Men's table offer locals an entrée

By VANESSA ROSE
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Men's Table co-founder David Pointon, who has opened the group to locals, with Michael Lofaro, member of a Sydney table.

INSET: Men's Table co-founder David Pointon.
PHOTOS: Supplied

LOCAL men are being encouraged to "share their burdens and celebrations" with each other over dinner by joining a new group in South Australia striving for healthy men, masculinities and communities.

Men's Table is a not-for-profit that builds tables of eight to 12 men who have monthly dinners at the same time and place so they can talk about what's going on for them.

Co-founder David Pointon brought the national organisation to SA this summer and is giving men in the Adelaide Hills and surrounds the chance to decide whether to join a table at an 'entrée' on Monday.

"Our first entrée in Adelaide in December sold out, so we held another one the next night as well and that formed our first two Adelaide CBD tables," he said.

"If men can't attend, we run online entrées each fortnight to introduce men to how a table works and to decide if it's for them.

"If it is, we either introduce them to an existing table that is open to new members, or we build another one."

Mr Pointon said each table ideally had 12 men to allow for diversity in age, experience and conversation, and developed "its own personality".

"We provide some starting guidelines as to how a healthy table functions. Then, the men at each table make it work in their own unique way," he said.

"Participation and who comes is a random thing, and this is some of the magic of each table, with a diversity of men coming together as strangers and forming into a tight-knit community of men over time.

Mr Pointon said the idea came about when his co-founder Ben Hughes was going through a tough time and invited the men at their business networking group to get together.

"We had dinner once a month for eight years before we decided to take the idea out to communities because we could see the benefits we were all getting from having a place to really talk and be heard and supported by our peers," he said.

"Our motto is that we don't talk about 'footy and shit', rather we intentionally have deeper conversations about what's going on for us, how we feel about it and how it's impacting our lives and those around us.

"Research shows that it's healthy to talk about feelings and so we want to encourage all men to feel that it's okay to share their burdens – and their celebrations – with other men."

And surveys by Men's Table show that the benefits of joining extend beyond the participants.

"What we know is that sitting at a table creates a sense of belonging and camaraderie, connection and friendship," Mr Pointon said.

"Men aren't typically good at asking for help when they need it, but men at tables report an improvement in their communication skills and ability to ask for what they need.

"Our latest research suggests also that these impacts are rippling out into improved relationships with family and friends, as well as the men they sit with.

"We hope we'll continue to see the positive benefits that come from openly sharing our common human characteristics and in turn building healthy, supportive communities."

The Adelaide Men's Table Entrée will be held at The Original Coopers Alehouse, Adelaide, on Tuesday.

To register your attendance, visit themenstable.org/adealaide2

The new drinking fountain at Summit Sport and Recreation Park, Mount Barker. PHOTO: SA Water

Drinking fountain cuts plastic waste

VANESSA ROSE

IT'S now even easier to do your part for the environment in Mount Barker, with a new drinking fountaining providing an alternative to buying bottled water.

The fountain at Summit Sport and Recreation Park on Springs Road lets people fill their reusable bottles free.

SA Water's general manager of strategy, engagement and innovation Nicola Murphy said increasing access to drinking stations made it easier to choose tap over bottled water, saving money and reducing plastic waste.

"Summit Park is a popular destination for those out exercising or playing sport, especially in the summertime and it's important visitors and locals have a source of safe, clean drinking water to stay hydrated while out in the sun," she said.

"Having fountains in prominent community hubs and parks is an excellent opportunity for us to promote the many benefits of tap water – it's one of the best decisions you can make for your health, your wallet and the environment."

The Mount Barker drinking fountain was designed and made in Australia and features a water-spout that is child and wheelchair accessible.

It also includes a 'water window' to assist with filling, a splash guard to limit direct mouth contact with the nozzle, and a dog bowl for thirsty pets.

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Change will happen so prepare for it

CHARLES GILMAN

I PREFER to write about things that are just over our usual attention horizon or skirting low along it.

Sometimes, though, the basics must be reiterated. So here is my legal 'to do' list for everyone over 50, with importance rated out of 10.

❑ Get an enduring power of attorney. 10/10.

❑ Get a will. 8/10.

Now for something completely different – the big themes for the year: energy and liberalism.

Of these, the most pressing is energy, from the mundane (price) and the esoteric (technology), to the economic (growth) and the existential (entropy, global warming).

That is not to deny the importance of liberalism and the inevitable push-back (free trade, free movement of capital, free movement of people, and small government), four decades in the ascendant, but now rightly under challenge from left and right.

It is just a fact: the harnessing of energy is the most fundamental function of life at almost every level, and without it we are faced with decay and entropy.

For 300 years we have been using energy which the earth has converted from sunlight into fossil fuels and stored away.

It has, in many ways, been a free lunch.

Yet, there is no such thing as a free lunch: there is always a price to pay, and that price is becoming glaringly apparent.

We in the Hills, can think and do what we like with respect to the questions of energy.

But the world is moving. Trillions of dollars have already been spent, and trillions more are being harnessed to re-engineer energy production (collection), distribution, and use.

The scale of the project is vast, and unstoppable, and many fortunes will be made.

Some might quibble with 'the science', but change, like the tide, is coming anyway.

We might struggle with meeting the increased cost of energy, or decreasing our use of it, but change is coming.

We need to anticipate and prepare for that change and figure out how best to profit from it or minimise the loss it causes us.

Charles Gilman is a lawyer at von Doussas, Mount Barker.