



Media Release

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### Men-in-dee-Shed learn new skills

"In the last quarter, less than a third of our mental health clients were men," reveals Vanessa Latham, a mental health nurse at the Royal Flying Doctor Service, South Eastern Section (RFDS SE).

"Men are 2- 3 times more likely to have substance or alcohol abuse issues,<sup>1</sup> but are harder to reach and more reluctant to seek help."

"Getting men to seek help has been a constant challenge for us," added Vanessa.

However, this pattern might be about to change thanks to a community initiative by the newly established RFDS SE Alcohol and other Drugs (AoD) program, which is working in partnership with Lyndon. RFDS SE AoD worker, Gavin Drake, started what he calls "The -Men-in-Dee-shed" project around June this year, when he started visiting the Menindee Men's Shed and building a rapport with locals. The RFDS SE brings primary health clinics, including mental health, to Menindee from Broken Hill by road.

The Men's Shed Association is a community-based organisation. Their primary activity is the provision of a safe, friendly and healing environment where members can work on projects and advance their health and mental wellbeing through good old-fashioned mateship.

"The Menindee mob is doing a few projects, trying out a few things involving basic carpentry and power tools. I thought helping these guys to get skills they could use in the working world and in their own lives would be a positive thing," says Gavin.

"Working in the mental health space isn't just about solving problems. It's also about prevention and proactive intervention that stops people sliding into a hole by encouraging them to take positive steps to look after themselves and reinforcing their sense of purpose."

Gavin met with Tracey Dodimead, Chief Executive Officer, and Christine Stokes, Administration Team Leader from Education Centre Ltd. RTO 90449 trading as Robinson College in Broken Hill. The upshot of the meeting is a thirteen-week pilot training program, which starts today.

"The men will be working towards a statement of attainment or a certificate through funding provided by the NSW Department of Industry under Robinson College's Community Services Obligation," said Tracey.

"The program will include getting a white card, First Aid, power tools use and maintenance, Work Health & Safety and welding courses."

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<sup>1</sup> Mindframe Mental Illness Facts and Statistics [http://www.mindframe-media.info/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/6009/Mental-Illness-Facts-and-Statistics.pdf](http://www.mindframe-media.info/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/6009/Mental-Illness-Facts-and-Statistics.pdf)

“If the pilot is successful, it could be rolled out to Broken Hill and other Men’s Sheds in the near future, establishing a new skills and employment pathway for more people.”

Menindee is also the location for another successful community project being run by the RFDS SE mental health team. Team member and yoga instructor Susan Jordan offers monthly classes to locals in the health service, and fortnightly sessions in Tibooburra, also at the health service.

“The idea behind doing community projects is to approach mental health and wellbeing from a different angle and integrate awareness and important messages into fun activities,” explains Vanessa.

“We’re hoping that these indirect approaches might encourage more people, especially men, to get in touch.”

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For more information or photographs, contact:

Ryan Young, Digital Marketing Communication Coordinator, RFDS (South Eastern Section) on 0427 392 475 or [ryan.young@rfdse.org.au](mailto:ryan.young@rfdse.org.au)

Nick Bleszynski, Media Consultant, RFDS (South Eastern Section) on 0403 931 291 or [nick.bleszynski@rfdse.org.au](mailto:nick.bleszynski@rfdse.org.au)



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