to my room and watch television.

Douglas, 82

...went to 7th Grade in New South and that was it. I had 26 years with Gypsum Mines so I learnt a fair bit there.

[The monthly bus trip is] a good day away with men, I live on my own and it's a really good day. I have been going on these trips for the last 12 months. ... I like to come down with [the other men]. There's always history about the place years ago, I come from NSW originally and they tell who's has got the farms and that, its' real good, interesting data. [We] always get a good meal wherever we go. [If I didn't come here it'd be] a lonely sort of a life, I don't do anything else, I don't drink, I don't smoke.

Jack, 88, still identified as a local farmer despite having been in the Senior Citizen's Village for 17 years, for most of that time until with his wife until her death three years ago. Jack still gardened, with

... a few fruit trees down there [at the Village]. I don't come here [to the Activity Centre] very often. I have got sons on the land out here, I am a farmer myself and whenever I feel like it I drive out there, I still have a licence to drive and I go out there probably once every 10 days. I have got three sons and a son-in-law and they are about 25 miles from here.

I like to learn all the time really, but I have had a very varied life, I can remember the end of the depression and I had four and a half years in the War. I was a pilot on the flying boats and that was

quite an experience. We were over in the Middle East ... Before the War I was working in a store. [When I came back from the war] ... I went back on the farm until 1979 and came to live in the town. ... My wife and I had to go to the [Seniors] Village [in 1992] and we were there [together] for a [fifteen] years and she passed on here three years ago.

The Village [has been] an excellent place actually. We can do what we like... I am still able to drive .and if I get bored with myself I go out to my sons or my daughter. [Without my wife] I feel lost, but I am fortunate in as much as I ... when I get a bit down I [can] get out there for a day or something like that. When they have parties I always go out with them. My wife and I knew each other for 63 years and it's certainly a loss when they do go.

[I feel down] probably once or twice a week. I feel a bit sorry for having lost my wife. We were together for 63 years ... she died about 3 years ago and I still get the sad feeling. I watch the news every night and I get the Sunday paper and read it from go to woe.

I sometimes look back over the years, over the six years I had with the Navy and that taught me a lot. I came off the farm originally. ... I think being in the services is a good place to learn ...

Unlike the other men in the Activity Centre interview Jock, 79 was still married but still enjoys the Activity Centre activities, particularly the outings with the other men.

It's a change from home. [My] wife she comes down here on Tuesdays and enjoys herself with the women, sewing and things like that. It's a change from being home and you get a good attitude just talking to different men. ... Different conversations [to talking with women]. ... You don't talk about the same things as you do at home all the time. ... [but mainly] things about the district.

We are all part and parcel of the district and any interests that come up in town or anywhere or anything like that that people talk about. It's interesting to us. The change in townships over the years. Rainfall, always looking for rain, the farmers who are part of our district. It gives you a different slant on thing.

We went to Smokey Bay about a fortnight ago and had lunch at the Club down there and then we came home. We did a lap around Smokey Bay and had a look at the oyster sheds and the new streets around the oyster sheds and the boat ramp and around town and so forth. It forms a friendly atmosphere with all the fellows that go on the bus, its all fellows that go on those men's days. The only women that are on there is [the Activity Centre Coordinator] and her helpers. They look after us and have a talk and natter and carry on. It's really enjoyable.

[I enjoy] the friendship of all the fellows and people around me. They are always friendly and if you meet them in the street they always talk. It's the companionship I suppose, something different to when you are home with your wife all the time. ... I get a bit bored sometimes but then I just get in the ute and go for a drive somewhere across the drive-way here or across to Smoky Bay.

Well learning is something you do all the time, if you stop learning you stop knowing what is going on around you, so it's an occupation really. ... , I go to the library. We keep ourselves occupied my wife and I. We often [drive over] to Adelaide because our daughter is over there and we have a great friendship with the grandchildren because she is a very busy person. ... We do Red Cross driving, which is driving people to a conference in Whyalla. That's a long day but it's interesting. So it's keeping an open mind and seeing what's going on around you.

Standing back

Age-related settings and organisations often have difficulty engaging men in later life. Age-related organisations like the Oatlands Multi-Purpose Health Centre examined in Oatlands and the Over 50s Activity Centre examined in Ceduna can provide important opportunities for older men to practice a small number of aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Framework. In both organisations men had particularly enjoyed opportunities to share, reflect on and reminisce about their previous roles, lives and identities. In the case of the older men in Ceduna, their highlight was the trips to places that they knew and cared about. As 79 year old Jock put it so eloquently, older men, through retired, "are all part and parcel of the district". The Activity Centre monthly trip enabled men of diverse backgrounds to get together, share and recollect aspects of their identities associated with those places across the district. It provided a particularly powerful way, along with the social nature of the lunch, to learn about other men by interacting in groups. In

the case of the older Oatlands men (and also some of the Ceduna men), the vegetable garden had become a focus of men's activity and identities. Again, men were able to express their identities through something they knew something about and could do outside of the centres in which they were otherwise confined, even when their mobility was reduced to just one arm. At this later stage of life many (but not all) men appear to be less interested in interacting with the new communities and using new tools and technologies and more interested in sharing and making sense of their often rich and diverse, previous lives, including tools and technologies and previous communities of practice.

Age-related organisations like those examined provide rich opportunities for relating older men's early lives to their later lives. The other, main areas of the World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage addressed by programs such as these are related to social inclusion of sometimes isolated men, community engagement, recreation, exercise, relaxation, food and enjoyment.

Men's special interest organizations

Men's special interest organisations are extremely diverse. We have selected three organisations from the several available in our sample: the *Blacktown Gay Men's Pottery Group* in Western Sydney, the *Riverside Community Garden and Nursery* in Hobart's outer suburbs, and the *Alstonville Seventh Day Adventist Men's Shed* in Northern New South Wales. This one shed is illustrative of, but cannot be representative of, the recently emergent and rapidly expanding community men's shed movement and organisations in Australia, with around 350 sheds already open to mid-2009.

The Blacktown Pottery Club

The Blacktown Pottery Club is a group of local men who are gay and HIV positive. The group was formed by Mike Moore and Jeff Lees who saw the need for a community group that was set up to counter the social isolation and lack of services for gay HIV positive men in Western Sydney. The group get together once a week and work on pottery pieces while at the same time connecting with local people in friendship and support. The pottery group is part of a larger community group, the Blacktown Outdoors Group also run by Mike and Jeff, which had been awarded a Community Development Support Expenditure Grant (CDSE) through the Blacktown City Council in August 2009. The grant has allowed the group to purchase equipment for their weekly pottery class. The Blacktown Outdoors Group holds a social night at the Blacktown Workers Club on the last Sunday of each month and also runs monthly bushwalks and other social activities.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

The Blacktown Pottery Group provides a place where men can come together in friendship and learn about their creative side, by working on a piece of pottery and at the same time be with people who have similar challenges in their lives. When initially asked what benefits the men got from coming to the group, some members saw it as a chance to 'get out of the house and socialise'. For others coming together as gay men and breaking down barriers was an aspect of the group's intention.

You will probably find that the other organizations that you have been to in Blacktown that there has been quite a number of gay men that would have been at the bowling club or whatever that are just not out and they don't feel they have the confidence to come out. That is what we are aiming to do is break those barriers. We are just normal people, we just have fun like everyone else and we have arguments like everyone else, there is nothing different about.

Also it helps you to understand HIV because we have been fully accepted by the Arts and Crafts Council because they are well aware that it is a positive men's group and they may not have met anybody who is positive before and this is a first time for the Council because they have never had a positive group come up to them before.

For others the social and friendship was an important aspect of their participation in the group:

I think that social interaction actually makes for a more evenness to your life and that will extend to whatever there is ... like I could become very insular because for awhile I have only left home to go to

the doctors or go shopping ... very exciting, so it actually improves your whole outlook and therefore your relationship with other people.

Aspects of developing the men's creativity was clear in the responses:

Also it gives you a lot to think about too doesn't it, like 'I wonder what the pot is going to turn out, should I have done this to it or that to it'.

When asked about what the men learnt through their involvement in the group, some men were quick to acknowledge the 'liberating' effects of education.

Well I think education can be liberating it can take me out of what I was and the more I learn the more I understand.

In the last few years I actually started going to TAFE I just wanted to learn a few things, but mainly through just general reading over the years.

They acknowledged the importance of education in breaking down barriers.

Education tends to break down the barriers, when you were born you were given a set of beliefs and structures and as you grew older and educated those structures were changed or broken down and you started to develop your own view of the world. Sometimes ... like if you were a Catholic boy, you started to see through the crack of the church, and it's continuing, it continues on through your life. I was a teacher and I used to say to the children I'm here to thrust back the barriers of ignorance and that applies not only to the kids but also to yourself.

Giving to community

Many of the men in the conversations discussed how their involvement in the group assisted them to help in the community and their desire to have more involvement in developing their artistic skills:

From an artistic point of view I hope that as we develop as potters and artists that we produce pieces of art that will challenge the community, that when we put them out there that they will have an effect on them ... they will like them or hate them or they will say 'what the hell is that about?'

Men in the organisation

The Blacktown Pottery group advertise in the gay press in Sydney and locally through the walking group website and the local Gay magazine as well as by word of mouth.

...and we get enquiries through that, one of the magazines just goes to our web site and grabs up things from our diary page and just automatically put it in for us. Its to let everyone know, just getting your name out there. Just that you can be gay and to be open about it and to be accepted as part of the community. I see myself as being Australian first, I am not gay first.

It's word of mouth mainly, it's also in our local newspapers and for the gay organizations but then to get beyond that you would have to get publicity in your local rag.

Riverside Community Garden and Nursery, Bridgewater

The local council has operated a municipal nursery for twenty odd years on the current Riverside Community Garden and Nursery site that looks out over the Derwent River. In the past two years the site has been leased out and opened up to the local residents and operated as their garden and nursery by STEPS, a registered charity who operate as a Job Network organisation. The intention is for people from the community, but particularly those doing the STEPS program, who for whatever reason don't have a garden at their residence, can come and plant up a garden and grow fresh and cheap vegetables for themselves to take home and eat. Basically they have an agenda of getting people to come and use the facilities rather than looking to make a profit. The participants are predominantly male. They include young people of school age doing work experience, older people doing the Work for the Dole program and some volunteers who just like to be there.

Participants explained that STEPS is a community employment program involved in building new houses for the community. Having completed the STEPS program, they have received some qualifications and are now involved in the building works on the garden and nursery site. Some help out under supervision with the carpentry and landscaping. As one participant stated,
I mainly do the plumbing and work with the plumber and extra things that I didn't know about before.

Some of the plants grown at the nursery are used in the landscaping of these new houses. It's with some pride that the participants mention the opening and handing over of the keys of a newly finished house to the well deserving occupants, who otherwise would have little chance of obtaining their own house.

Well when the houses are built and to see the look on some of the people's faces, they might not have had a new house before and just seeing how happy some of them are ... they thank you and I enjoy that and get a kick out of it. . .

Another explains,

We had an opening yesterday. ... Yes, the Premier comes along and he comes along to a few of the happenings when we hand over the keys. We have just finished two [houses] at Kingston and just finished four [houses] down here in Bridgewater and two [others] before that in Bridgewater. They have got them all over the place and they have got plans to continue to do more. I think the original plan is for 600 units in ten years and they don't seem to have any problems with money to do it.

They mention that they often call in at the garden and nursery as part of their ongoing work roles and to help out with some of the projects that are currently being undertaken.

Learning and wellbeing in the organisation

Through doing the work the participants who come to the gardens and nursery learn about horticulture, gardening, general building, maintenance and employment skills. The manager explains that in this area, unemployment is a part of life and how this is managed by each individual which can be vital to the wellbeing of the community. He explains some of the negative consequences that being out of work can lead to.

[Of the] 45 people through here on work for the dole, we probably manage to get five of them into full time sustainable work ... You wonder what happens to the others, but the issue of long term unemployed people ... is part of the generation. You have got the influence of drugs, that's still a major issue with the young ones and it's endemic, they are unlicensed drivers and that's often the start of the slippery slide, being in strife with the law.

The manager also explained how while some things are second nature to him and his experience, they can be surprisingly foreign to some of the participants who attend the gardens. Such events encourage him to reflect on what these participants are learning through their experience at the gardens and nursery and what their learning needs are.

Simple, little carpentry jobs with Work for the Dole people who may not have an affinity with power tools and haven't been shown how to use a hammer properly. I have young blokes here who don't know how to use a cordless drill ...

Another participant was observed passing on his own newly acquired knowledge to another through showing him how to plant seeds into seed boxes. He explained what he was doing and the reasons behind it as he was doing it. He then handed the box and the tools over and invited the other, newer participant to have a try while he looked on over his shoulder.

Men in the organisation

When asked about giving advice to other, similar organisations about how to cater for men over 50, the supervisor said that there needed to be a variety of activities to engage older male participants.

We have found with the [50] Work for the Dole ... who have been through here [that] the older men are not interested in potting up plants from one size pot to the next one up. You feel as though you have to have a variety of activities for them to 'suck them in' to some extent. It can't be just the boring and repetitive, one kind of job ... You do have the variety here. I mean up here

on this whiteboard you have got, 'Dads and billy' carts gets a guernsey there, boats and sandpit ... This week I will get going with doing some billy carts and I wouldn't mind doing a couple of canoes or kayaks with some of the kids and some of the unemployed Work for the Dole people. It's not all jobs like mowing lawns or potting up plants.

One of the participants explains that he gets enjoyment out of working at the gardens through the feedback from others who come in and use the facilities.

One of the things that I really like about working here is seeing the faces of some of the school kids when they come. If we had lights here, I think they would stop here all night. It's a real thing to see them come in. If they have a little garden growing they will come in the following week and see what's grown and take [some] home. We grow all different kinds of vegies here and distribute them through the tenancies, through the units. That's always appreciated.

One of the participants explains that it is important to find out a newcomer's existing interests and try to match and make links to these.

[It's important to] find out what their interests are and what they would like to do and get them to try and do something they *are* interested in so they can show other people. They might come here and I take them gardening and they might not come back. If they are not interested in doing an activity they won't put 100 per cent in and that's how any sort of community activity should be. If people want to come along and there is an interest for them, they can learn. Not with pen and paper, but with hands-on stuff.

Alstonville Seventh Day Adventist Men's Shed

A brief picture of the organisation

Most interviews are set up long in advance. This one was a fortuitous fluke. The day previous to the interview I had admired and photographed the huge, blue *Alstonville Seventh Day Adventist Retirement Village and Aged Care Facility* sign in rural Pearces Creek Road outside Alstonville, one of Lismore's many satellite 'villages'. A random conversation that same night checking details for a U3A interview the next day identified that a shed existed in the area that some U3A men used on a Wednesday. On the way to another interview early next morning I turned up an unmarked driveway nearby and walked into a nondescript shed separate from the Adventist Village under a spreading subtropical tree, typical of the Rainbow Region.

Chris, the coordinator was preparing the materials for the morning's work before the men arrived agreed after a short explanation to invite the men to take part. Two hours later Chris explained on tape what it was all about.

The Men's Shed was started with the inspiration of trying to offer an outlet for men within the Village and the community to come and meet [and] enjoy activities of a similar nature and lifestyle. The Shed was on the Retirement Village property and it was cleaned out and made available to the men for use as a Men's Shed. The organisation of the Village, the Church, provided funds to get the Shed started and they provide ongoing funding for the purchasing of equipment and materials for doing the jobs we are engaged in doing. We have a number of people come from the Village itself and we also have a number of people come from other retirement institutions in the Lismore and Alstonville areas.

Five shed participants from the Retirement Village and Hostel who were doing one of their two mornings agreed to be interviewed. There was a 20 year age range between 'Frank' (74) and 'Don' (94). Along with three other men, 'Charles', 'Jack' and 'Errol', all in their 80s, had been pulled away from their job of very cheerfully assembling and painting parrot and possum boxes, designed to attract local hollow poor wildlife. If I'd come the next day on Wednesday morning, it would have been the U3A men. Other retired, older men come in regularly to the shed from the Caroon Retirement Village, the [Aged care] Villas in Lismore and Goonellabah.

As in many retirement Villages, the 'Seventh Day Adventist' Church label belies a diverse range of mostly Christian residents, as Frank explained.

I think the majority of people have a Christian belief whether it is the same religion or not, I think of the people living here 25 per cent of the population would be Seventh Day Adventists. The rest of us are not and we are treated as equal, but most of us would have a Christian belief and I think it makes the Village prosper.

Learning and wellbeing through the organisation

Frank, the youngest participant at 74, outlined what they had already made – and benefited from in the men's shed.

We do jobs for Parks and Wildlife and Wildlife Carers, and that's possum boxes. We are now doing parrot nesting boxes. We have done bookend stands for the library in the Village; we are currently making toy hammers for the Church School. And the kids can then finish decorating them.

Then there's the comradeship and friendship. Personally I am not very active, so it's great to be able to get out and be amongst friends and men and it's great for the activity.

Frank ...

... left school after three years at high school and I was never educated, I did like school but I didn't have a school leaving certificate or a University degree ... My favourite saying is that I learnt from the University of Hard Knocks because I was working and helping Dad on the farm and then I started my own business and had been in my own business for the rest of my life. You are never too old to starting learning ... You learn all the time, you listen to what is happening and you keep learning.

Being in the Shed here I have learnt techniques. I was never a woodwork sort of guy, but I could drive a nail with a hammer and that's it, I don't think you ever stop learning, you just have to keep your ears and eyes open and see what's going on ... and accept the good with the bad.

Frank had worked for 30 years, 20 of it in the live produce business,

... that required heavy lifting, and I retired especially to come here. I live with my wife. The other thing that is very good, people like [Errol, here] who is my next door neighbour. He has had a stroke but he can [still] come here. He is right handed but he can use his left hand to do little jobs, and it's great to see him being useful and part of the team. The comradeship is what it's all about.

I was very involved in community affairs before I retired and came here, I am involved in the Village and my wife is as well, she has other community involvements and it's good to be able to continue to be involved within the community. This is a great place to see the Shed be part of the community and be part of something that we can build on and make it better.

Eighty year old Jack had dementia and enjoyed ...

[getting around and having a talk] about everything we have done and everything else, we have a good time here, it works pretty well with me, I can walk down along the ridgeway, it's good exercise.

I grew up in a bush town out of Lismore in Nimbin. I worked for the Government at one stage for about 10 years or more, with the magistrate and police prosecutor and all that and did that for a good part of my life ... and I worked for a land mining company about 30 km from Lismore for many years. Apart from that I have done a few other jobs ... see those trees out there? (Macadamias). I worked on them for a good while... I have been retired for a long time ... I don't know what age it would have been, maybe when I was 70?

I don't know whether I learn much [in the Shed] but I am happy to be in such a good place, to get on with everybody and my wife she does a fair bit of work for the community. She's alright. she's quite happy for me to be here, she thinks it's a good idea to come here and we are both happy with what we are doing here.

The retirement Village is a good place for Jack to recollect the old times.

At the retirement village everything seems to go pretty good and there are lots of fellows around in the village and you get to know them. Sometimes you have got people who come into the village and sit down there and they tell you what they have done and they might say 'wait a minute I know your father' or something and they tell you all about everything ... they all work together they do.

Errol, 85 and introduced above by Frank, and riding a gopher had one good hand and one good leg and liked the way the shed-based activity

Occup[ied] my mind more than anything, seeing that I am a little bit incapacitated.... I have had a stroke on the right side, it wasn't as bad as some people because I didn't lose my speech although it is not quite as firm as it was. [The gopher] is my saving grace of getting out on my own anywhere.

Errol was at school when

... the war came along and I went into the Navy, the conscription was just at the door and I jumped in. [When I came back] I met a girl in Sydney ...

Errol had been ...

General Sales Manager for a company in Sydney for quite a number of years and then I retired and I bought a farm [elsewhere] because I thought it would be a good change for my lifestyle, because my life was very, very busy. [Later I sold] the farm and that's when I retired and came ... and lived in a house [nearby] in Alstonville. About three years ago I had the stroke, which put a kybosh on those things.

Well I think it proves to me that people are a lot better than what you first give them credit for ... I'm talking about coming in here as a virtual stranger. I know some of the people up in the Village but you get people that give you the verbal and the support that you need behind you ... Everybody needs support sometime, some of them are a bit more fortunate, but a lot of people do [need support] and I think that's what I get out of it ... I can get in my buggy and drive up here which is fortunate, the wife goes off and does shopping and gets her hair periwinkled or something or other ...

And she's happy and I get back and I'm happy. I did a lot of work under my unit and I used to do a lot of woodwork in my retirement and I just couldn't pick the tools up any more I can't handle them and that really got to me for a long time. I used to go down and look at them and walk back up again and would think 'Perhaps it will get better?' but of course it never will get better.

Don, the oldest man at 94 and a former Emeritus Professor in Dentistry explained that he and his wife got into the Village because she needed high care. Don was now in the Hostel and therefore 'more restricted' than the other participants, perceived significant benefits from the participation.

For me it's a 'carry on' from what I used to do. I used to do my own woodwork in the Village and it has given me the opportunity to keep contact with the people I had contact with before ... It has given me a chance to see different [woodwork] and ideas.

I have always used my hands and I have always had hobbies in fine work. I did a lot of woodwork and I have carried these things right through and I can still work ... It has been a great benefit to me and if it hadn't been I would have died.

The majority [in the Hostel] is females and there is only a small number of men. (With some humour) They wear us out too soon that's the trouble.

There are number of people, males, ... some of them have got nothing whatsoever to do. ... It's like there is something missing. In their lives. Some of them don't know how to look after themselves, and now it's too late, maybe that's being critical? ... They don't know how to play ... [It's important] in life, to be able to enjoy something, and that's what we get out of this. It's not what you do, nobody knows what I do. I cover up all the mistakes I make. We have a lot of fun and it's nice that something comes of it. I think it's remarkable.

Charles, now 82 illustrated the way learning had shaped his life in a multitude of contexts. The detail is important to hear as it illustrates the depth of skills and experience men sometimes bring to a Shed. Charles was at school ...

during the war years. Dad had brought a big heap of timber and instead of going back to school I started swinging the axe. I had a couple of years at that and then I went and served my time [in the army]. I was only a kid, I went and served my time in Newcastle with BHP and I did the tech exam on the Friday night and I was in New Guinea on the Monday morning, so it was pretty well organised.

I worked there for five years, I had two years before we got married and then I had two years after and I finished a two year contract ... that was unbelievable as far as learning is concerned because there was no unions, overtime was time and a half. So you learned how to weld, you learned how to splice ropes for powerlines, all sorts of things and you didn't get that experience unless you went to those sorts of places.

I had the opportunity to work overseas with a mining group in Malaya. I had the opportunity to get a better education. You could do a ticket in mechanics and safety and these certificates covered the

whole works of electricity. ... It was just under two years before I got the two tickets. I studied at home at night.

I took an interest in the dredging, actually I started off in the dredging in Malaya ... and I knew more about dredging than most of the blokes who got the job because I had had some experience before and I would ask the right questions and would get the right answer. It was a great place. Also if you wanted to know how to do something and someone knew they would show you.

Charles liked

... the comradeship, they are a very good group.

Chris, the shed supervisor had the last, important words about the men who participate.

I think one of the most important things that is coming out of the Shed, as far as I am concerned, is the willingness and the way that the men that come up here get in and help and they look after each other and they look after new ones that come in. But they are kind enough and courteous enough to give up their seat when we have got others come in so that they can sit down or they will leave what they're doing to help someone else. Their dedication to helping and making the Shed grow is just second to none and I appreciate each and everyone of them because it makes my job a lot easier. These fellows will come over to my Shed where I do a lot of stuff to have a look at what I have done and to help me. I cut a lot of stuff out for the possum boxes and [Charles] and [Frank] will come over and help me. It's great for the friendship but also their dedication is absolutely fantastic. They are very very much appreciated.

Standing back

Organisations in which men are the main or only participants are very diverse in nature and in terms of the learning. The three organisations examined above each provide productive, practical hands-on activity through pottery, gardening and woodwork respectively. Each provides extensive and rich opportunities for the development of all aspects of communication in the Australian Core Skills Framework directed towards the needs and interests of older men. There are ample opportunities for older men to learn and develop new skills with tools and technology skills as well as to practice, mentor others and share existing skills developed from men's previous work and lives. There are opportunities in all three organisations to interact regularly in small groups, to perform tasks, interact within the organisations and through the products they make, to interact with and benefit the wider community as well as the men themselves.

All three organisations simultaneously and actively address several of the World Health Organisation determinants of disadvantage: particularly social inclusion and community engagement of older men, some with limited formal education and others who are otherwise socially isolated. Active involvement in practical hands-on activity in the form of voluntary and cooperative work encourages productive ageing. It provides older men with opportunities and incentives to remain fit and healthy enough to actively participate at any age, to reconnect with past lives and hands-on practices with other men and to combat the likelihood for some older men of depression associated with withdrawal from family, and community and coping with changed abilities with age.

Discussion

Our discussion seeks to 'thread together' the diverse narrative and survey data from diverse community organisations in two ways. Firstly we critically examine the learning opportunities available through a convenient and widely recognized Australian theoretical filter: the six aspects of communication identified in the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). *Personal, cooperative, procedural, technical, systems and public communication* are seen to be involved respectively as providing opportunities through learning for adults to *express identity, interact in groups, perform tasks, use tools and technologies, interact in organisations and interact with the wider community.*

Secondly, we critically examine the opportunities for enhancing health and wellbeing available through a convenient and widely recognized international theoretical filter: the nine World Health Organisation (2003) 'Determinants of Disadvantage' (and some alternative opposites). The data

and our analysis is particularly focused on four of these determinants of disadvantage (and some possible ways of addressing them): *social exclusion* (social inclusion and community engagement); *unemployment* (employment and productive voluntary work); *early lives* (later lives) and *stress* (recreation, exercise, relaxation and enjoyment). In some organizations two additional determinants or disadvantage become relevant: *inadequate food* and *substance abuse*.

Older men's learning through the Australian Core Skills Framework filter

The narratives above richly illustrate the ways in which diverse community organisations have the capacity to involve and include older men. The most effective learning is associated with contexts which cast older men as co-participants in hands-on, shared group activities. The learning is particularly rich if, apart from the focus of the activity (on learning, sport, fire and emergency services, gardening, art or shed based practice), there is parallel consideration of the changing needs, wants, interests and aspirations of the *men themselves, as they productively age*. All organization types examined provide a wide range of opportunities, albeit in different combinations and with differing emphases, for older men to learn, develop and practice all six, inter-related aspects of communication contained within the Australian Core Skills Framework.

In the case of *personal communication (expressing identity)*, there is evidence of significant opportunities for men to develop, express, model and share positive identities as men. The particular value of organizations such as sporting clubs, fire and emergency services organizations, gardening, craft and shed-based organizations is that they encourage and provide opportunities for developing and enhancing positive identities for older men without naming or foregrounding the benefit. The most successful learning appears to be associated with older men as equal co-participants in a group activity rather than as students, customers or clients. This success is enhanced in settings such as men's sheds and gardens (but also in some sports) where the shared activity provides a context for men to learn about productive ageing, about being older, and about how to stay as fit, active and as healthy as they can be for as long as is feasible.

All organizations provide varying opportunities for older men to engage in *cooperative communication (interacting in groups)*. These opportunities are richest in relatively small community organizations where a high proportion of volunteers work in small teams or groups and are more likely to have opportunities to take on responsible roles within the organization. In order to fulfill these roles, there is a need for high levels of cooperative communication.

Learning is particularly rich for older men in organizations, which also provide opportunities for *procedural communication (performing tasks)* and *technical communication (using tools and technologies)*. Both these aspects of communication presuppose a practical context in which the tasks are undertaken and the tools and technologies are regularly used. While these opportunities are available in some sports they are again richest in fire and emergency services, shed, garden and sporting settings where men are able to work productively for the common and community good in groups.

Opportunities are also available in all community organisations included within this study (with the possible exception in some education and training providers where participants are treated primarily as students or as fee paying customers or clients) for men of all ages, including older men, to maintain and take on ongoing, responsible roles within organizations. There are therefore ample opportunities for older men to practice *systems communication (interacting within organizations)*. Again, these opportunities are richest in relatively small community organizations where a high proportion of volunteers have opportunities to take on responsible roles within the organization. In order to fulfill these roles there is a need for high levels of systems communication.

Finally but importantly, most of these organizations actively interface with the wider community, providing rich and diverse opportunities for older men to practice *public communication (interacting with the wider community)*. It is important to note that some older men who do not use the internet or other contemporary information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as a mobile phones may sometimes be 'passed over' when the responsible roles associated with both *systems communication* and *public communication* are allocated. This is because of the perceived inability of older men without ICT access to rapidly share information now routinely distributed in most (but not all) organisations via email, internet and mobile phone.

Older men's learning through the World Health Organisation 'Determinants of Disadvantage' filter

The narratives above richly illustrate the ways in which diverse community organisations have the capacity to involve and include older men. As for learning, the most effective ways of addressing men's health and wellbeing are seen from the data to be associated with contexts which cast older men as co-participants in hands-on, shared group activities. The wellbeing benefits are particularly powerful in community settings where there is active consideration of the changing needs, wants, interests and aspirations of the *men themselves, as they productively age*.

Firstly, all organization types examined provide a wide range of opportunities, albeit in different combinations and with differing emphases, for older men's health and wellbeing to be enhanced in ways that particularly address the risk and reality of *social exclusion*. Wellbeing benefits associated with social inclusion and community engagement are particularly enhanced in smaller, community-based organizations where men's age and experience are regarded as positive attributes to the organization and to the communities.

Secondly, all organization types provide opportunities to address the critically important WHO determinant of disadvantage, *unemployment*. Unemployment is most relevant for older men of working age (less than 65 in Australia) who want to keep working and earning. Men over 50 regularly reported widespread and blatant age discrimination in the workforce and disabilities associated with previous work. In many cases the community organisations we examined provided the experience of voluntary employment and productive work. In some cases, such as in Meals in Wheels organizations, this part time, voluntary work can satisfy government requirements for mutual obligation in relation to income support whilst otherwise unemployed. It is unsurprising that the use of lower level vocational training on its own for older men is demonstrably ineffective and inappropriate. The promise of work after training is particularly cruel for older men who have been damaged by previous work, and who are likely to experience the same age-related knock backs when they apply for work.

Our research suggests an urgent need to reconsider the appropriateness of the term *unemployment* as it applies to men older than the formal retirement age of 65. Many men struggle with the transition beyond paid work, even when they voluntarily retire in a planned way at the official age. The decline in men's wellbeing, though partly related to the physical effects of ageing, appears in many cases to be adversely affected by changes in men's identities. The particular value of involvement in community-based organizations before formal retirement age (and particularly before involuntary separation from the workforce) is the early and pre-emptive bridge that this regular involvement creates in terms of men's non-work identities. Community-based activity can and does allow men to develop identities that exist independently of paid work. They allow for opportunities for interaction in groups, within organizations and with the wider community. The value of this interaction is enhanced for older men when this activity is more than individual and cerebral (knowledge or skills-based). It is particularly powerful, therapeutic and likely to have broader wellbeing benefits when it is physical, social, involves other men and contributes to the organization and the community. This hands-on activity has particularly strong wellbeing benefits, whether it be via sport, fire and emergency service volunteering, gardening or 'doing stuff' in sheds, because it creates, maintains and strengthens men's post work lives and identities through communities of men's practice.

Thirdly, community-based activity for older men has the capacity to allow men to reconnect with and positively build on often difficult *past lives*. A majority of the older men in this study had negative experiences of learning at school and left very early by contemporary standards. Men over 65 in 2009 were born during wartime when a relatively small percentage of men undertook advanced formal vocational or university education or training. A higher proportion of older men than in younger population cohorts have low formal competencies in the five core skills that comprise the Australian Core Skills Framework: learning, reading, writing, oral communication. Most also have relatively low information and computer technology (ICT) skills.

Fourthly, community-based activity for older men have the capacity to reduce the significant *stresses* involved with changing and ageing. These stresses include the stress of not being in paid work for some men. Regular trips and hands-on activities for older men in age-related settings, such as those provided through men's sheds, over 50s activity centres and gardening are

enjoyable, positive, therapeutic and preventative in terms of men's health and wellbeing. They provide critically important opportunities for regular re-creation of past lives, exercise and relaxation as well as informal discussion of the many health and wellbeing issues that differentially affect older men, including prostate and bowel cancer, incontinence, hearing loss, depression and dementia.

Fifthly, some community organisations also positively address *substance abuse* issues that affect many men including older men. These particularly include cigarette smoking and alcohol but also include other prescription and non-prescription drugs. In some organizations including some sheds and war service organisations, the activity itself is recognized as part of the treatment for depression.

Finally and importantly, all successful community-based organization recognize the value of healthy food: particularly regular, healthy and social eating as a way of attracting engaging and benefiting older men in social and community activities. It can be as simple as a shared 'cuppa', lunch together in a men's shed or a picnic on a group outing.

Reflection on the links between learning and wellbeing

We have attempted in this research to actively 'join dots' that are seldom considered to be on the same plane. Learning is conventionally and increasingly considered to be individual, personal and cerebral and necessarily associated with education and training professionals and 'providers'. Health and wellbeing have been conventionally and historically regarded as being in the domain of health professionals and directed to fixing individuals once they are 'broken'. What we have tried to do in this research is provide some new insights into the ways some community-based organisations have an uncanny capacity to join the learning 'dots' and the health and wellbeing 'dots' in ways that are informal, effective, positive to and therapeutic for older men, in ways that formal learning and health approaches sometimes are not.

Critics of our research might question our deliberate decision to investigate informal learning as a wellbeing rather than a vocational or cognitive phenomenon. The copious evidence from all organisations investigated of a positive connection between community involvement and wellbeing in our study is backed by research from other research fields. For example the National Heart Foundation of Australia found that '... [d]epression, social isolation and lack of social support are significant risk factors for CHD [coronary heart disease] – independent of and of a similar magnitude to the conventional risk factors' (Bunker et al 2003, cited in DHA 2008, p.11). In the past five years more than one in three men surveyed (32%) had experienced a major health crisis; one in four (23%) had experienced 'a significant loss in their lives' and around one in five (18%) had experienced depression.

Rather than counting adult learning as a public cost that adults might pay more for, it is timely to ask whether learning is or might become recognized as producing significant public wellbeing benefits that are economically positive. It is widely recognized that high levels of relative inequality, demonstrable in all communities we have researched, can and does harm the wellbeing of individuals and communities (Field 2009, p.34). While there may or may not be an argument for more funds for higher levels of support for universities or vocational education and training, our research provides convincing evidence of the value of assisting adults of all ages to negotiate transitions effectively (McNair 2009). This includes not only those transitions associated with initial labour market entry and re-entry, but also and particularly transitions associated with relationship breakdown, divorce, separation, bereavement, the onset of dependency, and changing residential location.

Conclusion

This study, is fundamentally and deliberately 'an exploration of informal learning and wellbeing in communities other than those understood as having an educational dimension' (de Carteret 2009, p.504). Because of the huge volume of data created from interviews and surveys in over 40 organisations in six categories, this report should be regarded as a first cut of a large and very complex and multi-layered cake sampled from six sites in only three Australian states. As a

learning-related study it is unique, not only by being informed solely by older men as informants, but particularly by older men as voluntary participants in community-based organisations. Its other unique feature is its attempt to analyse learning as a wellbeing phenomena, not only in terms of participant intentions but also in terms of outcomes.

In order to embed this research and our conclusions in the wider international literature about lifelong learning, we have framed many of our conclusions around Field's (2009) review of the wellbeing and learning literature. In this we take a value position, backed up by our narrative and survey evidence, that people derive critically important identity, enjoyment and fulfilment in community settings. As Field (p.5) points out, '[M]oney alone is not enough. People also value their health, their social connections (including family) and their ability to contribute to the wider community'. Our research shows that virtually all (96%) of the senior men in this study were doing 'what they really enjoy' through these diverse and fascinating community organisations and places.

Adult and community education (ACE) tends to be missing, less accessible to or appropriate for older men surveyed in the regional and remote communities examined in South Australia and Tasmania. ACE is known from international research (Field 2009, p.36) '... to be particularly effective in enhancing *the wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens*. Any government that ignores this evidence is open to serious criticism.'

One reading of this conclusion might be to argue that since adult and community education is not available to, appropriate or working for many men in Australia, unless community organisations like ACE are indeed able to 'bring in more blokes' (LCL 2003), informal learning might be relied on less and provided with less government funds. Another reading of our research might be to suggest that a greater amount of funding might be invested in what Field (2009, p.39) describes as '*a lifelong learning system that takes wellbeing as its primary purpose*', which as Field points out '*is likely to differ significantly from the present models*'. Narrowly focussed vocational education policies are totally inappropriate for older men not in work, particularly for those men who have withdrawn from the workforce or have retired. Importantly, opportunities and choices for learning for men in rural communities in Tasmania like Oatlands, and rural and remote communities like Ceduna are currently very limited. Self-service, computer mediated learning models and contexts (as provided in some parts of Tasmania and Western Australia by Telecentre networks) would appear to be inappropriate for the two thirds of older men (65%) who do not enjoy to learn via the computer or internet.

Separately, there is little evidence that the significant learning and wellbeing needs of communities with large adult Aboriginal populations are being appropriately provided. It is concerning in 2009 that in locations such as Ceduna with significant Aboriginal populations there appears to be few culturally appropriate places for adults to learn or access computers other than through TAFE.

In broad terms, adult and community education (ACE), vocational education and training (VET) and schools tend respectively to target and address the needs of women as community members, men as workers and young people as prospective workers on the assumption that everyone is in paid work or should work. Men who are not connected to community, unemployed, retired or not working express a desire for positive ways to contribute to the community, stay fit, independent and healthy. For many older men, being taught in off the shelf, accredited vocational 'courses', particularly in the ACE environment, is typically neither desirable nor appropriate.

Nevertheless half of the men (47%) surveyed were hypothetically interested in the opportunity to take part in more learning: not through ACE but through the organisation in which they were surveyed; not through teaching but through mentoring or bringing in a local or outside tutor; ideally hands-on, in special interest courses, in small groups, where they can meet people.

Consistent with this finding about hypothetical learning, men's general preference for learning was, in descending rank order of agreement: by doing (97%), in practical situations (95%), in a mixed group including women (87%) and in outdoor settings (76%). While two thirds of men (64%) agreed that they also preferred to learn in a group with men, 36 per cent of men disagreed. While

male-specific organisations like community men's sheds are important for some particularly vulnerable men, they are clearly not for all older men.

In the relative absence of appropriate learning opportunities to address positive ageing and social isolation of men, particularly for men not in the workforce or unemployed, community organisations *other than* ACE are playing critically important roles as surrogate learning and wellbeing organisations. There is new evidence of the relative effectiveness *as learning organisations* of both sporting and fire emergency services organisations (including coastal and surf rescue and organizations). Given that these organisations are more ubiquitous even than primary schools and found in most small and remote communities, they appear to play a more positive and significant role in shaping the attitudes to informal lifelong learning for older men than any other category of community organisation including ACE.

The difficulties many older men had recently faced are striking. In the past five years around one in three older men (32%) had experienced a major health crisis. Around one in four (23%) had experienced a significant loss in their lives or a new impairment or disability (also 23%) and around one in five (18%) had experienced depression.

Unlike for younger men we have separately studied in Western Australia (WADET 2009), work and job related concerns were of lesser importance. A lower proportion: around one in ten (12%) had faced a recent financial crisis and a very small proportion (3%) had experienced difficulties with their business or job. There is evidence from the interviews that the organisations men belonged to were important in maintaining and enhancing their identities, social relationships, happiness, health and wellbeing.

There is copious evidence of the critically important role in Australia of community organisations in helping older men to learn about change. This particularly includes men learning to enhance their wellbeing to reshape their lives after a wide range of setbacks to do with family, identity, ageing, health and social and community relationships. It appears timely, as Field (2009, p.36) observed, '... to tackle the persistent gap between medical and other approaches to wellbeing. [O]ther interventions can also play an important role in an integrated strategy for promoting wellbeing'. While there is a widely acknowledged, general statistical correlation between level of formal education, work, income and wellbeing, recent research in Australia has shown that the outcomes from lower level vocational training are either minimal or negative for many adults. There is a general move by most nations towards more vocational training through ACE and TVET (technical vocational education and training) and away from funding and supporting adult and community education. This move may be appropriate for some younger and unemployed people but is inappropriate for older adults, particularly for older men who are not in work and typically retired. Learning is well known from research to be able to protect older adults from cognitive decline and support continued autonomy (Field 2009, p.36).

Consistent with observations by Field (2009, p.36), there is evidence in Australia of a need for adult learning organisations 'to align themselves with other services and campaigning bodies that are concerned with well-being'. Conversely, health-related organisations are sometimes unaware of the wellbeing benefits of active community involvement including through learning.

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Appendix 1 Survey Instrument (Results and explanation added in []: from 219 returns in 48 organizations. Numbers are percentages of all returns. The original survey was customised for each organisation.)



MEN'S LEARNING & WELLBEING

NSA Survey of Men Participating in Community Organisations

Based on 219 returns from 48 diverse organisations in six categories in six sites in SA, Tasmania & NSW (all numbers are percentages; most frequent of multiple responses have usually been indicated in **bold**)

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey. It is for completion by you, as a man who participates in the community organization above. The aim of the survey is to find out about you and what you get from your participation (Part A, Questions 1 to 5) and also your learning needs & preferences (Part B, Questions 1 to 13). Survey results will be available on request.

You do not need to tell us your name. We will not be reporting any information that can identify you. Please answer the questions by placing ticks ✓ in boxes or comment where appropriate.

Part A: Questions about you, your experiences and participation in this organisation

1. About your experiences in the organisation above

(Tick one box in each row)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I enjoy being able to participate when I want to	61	37	2	0
I enjoy the social aspect	57	43	1	0
I feel 'at home' in the organisation	51	47	1	1
I have some say over how the organisation is run	28	52	17	4
I have made good friends in the organisation	53	44	3	1
I get a chance to mentor others	25	60	12	4
I enjoy the activities, trips or outings	47	48	4	1
It is best for me to participate on set times and days	33	45	18	4
The role of the organisation leader is important	59	37	2	2
I get to mix with people of different ages	45	51	4	1
I feel comfortable with women participating	48	44	4	4
Someone is responsible at all times	45	50	4	1

2. As a result of participating in this organisation ...

(Tick one box in each row)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
... I am doing what I really enjoy	51	45	4	1
... I can give back to the community	44	46	9	1
... I have a place where I belong	30	61	9	1
... I expect to get more paid work	3	9	55	34
... I get access to men's health information	13	41	35	10
... I feel better about myself	35	63	2	0
... I feel more accepted in the community	25-	64	10	1
... I feel happier at home	27	54	16	3
... my communication or literacy skills have improved	18	54	24	3
... my wellbeing has improved	28	61	11	1
... my confidence has improved	31	56	13-	1
... my social skills have improved	23	54	22	1
... my organisation skills have improved	21	50	26	2

3. I regard this organisation as a place ...

(Tick one box in each row)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
... to be with other men	28	49	19	3
... to meet new friends	34	59	6	1
... to get out of the house	31	40	27	3
... to learn new skills	36	48	16	1
... to help me keep healthy	34	55	11	1
... to give back to the community	42	46	11	1

4. About you. Tick if any of the following apply to you.

44	I am a current or former qualified tradesman
21	I am currently in the paid workforce
92	I currently have a car licence <u>and</u> drive my own car
5	I depend on others to get to the organisation
16	I participated in a similar type of organisation as a boy
52	I heard about the organisation through friends
10	I was referred to the organisation by a health or welfare worker
81	I am married or have previously been married
73	I currently live with a wife or partner
68	I receive some type of pension
86	I am a father
69	I am a grandfather
5	I speak another language other than English at home
1	I am an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person

5. About your experiences in the past five years.

Tick if you have experienced any of the following during the past five years.

In the past five years I have experienced:

12	separation from a partner	78	satisfaction with life generally
8	separation from a family home	16	a new personal relationship
9	separation from children	41	a new child or grandchild
23	a significant loss in my life	3	difficulties with my business or job
32	a major health crisis	19	depression
23	a new impairment or disability	10	unemployment
7	loss of tools or a work space	12	a financial crisis
42	retirement		

Part B: About your learning in the organisation

1. How often, on average, do you take part in this organisation's activities? (Tick one)

9 Daily 36 A few times a week 27 Weekly
 9 Fortnightly 10 Monthly 8 Occasionally 0 Never

Please continue at Question 2 on Next Page ...

2. What type of learning, if any, is available through this organisation?

(You can tick more than one answer)

37	Computers or internet skills
4	Land management skills
34	Technical, trade or craft skills
43	Team or leadership skills
44	Safety or health skills
34	Communication or literacy skills
57	Hobby or leisure skills
15	Customer service skills
12	Other learning (<i>Please specify</i>): 26 descriptive responses (12% of all responses)

3. Is the learning you receive through this organisation useful in other aspects of your life?

(Tick any which apply in each row) [per cent of cases]

Type of learning	Useful at home	Useful at work	Useful in the community	Not useful
Learning about computers or the internet	67	13	24	22
Learning about land management	12	7	19	69
Learning technical skills, a trade or craft	53	20	34	25
Learning team or leadership skills	19	24	67	14
Learning about safety or health	59	19	48	12
Learning communication or literacy skills	42	22	66	16
Learning hobby or leisure skills	61	10	47	12
Learning customer service skills	19	30	47	32

4. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to learning in and through your organisation. (Tick one box in each row)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Members of this organisation need more opportunities to learn	14	50	34	4
There is too much emphasis on learning things I can already do	7	13	73	8
My skills are already good enough for me to be able to take an active part in this organisation	27	56	16	1
There is too much importance placed on formal learning	6	15	67	12
There are opportunities to improve my communication skills	17	66	17	1
Learning is more difficult because of this organisation's isolation	2	10	66	22
There is not enough recognition of what I already know	5	14	67	15
I am keen to learn more	34	59	6	1
I would like to improve my skills	28	66	5	0
My skills help me learn with others in a team	18-	73+	9	0
Difficulties with my skills make it hard for me to learn	3	8	73	16
I actively take part in the learning opportunities that are offered	21	65	14	0
Being part of this organisation helps me to learn	24	67	8	1
Opportunities for learning elsewhere in this community are limited	8	32	52	9
This organisation's small size makes learning easier	13	59	26	2
This organisation should offer more opportunities for learning	9	34	52	6

5. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements as you think they apply to your organisation.

(Tick one box in each row)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
This organisation warmly welcomes new members	71	26	2	1
This organisation is equally welcoming of male & female members	61	33	2	4
This organisation's resources are available for wider community use	31	49	17	3
This organisation only welcomes men	6	4	42	47
This organisation is well connected to the local community	44	51	4	1
This organisation has strong links outside of the town	28	51	20	1
This organisation's members are mainly men	14	28	34	24

6a. If more learning opportunities were available through this organisation, would you be interested in taking part?

46 Yes 36- Maybe 17 No *(If No, go straight to question 7)*

If 'Yes' or 'Maybe', which type of learning would you be interested in?

(Tick as many as you like)

24 A course to get a qualification	16 Through the internet
53 Special interest courses	27 By taking on responsibility
42 In a small group	13 Preparation for further study
41 Field days or demonstrations	42 Where I can meet other people
72 'Hands-on' learning	17 Individual tuition
27 In a class	2 Other way <i>(Please specify)</i>

2 descriptive 'Other' comments out of all 219 responses

6b. How and where would you prefer these learning opportunities be provided?

*(Tick the **one** box in each column that you would most prefer)*

BY ... <i>(tick one)</i>	IN ... <i>(tick one)</i>
63 another member of your organisation with the appropriate skills	76 this organisation
20 bringing in a local tutor/ trainer from outside of your organisation	3 another local community organisation
11- bringing in a tutor/ trainer from outside of your town or suburb	10 a local community learning centre or neighbourhood house
2-- the internet	5 an adult or vocational education provider
2-- a organisation elsewhere in a larger centre	2 your home
2 Other way <i>(Please specify)</i>	3 a venue outside your local area
	1 Other location <i>(Please specify)</i>

7. *Most places have a community organisation where adults can go to learn things. When responding to the statements in Question 7, think of that organisation closest to where you live. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to your closest adult learning organisation. (Tick one box in each row)*

Statements about the 'local' adult learning organisation

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I don't feel comfortable going there	7	20	54	19
It is valuable to me as a resource	11	58	30	2
It is a useful place for me to do courses	15	59	25	1
I don't know enough about it to use it	5	33	52	10
I would go there more if more people I knew went there	4	26	61	10
I would use it anytime if I really needed it	17	68	15	0
I would go there more often if more men I know went there	5	24	62	10
It is held in high regard by the local community	22	60	18	1
It doesn't offer anything I need to learn	5	33	47	15

8. Your general preferences for learning (Tick one box in each row)

I generally enjoy to learn ...	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
in a mixed group including women	32	58	9	2
in a group with men	19	45	30	6
in practical situations	33	63	4	1
in a classroom	13	49	37	2
by doing	32	65	3	0
on my own from books and other written materials	7	31	54	8
in outdoor settings	15	60	23	2
via the computer or internet	5	30	52	12

9. I would be more likely to be involved in learning if ...

(Tick one box in each row)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I had more free time	13	46	40	1
I had more opportunities locally	13	38	48	1
there were more male tutors or teachers available locally	5	18	69	8
there were sufficient learning resources locally	7	48	45	1
there was somewhere locally I considered a good place to learn	8	50	42	1
there was something I really wanted to learn	25	61	14	1
I had more support from my family or partner	6	14	66	14
I was younger	11	31	48	10
this organisation was open more often	7	23	64	6
my health allowed it	9	30	50	11
there were more learning situations where men were encouraged	9	35	48	9
programs or courses were available at times that suited me	11	50	36	3
I lived closer to this organisation	5	26	59	10
courses were shorter	5	26	61	9
I was more confident	6	25	55	13

OTHER THINGS ABOUT YOU

10. Please tick any statements that apply to you.

- 83% I am an active participant in this organisation
- 16% I am a returned serviceman
- 42% I have a leadership role within this organisation
- 41% I began participating in this organisation within the past two years
- 12% I have special needs (an impairment or disability)
- 22% I attended a formal learning program some time in the past year
- 67% I am retired from paid work
- 34% I really enjoyed learning at school
- 1% I am a fly-in/fly-out worker

11. How long (in years) have you participated in this organisation? mean 11.4 years

12. Your age:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 0 Younger than 20 years | 29% 50-59 years |
| 0 20-29 years | 36% 60-69 years |
| 0 30-39 years | 27% 70-79 years |
| 0 40-49 years | 8% 80 years or older |

13. Your highest completed formal education (Tick one in each column)

AT SCHOOL ...

- 23% Below Year 9
- 13% Year 9
- 26% Year 10
- 12% Year 11
- 26% Year 12

SINCE SCHOOL ...

- 18% None completed since school
- 24% Apprenticeship or Traineeship
- 34% Vocational Certificate or Diploma
- 16% University or higher degree
- Other (*Please specify*) 9% indicated 'Other' formal education

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

Please place your survey in the envelope, seal it and return it to the person in the organisation who gave it to you, OR post it back as soon as possible (The postage is pre-paid).

Any **questions** about the project can be directed to the Principal Researcher:
Associate Professor Barry Golding, School of Education, University of Ballarat, P.O. Box 663,
Ballarat Vic. 3353 Ph: (03) 5327 9733 b.golding@ballarat.edu.au
Should you (i.e. the participant) have any **concerns** about the conduct of this research project, please
contact the Executive Office, Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Graduate Studies Office,
University of Ballarat, PO Box 663, Mt Helen Victoria 3353, Australia. Telephone: (03) 5327 9765

Appendix 2 Organisation Survey



Organisation and Interview Information & Survey

National Seniors Productive Ageing Research: Results

FOR THE CONTACT PERSON TO COMPLETE & RETURN

Ideally to the interviewer, or else soon after in the supplied Reply Paid Envelope.

These questions help us to categorise and compare the many different types of organisations we are studying across Australia.

Organisation Name: [Results below are from 36 of 66 organisations]

ORGANISATION & PARTICIPATION DETAILS

[Results are in percentages other than where indicated: highest frequency response often shown in bold]

1. This organisation has been operating for:

Median 25 years (Range 1.5 to 109) **Years.**

2. This organisation has the following affiliations with similar organisations:

Tick ANY that apply.

Locally 60% Regionally 57% In this State **67%**
Nationally 33% Internationally 20%

3. This organisation relies on: *Tick ANY that apply.*

Financial members 39% Part time paid staff 42%
Full time paid staff 42% Volunteer staff **70%**
An elected Committee 49% Government funding 46%
A Management Committee or Board 58%

4. This organisation, its facilities, programs or services are available to participants on:

Tick ANY that apply.

Mon 70%; Tues **85%**; Wed 76%; Thurs 85%; Fri 85%; Sat 49%; Sun 46%

5. Organised meetings between members or participants usually happen:

Tick ONE that MOST applies.

Weekly 36% Fortnightly 15%; Monthly **33%**
Quarterly 12% Annually 3%

6. This organisation is open or active: *Tick ONE that most applies.*

All year round **73%** All but holiday times 27%
Frequently for specific activities 0 % Infrequently 0%

7. This organisation is available ... *Tick ANY that apply.*

- Mainly for men 6% For a Specific Interest Group **40%**
 To the general public 9% For either men or women 7%
 Mainly for older men 35% Only for men 4%
- 8. Eligibility to become a member or participant is:** *Tick ONE.*
 Assessed against a criteria **50%** Not assessed 50%
- 9. The facilities of this organisation are shared with another organisation.**
 Yes 44% OR No **56%**
- 10. The four main reasons why MEN tend to join this organisation are:**
 1. 32 descriptive responses 2. 31 descriptive responses
 3 29 descriptive responses 4 25 descriptive responses
- 11. The four main reasons why MEN tend NOT to join this organisation are:**
 1. 28 descriptive responses 2. 23 descriptive responses
 3 18 descriptive responses 4 13 descriptive responses
- 12. The average number of different participants who access the facilities of this organisation each week is Median 40 participants (Range 2 to 421) *Insert number***

LOCATION, LAYOUT, FACILITIES & ACTIVITIES

- 13. The facilities this organisation uses are:** *Tick ANY that apply.*
 Stand alone 39% Purpose built 64%
 Part of a larger building 42% Not owned by this organisation 12%
 In several locations 12% For members use only 18%
- 14. This organisation is:** *Tick ONE that MOST applies.*
 On a main street frontage **53%** In an out of the way area 47%
- 15. This organisation has an area for:** *Tick ANY that apply.*
 Inside Social activities **100%** Outside Social activities 68%
 Workshop/Craft activities 61% Serving/eating food 74%
 Keeping fit 45% Drinking tea & coffee 87%
 Serving alcohol 19% Gardening 29%
- 16. Activities in this organisation are:** *Tick ONE only.*
 Diverse 75% Mainly focused on one activity 25%
- 17. Activities that participants undertake are mainly decided by:** *Tick ONE only.*
 An affiliated organisation 9% The participants 41%
 Managers or Staff 19% Organisation Office bearers 13% (19% combinations of all 4)
- 18. Activities in this organisation are:** *Tick one.*
 Strictly controlled 31% With some rules 66% Without rules 3%
- 19. The organisation is involved in other charity or voluntary activities beyond its main purpose or activity.** *Tick one*

50% OR No 50%

FUNDING, RESOURCES & RELATIONSHIPS

20. Participants pay to take part in particular activities: *Tick ONE.*

Yes 59% OR 34%

21. Funding for this organisation is MAINLY from: *Tick ONE.*

Governments 39% Membership 36% Fund raising or donations 25%

22. At present, this organisation is: *Tick ONE.*

Totally funded 50% Partially funded 28% Underfunded 22%

23. This organisation is : *Tick ONE.*

Part of a larger organisation on the same site 13%

Part of a larger organisation but separately located 43%

Independent and stand alone 43%

25. The future of this organisation is: *Tick ONE.*

Very secure 59% Reasonably secure 41% Insecure 0%

Thank you sincerely for taking the time to complete this organisation survey

You are free to supply any additional, relevant information about your organisation,

EITHER to the researcher OR by post to:

Barry Golding, School of Education, University of Ballarat 3353 Victoria

soon after the interview in the (free) Reply Paid Envelope,

or later by email to b.golding@ballarat.edu.au

Appendix 3 Plain language statement (as distributed on the reconnaissance visit; a colour leaflet version with photographs was distributed to interviewees)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF OUR RESEARCH PROJECT

Senior Men's Informal Learning and Wellbeing

Through community-based participation

Research Project through the School of Education, University of Ballarat for the National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre (NSPAC), Australia

Method: Literature, survey and focus group interviews in three Australian states.

Project Time Frame: October 2008 - November 2009

Researchers: Associate Professor Barry Golding, Dr Mike Brown, Dr Annette Foley
Researcher Contacts: Barry Golding b.golding@ballarat.edu.au 03 53279733; **Mike Brown** mb.brown@ballarat.edu.au 03 53279736, **Annette Foley** a.foley@ballarat.edu.au 03 53279764. School of Education, University of Ballarat, PO Box 663, Ballarat, Victoria 3353 Australia; Fax: 03 53279717.

OUR AIMS & THE TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS WE ARE INTERESTED IN

Our aim is to study senior men's participation in community-based organizations in urban, rural and remote contexts in Australia. Our interest is in what senior men (over 50) learn informally and what wellbeing benefits the men, their families and communities get out of that participation.

We will visit, survey and interview adult *men over 50* (in work, out of work, retired) in a wide variety of community organizations in three states - South Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania. The organizations we are interested in include *sporting, fire, sea search and rescue, aged care, adult and community education, religious, cultural or Aboriginal organizations* as well as *men's special interest organizations including men's sheds*.

We expect to find out what is attractive, common and different about senior men participating and learning informally in a range of community organizations to find better ways to engage and benefit other men.

WHERE & WHEN WE PLAN TO VISIT

We have selected cities and towns in urban, regional and rural areas where the proportion of senior men (age 50+) not in the workforce (including in retirement) is higher than the Australian average. The urban areas and the researchers that will visit them are Bridgewater, Tas (Mike Brown), Blacktown, NSW (Annette Foley) & Noarlunga (Barry Golding). The regional, rural and remote areas Barry will visit will be Oatlands (Tas), Lismore (NSW) & Ceduna (SA).

We visited each area in **late 2008 or early 2009** to fully inform local organizations and communities what participation would involve and to seek their cooperation with interviews and surveys with fully informed and consenting participants, planned **prior to June 2009**.

This Australian project forms part of an international project on informal men's learning being conducted in Australia, the UK, New Zealand and Ireland. It has full University of Ballarat research ethics approvals. The results of the research will be available in a late 2009 research report to NSPAC and a copy will be provided to each participating organisation. No individuals will be identified in the research reports.

Appendix 4 Statement of informed consent (for interviewees)



UNIVERSITY OF BALLARAT
INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE:	Men's learning and wellbeing: beyond the workplace (for National Seniors Productive Ageing)
RESEARCHERS:	Associate Professor Barry Golding, Dr Annette Foley and Dr Mike Brown

Consent – Please complete the following information:

I, of
.....
hereby consent to participate as a subject in the above research study.

The research program in which I am being asked to participate has been explained fully to me, verbally and in writing, and any matters on which I have sought information have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that: all information I provide (including questionnaires) will be treated with the strictest confidence and data will be stored separately from any listing that includes my name and address.

- aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.
- I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from it will not be used.
- once information has been aggregated it is unable to be identified, and from this point it is not possible to withdraw consent to participate
- I understand that interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed, but will be used in a way in which the participants cannot be identified (that protects anonymity and confidentiality).

SIGNATURE: **DATE:**

Appendix 5 Focus group interview schedule and protocols

Focus Group Interview Schedule & Protocols

NSA Project, Australia, 2009

Men's learning & wellbeing through community organisations

The interview

- *The recruitment of interviewees (ideally 3-4 in one interview) will have been organised by a known and trusted informant in each community organisation.*
- *The interviews will typically take place at the organisation or in another place familiar to the participants.*
- *Interviews will be audio recorded and typically be for 30 minutes.*
- *All interviewees will be fully informed and consent to the audio-recorded interview by signing a Statement of Informed Consent*
- *Each will take away a one page Plain Language Statement with project, research ethics and researcher contact details.*
- *Interview questions apply to men aged 50+ as active participants in a particular community organisation.*

The participant surveys

- *The interviewer will have sixteen (16) surveys, with the header customised for each organisation plus reply paid envelopes.*
- *One survey will be given to each of the men who undertake the interview who will be invited to complete and return the survey afterwards.*
- *The person who sets up the interviews will be offered the balance of the surveys (typically 12), but will be encouraged only to take the number that can realistically be distributed and returned to other men over 50 years involved in some way in the organisation.*

The organisation surveys

- *A separate and different survey will be completed by the person who set up the interview, about characteristics of the organisation.*

Interview Questions

6. Tell me about this organisation & what you do when you come here?
7. What benefits do you get out of participating in the activities associated with this organisation? Do these benefits flow on to others, such as to your families, work and communities? Tell me about those benefits?
8. What do you learn through coming here and participating in these activities? Give some examples.
9. Thinking back over the course of your life, how has learning affected you? How do you learn new things?
10. What advice would you give to similar organisations in order to attract, involve and benefit other older men?

Appendix 6

Advice and Request to Check Narratives in the Report Draft

We greatly appreciate the assistance you have already given us collecting information for our report, including completing and returning surveys and helping us with or participating in the research interviews.

As of late September 2009, we are finalizing our research report to National Seniors Australia Productive Ageing Centre.

From the 48 organisations that we interviewed in Australia, we have chosen just 15 to write 'narratives' or stories about. The 'story' of your organisation was chosen because it neatly captured and/or represented many of the important things we are interested in: learning and wellbeing through community-based organisations.

We have changed all people's names to try and protect confidentiality.

We have tried in our report to accurately report what we have heard on the audio tapes. However we (including our transcriber) can and do make mistakes.

We are asking you, as our contact person for your organisation, to read and check the short narrative section specifically about your organisation. The approximate page numbers for your section are indicated in the Table on the previous page.

This is **your opportunity before our report is finalised and published, to advise us about anything** you or others, including the people we interviewed, think needs changing in our report to:

- correct important factual **errors** in the narratives, particularly in the *Painting the picture* section.
- **protect the privacy, anonymity or confidentiality** of any people who are likely to be and/or who are concerned about being identified.
- suggest that **we add, delete or clarify** anything else relevant to your organisation that is relevant to what is already contained in our DRAFT narratives.

Thanks a lot. Please email us and tell us whether anything needs changing as soon as possible and at latest by 6 Oct 2009 to b.golding@ballarat.edu.au.

Alternatively, you could print or copy the relevant pages, and post them back hand edited to Barry Golding, School of Education, Uni of Ballarat, PO Box 663 Ballarat 3353 Victoria.

We plan to send you (and all organisations) a full and final copy of our report by the end of October 2009. Meantime, this is a FINAL DRAFT, NOT for wider circulation.

Barry Golding, Mike Brown & Annette Foley, 24 Sept 2009