

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria



OM:NI

Older Men:New Ideas Men's Discussion Groups

Information and Resource Manual

Contents

Introduction to the Manual	2
What is OM:NI?	3
Part A – Information for Participants	4
Leaflet: It’s never too late to make new mates	5
Leaflet: What is OM:NI?	6
What Happens at OM:NI Meetings?	7
OM:NI Group Guidelines	8
Listening	9
How Does the OM:NI Group Operate?	10
Suggested Topics for Group Discussions	11
Part B- - Information for Facilitators and Group Leaders	12
The Role of the Facilitator	13
Some Useful Skill for the Group Facilitator	14
What the Facilitator does not do	
A Code of Ethics for Groups Facilitation	
Sharing the Role of Facilitator	15
Looking After Yourself	16
Understanding Groups	17
Running into Problems	19
Part C – Council on the Ageing and OM:NI	20
Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria	21
What is COTA?	
How to Contact COTA	
COTA’s Relationship with OM:NI Groups	22
What is Required of OM:NI Groups	
COTA’s Role	
Guidelines for OM:NI Activities	24
OM:NI Volunteers	25
Legal Matters	26
Insurance	
Access to the Name OM:NI	
OM:NI Group Liaison Registration Form	27
Part D –Useful Ideas and Material	28

Introduction to the Manual

The Purpose of this Manual

This Manual has been produced by Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria, with input from OM:NI Groups and participants across the State, to assist OM:NI Groups in their operations.

A range of resources and information has been included which you may find useful at different times. These resources include:

- Leaflets to provide to new members so they can understand how your Group works,
- Information you can distribute in your community about OM:NI and your Group,
- Information for people who are a facilitator of the Group, or who are interested in being more actively involved in the Group, to assist them in this role,
- Ideas for your Group discussions,
- Information about COTA and what support is available to you,
- What is required of your Group to be part of the OM:NI network,
- Ideas for promoting your Group,
- Legal matters such as insurance.

We suggest you copy material in the folder as you need it, making sure you keep a master copy for the future. The kit is also provided in an electronic version for your convenience.

COTA Victoria develops some information material on OM:NI and other programs and services it provides. If you require more of our material please contact us on the number below.

This manual should be held by the Group Contact Person or facilitator, and made available to people who take on active roles within the Group.

**Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria
Level 4, Block Arcade
98 Elizabeth St
Melbourne 3000**

Ph: 9654 4443
Email: cotavic@cotavic.org.au
Website: www.cotavic.org.au

What is OM:NI?

OM:NI Mission:

To enhance the health, well-being and lifestyle of older men

OM:NI provides safe, male-only sharing environments which foster friendship, trust and respect, operating as small community based discussion groups,

The OM:NI Groups are facilitated and overseen by the men who participate in the Group and rely on the agreement of participants to the guidelines. The Groups are not support groups or therapy sessions, and are not linked to the health or disability service system. They are not a substitute for any outside professional advice or support, which are available elsewhere in the community.

OM:NI Groups were first established by COTA NSW in the late 1980s. They were set up in recognition of the unique issues faced by many men as they near or enter retirement.

The underlying aim of OM:NI is to enhance older men's holistic health needs: not only their physical, but emotional, mental and spiritual health, and enable participants, over time, to address the issues that have prevented them, or may impact on their ability to enjoy full and enriching lives.

The isolation and loneliness most men experience, even in the company of others, is relieved by appearing from 'behind the mask' and letting go of the competition and fear developed from years in their workplace and it's culture. Many men acknowledge in their OM:NI Group, this is the first time in their lives they have experienced this new type of relationship with other men.

Participants have shown an increased interest in retirement, better communication and listening skills with family members, friends and others. They say they feel a clear sense of direction and purpose in their lives. This then leads to a greater willingness to become involved in family and community events.

All men need the companionship and authentic support of peers they can trust, in a climate of confidentiality and caring as found in an OM:NI Group. These factors empower a man to take greater control of his life, leading to a richer, fuller and more satisfying existence.

In Victoria OM:NI Groups operate under the umbrella of Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria.

COTA's mission is to enable older people to age well in a just society, and is the voice of older people across the state. It is a not-for-profit independent organisation promoting the interests of older people.

Part A – Information for Participants

In this section you will find information sheets and flyers that you may find useful to distribute to new members, or to people who want more information about OM:NI and your Group.

You may find it useful to give new members an ‘information pack’ at their first or second meeting, so they understand how the Group works. All new participants should receive in the early stages of their involvement the following information:

- **OM:NI Group Guidelines**
- **What Happens at an OM:NI Group**
- **Information sheet on ‘Listening’**

These information sheets will help new participants understand what is expected of them in the Group, and help them to fit into the Group.

It's never too late to make new mates

OM:NI

If you're a man over 50, then you can belong to an OM:NI Group.

What is OM:NI?

OM:NI Groups are a meeting point for men as they approach retirement age, and in the years that follow.

At OM:NI you can meet, talk and laugh with other men your age twice a month. We chat about ordinary day-to-day things, and we entertain and encourage each other by sharing our own individual outlooks on life. We often find that we all have something to teach each other, and we all have something to learn from each other.

What happens at an OM:NI Group? In the first hour we hear how everyone is going. After a cuppa we tackle the discussion topic chosen by the Group.

Who goes to the Groups, how often do they meet and what is the cost?

Participants are men in their 50s and over and come from all walks of life – the oldest participant is in his 90s. The Group usually meets for 2 hours twice a month and is casual (come along when you can) and the cost is \$2 to cover tea/coffee and biscuits.

There are now a number of OM:NI Groups in Victoria, with growing interest in starting new Groups in many areas, and close to 40 Groups across NSW.

What OM:NI members say:

"I've met some great blokes, we always seem to have a bit of fun"

"I joined OM:NI and found that getting together with a group of other men was something I really enjoyed"

"The Group provides an opportunity to help each other enjoy the future"

"To me OM:NI Groups are about friendship, warmth and humour"

You will be warmly welcomed at an OM:NI Group near you.

To find your nearest OM:NI Group, or for more information about OM:NI contact Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria on Ph 9654 4443.

What Happens at OM:NI Meetings

Suggested Format for the Meetings

Each OM:NI Group is different, and how a Group operates will be up to the participants. Usually a Group will have a designated facilitator for each meeting, who will make sure the meeting runs smoothly.

A general format which many Groups follow is suggested here:

1. Welcome to everyone

- Any man new to the Group or those returning from an absence is acknowledged.
- Any apologies from members is also acknowledged.

2. Check-In – a time to share what’s been happening for you.

- Each member in turn is given time to share what’s been significant to them, how they are ‘travelling’ and what’s been happening since they were last at a meeting.
- A maximum time will need to be agreed upon by the Group if there are a large number of members at the meeting (like 3 or 5 minutes).
- Remember this time is an opportunity for people to speak without interruption. Hold on to any comments or questions which can come later.

NOTE: If someone is dealing with a big issue the Group can either extend their time or say that they will be given extra time after everyone else has shared.

3. Questions/comments

- There may be things that people have said that have sparked thoughts or ideas this is the time to say anything else or to ask questions.

4. Housekeeping:

- An opportunity to deal with any matters such as meeting procedure, social events or activities etc.

5. Coffee break: (10 –20 minutes)

6. Topic Discussion:

- A chance for members to give their opinion about the chosen topic. (See list of suggestions)

7. Picking next meetings Topic for Discussion:

- A list of suggested topics is provided in this manual, but Groups can identify topics that are of interest to them.
- Check for ideas amongst your Group participants.

8. Check-Out:

- Each member to say how the meeting was for them. It may only be a few words.

See you at the next meeting.

OM:NI GROUP GUIDELINES

OM:NI does not have any formal membership requirements, and the expectations of people participating in the Group are simple – they are about respect, trust and acceptance of each other.

OM:NI is about living and enjoying a healthy and positive retirement, and above all it is a space to talk and listen to each other.

All men in the Group are expected to follow these guidelines:

Confidentiality

Whatever is shared in the Group stays in the Group. It is OK to talk about yourself, but it is not OK to talk about Group participants to people outside the Group. This helps build trust.

Acceptance

We all need to feel accepted for who we are. We don't need to be judged or criticised (most of us are very good at doing that for ourselves!). We are all doing the best we can within the circumstances we find ourselves in. There are few right or wrong ways to be, for us or for others.

Respect

Respect others' opinions and don't interrupt when another person is speaking. Don't give advice (unless people ask for it). Most of us just need to be heard and don't need others in the Group telling us what to do.

Issues

Discuss only your own personal issues in the Group – it is not a place to gossip or discuss what is going on in the lives of other participants in the Group, or people outside the Group. As much as possible, discuss what's happening for you currently.

Sharing your feelings or experiences is always optional. If you don't want to speak in the Group that's OK – just say 'pass'.

Help

If you need help it is OK to ask the other blokes!

LISTENING

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems, you have failed me, strange as it may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen, not talk or do – just hear me.

When you do something for me that I can, and need, to do for myself, you contribute to my fear and inadequacy. And I can do for myself, I am not helpless. Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational, then I stop trying to convince you and fret about the business of understanding what's behind this irrational feeling. And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works sometimes for some people.

So please listen and just hear me. And, if you want to talk, wait a minute for your turn, and I'll listen to you.

By Ralph Roughton

How does the OM:NI Group Operate?

Roles in OM:NI Groups

Each Group establishes its preferred processes and structures as to how the Group operates.

Some Groups may choose to establish a small administrative group that handles the issues associated with running the Group – where it meets, how the Group is promoted and so on, and they may meet periodically outside the OM:NI Group meeting, so these matters do not take up the meeting time. Other formal roles such as ‘treasurer’ may also be identified – for collection of money to meet running costs, and some Groups accrue a sum of money each year that they decide to spend on a lunch or BBQ etc.

Another useful role in the Group is someone who will take responsibility for sending out reminders of meetings, or keeping in touch with Group participants through a newsletter or similar regular mailout.

Facilitating the Group

Some OM:NI Groups may not have a specific facilitator – a group of people may share this role, or everyone in the Group may take turns in being a facilitator. Anyone in the Group can be a facilitator. It is useful, however, if someone is identified for each meeting to take on this role.

The main role of the Group facilitator is to provide some level of structure for the meeting, as well as assist members to feel comfortable in the Group. The facilitator’s role is “*to facilitate*” which means “*to make an action or process easier*”. Facilitators, therefore, make the conversation and the sharing that happens in OM:NI Groups easier.

Contact People for the OM:NI Group

It is useful if someone in the Group is identified as the **Contact person**. This is the person who will be identified in promotional material with a contact number, if new people want to find out more about the Group. The Contact Person does not need to be the Group leader or facilitator, or have any other formal role in the Group.

COTA Victoria also requires all Groups to identify an **OM:NI Group Liaison person**, who will be the main contact for COTA Victoria and its communication with the Group. The Contact person and the Liaison person do not have to be the same person.

Administrative Matters

Participants pay a small fee each time they attend, which covers basic costs, such as for tea and biscuits, mail outs etc, and possibly the cost of the venue, if necessary.

Your Group may develop contact lists for members of the Group. It is important that each person in the Group is asked if they are happy to have their contact details distributed.

Welcoming New Members

OM:NI Groups periodically have new men turning up, and it’s important the Group is open and welcoming, so that new members feel comfortable. The warmth and comfort of a group of men who know each other well and may come from similar social and/or cultural backgrounds, can become real barriers for new people, if effort is not made to include them.

Suggested Topics For Group Discussion

1. Creative Thinking
2. Communication
3. Isolation and Competitiveness
4. Work
5. Social Life
6. Married Life
7. Listening
8. Growing Up – Maturity
9. Hobbies, Recreation
10. Enjoying Old Age
11. Depression
12. Loss and Bereavement
13. Coping with Pain
14. Intimacy
15. Meditation
16. Fathering –Sons/Daughters
17. Mid-life Crisis
18. Health, Physical, Mental, Emotional
19. Faith
20. Joy Of Giving
21. Forgiveness
22. Happiness
23. Positive Thinking
24. Integrity/Trust/Fear
25. Community
26. Facing Your Demons
27. Duty Vs. Personal Satisfaction
28. Retirement
29. Freedom
30. What's Life All About
31. What To Do With Your Time
32. Problem Solving
33. Confidence
34. Seeking Advice
35. Responsibility
36. Financial Security
37. Values
38. Adapting To Change
39. A Project You Always Imagined
40. Self Reliance – Keeping Your Own Council
41. Pleasure – Creative And Positive
42. Your Philosophy Of Life
43. What Do You Want Of Life?
44. Life Is In Action
45. Goals – Aspirations
46. Love And Relationships
47. Structuring A Meaningful Life
48. Coping With Stress
49. Follow Your Bliss
50. Calculated Risks - Live A Little Bit Dangerously
51. Awareness
52. Think Tank
53. Wisdom
54. Sex/Sexuality
55. Procrastination-Do It now
56. Relaxation
57. Searching for Direction
58. Laughter & Love of Friends
59. Groups
60. Where To Live
61. Talking To Strangers
62. Clairvoyance, Telepathy
63. Exercise Your Body, Mind
64. What Is Our Role In Saving The Planet

This list is only a beginning. Make a list for discussion with the men in your Group. Include topics around beliefs and values in relationships and community that concern all men

Part B: Information for Facilitators and Group Leaders

The following section provides

- some background information on the role of a Facilitator in a Group, and
- information on the theory of how groups work.

This information is intended as a guide, which may be useful for people who are new to this role or want some more information.

Remember that not everyone will want to take on this role, or is suited to it, while others will already have experience in this role, or will be able to naturally take up the task.

It is best if participants are supported into the role, if they wish to take it on.

The information provided is based on “Support Group Training Kit” developed by the NSW Mental Health Association.

The Role of the Facilitator

Confidentiality – It is important to emphasize that what is spoken in the room, stays in the room.

Provide Safety - by fostering a supportive, trustworthy and friendly atmosphere. This is accomplished by ensuring the guidelines, and goals of the Group are met, and by maintaining time limits on discussions by voice, timer or bell.

Encourage Participation - Not every member immediately shares with the Group. The facilitator, gently encourages members to participate, but be aware of their limitations. Find out what members want from their meetings, and that all decision making is fair to all members.

Provide Opportunities for Everyone - It is essential to create an environment in which all members of the Group regardless of race, religion, sex or disability have equal opportunity to participate. This means taking the time and effort to discover what people's needs are and develop practices to ensure that those are met.

Provide Focus - by tactfully redirecting conversations that are not related to the current topic (some men may go off on a tangent which may be irrelevant to the topic.)

'Active Listeners' - Active listeners are sensitive to what is, and what is not said. Look around the Group for boredom, talking, hands up for interjection and detect open and subtle pain or grief in another, and respond to these. If you believe the Group has ignored an important point, go back to it.

Foster Personal Responsibility - Facilitators should not exclusively enforce the rules of the Group. Members should also have an obligation to the Group's welfare and be encouraged to extend their comfort zones.

Encourage Self-esteem - Let members know that their sharing is important to the Group and thank them, and that they are valued as individuals. Don't permit personal attacks on any member during Group meetings. Also include and encourage humour in the Group.

Handle Problems - Members may try to monopolise the discussion in the Group, become angry and in conflict, question others too aggressively, or violate Group guidelines in other ways. A good facilitator deals with these situations tactfully through a combination of appropriate comments and actions.

Share - Facilitators should NOT forget that they are also Group members. They should share feelings and experiences when appropriate.

Honest Feedback - Obtain feedback from each member on how they feel at the end of the meeting (be prepared to be upfront).

Farewell - Shake hands with each member and invite them back to the next meeting.

Welcoming new participants - Here are some ideas for making new members feel welcome and accepted:

- Have some longstanding members of the Group responsible for making new members welcome – maybe they could introduce the new man to other members before the meeting or during the coffee break.
- At the start of the meeting acknowledge the new man (men) and welcome them to the Group and explain the purpose and processes of the Group.
- Make sure each man introduces himself to the new visitor.
- Make sure each new participant gets a copy of the manual and any other printed information. You may prefer not to hand out member details such as contact lists initially.
- Recognise that it is his first meeting and that it might take a while for the man to feel accepted and trust to be built up to enable him to open up. Encourage all the men to create new friendships within the Group members. Organise an existing member to ring or make personal contact with the new man during the following week.

Some Useful Skills for a Group Facilitator

Regardless of the Group facilitator's background, it is important to have or develop the skills and attributes below:

- An interest in and an understanding of the purpose of an OM:NI Group and the other members of the Group, in order to create trust and loyalty.
- Good listening skills and making eye contact.
- An understanding and appreciation of other's thoughts and feelings.
- Ability to be non judgmental – as a Group facilitator you need to be open to other men's different experiences, values, beliefs and opinions.
- Ability to resolve conflict and deal with difficult situations.
- Awareness of your own capabilities and limitations – The Group will sometimes not meet the needs of all its members and will not find a solution to every issue discussed.

What a Facilitator Does Not Do

- Believe that the Group is 'their Group'. It is essential that Group members all feel that they have some 'ownership' of the Group.
- Dominate and monopolise the discussions.
- Dictate what the Group will discuss.
- Lecture or preach, or lead members to believe that you have all the answers. Encourage members to have realistic expectations of the Group.
- Attempt to run a therapy group.
- Breach confidentiality.

A Code of Ethics for Group Facilitation

The code of ethics below is to assist OM:NI Group facilitators maintain a consistent and ethical approach for all OM:NI Groups.

Group facilitators agree to:

1. Keep and protect the confidentiality of Group members by clearly defining:
 - What it means.
 - Why it is important.
 - The risk and difficulties involved in its enforcement.
2. Respect and encourage the voluntary participation of Group members so as to improve and foster each man's sense of self, well-being and connectedness.
3. Refrain from imposing personal agendas, values, attitudes and morals on other Group members.
4. Not secretly record Group sessions without the permission of the Group members.
5. Not use any therapy technique or strategy in the facilitation of an OM:NI Group.
6. Provide information to all Group members about activities in which they may participate.

Sharing the Role of Facilitator

Establishing and facilitating a Group can take a lot of time and energy. Sharing the responsibilities amongst people in the Group can mean less work for any one person and make the experience more rewarding. If people in your Group find the idea of facilitating the Group too daunting you could consider having more than one facilitator for each or some meetings.

Advantages of Co-facilitation Work

There are several advantages to sharing the facilitation of an OM:NI Group. These include:

- Tasks and responsibilities of setting up and facilitating the Group are shared.
- Facilitators can provide support for one another.
- If one Group facilitator cannot attend a meeting there is someone else to take their place.
- Having another facilitator, can give you extra moral support when starting up a new Group.
- Two or more facilitators will bring different skills, experiences and ideas to the Group.
- New ideas can be easier to conceive with two heads rather than one.
- Facilitators can debrief with each other after the meeting.
- It is another way of supporting another Group member to become a facilitator.
- Groups that share responsibility for facilitating the Group amongst all the members report that members feel more personally involved with the Group and have increased self-esteem.

How to Make Co-facilitation Work

While co-facilitation of the Group has many advantages, it also requires effort on the part of each facilitator, for it to be successful and a positive experience for the Group.

The following points will help make co-facilitation a rewarding and positive experience for all:

- Each facilitator needs to be clear from the start about their role in the Group and who will do what.
- Allow time together to plan the meeting.
- At the end of the meeting facilitators should discuss issues that arose during the meeting and allow time to debrief.
- Good communication – facilitators need to be able to discuss their differences, problems and tensions with each other.
- There needs to be agreement about the objectives and purpose of the Group.

Disadvantages of Co-facilitation

If there is conflict between the Group facilitators or the above points are not taken into consideration, co-facilitation can be a negative experience for both facilitators and Group members. If your Group has a number of participants who take turns to facilitate the meetings, it is important that everyone is clear about who is facilitating the meeting, and the roles of other people in the Group for that meeting.

Negative consequences include:

- Significant differences between facilitators will be observed by Group members and may make them feel uncomfortable in the Group.
- If one facilitator 'takes over' the other facilitator could feel undermined, leading to tensions between the facilitators.
- Facilitators will be less focused on the needs of the Group and more concerned with their differences.
- Group members will not return and the Group may collapse.

Looking After Yourself

Taking on the role of facilitator can be exiting and rewarding but can also take some time and you may find it hard work at times. It is important that you reflect on your role as facilitator, and consider how it may be impacting on your participation in the Group.

Below are some ideas on how you as a facilitator can help maintain your own enjoyment of the Group:

- Reflect on positive things that happen, not just the negative.
- Ask Group members for feedback – they will be less critical than you.
- Share responsibilities and tasks with other Group members; others may enjoy the opportunity.
- If you are feeling overwhelmed and there is no other designated facilitator, ask for help from other members in the Group.
- Feel able to take time out from the Group if you need to. The Group can still carry on and you will probably return to the Group refreshed and with more energy.
- Recognize your own limits – you may need some time out as a facilitator so you can enjoy the Group as a participant.

Understanding Groups

Understanding some of the basic concepts of Groups and how they work can assist a facilitator understand what is happening in the Group and aid the facilitation process.

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics can be defined as looking at the what, when, why and how a group operates. It is about observing the Group as a whole and the interaction between individual members and the members and the facilitator to gain an understanding of what is happening in the Group. For example, the Group sits in silence. The question most facilitators probably ask themselves is “What can I do to get the Group going?” However, if the Group dynamics are taken into consideration, the facilitator could observe the Group and ask themselves the following:

- Is it just a working silence where members are just thinking hard about a particular issue and how to respond to it?
- Is there a lack of trust or a high level of anxiety in the Group?
- Is it that there’s a lot of quiet people in the Group?
- Is it because the Group doesn’t understand or have interest in this particular topic?

When to Monitor Group Dynamics

- At regular intervals, for example, every 5 minutes.
- At the end of each session.
- When something unexpected happens.
- When something expected doesn’t happen.

Who to consider

- The individual participants.
- The Group as a whole.
- The Group facilitator.

What to consider

- Levels of trust.
- Patterns of communication.
- The environment.
- The content.
- External factors.
- The stage of development of the Group.

Group Theory

There are different theories about the stages that groups go through and like group dynamics, they can be useful for group members and the facilitator to understand what is happening in the group.

One popular theory development describes the stages a group goes through in terms of forming, storming, norming and performing (*Tuckman, 1964*).

- **Forming** - Groups begin by members getting to know each other, integrating and getting clear about why they are there.
- **Storming** - Group members might have different ideas things such as how the Group should work, its objectives and who should be included.. These differences will cause them to 'storm' with one another.
- **Norming** - As the issues get resolved and the 'storms' subside, Group members generally establish agreements (often unconsciously) on roles, leadership, guidelines, objectives and operating norms.
- **Performing** - The Group is now ready to perform and do the work they set out to do.

According to *Tuckman*, the stages are predictable and inevitable to some extent for every group. They can go quickly or seemingly take forever.

Understanding that the Group you facilitate is likely to go through these stages can help you understand what is happening in the Group.

Running Into Problems

Despite the best intentions and putting in place processes to help your OM:NI Group run smoothly and effectively, problems can still arise, such as:

- conflict amongst members of the Group;
- problems with the meeting venue, or finding a new venue;
- small attendances;
- people taking over the Group;
- lack of leadership.

If you are having problems or concerns about any aspect of your OM:NI Group, feel free to contact COTA. We will try to help you find a solution, or assist with the involvement of one of the OM:NI volunteers or peer educators.

There is a great wealth of experience within the OM:NI network of Groups and you may like to contact another Group to share your experiences and learn from each other. The OM:NI Quarterly Representatives Meetings, and OM:NI Gatherings provide networking opportunities to deal with some of these issues.

Closing or Starting a New Group

If your Group is very successful you may have too many participants and need to 'close' the Group to members, for at least a period of time. Or if interest in your Group is high, you may want to establish a new Group in your area.

COTA Victoria will work with you and/or local organisations to establish an OM:NI Group, along with men who are OM:NI volunteers and peer educators. They will help establish the new Group by:

- attending the launch of the new group, and talking about OM:NI and their experiences of being a participant in a Group,
- attending the first 4-6 meetings of the group to help facilitate the discussion and establish the processes for the group,
- helping men who may be interested in becoming facilitators themselves,
- being a contact for the Group if there are any problems or issues in the Group.

The focus of the initial sessions will be to encourage a positive approach to ageing, and to help the men discuss their own health and ageing issues and concerns. This will lay a good foundation for the continued success of the Group.

Why developing local partners is essential.

Teaming up with local organizations in the area where a new Group will be developed provides: access to local knowledge and networks; possible venues; local promotion and publicity; access to local men; ongoing support and referral opportunities. Partners might include RSLs, Local Councils, Community Centres and Neighbourhood houses, or other organizations like Vision Australia, Retirement Villages, Rotary Clubs, Men's Sheds.

In some circumstances it may be useful to develop a local OM:NI working group comprising 6 -8 which would plan a launch and find a venue for the new Group. In other situations working with only one partner to plan the development of an OM:NI Group can be the starting point.

Developing a launch for a new Group

Having an event for the launch of the discussion program and the establishment of the OM:NI Group has proved a useful step in the process. The launch provides a focus for media publicity, provides an opportunity to promote the discussion group program and the benefits of OM:NI widely, and is promoted to local older men to form the basis for the first meeting.

Please contact COTA to discuss how we can help your Group in these matters.

Part C: Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria and OM:NI

This section provides information about COTA Victoria, what the organisation does, and outlines its relationship with OM:NI Groups.

You will find here important information about:

- What COTA Victoria requires from a Group for it to be part of the OM:NI program.
- Legal matters such as insurance
- Guidelines for OM:NI Groups in relation to promotional activities.

If you have any questions about any of these or other matters to do with your OM:NI Group, please call COTA Victoria on (03) 9654 4443.

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria

What is COTA?

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria is a not-for-profit incorporated association, comprising of individual members of 50+ years and organisational members with an interest in older people. It is an incorporated association in Victoria.

COTA's mission is to enable older people to age well in a just society.

COTA works with and for older people, to empower them to achieve universal well-being and social justice.

COTA recognises that ageism plays a significant role in diminishing people's life opportunities and work towards eradicating ageism in the community.

COTA provides opportunities for older people to take action on issues and matters that are of concern to them

COTA recognise the interests and diversity of older Victorians, and undertake regular consultation, encourage feedback and develop consultation mechanisms to ensure that we respond to current trends and needs of older people. COTA Victoria works with and consults older people to influence those who work with older people, their families, the community and government.

What does COTA do?

- **Represents and advocates** on behalf of older people, based on research and policy development.
- Provides a range of **education programs** including, positive ageing and Health promotion.
- Provides **information sessions and services** on a range of issues of interest and concern to older people.
- **Recognises and promotes** the diversity of older people, and their contribution to family and community.

Contact COTA at:

**Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria
Level 4, Block Arcade
98 Elizabeth St
Melbourne 3000**

Ph: 9654 4443
Email: cotavic@cotavic.org.au
Website: www.cotavic.org.au

COTA's Relationship with OM:NI Groups

As the umbrella organisation for OM:NI Groups COTA brings a range of advantages to the network of Groups:

- recognised and trusted name for groups and individuals to identify,
- an organisation for community groups and organisations to liaise with,
- insurance and volunteer entitlements,
- coordination of a network and promotion across the state,
- ability to seek funding to expand and develop the OM:NI network,
- an auspice arrangement for funding received by individual Groups.

What is Required to be an OM:NI Group

To use the name 'OM:NI', Groups are required to be part of COTA Victoria's OM:NI program.

A Group does this by entering into a partnership with COTA Victoria by

- agreeing to the guidelines and protocols outlined in this manual, and
- registering a Liaison person with COTA Victoria to be contact point for communication between COTA and the Group.

OM:NI Group Liaison Person

Each Group must nominate one of their participants to be the OM:NI Group Liaison person, using the Registration Form in this Manual. This process confers volunteer status on the Liaison person, which includes insurance coverage for that person when they are involved in OM:NI activities.

This person will be the main contact between COTA Victoria and the OM:NI Group, and will be the person who receives information from COTA to be passed on to the Group. This position has no formal tasks, but will periodically receive the following information:

- Notices of the Quarterly Representatives meeting (the Liaison person may or may not be the person who attends these meetings),
- COTA News which is distributed bi-monthly,
- Notices of other COTA activities which may be of interest to OM:NI participants.

COTA Victoria may contact the Liaison person if they need to follow up on any issues, or would like information about the Group and its activities.

All OM:NI Group Liaison people are required to attend an Volunteer Orientation session with COTA to provide them with information about

- their volunteer status, and the rights and entitlements this gives,
- COTA and the work it does, and
- An understanding of the relationship between COTA and OM:NI.

If the OM:NI Group Liaison changes for any reason, a new person needs to be nominated to fill this position, and new Registration form sent to COTA Victoria, informing them of this change.

COTA's Role

COTA Victoria will support OM:NI Groups through a range of mechanisms including information sessions or training for facilitators and Group members, if they would like it, and other support processes.

1. Promotion of OM:NI Groups

OM:NI Groups are free to arrange their own promotion through local outlets and newspapers etc. COTA will promote the OM:NI Groups and meetings through COTA News and its own information services and activities, as well as provide promotional flyers to Groups, as they require them

2. Communication with OM:NI Groups:

COTA will keep in touch with OM:NI Groups through OM:NI Group Liaison person. COTA will also send out to OM:NI Groups information and other materials that participants may find of interest.

In addition COTA will convene **OM:NI Groups Representatives Meeting three times per year**. Representatives from each Group will be invited to participate in these meetings, which will usually be held at COTA's office in central Melbourne. It will provide Groups with an opportunity to hear what is happening at COTA; and provide a valuable forum that ensures,

- a) that Groups remain in touch with COTA and each other, and
- b) that the Groups have the opportunity to share ideas, issues and resource/training needs directly with COTA and between each other.

3. OM:NI Advisory Group

An Advisory Group has been established and will be convened periodically or as required, to steer the development of the OM:NI network and program, and work on issues identified by the OM:NI Groups.

4. Quarterly OM:NI Gatherings.

The network of OM:NI Groups have established quarterly events that will be rotated between OM:NI Groups. The Gathering's provide social opportunities but also generate valuable networks between Groups.

Guidelines for OM:NI Activities

When OM:NI volunteers or Group members attend a local event, develop material for distribution or for local media, to promote OM:NI and their Group, they are also representing COTA Victoria as the umbrella organisation for OM:NI in Victoria.

OM:NI Groups are asked to do the following whenever promotional activities are undertaken for your OM:NI Group:

- identify COTA as the umbrella organisation for OM:NI,
- use COTA logo on all publicity and official materials,
- promote COTA's role and activities.

COTA has developed flyers and some promotional material for OM:NI which are available to Groups for use in their promotional activities and for distribution.

When OM:NI volunteers or Group members are participating in local events, additional materials promoting other aspects of COTA will also be provided.

If in doubt or if you need assistance or more information, please contact COTA.

Dealing with the media

OM:NI Group members are expected to deal with local media only in relation to their own OM:NI Group – such as promoting its operations, and to promote OM:NI in general.

Any questions from the media about COTA Victoria, should be directed to COTA Victoria staff or Executive Director.

COTA may be approached for media interviews, which may give rise to opportunities for OM:NI volunteers and Group members to be interviewed by the media, about participation in OM:NI and in the volunteer program. COTA may also invite OM:NI volunteers and members to share their experiences and thoughts, at conferences, training workshops and other activities.

OM:NI Volunteers

Participants in OM:NI Groups can take on more active roles and work with COTA to support and promote OM:NI, or assist in the development of new Groups by becoming part of the OM:NI volunteer team.

These activities may include:

- contributing to newsletters,
- doing training to help in the facilitation of their Groups,
- become peer educators with the OM:NI program,
- representing OM:NI and COTA at expo's and forums.

Becoming an OM:NI volunteer will involve you attending an Orientation session at COTA. This session will provide you information about the benefits of being a COTA volunteer, which include:

- support in the roles you may undertake,
- reimbursement of costs,
- networking with other people who are volunteers,
- insurance and entitlements as a volunteer of the organisation.

OM:NI Volunteer Roles and Requirements

OM:NI Volunteer Program: OM:NI participants who join COTA's Volunteer Program will be registered as a volunteer with COTA and will be linked into OM:NI promotional activities, such as:

- manning information stands at a range of community events,
- participating in information sessions related to older men and their health,
- launches and support of new OM:NI Groups.

Peer Educators: OM:NI participants can become a Peer Educator by undertaking a specific training program with COTA. This training will enable you to work with COTA to :

- establish and facilitate new OM:NI Groups,
- speak at information sessions and other forums.

Other Volunteer Opportunities with COTA

A range of volunteer opportunities are available through COTA which may be of interest to OM:NI participants including:

- becoming a speaker about COTA and on ageing issues, to community and other interest groups
- becoming a peer educator for programs such as
 - beyondmaturityblues
 - Quality Use of Medicines
 - Getting Connected (understanding and using new technologies)
 - Computer training

On-going support and information is provided to our volunteers to keep them abreast of issues and developments in their areas of work.

Legal Matters

Insurance

An OM:NI volunteer is a person who has registered as a COTA/OM:NI Liaison Person using the OM:NI Liaison Registration Form. All OM:NI volunteers are covered by COTA's Personal Accident and Voluntary Workers' insurance. This insurance covers volunteers while they are on COTA business, from the time they leave home until they return, provided the journey is uninterrupted. COTA business includes facilitating OM:NI meetings and being a designated COTA volunteer at promotional events such as a local fete, Gala Day or Expo.

This insurance **does not** cover:

- participants who attend an OM:NI meeting; they are covered by the venue's insurance
- facilitators if they socialise with an OM:NI group after their regular meeting.

Access to the OM:NI Name – OM:NI Proprietary Rights

OM:NI (Older Men:New Ideas) is a registered Business Activity of COTA (NSW), and all intellectual property rights and privacy considerations are the exclusive property of COTA(NSW).

OM:NI Groups are unique in allowing older men to meet together in a safe, confidential male only environment to share joy, sorrows, hopes and achievements as well as significant issues or other that may have prevented them from enjoying full and enriching lives.

The use by others of the OM:NI name, meeting procedure or seeking access to the Groups and/or the Group members for the research, financial gain or purpose other than intended, is unlawful without the written consent of the Group members involved and/or COTA(NSW), and any breach of COTA(NSW) proprietary rights will result in legal action. “

COTA (NSW)

COTA Victoria is the authorised agency for the development of OM:NI in Victoria.

COTA Victoria OM:NI Liaison Registration Form

OM:NI GROUP NAME:

LIAISON PERSON'S NAME

ADDRESS:

..... Postcode:

Telephone: Mobile:

E-mail address:

VENUE ADDRESS:

.....Postcode:.....

VENUE
CONTACT.....

Telephone:E-mail address:

ALTERNATIVE GROUP CONTACT:.....
(In case the Liaison person is unavailable)

Telephone:E-mail address:.....

OM:NI Groups are part of COTA Victoria's OM:NI program, and enter into a partnership with COTA Victoria by agreeing to the guidelines and protocols outlined in the OM:NI Information and Resource Manual.

Registration of the OM:NI Liaison person with COTA provides that person with volunteer status, which includes Insurance whilst engaged in OM:NI activities. As a part of COTA Victoria's programs, OM:NI Groups are covered by COTA Victoria's insurance.

Signature:

Date:/...../.....

Part D: Promotional Material

OM:NI flyers are provided in this manual for your Group's use.

In this section you will also find included other resources, some of which has been developed by other Groups, to help you with ideas for development of materials for your local area.

You may like to use this section to collect material and ideas you or other Groups have developed, or articles in local papers about your group.

It's never too late to make new mates

OM:NI

Men's Discussion Groups

Are you a man over 50? Then why not come along to an OM:NI Group?



What is OM:NI?

OM:NI Groups are a meeting point for men as they approach retirement age, and in the years that follow.

At OM:NI you can meet, talk and laugh with other men your age twice a month. We chat about ordinary day-to-day things, and we entertain and encourage each other by sharing our own individual outlooks on life. We often find that we all have something to teach each other, and we all have something to learn from each other.

What happens at an OM:NI Group? In the first hour we hear how everyone is going. After a cuppa we tackle the discussion topic chosen by the Group.

Who goes to the Groups, how often do they meet and what is the cost?

Participants come from all walks of life and are men in their 50's and over – the oldest participant is in his 90s. The Group usually meets for 2 hours twice a month and is casual (come along when you can) and the cost is \$2 to cover tea/coffee and biscuits.

There are now many Groups in Victoria with growing interest in establishing new Groups.

What OM:NI members say:

"I've met some great blokes, we always seem to have a bit of fun"

"I joined OM:NI and found that getting together with a group of other men was something I really enjoyed"

"The Group provides an opportunity to help each other enjoy the future"

"To me OM:NI Groups are about friendship, warmth and humour"

Would you like to know more about joining an OM:NI Group, or getting a Group going in your local area? Would you like some information for other people?

Contact Council on the Ageing (COTAVic) Ph: (03) 9654 4443

Men's Discussion Groups (OMNI) - Victoria

Group	Where	When	Contact
Balla Balla	Balla Balla Community Centre 65 Berwick-Cranbourne Rd	2 nd and 4 th Tuesday 9.00 – 12.00	Terry Hughes 5996 3314
Balwyn 2 Groups	Evergreen Centre 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn	2 nd and 4 th Thursdays 10.30 – 12.30	Peter Hassett 9857 8110
Banyule	Greensborough RSL, 111 Main Street Greensborough	1 st and 3 rd Tuesday 2.00 – 4.00	Ken Young 9435 2430
Beaconsfield	Beaconsfield Neighbourhood Centre 8 O'Neil Road, Beaconsfield	3 rd Monday each month 9.00-12.000	John Douch 0425 787 545
Belmont	South Barwon Community Centre 33 Mt Pleasant Rd Belmont Geelong	2 nd and 4 th Wednesday 10.30 – 12.30	Alan Thomas 5254 1587
Box Hill	Box Hill RSL 26 – 28 Nelson Rd Box Hill	2 nd and 4 th Thursday 2.00 – 4.00	Gary Haley 9808 9539
Brentwood Park	Brentwood Park Neighbourhood House 21A Bemersyde Drive, Berwick 3806	1 st Wednesday each month. 9.00 – 12.00	Brian Regan 5996 9496
Canterbury	152 – 162 Canterbury Rd, Canterbury	1 st and 3 rd Wednesday 10.00 – 12.00	Ralph Johnson 9819 0992
Casey	Mechanics Hall 59 Webb St, Narre Warren	3 rd Friday 9.00 – 12.00	John Douch 0425 787 545
Cranbourne	Cranbourne Community House 49 Valepark Cres Cranbourne	1 st and 3 rd Thursday 10.00 -12.00	Alan Kent 5995 7947
Croydon Hills	Yarrunga Community Centre, 76-86 Croydon Hills Drive Croydon Hills	2 nd and 4 th Thursday 10.00 –12.00	John Hogan 9870 2562
Diamond Creek	Netball Centre Diamond Street Diamond Creek	1 st and 3 rd Tuesday 10.00-12.00	Ken Ramplin 9438 1384
Greensborough	Diamond Valley Learning Centre Diamond Creek Rd (Cnr St Helena St) Greensborough	2 nd and 4 th Tuesday 9.45 – 11.45	Ken Ramplin 9438 1384
Hawthorn	Inner East Community Health Service 378 Burwood Rd Hawthorn	1 st and 3 rd Friday 10.00–12.00	Ralph Johnson 9819 0992
Kooyong	Vision Australia 454 Glenferrie Rd Kooyong	1 st and 3 rd Wednesday 10.00 – 12.00	Alan Bawden 9803 5917
Warrnambool	Archie Graham Centre	1 st & 3 rd Friday 2.00 – 4.00	Jim Thornley 5562 4497
Werribee	ISIS Primary Care 117 Warringa Cres, Hoppers Crossing	1 st and 3 rd Tuesday 10.00 – 12.00	Ted Morley 9748 8602
Narre Warren (Associated Group)	Mechanics Hall 59 Webb St , Narre Warren	1 st and 3 rd Fridays (except school holidays) 10.00 – 12.00	Mike Downing 0408 102 864