

News

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Strong bonds: Gary Pinnegar, Peter Lynch and Dean Dyer joined the men's gathering at Stoneville.

Picture: Lee Griffith

Men take strength from some time out

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They could take a yoga class in the morning or enjoy a walk in the tranquil bush surrounds.

There was a drumming workshop and time for a siesta. They shared Aboriginal stories, looked at issues such as relations with their fathers, their partners and engaging with their children.

They shared and listened. Most important of all, they enjoyed being men.

At the weekend, 67 men aged from 16 to 87 gathered at a retreat in Stoneville for the 15th annual West Australian Men's Gathering.

The WAMG registrar, Peter Lynch, 80, said it was a chance for men to be themselves.

"There's no competition," he said. "There are no medals, they are just there to be themselves.

"Last year one of the blokes said, 'It was the first time I had been to a place with 70 to 100 men and nobody asked me what I did for a living'," he said.

Mr Lynch said men from all walks of life and ages attended, including one year when a man came with his son and grandson.

The WAMG chairman, Reijer Groenveld, said society too often overlooked the importance of male

brotherhood and men could end up feeling emotionally isolated.

The gathering showed men they were not alone in their fears and aspirations, he said.

It was an alcohol and drug-free event. And, crucially, what was said in the group stayed in the group to ensure confidentiality.

Allowing men to be in touch with their feelings and to express them helped build stronger communities, Mr Groenveld said.

Mr Lynch said there was a flow-on effect on the men's home lives. "Wives often say there is an improvement in the relationship after the men get home," he said.