



NATIONAL RURAL  
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ALLIANCE INC.



**9<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference**  
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## **Media Release**

### **Grumpy old men perform secret men's business - and more - in Men's Sheds**

The expansion of Men's Sheds in rural and regional communities has been an important initiative in dealing with the current drought and fires, and their impact on health. They provide an acceptable outlet and information source for men who may not seek help. And some are making money for their community.

Men's Sheds started in 2002. Over 80% of the 200 Men's Sheds are in non-metropolitan areas, according to Peter Sergeant, Managing Director of Mensheds Australia, who spoke about them at the Conference on 9/3.

“While men often have their own shed or workshop, this can lead to further isolation and withdrawal from family and community life. The Mensheds Australia movement uses the concept of work and problem solving in a shed, together with meeting and solving these problems with others. Mensheds Australia is working towards helping men's sheds to become valuable and sustainable assets in their communities.”

“A successful example is the Armidale (NSW) Men's Shed, which was established by taking over an existing timber and joinery business. Building financial sustainability was the first task. Membership is now around 50 and business earnings are rising. It features the development of skills in using wood, as well as being a social place for men with a common interest in wood. It will be a place to help men through building technical, social and workplace skills and restoring confidence. It will also be an incubator of new businesses linked to working with timber.”

“Women naturally recognize the need for such meetings and working together, but it has taken the development of Mensheds Australia to show men how they can benefit from getting together with others,” Peter Sergeant says.

“Secret men's business, grumpy old men and other such sayings are used to typify the plight of men, particularly in rural and remote areas. They signal an underlying problem in dealing with men's health. It is secret because most people do not understand what men are facing in rural and remote areas, and they are grumpy because no one seems to care and there seems to be no answers.”

“As remoteness increases and town size decreases, involvement in networks and community activities becomes a critical part of adult learning as well as for social, family and economic wellbeing. Most men want learning provided in informal, practical group settings, locally and on-site through organisations in which they feel comfortable. Men generally learn best by doing and through practice in familiar situations, through organisations and people they know and trust.”

Mensheds Australia's vision is that every community in Australia will have a men's shed to:

- address the issues of men's health (physical, emotional and social well-being) in the community;
- engage men including the elderly, differently-abled, youth, Indigenous, veterans and other groups, in both rural and urban Australia, and to specifically address isolation, loneliness and depression;
- support the social interaction of men in transitional periods (e.g. redundancy, bereavement, retirement, ill-health, relocation, respite Care); and
- share, disseminate and preserve skills and interests that are relevant to the community.

[www.mensheds.com.au](http://www.mensheds.com.au) has contacts for all Men's Sheds. For media comment and interview contact Peter Sergeant on 0417 200 221. For general conference information contact Megan Stoyles on 0408 147 829