



Many things worry older men...

HOW TO HELP... yourself and others

Ever wondered how tough it can be for an older man?

These are some of the hidden realities for ordinary Aussie men, some tips on how men can help themselves to overcome these challenges, and how families and friends can help an older man to rediscover a fulfilling life.

HIDDEN HARDSHIPS

Physical Health Problems

Sometimes no matter how active and healthy you are, you can experience physical health problems. Physical illness is tough enough to deal with on its own, however it can often trigger a range of emotional issues that men find hard to talk about.

Health issues can shatter the dreams and dignity of a man. These issues may result in the loss of their highly valued independence, a lack of mobility, not being able to do tasks, and having to ask for help. They may feel they need to remain stoic and strong for the family and some think they become a burden.



Retirement – when the honeymoon is over

When we are busy working, it is hard to envisage what the emotional impacts of retiring will be. We talk about it for so long and dream about the holidays, doing jobs around the house and having time to do the things we enjoy. The reality is, often after a few years of retirement, the novelty wears off and the honeymoon is over, leaving many to ask, “what’s next?”.

So often, men associate their self-worth and purpose in life with their job. Without a job to go to, many men lose their identity, their sense of achievement, and contribution. Without something to do, they no longer feel valued for their skills and experience, and their confidence can suffer. This is made worse by society’s unwillingness to value older generations.

In addition to this, the workplace is often where men find friendship and support with their work colleagues. With retirement this network disappears, and a sense of disconnection may occur as the world moves on without them.

Adapting to change can be very challenging for a lot of older men. Many have had only one or two jobs over the past 50 years, which can make it difficult to adapt to being at home all the time. This also brings about changes to relationships with their partners, who are now together most of every day. There is also a change in daily routine and a change in role from being the provider and protector of their family which can be confronting for some.

Relocation – having to start somewhere new

Whether it be moving house or moving town, relocation can cause a number of hardships for older men. Moving for older men is typically due to failing health or following retirement and often men play little part in the decision making process.

This challenging time leads to some significant changes in everyday life including the loss of friendships and support networks, and the loss of their place within the community. For instance, moving into care may cause a major loss of freedom and independence, they may also feel there are limited opportunities to engage with others, and that many activities are oriented towards women.

Often it can be too daunting and exhausting to have to make a new network of friends which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Becoming a carer

It is very hard to understand the true physical and emotional toll becoming a carer can have on a person, particularly if it is unexpected. A constant focus on the needs of the person being cared for can see the carer's needs get pushed aside.

Feelings of resentment and guilt are a common part of caring, and are often hidden.

When the caring role stops, carers can feel they have lost their identity and reason for getting up each day. No longer do nurses or other support persons come calling and the social interaction ceases to exist, leaving a sense of isolation and loneliness. This is compounded by the loss of their partner from the home or life itself.

Loss – losing a partner

Losing a partner can be a particularly difficult time for older men. Not only have they lost their wife or long-term partner but also their most trusted companion, the person who connects them socially to the outside world and is typically the driving force behind the home and family.

The grieving process overwhelms many with complex emotions, and life changes so dramatically they begin to fall apart. These men are at significantly higher risk of depression and suicide.

Every experience is unique and people don't just 'get over it'. They need to learn to live with it and move forward.

Every day, these issues become too big to handle for more than one Australian man over 65 who takes his own life.

For thousands more, there is little enjoyment left.

Loneliness and isolation

Everyone can feel lonely sometimes, even those with a supportive family. The difference with older men is they are usually wary about revealing their inner most thoughts and so keep this loneliness hidden.

Having a group of men to talk to, where they feel safe to express their concerns, opinions, and thoughts is extremely important. Men only groups help to support these friendships and conversations, reducing the loneliness and isolation.

Depression in older men

Depression is not a normal part of ageing, however around 15 percent of older persons and around 35 percent of those in aged care are affected by the illness in Australia. Men tend to be conditioned not to show weakness in any form and are therefore less likely to admit they are suffering.

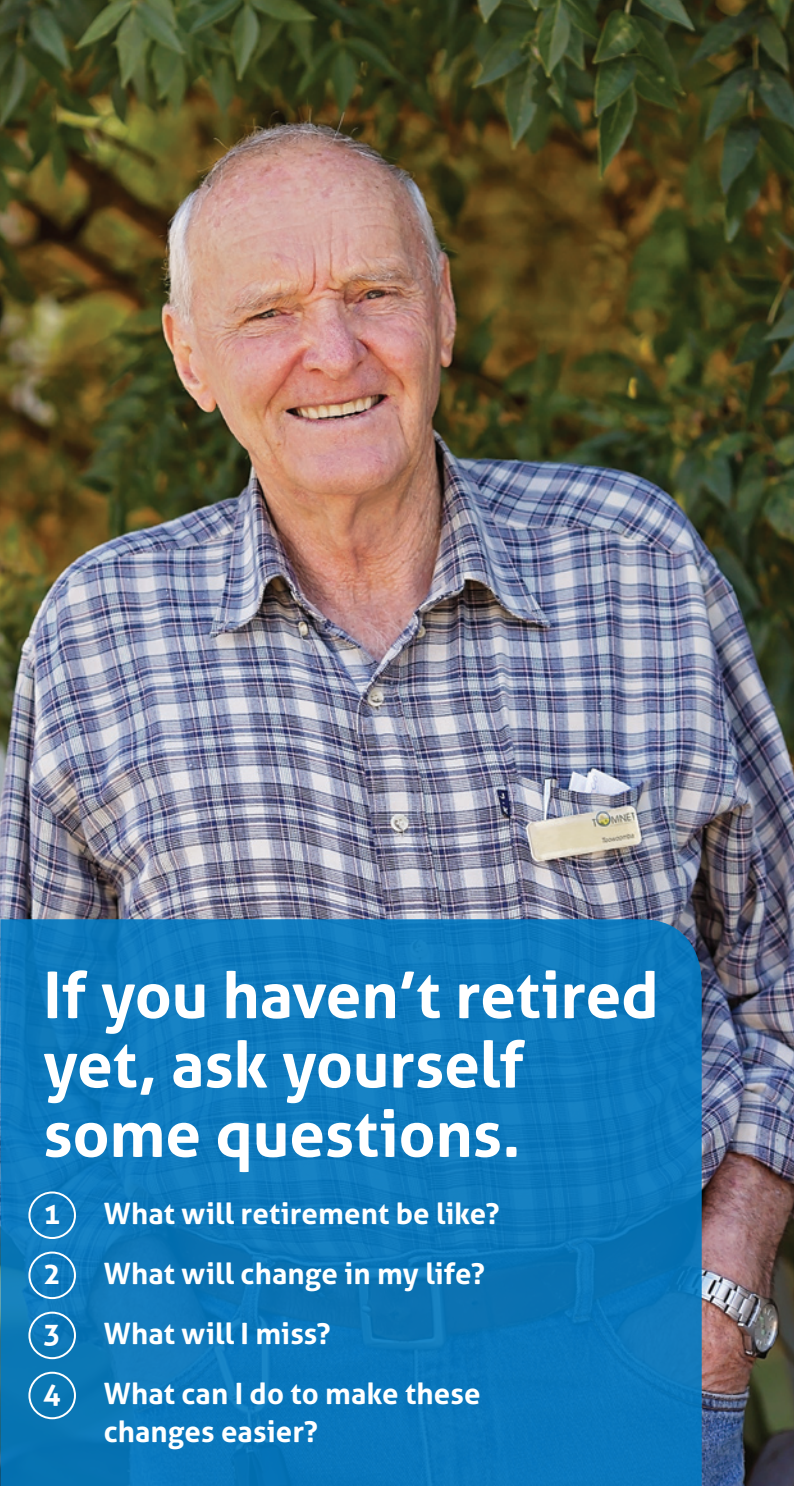
Depression in men is often masked, and tends not to show up as feeling hopeless or helpless, but as being irritable, angry and discouraged, so may be difficult to recognise. Even if a man realises that he is depressed, he may be less willing to seek help. Support from concerned family members or friends, and encouragement to seek help, can make a difference.

**There is hope for a better life.
Your life really can start at 65.**

"This is what I say to men dealing with hardships: don't let it beat you.

We are all mates, and there is always someone to talk to. Throughout my boxing career, I never gave up. And with TOMNET's help, nothing can beat me."

– Neil



If you haven't retired yet, ask yourself some questions.

- 1 What will retirement be like?
- 2 What will change in my life?
- 3 What will I miss?
- 4 What can I do to make these changes easier?

How you can help yourself

Retiring and growing older will present major changes in your life, however there is no reason why you can't turn your post-retirement period into one of the most satisfying times in your life.

Here are some suggestions

- 1 **GET INVOLVED** in a network like ours where you will find friendship, trust, understanding and support.
- 2 **CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING** and share your skills and life experiences with others.
- 3 **TRY SOMETHING NEW.** Is there something you're interested in doing but never had the chance? Make it happen.
- 4 **KEEP IN TOUCH** with family and friends. This is vital.
- 5 **REALISE YOU ARE NOT ALONE.** You will have good and bad days but speaking to other men or a member of the TOMNET Professional Support Team is one step towards being heard and supported.
- 6 **SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP** for any unresolved issues.

How you can help an older man

Do you know an older man doing it tough? Here are some easy ideas to help you connect with them and to make a difference in their lives.

START a meaningful conversation with your father, brother, uncle, neighbour, or other older man.

TALK with genuine interest about what they are doing and how they are feeling.

VALUE their life skills, abilities, and their past and present contribution to family and community.

ENCOURAGE them to come up with their own ideas on how they can lead a fulfilling life and support them to make it happen. Some examples are

joining a network like TOMNET, volunteering, exploring their interests, and keeping in touch with family and friends.

Encourage them to seek **PROFESSIONAL HELP** for any unresolved issues.

Take **WARNING SIGNS OF DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE** seriously and act immediately. Don't keep the plans a secret. Seek professional help.

Reaching out could save a life.

"It's not always easy, indeed it's mostly very hard for older blokes to tell you how they really feel."

– Royce



At TOMNET we create networks of retired men who genuinely care about the welfare of each other. TOMNET provides a sense of belonging. We hold weekly gatherings, events, interest groups and barbecue services. We also run volunteering programs and provide professional support.

TOMNET is about retired men supporting each other through hidden hardships to improve their mental health and well-being, and prevent suicide. Through rediscovering fulfilling lives, TOMNET men regain purpose, the ability to connect, and contribute to the community.

5 ways TOMNET supports older men in the community

Members provide peer support to:

- 1 Male residents in aged care facilities
- 2 Isolated, at risk older men through home visits
- 3 Isolated Members through telephone support
- 4 New and established Affiliate Groups
- 5 Disadvantaged youth by sharing skills and mentoring

We are gratefully supported by:



Australian Government



While DDWMPHN is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, the information provided in this brochure does not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government and is not advice that is provided, or information that is endorsed, by the Australian Government. The Australian Government is not responsible in negligence or otherwise for any injury, loss or damage however arising from the use of or reliance on the information provided within.

"There are many circumstances why we come here. It's a great thing to be involved in. I love every second of it."

– Peter

Where to go for help

TOMNET Toowoomba
223 Hume Street
Toowoomba, Qld 4350

PO Box 7801
Toowoomba South, Qld 4350

Phone: 07 4638 9080
Email: admin@tomnet.org.au

www.tomnet.org.au

TOMNET has affiliate groups in Toowoomba, Brisbane, Bundaberg, Crows Nest, Goondiwindi, Highfields, Inglewood, Millmerran, Mt Gravatt, Oakey, Roma and Tara.

If you are thinking about suicide or experiencing a personal crisis, help is available.

**FOR IMMEDIATE CRISIS
HELP 24 HOURS A DAY,
CALL LIFELINE 13 11 14**

**CALL 000
(EMERGENCY SERVICES)
IF LIFE IS IN DANGER**