

# Final Evaluation for



(2018-2022)

Delivered by  
Wheatbelt Men's Health (Inc.)  
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**A report by**



## Executive Summary

This document is the Final Evaluation of the Regional Men's Health Initiative (RMHI) project for 2018-22. The project is delivered by Wheatbelt Men's Health Inc. and is funded by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)<sup>1</sup>.

The purpose of the Final Evaluation is to:

- Summarise progress towards project objectives and attainment of performance indicators
- Document outcomes achieved during the period and describe the aspects of RMHIs model that support its effectiveness
- Update the cost benefit analysis of the project.

The evaluation aimed to understand the contribution of RMHIs activities towards improved health and wellbeing of regional, rural and remote men. The report found compelling evidence that regional stakeholders and individuals continue to place a high value on RMHI which is seen as a highly credible organisation and continues to fill an important gap in regional men's health and wellbeing education, advocacy and service delivery.

RMHI plays an important role in connecting regional men to existing health and wellbeing services. RMHI is unique in the sense that no other non-government Western Australian organisation working in the male health and wellbeing space has the broad coverage across all regional areas, the longevity of delivery and relative stability in delivering its core message.

RMHIs staff reflect an appropriate mix of skills and backgrounds enabling them to connect and develop trust and effective connections with regional communities. This is complemented by an enthusiastic Board that proactively supports RMHIs message and networking efforts.

RMHI has surpassed expectations in terms of directly connecting with approximately 62,344 individuals over the project period. This is an annual average of 15,586 participants per annum, either through direct participation at RMHI events or direct discussions and well above the 10,000 annual target of participants.

The evaluation estimates that the annual economic benefit to cost ratio from RMHI activities is between 2.5-12.45, depending on the different assumptions made about the extent, and value of, benefits to men's health and wellbeing. Comparisons with costs of service delivery with related health services suggest RMHI represents significant value for money.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2017 the Department of Regional Development and Primary Industries was created from the merger of the Dept. of Regional Development, which originally funded the project, the Department of Agriculture and Food WA, the fund holder for the RMHI project and the Department of Fisheries.

RMHI maintains a well-balanced reach into all Western Australia's (WA) regions. While the Wheatbelt accounts for 21% of all events, all the other regions account for between 8-12% across the regions. Its demand driven approach has ensured smaller isolated communities are not neglected.

The RMHI is successful because of its quality products and presentations, targeted and effective communications and the fact that their service delivery model is male friendly and appropriate for regional men. Stakeholders reiterated the value they place on its responsiveness to meeting their needs, its availability and flexibility in delivery, be it presenting to small or large audiences or serving an individual or community in situational distress.

RMHI has high credibility within the regions and among the service delivery organisations it partners with. It is now widely recognised across regional WA as the 'go to organisation' for men's health and wellbeing. It operates as an essential 'foundation stone' supporting many other health and wellbeing services to be 'male friendly' and access harder to reach groups of men.

Over the four-year period RMHI has reviewed and improved its products and communication approaches by streamlining some products and expanding its social media presence into other areas such as podcasts, Twitter, and Facebook.

RMHI's approach and services are highly regarded for their quality and relevance by regional stakeholders including other health service organisations and peer organisations. It has an extensive and diverse range of strategic partnerships allowing it to effectively reach a diversity of regional men and boys. The breadth of its activities – from presentations to schools, men's sheds and a wide cross section of industry and community organisations means they effectively target boys and men across all age cohorts.

It's ongoing partnership with the WA Country Football League (WACFL) is particularly effective in reaching younger men and has contributed to significant culture change within WACFL and therefore large sections of regional WA. Its new partnership with Bowls WA is highly effective and complements its activities with Men's Sheds WA to effectively reach many older males.

There is compelling evidence that RMHI has influenced individuals, community and industry organisations, in opening up conversations and behaviour change in relation to physical and mental health. Its contribution to fostering cultural change within regional communities is evidenced by numerous requests for repeat visits; approximately 25% of organisations visited by RMHI in this reporting period were repeat visits. Furthermore, there are many examples of regional communities increasingly promoting men's health and wellbeing messages and drawing on support, when needed and appropriate, from RMHI.

This evaluation provides clear evidence that RMHI's messages and language has had some influence in changing both the language, and therefore orientation, of health and wellbeing

policy. There is also anecdotal evidence that its 'Talk to a Mate®' message and taking care of a mate has occurred. The latter is recorded as Primary Care and RMHI recorded 703 instances of Primary Care over the project period, the highest category amount of Advocacy Support. Advocacy support involves individualised support to help people who are facing significant issues of situational distress or are concerned for the wellbeing of others.

RMHI has well and truly started on its 'adoption by community' stage whereby men and regional communities start to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. However, this is an ongoing and long-term phase that still requires significant cultural change and a long-term commitment and promotion of a consistent message (i.e., Talk to a Mate®).

Yet more still needs to be done – now is not the time to 'drop the ball' and RMHI should continue its current approach and it will require continued funding support over years to come to embed the cultural changes required.

Fortunately, RMHIs broad scope, relatively low cost to government and positive outcomes across both health, wellbeing and to some extent regional community resilience, has broader social and economic benefits that also align with other Government priorities.