

YOUR SHED AND DEMENTIA

A MANUAL



Australian
Men's Shed
Association

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

NAIL BUILD **ALZHEIMER'S**
AUSTRALIA
FIGHTDEMENTIA.ORG.AU

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Without the participation and openness of the participants and their spouses in the Every Bloke Needs a Shed project, the development of this manual would not have been possible. The participation of Jim and Pam, Don and Val and Reg and Lorraine, and their willingness to share their experiences honestly and openly is greatly appreciated. We would like to thank the eight sheds in the Hunter region involved in the project (Cessnock, Raymond Terrace, Elmore Vale, Belmont, Salamander Bay, Maitland, Wangi Wangi and Singleton) for the willingness to be involved and undergo training and increase their understanding of dementia.

We would like to particularly acknowledge the Cessnock, Elmore Vale and Raymond Terrace shed, their Shed leadership teams and shedders for their personal involvement and one-on-one participation in the Every Bloke Needs a Shed project.

This resource is in many ways a product of a collaboration between Alzheimer's Australia (NSW), the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) and several leadership teams of Men's Sheds in NSW and Queensland. We would like to highlight the assistance of Peter Torenbeek (President of the Cessnock Shed), Kevin Klingberg and Robert Bull (President and Vice-President of the Raymond Terrace Shed), and Leonard Paarman (Secretary of the Men's Shed 100 Inc) for their time and input into earlier versions of this manual. As a result of their combined contributions, the manual is a much more complete, useful and user-friendly document for whom it has been developed – men at Men's Sheds.

The support of the AMSA in the development of this resource and the involvement of Gary Green (Community Engagement Coordinator from AMSA) in the review of early versions of the manual is greatly appreciated. The image of the Mechanical Man developed by the AMSA has been used in this resource (page 2).

Alzheimer's Australia respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land throughout Australia and their continuing connection to country. We pay respect to Elders both past and present and extend respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have made a contribution to Alzheimer's Australia.

FOREWORD

On any day you will find in any of these numerous buildings around the world, amongst the dust and the noise, men gathering, working and talking in a place they call their own, a place that is more than four walls and a roof a place that has a heart of its own, a place they call the “Men’s Shed”.

Within the Shed many social barriers are removed. No matter what background a man comes from, what religion or race, what level of education or profession the common denominator is that they are all men in a male friendly environment in a place where they are all equal.

The Australian Men’s Shed Association is proud to support Alzheimer’s Australia in producing this manual. Men’s Sheds are welcoming places and many of the “shedders” wish to help fellow shedders, but sometimes don’t have all the tools they need to do so. This manual has the necessary tools to help shedders support and communicate with men with dementia and men who are carers. It addresses the real issues associated with dementia “Shedders” need to know how to handle these issues in a sensitive and supportive way so the Shed can continue to have a positive influence.

David Helmers

Executive Officer,
Australian Men’s Shed Association

This Manual is a great addition to good dementia care for a most needy group - older men who are dealing with the dementia challenge.

One of the great problems of dementia is the social isolation it causes. Social inclusion and shared experiences with open and accepting colleagues and friends are essential to a happy life. More so if that life involves dementia. That is why this initiative involving Men’s Sheds and dementia is so welcome.

At Alzheimer’s Australia NSW we have become convinced about the efficacy of the Men’s Shed movement in providing beneficial opportunities for older men dealing with dementia. With one in ten Australians over 65 expected to be diagnosed with dementia, sheds will have to determine whether they are open and inclusive to men dealing with dementia or whether they effectively close their doors to those in need. I cannot imagine that the Men’s Shed movement will be anything other than open, compassionate, generous and accepting. They are justly seen as leaders in the growing push for dementia friendly communities.

This manual provides creative and easy to follow advice about how Men’s Sheds can be that open and welcoming support that so many men with dementia will need. I’m sure this manual will become a very valuable and effective resource in improving the options for men coping with the dementia challenge.

The Hon John Watkins

Chief Executive Officer,
Alzheimer’s Australia NSW

INTRODUCING THE MANUAL

Being a part of a Men's Shed provides opportunities to participate actively in the community with other men from diverse backgrounds. Being involved in a social way at a Men's Shed has been shown to increase our quality of life.

Us blokes love to help out others – in fact we will help out others before we help ourselves. However, when we don't know what to do or how to help, we often do nothing or withdraw because we “don't want to do the wrong thing!” This only increases social isolation.

Until now there has been little specific information available to support men who are in the sheds who have dementia. Yet the shed is often one of the most important spaces available to men who have a diagnosis of dementia and for men who are carers.

This manual provides us as shedders with the tools to change this and shows how we can effectively work with, and help out, mates who are dealing with dementia in a way that is not patronising or demeaning – our pride is important to us! It provides practical ideas that are, in most cases, easily achievable and which can make a positive difference. This manual to improve our knowledge about dementia, help us learn how to provide assistance and to serve as a guide to look for additional information and support.

Our thanks go to a number of Men's Sheds in NSW and Queensland who helped with the development of the manual and by providing valuable feedback on the information provided in order to make it more “Men's Shed Friendly”.

The writers of the manual also recognise that often a shedder might be the person who is a carer for a loved one who has dementia – these blokes also need our quiet and caring support and understanding. The shed may be their only time out from caring for the whole week!

There is a tool for everyone here and the manual has been designed so that it can be read in sections or as a whole. Some of the tools on offer are:

- Tools for all shedders – a summary of what dementia is, how to recognise it and simple ways to support blokes with dementia which can make a big difference. There are also tips on communication and supporting carers.
- Tools for men who are interested in joining a shed and have been diagnosed with dementia
- Tools for keeping your brain healthy and active
- Tools for helping the shed leadership teams to make the best decisions for all concerned
- Tools that explain that dementia - like symptoms don't always mean you have dementia and that seeking a doctor's advice and a proper diagnosis might just provide a solution to what ails you.

I encourage you to make this manual available to all who attend the shed and perhaps have copies available to take home and absorb. Or you could print out the sections of interest separately. Enjoy the read!

Gary Green

Community Engagement Manager
Australian Men's Shed Association

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION FOR SHEDDERS

Your Shed and Dementia

Dementia can happen to anybody. Of all Australians aged 65 years or older almost one in ten will develop dementia. It is therefore likely the Men's Shed you are involved in will encounter dementia through either a participant or spouse being diagnosed at some stage. There may also be men with early stage dementia or carers of spouses with dementia interested in participating in their local Men's Shed as a meaningful social activity.

Although symptoms of dementia are different for different people, common early symptoms include:

- Memory problems, particularly remembering recent events
- Increasing confusion
- Reduced concentration
- Personality or behavior changes
- Apathy and withdrawal or depression
- Loss of ability to do everyday tasks

WARNING!!

It might not be dementia.

It is important to remember there are a number of conditions people might think are dementia but are actually something else. These include vitamin deficiencies, dehydration, depression and the effects of medication. Many of these problems are treatable and need to be discussed with a doctor. It is important a medical diagnosis is obtained when symptoms first appear to ensure that a person is diagnosed and treated correctly.

A major objective of Men's Sheds is to advance the wellness and health of their members by reducing social isolation and increasing social engagement. Men with early stage dementia are welcomed by Men's Sheds across Australia. Many men with dementia are active participants in their Shed activities. Just like other members, they can be an asset to their Shed as well as greatly benefiting from membership themselves.

Being engaged in such a social way has been shown to increase the quality of life and self-worth of men with dementia. There is increasing evidence this type of social engagement can potentially slow down the progression of dementia.

Being a mate - Supporting men

There are several ways you can support men with dementia to participate in your Shed such as:

- Be a mate ; Eg even saying “hello” and “goodbye” can make a big difference
- Treat men like you would any other member. This will go a long way to them retaining dignity and respect.
- Help ensure time is as structured and predictable as possible.
- Day planners and checklists can be helpful.
- Break instructions down and focus on one thing at a time.
- Provide more time to participate and complete tasks.
- Encourage freedom of movement through a safe environment.
- Understand that ability may fluctuate from day to day.
- Encourage joining in and having a sense of belonging in the group. Don't force men to join in or to do anything.
- Learn more about dementia .

Communication tips

Communication and social interactions of people with dementia can improve (it is a misconception that they can't) when communication is encouraged. Any ways you can find to help members with dementia communicate and connect socially will make a big difference to their day and quality of life. It is helpful to remember all of us rely more on body language and tone of voice than on words to communicate with one another.

Below are some tips for communicating effectively with people with early stage dementia.

- Smile and stay calm.
- Establish eye contact.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Use men's names.
- Keep sentences short.
- Use gestures; e.g. point to objects or demonstrate actions.
- Limit choices for response.
- Allow plenty of time for understanding what you have said.
- Allow person time to formulate their sentence.
- Show you are listening by your body language, paraphrasing and asking questions.

Supporting carers

There are several ways to help a shedder who is a carer for a family member or friend with dementia. These includes:

- Being willing to listen - Listening is one of the most important things you can do.
- Find out what sort of assistance the men may need.
- Help them locate assistance within the community.



SECTION 1

DEMENTIA INFORMATION

Men's Health

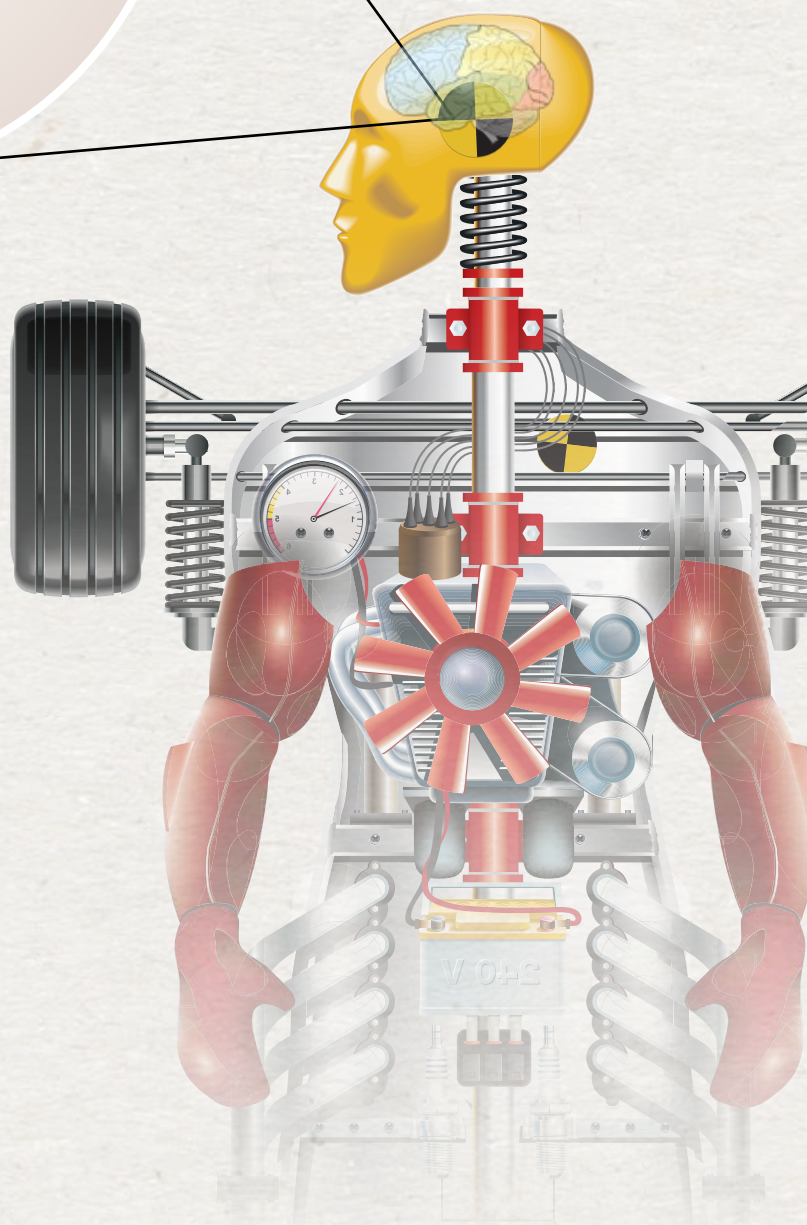
The Brain and Dementia



What is dementia?

Dementia is the term that is used to describe a collection of symptoms. Dementia affects thinking, behavior and the ability to perform everyday tasks enough to interfere with a person's normal social or working life.

Everybody's experience of living with dementia is different and their support and needs will vary over time.



Ageing, memory changes and dementia

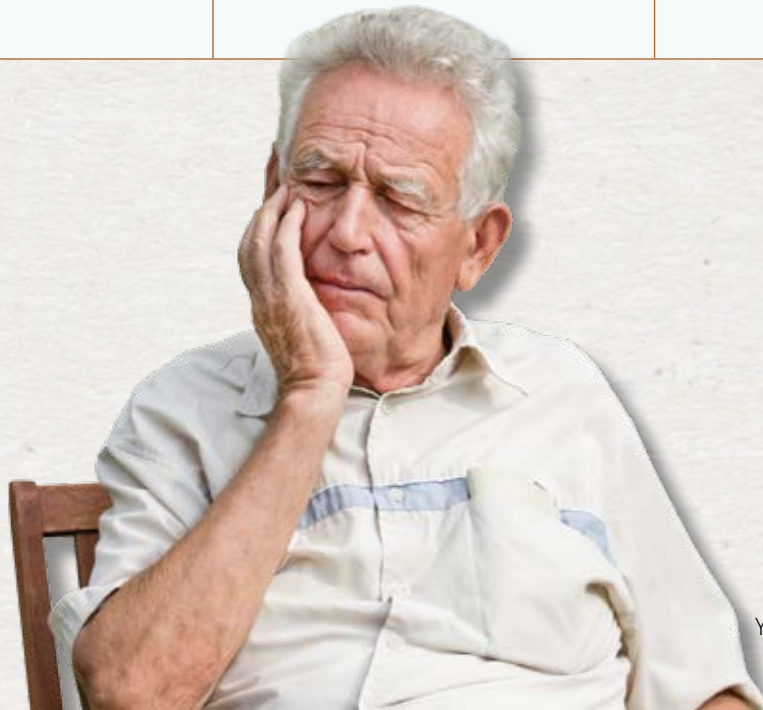
Dementia can happen to anybody. Although the risk of getting dementia increases with age, the majority of older people do not get dementia. Dementia is not a normal part of ageing. However, dementia is more common after the age of 65 years.

When people younger than 65 develop dementia it is called “younger-onset dementia”.

Memory changes are a common experience of ageing but these normal memory changes do not interfere with everyday life in a dramatic way. The table below helps to show the difference between memory loss in an older person compared to a person with dementia.

Dementia Compared to Normal Forgetfulness

DESCRIPTION	PERSON WITH DEMENTIA	OLDER PERSON
Events	May forget part or all of an event	Memory may sometimes be vague
Words or names for things or objects	Progressively forgets	Sometimes may forget; words or names are on the tip of the tongue
Written and verbal directions	Increasingly unable to follow	Able to follow
Stories on TV, in movies or books	Progressively loses ability to follow	Able to follow
Stored knowledge	Over time loses known information such as historical or political information	Although recall may be slower, information is essentially retained
Everyday skills such as dressing and cooking	Progressively loses capacity to perform tasks	Retains ability, unless physically impaired



Different types of dementia

There are over 100 different types of dementia. The four most common types of dementia are:

Alzheimer's disease

Vascular dementia

Lewy body disease

Frontotemporal dementia

It is common for people to have more than one type of dementia.

Alzheimer's disease is caused by flaws in the brain (plaques and tangles) that stop communication between nerve cells and cause them to die.

Vascular dementia is a cognitive impairment caused by damage to the blood vessels in the brain. It can be caused by a single stroke or series of mini-strokes.

Lewy body disease is characterised by the presence of Lewy bodies inside nerve cells. These abnormalities occur in specific areas of the brain and cause changes in movement, thinking and behavior.

Frontotemporal dementia involves progressive damage to the frontal and/or temporal lobes of the brain. Symptoms often begin when people are in their 50s and 60s and sometimes earlier.

For more information about the different types of dementia you can go to the help sheets on Alzheimer Australia's website:
www.fightdementia.org.au

WARNING!!

It is important to remember there are a number of conditions people might think are dementia but are actually something else.

These include vitamin and hormone deficiencies, depression, dehydration, medication effects and infections. Many of these problems are treatable and so need to be discussed with your doctor.

There is no one of symptoms which fits everyone and dementia may have an impact in various different ways in the early stages.

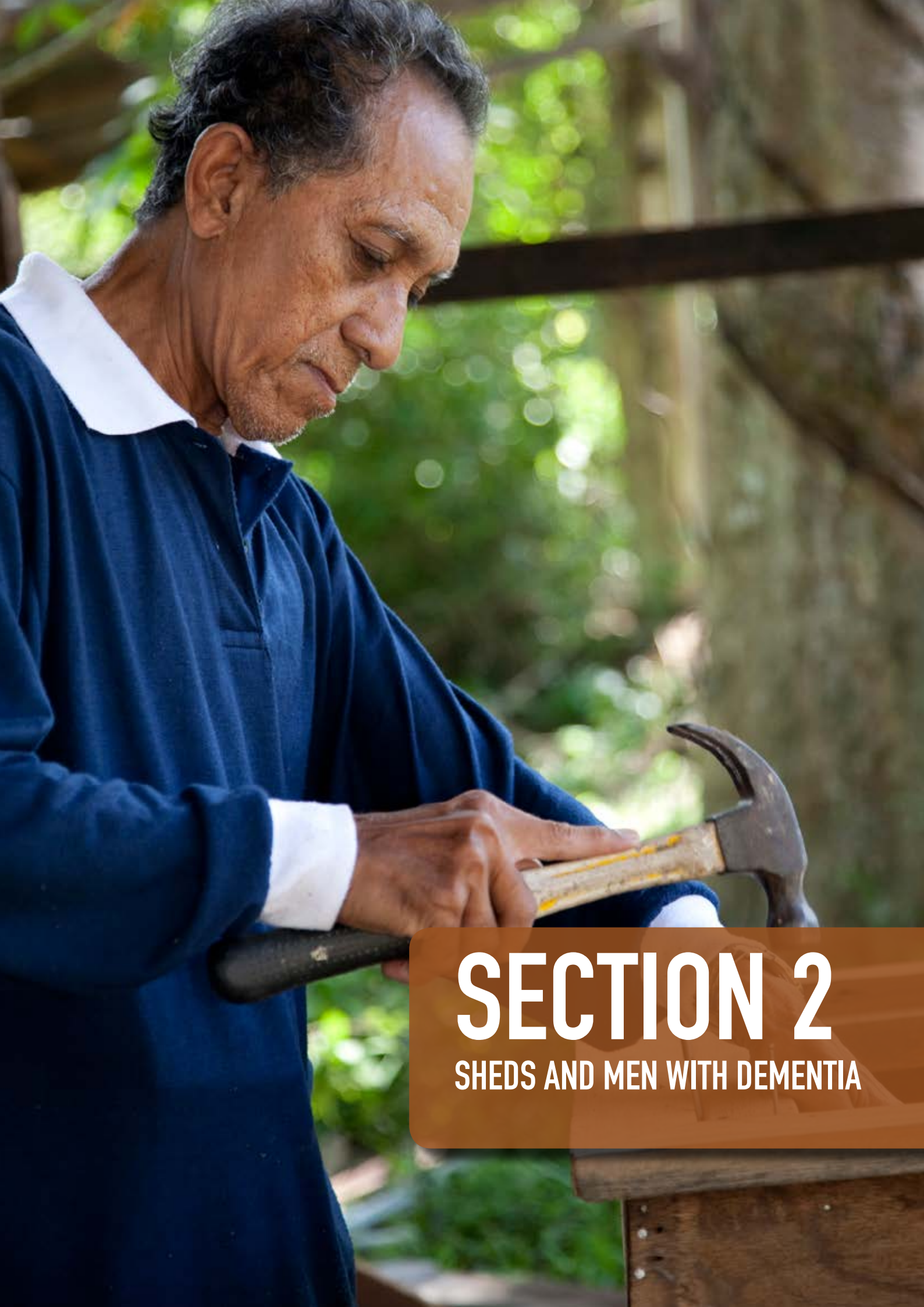
It is important a medical diagnosis is obtained when symptoms first appear to ensure a person is diagnosed and treated correctly.

If the symptoms are caused by dementia, an early diagnosis will assist access to any available support, information and education.

Common early symptoms of dementia

Although symptoms of dementia are different for different people, common early symptoms include:

- Increasing confusion
- Reduced concentration
- Personality or behavior changes
- Apathy and withdrawal or depression
- Loss of ability to do everyday tasks



SECTION 2

SHEDS AND MEN WITH DEMENTIA

The relevance of dementia to Men's Sheds

Of all Australians aged 65 and older about one in ten will develop dementia. It is therefore probable the Men's Shed you are involved in may encounter dementia through either a participant or spouse being diagnosed at some stage.

There may also be men with early stage dementia or carers of spouses with dementia interested in participating in their local Men's Shed as a meaningful social activity.

More than half of people who have dementia have the early stage or mild form. People with early stage dementia do not generally need assistance with daily activities. Depending on their interests and skills many are able to meaningfully contribute to the activities of Men's Sheds.

For people with dementia, doing something meaningful and being engaged socially has been shown to increase their quality of life and sense of self-worth. There is now also some evidence that involvement in meaningful activities that include social engagement can potentially slow down the progression of dementia.



(Reg) is alive when he comes home. It gives us both freedom...he was excited about the chairs...He gets a lot of praise at the Shed.

The men don't treat him any differently. It makes him feel more normal.



Lorraine (Reg's wife)



Sheds and men with dementia

Men's Sheds are a safe and friendly environment where men are able to work on meaningful projects at their own pace in their own time in the company of other men. A major objective of Men's Sheds is to advance the wellness and health of their male members by reducing their social isolation and increasing their social engagement.

Men with early stage dementia are welcomed by Men's Sheds across Australia. Many men with early stage dementia who are members of Men's Sheds are active participants in Shed activities. As one Shed member says, "They're just like us!" Men's Sheds can provide a place for doing something meaningful and social. Meaningful activities in a social setting can improve quality of life and in some cases have even been shown to slow down the progression of dementia.

What things do you need to consider before you join a Men's Shed?

1. Work out which Men's Shed is right for you

There are more than a thousand Men's Sheds in Australia so it is likely that there are several close to where you live. Each Shed is different. Some are small (around 20 to 30 participants), some are very large (more than 200 participants).

Each Men's Shed offers different activities from woodworking and metal-craft to social cards and gardening and everything in between. So how do you decide which shed is the right one for you?

- Call or email your local Sheds to see what their main activities are. Sometimes Sheds have a website so you may want to have a look at what they offer from looking at their website first.
- Find out what Men's Sheds are in your local area. The AMSA website has a Shed finder for helping you find your local Sheds.
- Arrange a visit to some local Sheds that have activities that match with the things in which you are interested in being involved in.
- You may want to take a mate or male relative for the first few visits to the Shed to see if you feel comfortable there and make some mates at the Shed.



Finding sheds close to where you live

1. Go to AMSA website - *Shed Finder Page*
www.mensshed.org/find-a-shed/.aspx
2. Type in your postcode or suburb/town name and choose the distance you are prepared to travel
3. You will see the details of Sheds within the distance you specified

2. Talk to the Shed about your level of ability

Health and safety at the Sheds is a key consideration so it is important to be frank about the extent of your abilities. There may be some things that may be unsafe for you to do and there may be some areas of the Shed you may need to avoid for your own safety. Men attending Men's Sheds need to have a level of independence and if they are not independent, need a carer.

Things to consider and talk to your spouse or carer and family about before you participate

- What activities will be safe and what activities will be unsafe for you to participate in?
- What is the best time of day to participate? (Is there a time of day, (eg morning) where you feel more like going out and being social?)

- Is it a good idea to bring along a carer?
- If you need to bring a carer with you, are there any restrictions about carers at the Shed (eg does carer have to be a male?) If your carer is a female are there restrictions on where they can go and what they can do in the Shed?)
- What does the carer need to know when they come to the Shed with you?
- What are the carer's responsibilities when they are at the Shed supporting you as a shed member?

How Don found a Shed

Don was 84 years old when he joined a Shed. He has early stage Alzheimer's. He played golf but he had recently stopped golfing and as a result no longer had any contact with other men aside from family members.

Don visited three Sheds in his local area and talked to the members about the equipment and what they were currently working on. This gave him enough knowledge of the Sheds to give him the confidence to approach one of the Sheds about membership. This Shed was close to home and they had welding equipment and various welding projects on the go.

Don had been a welder when he was younger and had instructed welding for many years before retiring.

He started attending the Shed regularly and slotted in immediately working in the welding area alongside another shedder. He enjoys it very much and the other members say he is an asset to the Shed.



3. Have a plan for yourself and the Shed for when your dementia gets worse

It is helpful to have a plan for what to do when your dementia progresses and discuss this with your spouse or carer and Shed. This may mean bringing a carer to the Shed with you. It may mean changing the activities you do at the Shed or going to the Shed for shorter periods or at a different time. Members are encouraged to let their Shed colleagues know how they can help overcome situations that might be becoming difficult to manage. This might be a railing or modified workbench and additional labelling in areas.

*I feel like a king in this place...
Here at the shed I am greeted
when I come to work.*

It is important that you or your carer advise the Shed member in charge of operations of any worsening of disability if this change may have an effect on your safety or the safety of others at the shed.

There will come a time when you may not feel comfortable attending the Shed alone or with a carer. It is helpful to have a plan for this up front. You may want to discuss what kinds of things you may do to keep in contact with the Shed when you are no longer able to attend the Shed and participate independently. For example, find out if you are able to call in with your spouse or carer for a cuppa.

How Reg found a Shed

Reg was 81 years old when he joined a Shed. He has early stage Alzheimer's. Reg worked as a splicer of electrical cables for most of his life and retired at 63.

According to Reg, he always wanted to be a carpenter. So a Shed that had a lot of woodwork activities really attracted Reg.

He admits some of the tasks he does such as sanding furniture in preparation for varnishing is menial. But he finds the work rewarding and really enjoys the comradery of the Shed.

4. Helpful contacts

Australian Men's Shed Association

Website: www.mensshed.org

Email: amsa@mensshed.net

Phone: 1300 550 009

Alzheimer's Australia National Dementia Helpline

Website: www.fightdementia.org.au

Email: See website for
email address for your state

Phone: 1800 100 500

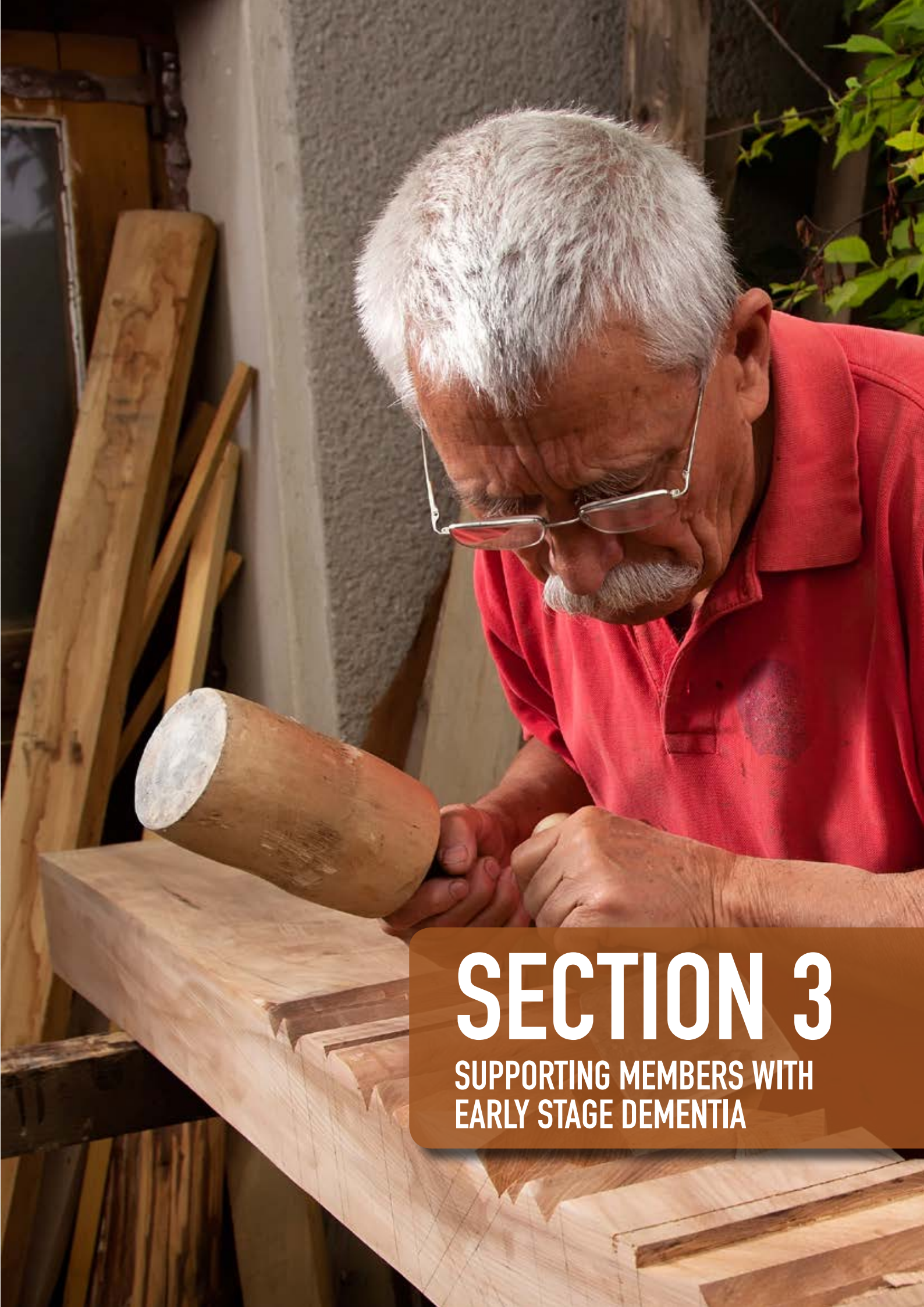
Carers Australia - Carer Advisory Service Counselling Service

Website: www.carersaustralia.com.au

Email: See website for
email address for your state

Phone: 1800 242 636





SECTION 3

SUPPORTING MEMBERS WITH
EARLY STAGE DEMENTIA

Being a mate – Supporting men

After a diagnosis of dementia many people experience loss of friends and reduced social contact which can leave them feeling isolated. Maintaining social connections and meaning in life through existing and new 'mateships' and meaningful activities can make a really big difference to the quality of life and happiness of a person with early stage dementia.

There are lots of ways you can support members who have dementia by helping them feel comfortable and safe participating in the group. Although a person with dementia may sometimes appear not to understand what is being said, they retain the same feelings and emotions as everyone else, so things like tone and body language are important.

Ways to support members with dementia

Help ensure time is as structured and predictable as possible

Day planners and checklists can be helpful

Encourage freedom of movement through a safe environment

Understand that men's ability may fluctuate from day to day.

Initiate conversation

**Break down instructions
Focus on one thing at a time**

Encourage joining in and having a sense of belonging in the group.

Learn more about dementia so you can understand more about what the men are experiencing.

Don't force men to join in or to do anything.

Treat all with dignity and respect.

Give all more time to participate and complete tasks.

HELLO

**Be a mate – Even saying
“hello” and “goodbye” can make
a big difference**

GOODBYE

Communication Tips

Communication is as important for people with dementia, as it is for anyone else. Our attitudes and approach are vital to assisting people with dementia to communicate. Communication and social interactions of people with dementia can improve (it is a misconception they can't) when communication is encouraged.

Any ways you can find to help members with dementia communicate and connect socially will make a big difference to their day and quality of life. People with dementia retain their feelings and emotions even though they may not always understand what is being said, so it is important to help them maintain their dignity and self-esteem. It is helpful to remember all of us rely more on body language and tone of voice than on words to communicate with one another.

GENERAL APPROACH

- Smile
- Stay calm.
- Establish eye contact.
- Use touch where appropriate; (eg a handshake, a pat on the shoulder)
- Speak slowly, calmly and clearly.
- Talk in a quiet place where possible.
- Sit face-to-face where possible
- Use a calm tone which conveys warmth.
- Use their name so they know you are speaking to them.

LISTENING HINTS

- Allow plenty of time for what you have said to be understood. Silence can give time to think.
- Don't jump in if a person is still thinking of a word. Allow them to formulate their sentence.
- Prompt where appropriate.
- Listen and take what is being said seriously, even if the person's reality may be different. For example they say "It is a cold day" when it is actually a really hot day. Don't correct them, just acknowledge, and say "Could be..."
- Show you are listening by your body language, paraphrasing what they have said and by asking questions.

LANGUAGE HINTS

- Keep sentences short.
- Only focus on one instruction or idea at a time.
- Use nouns and names; For example, Say "Can you pass the hammer?" instead of "Can you pass that?"
- Use gestures, For example eg point to objects or demonstrate actions, wave when you say hello and goodbye.
- Limiting choices for response will make it easier to respond. For example "Do you want a scone or a sandwich?" instead of "What would you like to eat?"
- Say things to orient men to where they are, such as what time of day it is and what is happening eg it is nearly lunch time here at the shed.)

You can learn more about dementia and how to support members with dementia by contacting Alzheimer's Australia on the National Dementia Helpline (1800 100 500)

Easy ways to include men with dementia

Every Men's Shed has its own unique culture and identity. There are numerous ways to help shedders with dementia feel a part of the Shed group from including them in Shed banter to ensuring they have a key role in the Shed. Below are some examples individual Sheds have used to ensure inclusion and a sense of belonging for men with dementia.

- At one Shed, the member's wife regularly bakes biscuits and cakes that he proudly brings to the shed for a shared morning tea.
- Jim was given the opportunity to take the role of "catering manager" at his shed and willingly took the position of doing the dishes with other shedders at morning tea. This was a role and identity he enjoyed.
- At a Shed that was involved in a major project of making a large number of stakes for a community garden, a new member took on the role of painting the tops of each stake.
- The shed Reg is involved in regularly restores furniture. His role of sanding chairs in preparation for varnishing is a critical task for furniture restoration at the shed. He talks about the pride this work has given him when he shows friends and family the final products at the Shed.
- The simple gesture of saying "hello" and "goodbye" to men at the shed makes a major difference to all men feeling included.

*The guys always say
"Good Morning Reg" and I like that!*

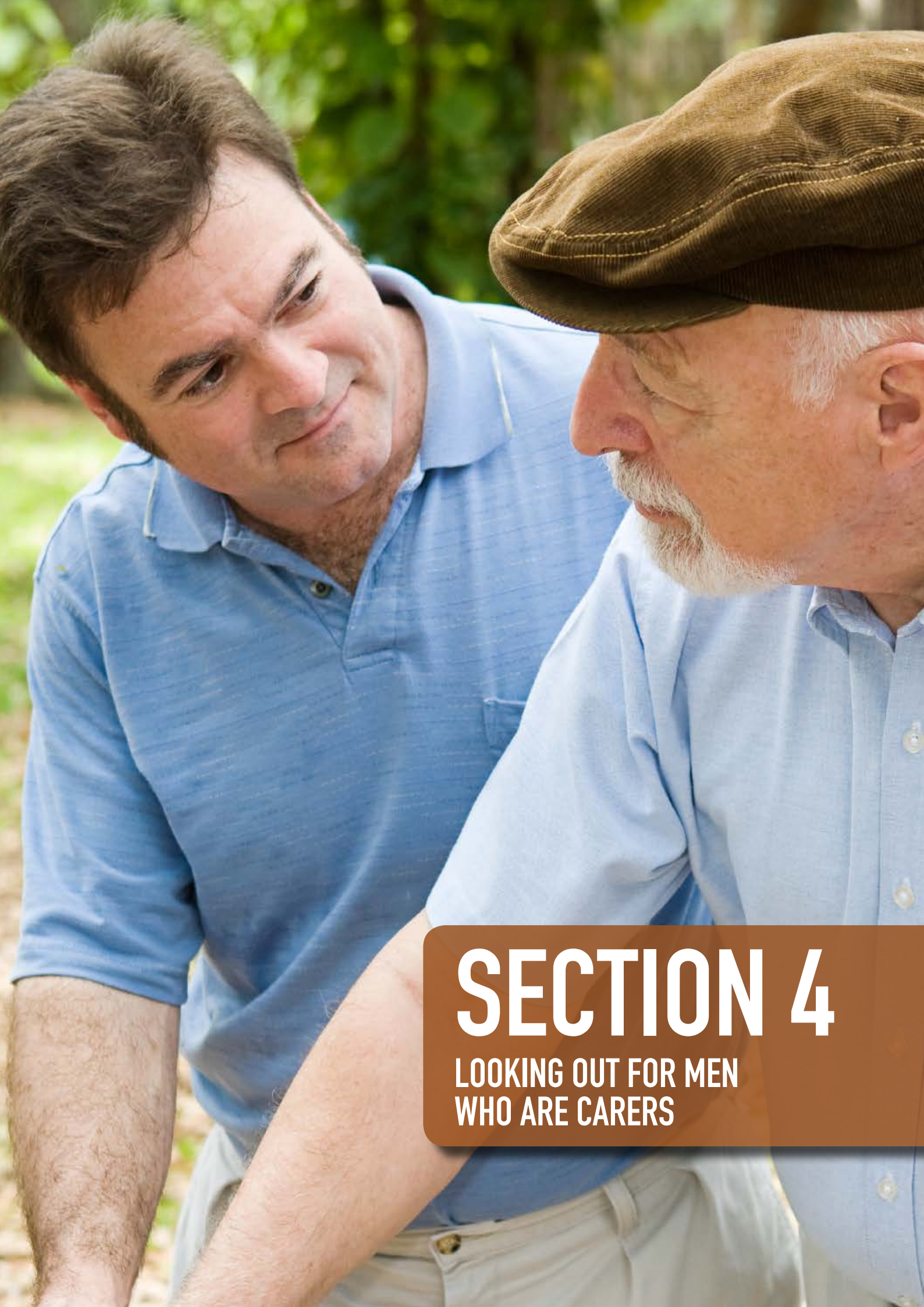
How to continue to support members with dementia when it is time to say goodbye

There will inevitably be a time when members with dementia will no longer be comfortable or be able to participate in the Shed on a regular basis. The best way to help is to stay interested and in touch with the member and let them know how much they are valued as a mate.

Below are some ways to continue to support members with dementia when they are no longer regularly attending the Shed.

Ways of continuing support to members with dementia

- Invite them to the Shed for a cuppa every now and then.
- Phone them or call in to see how they are going.
- Invite them to special events (eg Christmas party).
- Write them a letter to thank them for their contribution to the shed.
- Continue to send them your Shed's newsletter or Shed information.
- Introduce them to the 'Shed Online' website.
- Ask their carer/spouse what might be useful ways to continue to support them.



SECTION 4

LOOKING OUT FOR MEN
WHO ARE CARERS

Supporting a shedder who is caring for a family member or friend

Shed members and men wanting to become members may be the carer of someone who has dementia or another condition that requires supportive care either at home or in a residential facility. Caring can be emotionally and physically demanding. Carers need support so they can look after themselves as well. Carers may have difficulties in accepting what is happening to the person they are caring for and coping with the changes they are experiencing in their own life. They may be dealing with many different feelings such as guilt, grief, loss and anger. Men can find the task of caring even more challenging as they may not have the emotional support network of women and may need extra help.

How to help someone who is a carer

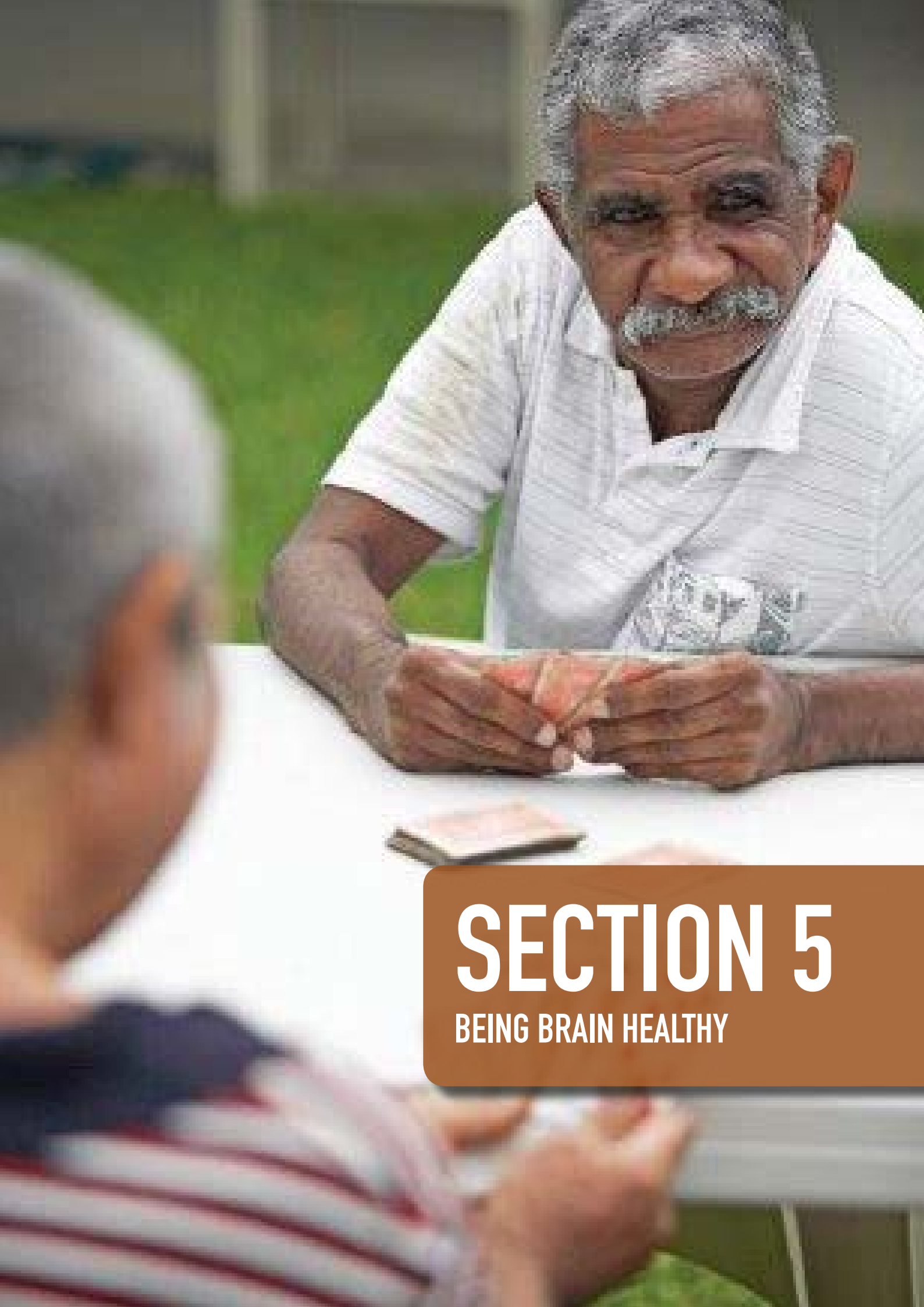
- Be willing to listen - Listening is one of most important things you can do for a carer.
- Find out what sort of assistance they may need
- Help them locate assistance within the community.

Listening to carers

- There is no proper or right thing to say to a carer.
- Be willing to listen.
- Ask them "Are you okay?" or "How is your wife/partner?" and then listen. It can really help them to give them the chance to talk things through.
- It is also important to remember they may not want to talk about their 'caring role' and may prefer to have time out from talking about it at the Shed.
- Listen carefully, rather than jumping in with suggestions. You may find the support they need; is not what you had expected.
- It can be tempting to offer practical solutions, but often people just need a chance to say how they feel.
- Try to be supportive and accepting, and not judgmental.
- Listen for issues such as carer stress or loneliness.
- Be open to helping them locate assistance in the community.

Helpful contact suggestions for assistance for carers

TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	AGENCY NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION
Emotional support, information, education and counselling	Alzheimer's Australia	Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500
Information about caring role, carer services and entitlements	Carers Australia	Carer Advisory and Counselling Service 1800 242 636
Information about range of community care programs and services available to help people stay in their homes	Commonwealth Department of Social Services	My Aged Care 1800 200 422 or www.myagedcare.gov.au



SECTION 5

BEING BRAIN HEALTHY

Looking after your brain

Engagement in social and productive leisure activities such as Men's Sheds has been shown to be associated with a lower risk of developing dementia. So through involvement in Men's Sheds members are already doing something positive to look after their brain. Other things members can do to look after their brain and decrease their chance of developing dementia are shown below.

1. Look after your heart
2. Do some physical activity
3. Mentally challenge your brain
4. Follow a healthy diet
5. Enjoy social activities ✓



For more information on looking after your Brain Health see

www.yourbrainmatters.org.au

1. Look after your heart

Having diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure, and not treating them effectively, can damage the blood vessels in the brain, affecting brain function and thinking. Obesity is associated with increased risk of dementia. Untreated high blood pressure, specifically in mid-life, has been associated with an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease. Smoking increases the risk of developing both heart disease and dementia.

Do:

- Have regular health checks and follow the advice of your health professional
- Seek medical advice on ways to help you quit smoking if you smoke

2. Do some physical activity

Exercise gives your brain a healthy boost. It increases blood flow to the brain and stimulates the growth of brain cells and connections between them. Physical activity reduces the risk of high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes.

Do:

- *Be active on most, preferably all, days every week*
- *Accumulate 2 ½ to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity or 1 ¼ to 2 ½ hours of vigorous intensity physical activity each week*
- *Muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week*

3. Mentally challenge your brain

The brain benefits by having to tackle something it doesn't know. Challenging the brain with new activities helps to build new brain cells and strengthens connections between them. Complex mental activity in later life is associated with a lower dementia risk.

Do:

- *Challenge yourself with new activities that use the brain.*
- *Learn something new - like a new language, a musical instrument, or a sport*
- *Do a course in something you've always wanted to do*



4. Follow a healthy diet

What you eat can affect your brain. A healthy, balanced diet may help in maintaining brain health. Foods that are high in saturated fats (such as full fat dairy) and trans fats (such as pies, pastries and cakes) are associated with an increased risk of dementia. Foods that are high in antioxidants (such as blueberries and tomatoes) and omega 3 fatty acids (such as oily fish) have also been associated with a decreased dementia risk. Drinking large quantities of alcohol overtime increases risk of developing dementia.

Do:

- *Eat a variety of foods including vegetables, fruit, grains, nuts, legumes (beans, peas and lentils) and lean meat.*
- *Reduce foods high in saturated fats (eg full fat dairy products) and trans fats (eg pies, pastries, cakes, biscuits and buns).*
- *Limit alcohol consumption to no more than 2 standard drinks a day*
- *Eat foods that are high in antioxidants. (For example tomatoes, pinto and kidney beans, pecan nuts, cranberries, blueberries and oranges.)*
- *Eat foods that are high in omega 3 fatty acids such as oily fish and walnuts.*

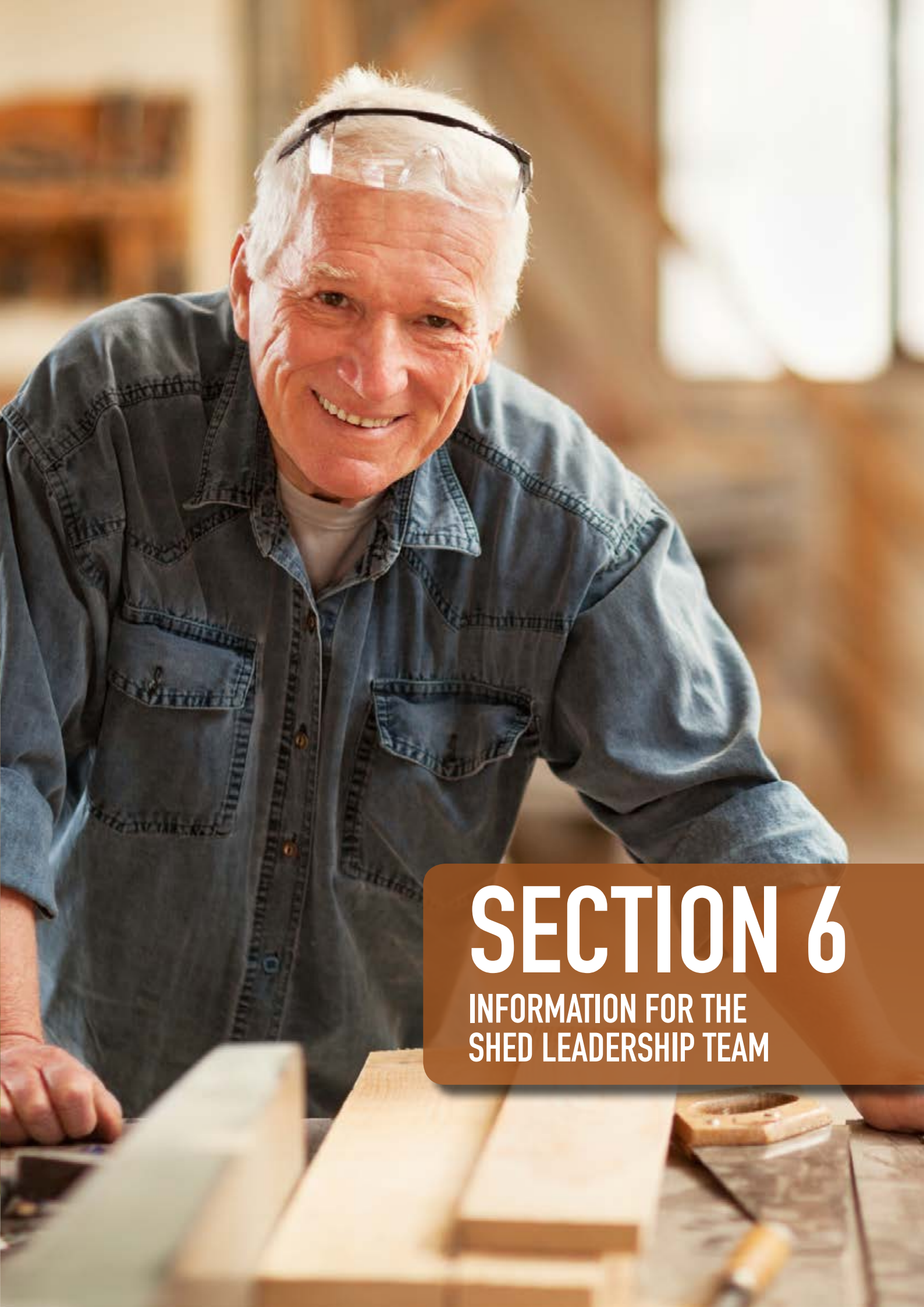
5. Enjoy social activity

Being social with people whose company you enjoy and in ways that interest you is good for your brain health. Social activities that involve mental and physical activities such as many of the activities on offer at Men's Sheds are of great benefit for brain health and for reducing the risk of dementia.

Do:

- *Social activities that involve mental and physical activities that you enjoy and that you find meaningful.*





SECTION 6

INFORMATION FOR THE
SHED LEADERSHIP TEAM

Considering participation at your shed

Establishing boundaries

Men's Sheds are a safe and friendly environment where men are able to work on meaningful projects at their own pace in their own time in the company of other men. A major objective of Men's Sheds is to advance the wellness and health of their male members by reducing their social isolation and increasing their social engagement.

“My Men's Shed has kept me going. Without the shed I don't know what I would have done, probably curled up and die (laugh). Jim

A shedder's comment about a man with dementia actively participating in the Shed include “he is an asset to our Shed!”.

Sometimes members of Sheds are concerned about men with dementia at the Shed. In many cases this is due to how dementia is misrepresented in the media. Often when shed participants meet someone with dementia for the first time they say “They're like us!”



Others say that the participation of the men with early stage dementia is a benefit to the other members because they can see the men enjoying themselves and they see it as an opportunity to find out what dementia is all about, what is happening to these men and how it affects people.

Keeping safety in mind, Sheds must make every practical and reasonable effort to prevent accidents and promote the health, safety and welfare of all people engaging in shed activities. So Sheds need to ask themselves: "Where do we draw the line between our objective of social engagement and the capacity of sheds to support and meet men's needs?" Let's be up front about it, all members are at the Sheds for their own wellness.

Personally it was good to see Jim becoming involved and taking a leadership role when at first he was reluctant to join the Shed. He kept on thanking us, but we weren't doing anything different to what we do for any other Shed member.

*Peter,
President, Cessnock Shed*

We look out for each other but we don't have to look after each other.

Shed participation is about the mateship and comradery of its members.

Most sheds are set up for independent participation and socialisation by members. It is up to each shed to make the rules and set the boundaries of its membership that is appropriate to the capacity and circumstance of each individual Shed and its members.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- What is the level of ability required for membership?
This will depend on physical access of the Shed, the type of activities available, insurances and the Shed policy.
- What health and safety issues need to be addressed for participation?
- What constitutes membership eligibility at the Shed?
- Can carers providing support be accommodated at the Shed if required?
- What is the policy around the eligibility of carers providing support to members?
- Do carers providing support need to be male?
- If female carers are accepted, is their involvement restricted to specific areas of the Shed?

Consideration of these questions will set a consistent guideline for potential shed members and outside agencies who may want to engage their clients within a Shed.

Supporting men with early stage Dementia

- What you can do as a Shed?

How to ensure the shed is safe

All Sheds have a strong focus on safe work practices and their duty of care to one another to protect both members and visitors to the Shed. The AMSA has provided shed safety guidelines and ideally your Shed has an OH&S or WH&S manual based on these guidelines (See <http://www.mensshed.org/risk-management/.aspx>).

In a Shed environment, members may have glasses, hearing aids, walking or other mobility aids. The Shed environment should be safe for all people to participate. It is AMSA's policy that members have an opportunity to participate in activities provided it can be done safely and without unduly expensive adaptations that could impact on a Shed's viability.

People with dementia may be experiencing increasing difficulties in their physical and social environments. As their ability to think clearly changes there are specific issues to keep in mind to ensure a safe shed environment for all.



Bringing a carer to the shed with you

Men's Sheds are about participation, mateship and accepting a diverse membership. If a member needs to bring a carer to assist their participation at the Shed, there are a few things they need to know and the Shed need to keep in mind.

If you think a member requires a carer to support their participation and be safe in the shed, talk to them and their spouse or other family member about this.

Carers will require orientation and may require a safety induction to the shed.

What carers should know

- They are principally at the shed to facilitate a member's participation.
- They are not principally at the shed as a member themselves. However, membership may be required.
- Their role is to help the member they are caring for to participate.
- They are the sole carer of the member at the Shed.
- Carers may need to become members for insurance purposes. For example, if the carer is a family member they may need to be covered by the insurance of the Shed.
- Paid carers should have existing insurance that covers them for participation at the Shed.

TROUBLESHOOTING

- Shed safety guidelines are available through the AMSA [www.mensshed.org/risk management/.aspx](http://www.mensshed.org/risk%20management/.aspx).
- The National Dementia Helpline may be able to provide advice on specific safety issues for dementia.
Phone: 1800 100 500
- The Carer Advisory and Counselling service provides carers with information about carer services and entitlements
Phone: 1800 242 636
- Carers Australia may be able to provide assistance to member and spouse/family member about eligibility for a paid outside carer.
Phone: 1800 242 636



Overview of Considerations of Shed participation

Two situations you may encounter are:

- A person interested in becoming a member of your Shed has early stage dementia
- A current Shed member shows concerning behaviors that may result in a diagnosis of dementia



It is helpful for Sheds to have an idea of what to do at different stages of Shed involvement of both.

The flowchart on the next page and accompanying text provides some strategies for action for the Shed leadership to assist at each key stage of participation.

The left-hand side of the flowchart shows five key stages of action with suggested strategies:

- 01** Providing prospective members with dementia information
- 02** Completion of membership processes for new members
- 03** Discussion and decision in response to change in ability
- 04** Modifications for continued participation
- 05** Transition out of the Shed to other activities

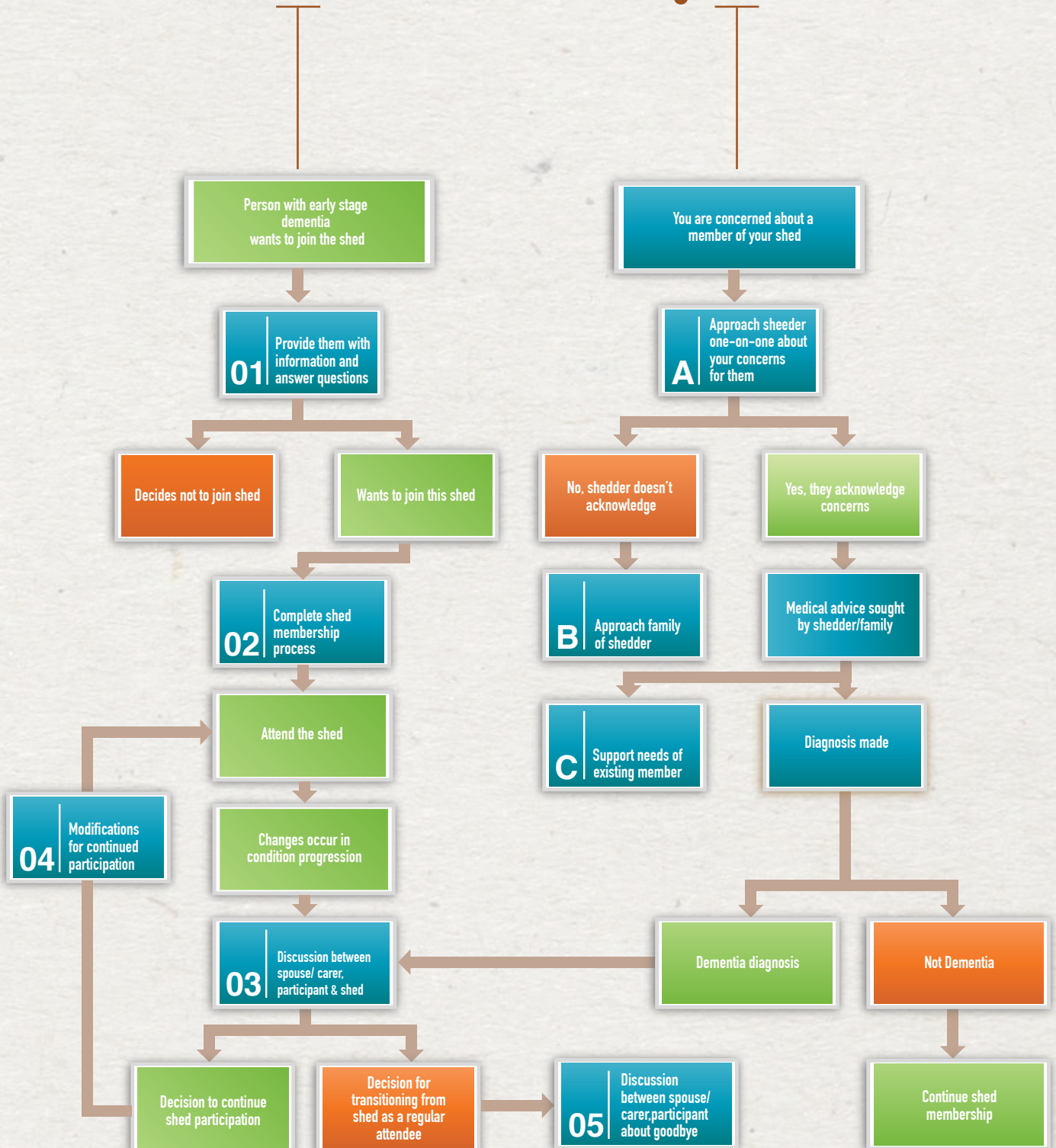
The right-hand side of the flowchart shows three key stages of action specific to existing members showing signs that may be dementia:

- A** Approaching shedder one-on-one about your concerns for them
- B** Approaching family of shedder about concerns
- C** Supporting needs of existing member prior to diagnosis

Once a diagnosis is available the strategies for the existing member link to the strategies for new members (at stage 03) or, in the case of a diagnosis of something other than dementia, continued shed

Potential Shed member

Existing Shed member



Considerations at different stages of Shed participation

Some basic information and guidance is provided here on each of the numbers and letters shown on the flow chart on the previous page to assist the Shed leadership team at different stages of Shed participation. It is divided into information for potential Shed members with dementia and existing Shed members who develop dementia.

Stages of consideration for new shed members with dementia.

Shed membership Enquiry

It is worth remembering men with early stage dementia can continue to be valuable members of your Men's Shed through their contribution to Shed activities and the social life of your Shed.

Providing them with the Handout "For Potential Members" (Hint: Photocopy pages 6 to 10 of this manual) will help them and their spouse or carer find out more about Men's Sheds and dementia and assist them in asking questions and making a decision about participation.

Key questions to address with prospective members

- Will their level of ability enable them to participate safely?
- Are their interests a good match to the activities available at your Shed?
- Are there areas or activities that will have to be restricted?
- Would any modification of the Shed be required for safe participation? (Note: This consideration is no different from considerations for any other prospective Shed member with a disability).
- Do they have access to a carer who can accompany them to the Shed if required?
- If they have a carer, is the carer aware of their responsibilities as a carer at the Shed?
- Do they need any assistance to overcome situations in the Shed that might be difficult to manage? (For example, steps need hazard paint or anti slip tape on edges)

Completion of membership processes

Once the Shed and prospective member agree the Shed is a good match for their interests and abilities and they will be able to participate safely (and whether they need a carer to attend with them or not), completion of the membership formalities is the next stage.

You may want to suggest the new member attends the first few sessions with a male relative or friend until they feel comfortable at the Shed and new friendships are formed.

01

02

Discussion and shed leadership decision about change in condition

If members notice or are informed of major changes in the abilities of a member with dementia likely to affect their participation and the safety of themselves and other members, it is time to talk about a way forward with the member, their spouse/family member and carer.

Some Shed committees meet on a regular basis to discuss the continuing membership of existing members with a focus on safety issues and have procedures for what to do if things don't look right. This might include a follow-up call to the member, family member or carer.

A decision is required to either continue participation after modifications are made or for the member to transition from regular shed participation.

Each Shed has its own membership processes that may include a health and safety information pack, induction checklist, machine competency assessment and review of the membership application by the Shed leadership committee.

The following checklist may assist as a guide at the time membership is requested and membership forms are being completed.

- ☐ Are any disclosures required for insurances?
- ☐ Do any restrictions to participation need to be noted (eg work capacity tag (AMSA Safety Manual). Some sheds request a doctor's certificate for members with a disability that outlines their abilities
- ☐ Are there any areas of the Shed that need to be out of bounds?
- ☐ Do any modifications need to be made to the Shed prior to participation?
- ☐ Is the new member clear about whether a carer is required?
- ☐ If a carer is to attend with member, does carer understand their role and responsibilities at the Shed?
- ☐ Does the paid carer have insurance? (Hint: Request copy of policy from carer)
- ☐ If the paid carer is a family member, they may need to also become a shed member to be covered by insurance.
- ☐ Is there a clear understanding that the Shed needs to be notified and communicated with if there are any changes in the member's ability that may have an impact on their safety or the safety of others at the Shed?
- ☐ Has an induction and any relevant machinery assessment been completed for both the member and carer?

Modifications for continued participation

When the condition of any member changes and this has safety implications, a decision needs to be made as to whether participation can continue with modifications to participation. For example, change in their role at the Shed, decrease in hours, being accompanied by carer(if they were previously attending alone) or modification of the Shed.

Transition from regular shed attendance

If the decision is made to exit, it is suggested an exit plan is formed with the member, spouse and carer. This could include short social visits to the Shed in the lead up to the exit and phone calls or visits to the home by Shed mates after exit to smooth the transition and impact of loss of social connection.

See page 14 for ways shed leadership and members can continue to support members with dementia when they are no longer able to regularly attend the shed. The spouse and/or carer may seek other ways for continued meaningful social connection.

Stages of consideration for existing shed members with dementia concerns

With one in ten Australians over 65 years of age developing dementia, it is likely that you will encounter the development of dementia in existing shed members. If you have concerns about an existing member of the shed, the following information is provided to assist in guiding the shed leadership team in taking appropriate steps to help support a diagnosis of the symptoms observed.



Approaching a member about concerning memory symptoms

A

It is worth remembering many conditions have symptoms similar to dementia, so it is important not to assume a Shed member has dementia just because some of the symptoms are present. Many of these conditions can be treated and it is important the member seeks medical advice.

If you are concerned with increasing forgetfulness or other changes in the thinking or behavior of a Shed member, the first step is to bring your observations to their attention in an appropriate and sensitive way to help prompt them to visit a doctor. Below are some suggested steps you can take with the shedder you are concerned about.

Step 1: Observe the shedder you have concerns about and note the specific issues you have noticed. You may want to write these down so you can talk to the shedder about his behavior and the reason for your concern. Identify any patterns in the behavior, such as them occurring at a certain time of the day.

Step 2: Arrange a one-on-one conversation with the member in a location with some privacy, away from other shedders.

- Provide the shedder with details of the forgetful behavior you have observed.
- Ask them if they are aware of the issues.
- Enquire if their family or friends have mentioned any similar things.
- Be prepared for the shedder to become defensive, offended or embarrassed.
- Reassure him that you are concerned about him
- Encourage him to discuss your concerns with his spouse or other family members



Step 3: Strongly encourage the shedder to see a doctor.

In the case the shedder does not acknowledge the concerns approach the family

B

If the shedder does not acknowledge your concerns consider an appropriate way for your Shed leadership to approach his spouse or other family member. Approach the concern from a health and safety perspective and follow Steps 1 to 3 above with the family member.

Support the needs of the existing member

C

It can take some time between when a person presents their memory and behavior concerns to their GP and a diagnosis of dementia or another condition. The support of Shed leadership to the member and his family is critical during this stage. It is also important to consider any health and safety implications of the member's increased forgetfulness and behavior changes.

A discussion with the member and/or spouse and family and Shed leadership should consider a way forward for participation at this time that is sensitive to the needs of the member awaiting a diagnosis and ensures the safety of all Shed members.

Review shed safety (Page 24) and Being a mate - Supporting men (Page 12) and Communication tips (Page 13 -14) to support the participation of the shed member with memory issues.

It is great as a shed member to see the guys with dementia enjoying themselves. It also helps us see what is happening to these guys, how dementia affects people and to learn more about it.

Bob from Raymond Terrace Shed



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a black fountain pen, poised to write on a spiral-bound notebook. The person has a thick, grey beard and is wearing a red and blue plaid shirt. The background is softly blurred, focusing attention on the writing action. An orange semi-transparent box in the lower right corner contains the section title.

SECTION 7

THE FINAL WORD



What the Doctor Ordered

by Bob Sanders

*He felt inside he was still able to control his life,
'though he had a little difficulty since he lost his wife.
And his daughter lived in Queensland; and his son, -- away at sea.
'Well,' he thought, 'I always was my own best company.
Besides, there's one advantage that being single brings:
there's nobody to fuss me when I can't remember things.
I've got my books and telly, I'll get along okay.'
So he didn't feel dementia creeping on him day by day.*

*But his doctor saw it when the old man called in with the 'flu.
'I think I'll get the District Nurse to keep an eye on you.'
Of course the old man grumbled that he would be quite okay,
but still, the District Nurse called in to see him the next day.
She was young and bright and pretty and she even made him smile
and he found that he could put away his troubles for a while.
So weeks went by 'til one day, when she came to visit, she
said, 'Get your coat and come with me. There's something you should see.*

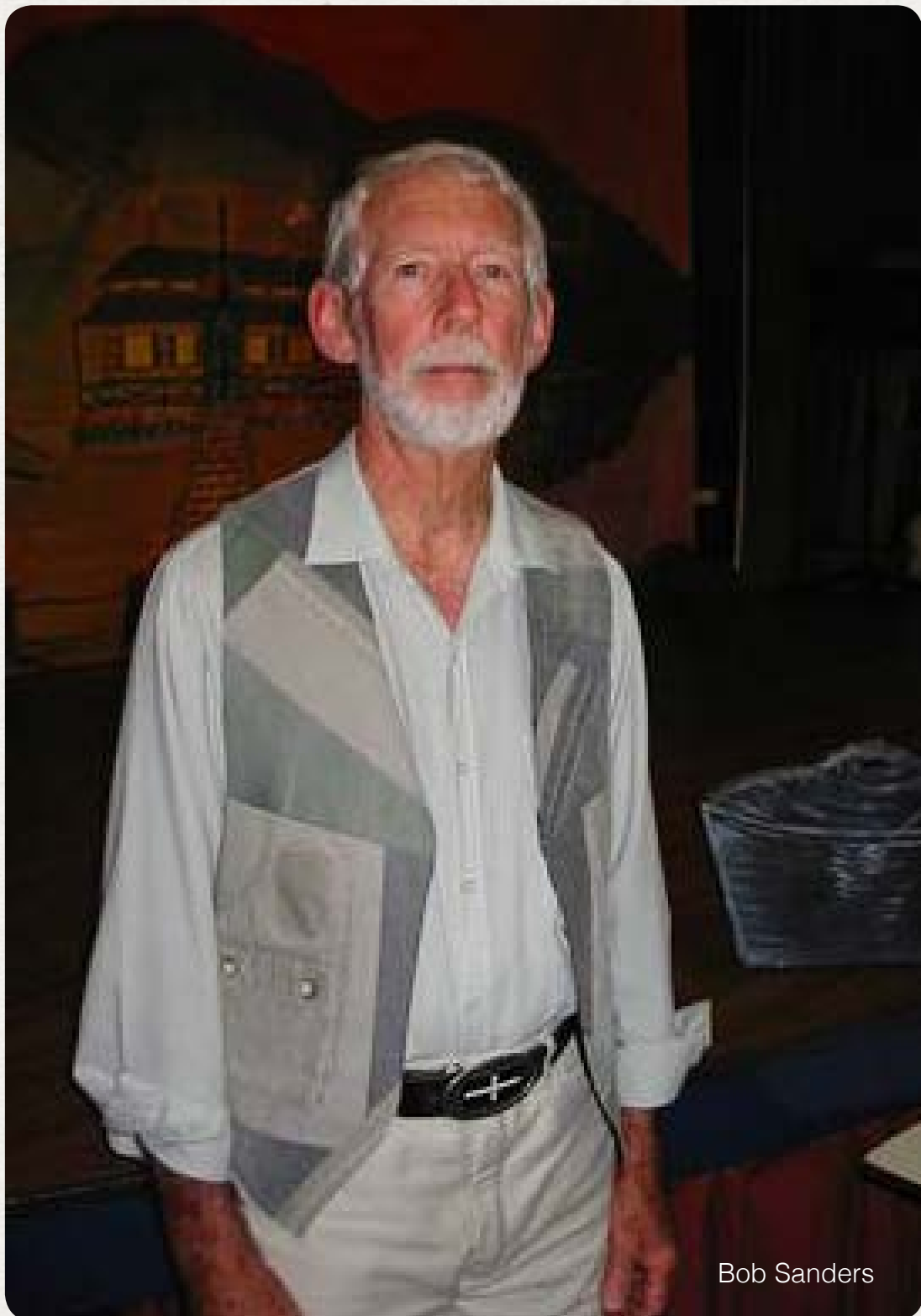
*I have to pick up Mister Hughes, he's three doors down from you,
to take him to his Men's Shed and I'd like you to come too.'
He started to protest this but she gently took his arm
and smiled and said, 'Oh, please come. It won't do you any harm.'
What could he say but, 'Alright,' and he turned and locked his door,
not knowing that this day would change his life for evermore.
For 'though some pessimistic thoughts were running through his head,
they soon gave way to wonder as he walked into the Shed.*

*'Cause the men inside were just like him; he wasn't out of place.
To any keen observer he was just another face.
The District Nurse said, 'Look around, and I'll be back at ten,
that gives you time enough to get to know the other men.'
Then Mister Hughes said, 'Call me Frank. Let's get a cuppa tea,
then we can look around a bit. There's quite a lot to see.'
And as they sat and chatted while their cup of tea they drank,
he found he had a lot of things in common now with Frank.*

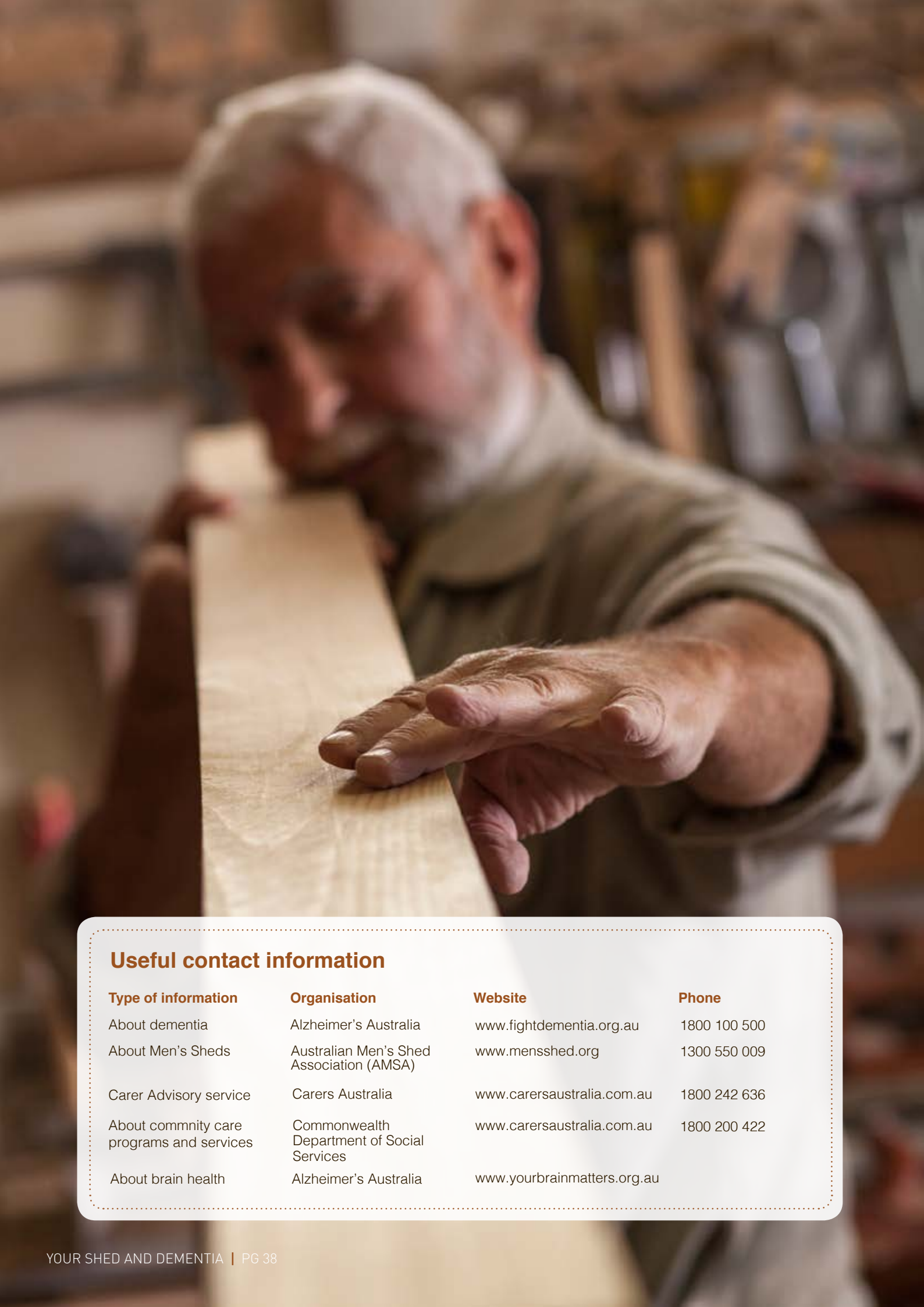
*Then as they wandered through the Shed and some men stopped to chat,
he took an interest in their work and thought, 'I could do that.'
And no-one seemed to hurry, they all worked at their own pace,
yet the air of quiet endeavour brought a faint smile to his face.
The District Nurse returned at ten to take him home again
and though he left, his heart told him he'd much rather remain.
So when she dropped him at his gate he told her, with a smile,
'Next time you take me to the Shed, I'd like to stay a while.'*

Alzheimer's Australia NSW would like to acknowledge the work and input of Australian Bush Poet Bob Sanders and the impact his poem "What the Doctor Ordered" has had on all who read it.

Sadly Bob Sanders passed away in September 2014, aged 76. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife Lois, his family and friends, and to all those who loved this Great Australian Poet.



Bob Sanders



Useful contact information

Type of information	Organisation	Website	Phone
About dementia	Alzheimer's Australia	www.fightdementia.org.au	1800 100 500
About Men's Sheds	Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA)	www.mensshed.org	1300 550 009
Carer Advisory service	Carers Australia	www.carersaustralia.com.au	1800 242 636
About community care programs and services	Commonwealth Department of Social Services	www.carersaustralia.com.au	1800 200 422
About brain health	Alzheimer's Australia	www.yourbrainmatters.org.au	



Samantha Abbato And Associates

Evaluation, Research, Strategic Planning



“Cheers mate”