

Collaborative Evaluation and Research Group

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LOCAL MEN, LOCAL COMMUNITIES

South Gippsland Shire Council Project Evaluation Summary 2022

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SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF LOCAL MEN, LOCAL COMMUNITIES

South Gippsland Shire Council

Suicide Prevention Project Evaluation

This report presents a summary of the evaluation of the Local Men, Local Communities, a suicide prevention project aimed to build the capacity of individuals and local community groups and workplaces to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of men aged over 25 in South Gippsland.

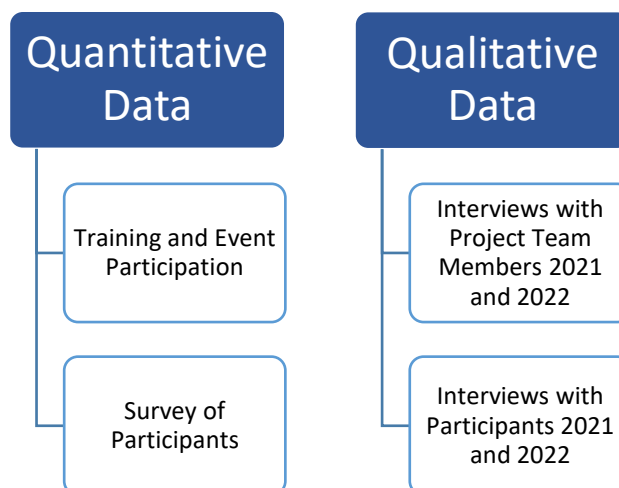
INTRODUCTION

The project was informed by five key objectives, to improve awareness, support men to engage in activities supporting greater social connection, enable a collaborative approach to suicide prevention, support for men, their friends and families affected by suicide and to support ongoing suicide prevention activities in line with the South Gippsland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. The main components of the project were training for community groups and social events and activities to bring men together.

The aim of the evaluation was to determine the impact of the project on building the capacity of community groups and workplaces in South Gippsland to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of men aged over 25 years and community members.

DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation of the project utilised a variety of data collection tools in a mixed methods approach which provided information about process, outcomes and impact. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected as shown in below.



LOCAL MEN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

389

Participated in
suicide prevention
training programs

512

Engaged in events
delivered during
the program

Chat & Chomp



8 sessions

4 event ideas

Bat Bowl Catch and Care
Chatty Café
Golf Without Balls
24 Hour Table Tennis
Marathon

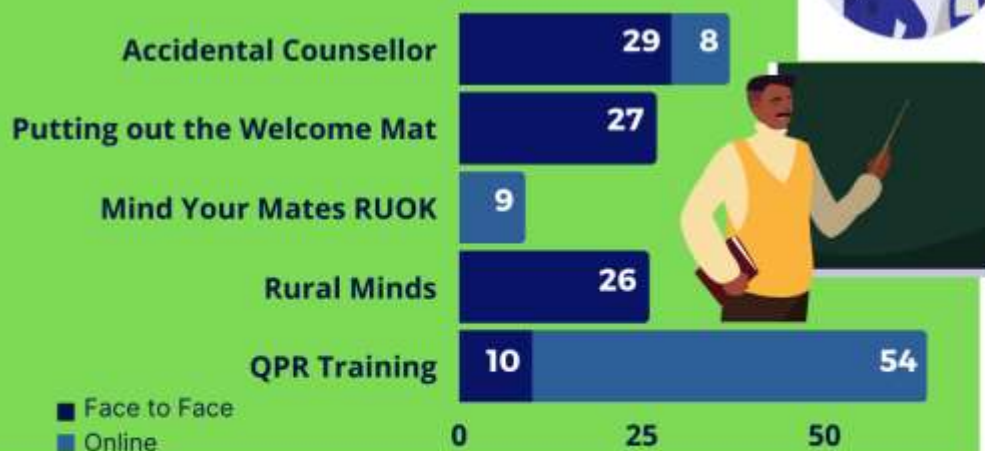


Changing the language:

The Project Team made a decision early in the project to not talk about suicide and suicide prevention, rather to talk about social connectedness, mental health and wellbeing.

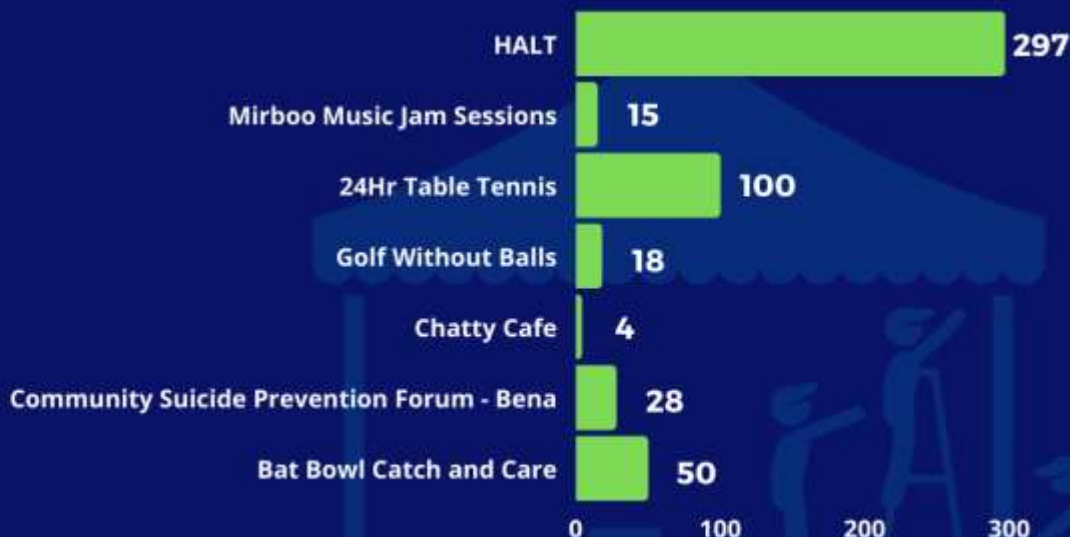


Training Delivered:



■ Face to Face
■ Online

Event Participants:

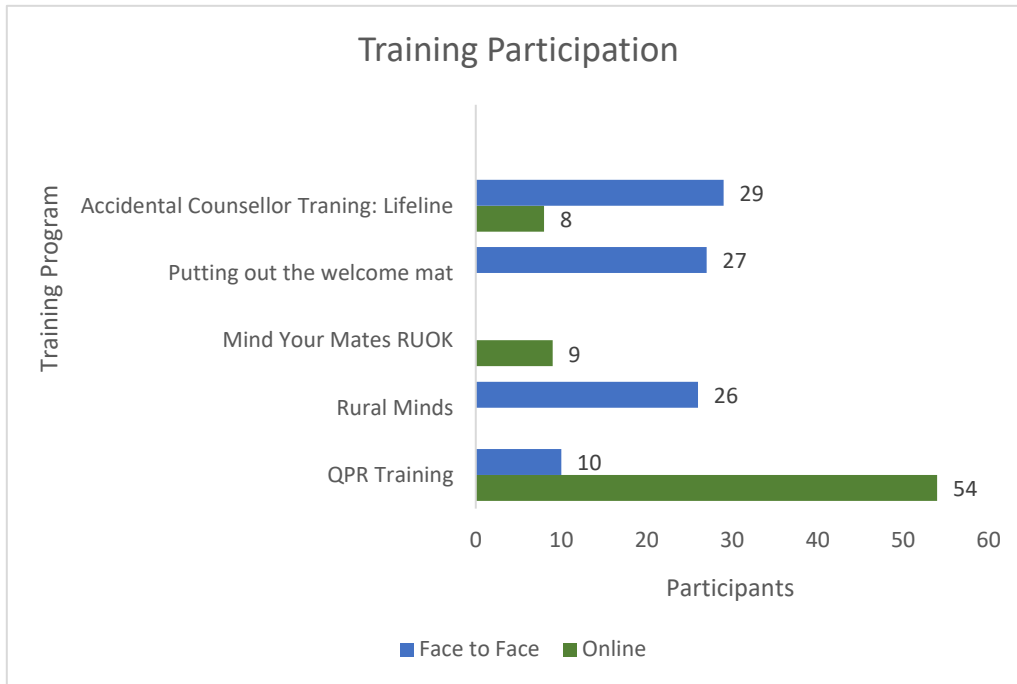


"I think it's made us realise that we don't have to do it all on our own... with him coming and reiterating that we're not all On our own ... I think it was pretty good. It makes you think 'yeah, why haven't we talked about this sort of stuff before?'"

KEY FINDINGS

TRAINING

A variety of opportunities and types of training in mental health and suicide prevention was offered to the community to capture the interests of a broad audience. A total of 389 individuals participated in the training programs.

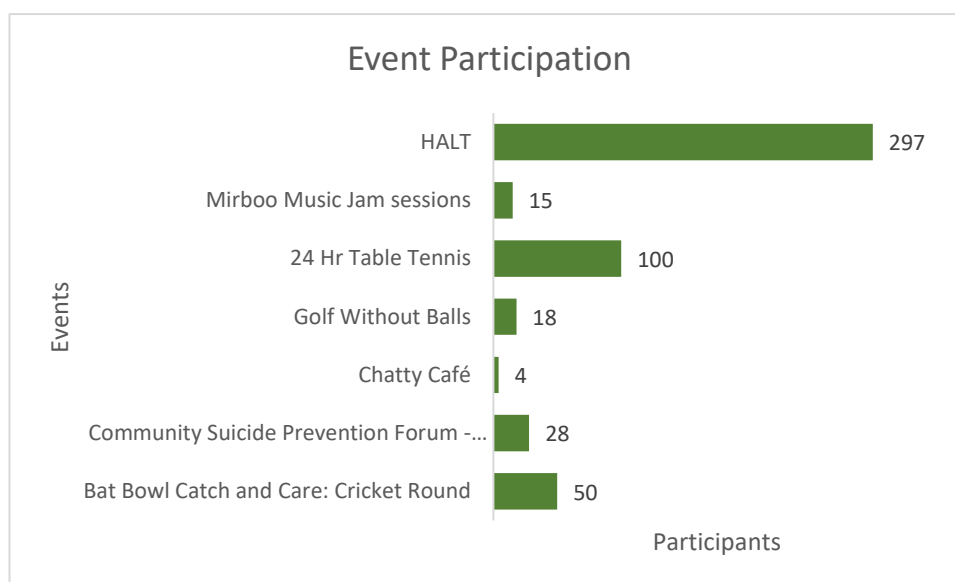


The **QPR** (Question, Persuade, Refer) training was the most popular, delivered by Wellways as a suicide prevention training program. **Putting out the welcome mat** was run by Non Profit Training and was tailored to a request from the South Gippsland Community. **Rural Minds – Rural and Remote Mental Health** develop mental health literacy and suicide prevention training programs.

The **Accidental Counsellor Training** was run by Lifeline Gippsland and was aimed at providing basic skills training and structured to enable support and assistance using the ‘Recognise, Respond, Refer’ model. **RUOK** is a harm prevention charity that encourages people to stay connected and have conversations that can help others through difficult times.

BRINGING MEN TOGETHER: EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

As shown below, a number of events were organised and engaged with a total of 512 community members.



The success in the project is directly related to the establishment of the **Chat & Chomp** men's group of local identities who represented their various townships. These men, although reluctant at first, participated in eight forums, designed organised and successfully implemented four major events, Bat Bowl Catch and Care, Chatty Café, Golf Without Balls and 24-hour Table Tennis. There was a clear intent of the group to focus the activities on mental health rather than suicide prevention to ensure men felt comfortable to attend events.

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 wellbeing** and looking out for each other

The **Hope Assistance Local Tradies (HALT)** training was well received, especially by the SGSC depot staff who attended two HALT toolbox sessions in November 2021 and March 2022. The facilitators were relatable and spoke to the attendees informally during a breakfast staff catch up. The depot managers noted that the sessions encouraged staff to check in with each other more often and were more inclined to speak up if they needed extra support. They also noted that further sessions, in particular individual sessions would be useful follow up sessions.

It was very **relatable** to a lot of our team members... he didn't say it wasn't just outside of work, it was inside of work as well....it was just people can relate to him because **he's been there, and he's done it.**



REFLECTIONS

The men interviewed for the evaluation were reflective about the purpose of the Chat & Chomp group and what they could achieve around mental health and wellbeing for their communities.

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.

The Chat & Chomp group created a forum for ideas to be generated that address local issues and provides a solutions-based approach to implementing events, training and awareness campaigns. The Chat & Chomp men's forums should be encouraged to continue in South Gippsland, which should lead to suicide prevention, and men's mental health staying at the forefront of community engagement activities.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

The men who participated in the project were of various ages and backgrounds with many having lived in the region since birth. It was recognised that talking about men's health, mental health and suicide were difficult conversations to have.

Suicide always has been a bit of a **taboo subject**. More so probably in the country because I assume it happens less in the country

It was noted as being important to be brave and to have difficult conversations with men if they felt they were struggling with their mental health. The training provided through the project helped to highlight the need to have open conversations and the skills and strategies to address men's wellbeing.

Not to be afraid to talk about it if we have to. That was the real take home message. I knew of lifeline, but I didn't know a lot of the other services. **There is a huge amount when you start to learn.**

LESSONS LEARNT

Setting up events with the right supports from professional organisations was a valuable way to encourage further conversation with agencies and familiarisation with personnel from those support agencies. The nature of the conversations, and content from guest speakers could be triggers for attendees so it was important to make sure that each event was well supported by local mental health staff.

We made sure we had **support people** in the room we pointed them out we had Lifeline counsellors dotted around the room just in case anybody or anyone did get upset and we had a **breakout room** for that as well.

The Chat & Chomp men identified that the mental health training, essential for local communities, was also good for even the most hardened man. All the participants spoke about the personal impact of being involved in this project, from serving their communities to helping other men to the benefits to their own mental health and sense of connection with their communities.

The mental health first aid is good. I guess everybody goes there with the idea of I'm there in case somebody else needs it, but of course **everybody needs it for themselves as well**.

CHANGING THE LANGUAGE

The Project Team made a decision early in the project to not talk about suicide and suicide prevention, rather to talk about social connectedness, mental health and wellbeing. Looking out for each other and making connections was seen as a way to reach men in the community. They recognised that service providers had a language of their own:

The **jargon** which you learn as you go along is very **antisocial** in its own way for the basic community member and the people we're trying to reach are not the people who are involved in any of those things, **they're just the bloke in our community that we would like to get connected** ... and maybe not feel so alone or unsupported."

SELF DETERMINATION

The self-determination from local men that has evolved is something that the Project Team were proud of.

And one thing that I'm **really proud of** is the fact that we've got a group of men who **are self-determining what happens next** ... I have a feeling that there will be things happening even if we're not doing any pushing from behind ... It's been a slow but **very successful outcome** in my mind, that those guys are there doing what they're doing and working out how to make their own activities sustainable as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations from the evaluation were made as follows:

1. Provision needs to be made for follow-up with participants post mental health training
 - a. Follow-up with participants post workshops and/or programs ensures people are provided with the resources they need in a timely manner
 - b. Re-engagement post workshops and/or programs has allowed time for participants to reflect on the content and implement strategies in their and loved one's lives
 - c. More rigorous evaluation and measurement of success of workshops and/or programs can be achieved with follow-up through in-depth responses
2. The Chat & Chomp men's sessions and group should continue to be supported in South Gippsland
 - a. Local men are encouraged to participate in regular forums to discuss local solutions to address mental health for men in regional areas
 - b. Funding should be allocated to support the activities of the group
 - c. Connections with existing organisations and groups should be encouraged to build a sustainable model for addressing men's mental health needs
3. Mental health training and education improve awareness and knowledge
 - a. Regular training and mental health first aid be offered to local residents, managers and project team members.
 - b. Education is encouraged within organisations to increase awareness
 - c. Further, individuals should be supported to seek help through official mental health agencies.

LOCAL MEN, LOCAL COMMUNITIES RESOURCES

A resource package was created as part of the Project. It included a booklet outlining the engagement model that was created, posters and flyers. The model encompasses a place-based approach, training and ways in which to engage with men in the community.

A website was generated as part of the project and will be maintained over coming years to extend connection to local resources and events.

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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



VICTORIA
State
Government

Department
of Health

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Collaborative Evaluation and Research Group (CERG), Federation University Gippsland, acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land, sea and nations and pay our respect to elders, past, present and emerging. The CERG further acknowledges our commitment to working respectfully to honour their ongoing cultural and spiritual connections to this country.

CERG would like to thank South Gippsland Shire Council for funding this evaluation. Further CERG would like to acknowledge and thank the Project Team for their ongoing collaboration and support.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Resource Package please contact South Gippsland Shire Council:

03 5662 9200

Website: www.localmen-localcommunities.com.au



Local men
Local communities
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR LOCAL MEN

Become a Local Legend by creating opportunities for men to connect in your local community. If you have an idea for a community event contact us on 03 5662 9200

Our events:

- ★ Chatty Cafe
- ★ Golf Without Balls
- ★ 24hr Table Tennis
- ★ Bat, Bowl Catch & Care

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