



**TOMNET**  
THE OLDER MENS NETWORK INC

# Home Visiting Program for Volunteers

## Overview

A service provided by TOMNET, whereby Volunteers visit socially isolated older men within their homes. Volunteers provide social interaction, companionship, and support to those older men who are unable to leave home without considerable effort.

### Why have a Home Visiting program?

For many older men, living alone and maintaining regular contact with other people in their community can be very difficult.

Some issues that create a need for someone to be visited in their home include:

- No access to transport.
- A feeling of isolation, even in the familiar surrounds of their own home.
- Feelings of loss of role, identity, and respect.
- Reluctant to admit that they are doing it tough.
- Health issues restrict their mobility.

The program aims to alleviate the social isolation experienced by older men, and ultimately contribute to a reduced suicide rate.

Men relate to other men from similar generations where a shared sense of values, experiences and understanding can lead to a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

## What is the Home Visiting program?

The Home Visiting program is Volunteers visiting older men who are unable to access social opportunities with other older men. It is simply an older man visiting another older man and have a chat, hopefully a laugh, and letting that man know others are thinking of his welfare.

The Home Visiting program was created due to the high rate of suicide in older men in the community, and the realisation that social isolation is a key factor in these suicides.

The program is also based on the premise that older men will typically not admit they are lonely, vulnerable, and need support. They are also less likely to proactively go and find help, hence the need to access these older men in an environment where they are comfortable.

## How did we start the Home Visiting program?

1. Volunteers within our Membership were asked to participate in the program.
2. The coordinator sourced potential clients from within TOMNET, referrals from welfare agencies, or word of mouth to reach the broader community.
3. An assessment was conducted by the resident counsellor/ social worker to assess potential client's welfare, including a property risk assessment.
4. The coordinator approached Volunteers with similar interests as the Client
5. The Coordinator and Volunteer visited with the Client for an initial visit
6. The Volunteer and Client agreed upon the frequency and location of the future visits – generally within the client's place of residence.
7. The Volunteer is encouraged to provide feedback regarding the visitations and receives support regarding any concerns they have.
8. The Coordinator facilitates ½ yearly evaluations of Clients.

## 5 ways TOMNET supports older men in the community

Our Members provide emotional and social peer support to...

1. male residents in Aged Care facilities
2. isolated, at risk older men and carers through home visits
3. telephone support for Members who are socially isolated
4. new and established peer support groups
5. share skills and life experience mentoring disadvantaged youth





## How do we qualify a potential client for the program?

The coordinator identifies potential clients using key indicators that help determine whether clients are suitable for the program.

These identifiers may include:

- at risk of self-harm, depression, and anxiety
- experiencing social isolation
- be retired and lacking social networks that once existed
- lost a partner and struggling with the grief process
- a full-time carer with little to no social networks
- experiences difficulty leaving their home

## What our Volunteers need to know:

1. They are visiting an older man in their home to provide meaningful conversation and support - many laughs are also shared.
2. Volunteers may visit more than one client – Volunteers may choose to visit several older men as part of the program.
3. Volunteers will be matched as close as possible to an older man in relation to previous career, interests, hobbies and background.
4. Volunteers adhere to all confidentiality agreements and conditions of the Home Visiting program.
5. Volunteers agree to provide feedback on a regular basis to support clients.
6. Volunteers, in consultation with the client agree upon location, frequency and time frames of visits, it is flexible.
7. Engage in conversation that is meaningful with the client, topics may include hobbies, special interest and life stories.
8. Volunteers may discontinue with visits and are not obligated to continue if the two parties do not “click” for various reasons or support required is beyond the Volunteers emotional wellbeing.

## What if Volunteers identify someone who requires additional support?

Volunteers may encounter a participant showing signs of requiring additional help, perhaps from a trained Counsellor. Ask the person if they would like to speak with someone about their issue. If available, make an appointment to talk to one of the Counsellors or provide the older man with the contact details of your local Lifeline, Beyond Blue or Mens Helpline.

## What if Volunteers need support?

Some visits may be confronting for Volunteers when clients are dealing with their own health or emotional issues. Volunteers are encouraged to debrief with the coordinator and discuss their own emotional wellbeing to ensure they are looking after themselves as well.



### What the program cannot provide:

The Home Visiting program is not a counselling service, a respite service or home care service. Volunteers are not psychologists, counsellors, or social workers. Volunteers are everyday men from a wide variety of backgrounds, ranging from labourers to lawyers and everything in-between.

The Home Visiting program does not have the capacity to visit older men who may have considerable health issues or requirements, it specifically focuses on older men who may be experiencing or at risk of depression and anxiety due to social isolation. It is not capable of supporting those men with greater mental or physical health issues that require more support than an everyday person with no experience or training could provide.

The Home Visiting program is also not a support service of a physical nature. For example, cleaning, support with activities of daily living, and assisting with transport are not activities undertaken by Volunteers. Volunteers are simply there with a handshake, a sympathetic ear, and an eagerness to listen, support, and share experiences.

## How we handle Confidentiality and Privacy

Organisations that have regular contact with older men may have strict rules governing the access to older men's details that are required. In order to access these details, we ensure all State and Federal rules and regulations are followed.

TOMNET Volunteers are inducted, undergo Police Checks, have current Blue Cards, and sign confidentiality agreements. When Volunteers are recording details from phone calls, for example, confidentiality is upheld at all times.

**Privacy is extremely important and taken very seriously.**

### The TOMNET Centre

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