

Everybody is a story

The TOMNET experience has blown several myths out of the water. One is that “you won’t get older men to talk about things that matter to them”. It was also said prior to the launching of TOMNET in 2001 that “setting up a group for men aged fifty or more is bound to fail”. It was said furthermore, that “once men dispensed with the weather they would have nothing else of consequence to talk about”. How wrong this has proved to be!

It is precisely because of conversation opportunities and capabilities within TOMNET that the organization has flourished. Good talkers and good listeners – not mutually exclusive – are of equal importance in conversation as they are in the building and maintaining of meaningful mateships. This has proved to be a powerful and valued component of older men actually engaged in supporting one another.

One of the greatest losses in the lives of older men generally is their inability or unwillingness to take advantage of having a yarn, being on the giving or receiving end of some storytelling. Be it a deep and meaningful matter, one of personal significance, the sharing of wisdom or a tall story that binds the Australian male through his peculiar sense of humour, this is all good.

TOMNET offers many opportunities for conversation at all levels. A 2010 reprint of Dr Rachel Remen’s (an older woman) book “Kitchen Table Wisdom”, has the doctor saying:

“Everybody is a story. When I was a child, people sat around kitchen tables and told their stories. We don’t do that so much anymore. Sitting around the table telling stories is not just a way of passing time. It is the way wisdom gets passed along, the stuff that helps us to live a life worth remembering. Despite the awesome powers of technology many of us still do not live very well. We may need to listen to one another’s stories again.”

This need is recognized and responded to in TOMNET – literally.

The range of topics addressed in TOMNET is interesting. It is also how the tales are told that is fascinating. Each man has his own character, of course, and without exception he has a way with words.

Around-the-table-talks or quiet one-to-one conversations, these are an integral part of TOMNET’s agenda. In this way the men become stories in and of themselves. Conversations about the weather can’t possibly compare with their significance. Through conversation our men discover how unique they are. They also discover how much in common they have with their peers. Every one of our men is a special story and it is this that makes the story of TOMNET the success it is today.