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# Local men Local communities

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR LOCAL MEN



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**An engagement model for connecting with men in  
your local community**



**SOUTH GIPPSLAND**  
Shire Council



Department  
of Health



## **About the Project**

Local Men - Local Communities was a project focusing on suicide prevention and postvention for adult men living in South Gippsland. The project was funded by the Department of Health and South Gippsland Shire Council.

## **Primary goals**

### **Prevention:**

The project worked with community groups and individuals to identify training and activities that build mental health and emotional well-being and social connectedness.

### **Postvention:**

The project provided resources for community members impacted by suicide to access support services.

This involved working to de-stigmatise suicide death and raise public awareness of ways to support people impacted by suicide.

## **Project Reach**

The project aimed to reach men aged 25 – 50 living in South Gippsland, residents of neighbouring local government areas and men aged over 25 not currently involved in a community group.

# The Community Engagement Model:



## Place based approach

Local men's group, addressing local issues.



## Training

Training in suicide prevention was delivered to community groups and local organisations, starting with short sessions to introduce community to the content. Face to face sessions were the most well received and well attended, although online training sessions were also offered.



## Funding

Funding provided support for the Local Men - Local Communities Chat and Chomp men's group and their community events. This financial support allowed ideas generated by the Chat and Chomp group to quickly become a reality, without the need to source funding elsewhere.



## Events and Activities

Created by the Chat and Chomp men's group, events were designed and delivered by men for men. These events included Golf Without Balls, Chatty Cafe, Bat Bowl Catch and Care and a 24hr Table Tennis Marathon.



## Engaging Widely

The Project Team engaged with men outside of community groups, such as men from local organisations and businesses. They did this through the delivery of training and events. This diversified approach helped expand the reach of the project.

# The Community Engagement Model:

## Getting men involved

The Project Team contacted men who had undertaken training and expressed an interest in participating further. Those men were more likely to remain engaged with Local Men - Local Communities and contribute to ideas, meetings and events.

## On their terms

Reaching men on their terms was an important aspect of the project. It allowed participants to be involved as little or as much as they wanted to without a long term commitment.

## "Bring a Mate"

Men were encouraged to "bring a mate" to meetings and events. This created a ripple effect, with more men attending Local Men - Local Communities activities and becoming involved in the project.

“ TALK TO A MATE ”

## Giving it Time

The project timeline was extended due to COVID-19 restrictions. This was actually beneficial for the project, as it allowed organizers to build the trust of participants resulting in them taking more ownership over the project

## Advertising local

Securing investment from local radio station 3MFM for continued promotion and advertisement of the project was an asset for Local Men - Local Communities.



*“We made a decision quite early on that **we weren't going to talk suicide prevention all the time.** It was very much in the background. It was much **more about social connectedness and mental health and well-being and looking out for each other**”.*

*“I think the message was more around sort of **social inclusion...** It was about **trying to get people to engage back into community and to talk to people.** I think **that's probably the key to the success of it**”* 



## Events and Activities:



### Chat & Chomp

The Chat & Chomp men's group was a South Gippsland Shire Council initiated community group, which encouraged men to engage with local issues in relation to men's health and well-being. The group focused on connecting with men and helping them feel more connected to their communities.

The group received mental health training and created a number of community events to engage local men in their community.

### 24hr Table Tennis

Keeping active was one of the main elements of many of the events suggested by the Chat and Chomp group. One of these initiatives was the 24hr Table Tennis Marathon.

Participants could pay for a one hour slot and have their organisation advertised during the event, as well as be part of the marathon festivities. All community members were invited to participate, with the event being advertised on local radio, social media and newspapers.



## Events and Activities:

### Golf Without Balls

Golf Without Balls provided men the opportunity to connect with others in their local community whilst listening to a guest speaker over a meal. It provided an opportunity for them to socialise in a comfortable environment, as well as becoming a conversation starter about mental health.

*"I went along when I was invited, and it was fantastic night. A lot of people knew each other but I didn't, I knew one or two that was it. But because of the environment everybody had a drink and just chatted".*



### Radio 3MFM

The local radio station 3MFM provided support for Chat and Chomp, including inviting them on air for guest interviews and advertising their community events.

The support from Radio 3MFM was essential to marketing Chat and Chomp events and became an avenue for them to reach more of the local community.

The station also aired mental health information, alongside marketing Chat and Chomp activities and hosting interviews.



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