

## Keep in touch with your community

COVID is a challenge for us all. We know positive social support can improve our capacity to cope with stress. But right now, we're being asked to keep our distance where we can.

### **We know social isolation has a negative impact on health.**

**Shedders are great innovators** - Whilst we can't replace the value of face-to-face interactions, we need to be flexible and think creatively. In times like this, it's essential that we support one another and show compassion to those who need it. This is a shared experience that's stressful for everyone – and we don't know how long it's going to go on for.

**'Home shedders'** - We have compiled some suggestions, based on what sheds and community groups have already done to engage members that can't visit their shed. These are also useful ways to connect with **all** members (including those that do attend their shed) and to engage **more men** from the wider community.

### **LEAD VOLUNTEER**

Ask for a committee member(s) or shedder(s) to be the lead on this. If you have a Wellbeing Health Officer (WHO) it may be something that they can help coordinate.

### **GET ONLINE**

While not all blokes are online, many of us are. Here are a few suggestions you can implement in your shed.

- **Online morning tea** – Regular catch ups where everyone can join in. A great opportunity to get to know more about your fellow shedders. Perhaps each week ask a different shedder to tell a 10 minute story about their lives and where they are from.
- **WhatsApp group** – Set up a group that everyone can join and keep connected (perhaps include a regular feature e.g. joke of the week)
- **Board games** - Set up an online Scrabble, Chess, Mahjong group etc. If there is enough interest, create a small league.
- **Quick games** – Try some of the online competitive games – create a weekly leader board ([Wordle](#), [Nerdle](#))
- **Quizzes** – Online quizzes became very popular during lockdown. Even easier: you can also set up a WhatsApp quiz for your group.
- **Guest speakers** – Recording guest speakers at their morning teas, so folks can dial in and watch/ listen.

### **HELP IS OUT THERE**

**Hardware** - Tech-savvy shedders may be able to repurpose old laptops and supporting people at home who don't have the equipment or confidence to get online.

**Be Connected** - If you need support to get online, Be Connected has everything you need to help your shedders get started.

**Men's Sheds of WA website** - There are information sheets on our website (<https://menssheds.wa.org.au/shed-resources/covid19/>) to help:

- How to set up a buddy system or phone tree.
- Using Zoom and WhatsApp to keep in touch with your shedders.

### **NON-DIGITAL OPTIONS**

Not everything has to be online: let's also explore some *real-life* ideas, ways to maintain contact, and ways people can still engage in their hobbies.

- **Home-projects** – Sheds can deliver wood and loan small tools to home-shedders. (Support can be provided over the phone/ online too).
- **Group project** – a project for the shed that the home-shedders can all contribute a section to. Perhaps a garden feature, plant stands, planter boxes etc.
- **Community projects** – Not all projects are in the shed. You can offer to maintain the local nature playground/ gardening for the shed or other local community groups.
- **Fishing day** - where everyone stands apart anyway.
- **Walking group** – These are easy to set up and can be done with safe-distancing. Start the walk from your shed/ local coffee shop.
- **Coffee and snacks** – Grab a thermos and sit in the park at a safe distance (2metres) or visit for a driveway catch-up.
- **Photography challenge** - Decide on a theme each week. Non-attendees can still email their photos in to be printed/ shared at the shed.
- **Drawing classes** – For sheds that have an arty person. Set a weekly drawing for shedders to send in and share with the group.
- **Book club** – They don't have to be held indoors.
- **Darts** – Hang up a dart board outside the shed. With some safe-distancing and cleaning this can be easy to do.

**Maintaining regular human connection is more important than ever as we navigate these difficult times. Let us know your suggestions and what works in your sheds. We will share ideas in our newsletters.**