

# Evaluation of the Australian Men's Shed Association

## SUMMARY REPORT

Final Report

31 AUGUST, 2016





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## Executive Summary

### Background

The Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) was established in 2007 and received its first Australian Government Funding in May 2010. This funding was part of the implementation of the National Male Health Policy, which recognised the 'important role [of men's sheds] in helping alleviate social isolation' by investing \$3 million over four years to support the Australian Men's Shed Association develop national infrastructure aimed at ensuring its future sustainability. This government investment has continued in subsequent funding agreements and the current agreement extends until 30 June 2019.

Men's Sheds have subsequently been established across Australia, with the current number of AMSA Member Sheds remaining at 950+ sheds and a conservative estimate of at least 22,500 members (Shedders) joining those Sheds.<sup>1</sup> AMSA Shed membership grew rapidly between 2010-14 and has remained stable over the past two years. The focus of funding agreements has changed (since July 2014) from *supporting the establishment of new sheds to supporting health and wellbeing activities and supporting the sustainability of sheds.*

### Purpose

The context of this project was to meet the requirement of the Australian Government Department of Health for an independent evaluation of AMSA's performance against their funding agreement (with the Department) for the 'AMSA Support for Men's Sheds' activity.

The purpose of the evaluation was to 'assess and make recommendations on the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the AMSA, including identifying opportunities to increase the AMSA's capability and sustainability.' To achieve this, the evaluators were required to answer five evaluation questions. The findings for each question are reported in separate detailed reports.

- 1. Does AMSA provide appropriate, effective and efficient support to men's sheds across Australia?**  
*Part 1 Evaluation of Service Provision to Members*
- 2. Are AMSA's organisational structure, governance arrangements, staffing profile and skills, and training arrangements appropriate to deliver support to men's sheds?**  
*Part 2 Evaluation of organisational structure, governance arrangements, staffing profile and skills, and training arrangements*
- 3. Is AMSA's current operating model financially viable and sustainable?**  
*Part 3 Financial sustainability and viability of current operating model*
- 4. Are AMSA's business processes, including the administration of the National Shed Development Program (NSDP), effective and efficient?**  
*Part 4 NSDP and Part 4a Business Processes*
- 5. Are AMSA's IT systems (website Shed Locator, membership database, accounting system and NSDP grants) able to achieve interoperability?**  
*Part 5 IT Review*

### Project timing, governance, scope and limitations

The project commenced on 9 May 2016, with an original finish date of 30 June 2016. It was then extended to allow further time for refinement of the research approach and consultation with AMSA

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers of individual members are based on insurance policy declarations of Member Sheds. Most, but not all, Sheds avail themselves of the AMSA-negotiated insurance policies, therefore the number is an under-estimate.

Members and AMSA partners, with a revised date for report submission of 31 August 2016. The project was governed by a Steering Committee consisting of three nominees of the Department of Health and three nominees of AMSA.

The evaluation coincided with other major changes in AMSA. For example, work had begun on assessing improvements to the AMSA IT system, on addressing some administrative issues with the National Shed Development Programme and on changes to the Constitution of AMSA and the composition of its Board of Directors.

The time available and the project scope and budget precluded extensive in-person field work for the consultations. Therefore, apart from a 3-day site visit to AMSA at Newcastle, NSW to access documents, observe processes and facilities, conduct interviews etc., contact with most other stakeholders occurred online or by telephone. Unlike some previous research conducted in the Men's Shed context, the focus of this project was AMSA itself, the effectiveness of its operations in meeting the contractual obligations and its sustainability. It was not, for example, an assessment of the Men's Shed Movement, or of the health of Shedders, or of the impact of AMSA activities on men's health. It is also important to note that individual Sheds are separate legal entities with their own management. AMSA has no authority over local Sheds, except in applying the terms and conditions of AMSA membership or the Government's policies related to the NSDP grants. AMSA's role is to support and facilitate. It offers services and resources, which may or may not be used by Sheds.

Communication about the project was email based, using the AMSA Membership contact list, from the AMSA member database. We note that a limitation of the study is that it predominantly used online surveys and therefore, in terms of use of communication technology, this is may not be a fully representative sample of Shedders. Other demographics presented below indicate that, in spite of limited time and resources to reach all Sheds and their members, the sample of respondents is representative in terms of jurisdictional spread, shed size, location, period of operation and membership demographics.<sup>2</sup>

### Method (in brief)

The methods to be used in the evaluation had been stipulated in the brief to the evaluators. These were:

- a business process review
- an IT systems review
- a survey of AMSA shed members (note: 4 surveys eventuated)
- a review of AMSA documentation and reports
- an analysis of financial data, and
- interviews with key stakeholders.<sup>3</sup>

The brief therefore called for a mixed methods approach that extended beyond program evaluation and included aspects of technical assessment, process review, quality assessment and audit.

The major part of the research consisted of four online surveys.<sup>4</sup> A series of questions related to Evaluation Questions 1 and 4 were posed to Shed **Office Holders** (that is the representative of a Shed

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for detailed demographics.

<sup>3</sup> Stakeholders were defined as: AMSA Members, the Department of Health, AMSA Board members and staff. Other men's shed organisations, sheds operating independently and men in the wider community, were not included in the evaluation as they are not provided with services under the funding agreement. An exception was made in the case of questions related to the NSDP, since non-AMSA Sheds are eligible to apply for NSDP funding. The Project Steering Committee later added an additional category of stakeholders: AMSA Health Partners because funding agreements also have required AMSA to develop partnership programs with men's health services providers. (See Appendix 2).

that is an AMSA Member) and to Shed **Members** (individuals who are Sheddors) in different survey formats. Each AMSA Member Shed could submit one survey for their Shed. Office Holders were assumed to have direct contact with AMSA and were asked more specific questions about AMSA services. Shed members were assumed to have less direct contact with AMSA and were asked more general questions about their needs, their experience of AMSA resources and whether their needs are met. Telephone interviews<sup>5</sup> were available as an alternative as were group telephone interviews with small groups of Sheddors.<sup>6</sup> Seven people chose to send completed pen and paper surveys.

## Main messages

### *Communicating with and providing services to AMSA members*

- AMSA Members said that the resources and activities provided by AMSA are meeting their needs. They consider them appropriate and useful.
- AMSA Members find the service provided by AMSA staff is prompt, efficient and responsive.
- While individuals may have access to digital technologies outside the Shed, the communication facilities inside Sheds vary and it possible that only 20% of Sheds have technical capacity to access online/digitalised services and resources. This has implications for planning future services.
- Sheddors prefer to receive information through personal communication at the Shed or printed materials. Internet based communication is less favoured by the Sheddors.

### *Health and wellbeing activities*

- The main reasons that men join a Shed are to make new friends and to give back to the community. Members say that joining a Men's Shed is meeting these needs. This supports the premise of the National Male Health Policy, which seeks to alleviate social isolation through supporting and sustaining Men's Sheds.
- The health improvement activities supported by AMSA are well received and useful to Sheddors, especially the 'Spanner in the Works?' program. The frequency and type of local health activities is influenced by local shed priorities.
- Keeping mentally healthy is the top health priority of Sheddors - followed by keeping physically healthy, knowing where to seek help if needed and knowing the warning signs of ill health. An increased focus by AMSA on supporting mental health activities may be required in order to meet the needs of members.
- Sheds expressed a preference for more regional/zone collaborative health-related events; for more inter-Shed collaboration and cooperation; and for more on-site presence from AMSA.

### *Supporting the sustainability of sheds*

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<sup>4</sup> There were two types of survey (Shed Office Holders and Shed Members) and these were circulated in two Rounds, with Round 2 being longer and more detailed in exploring reasons for responses. Arguably, however, these more detailed surveys did not yield much additional data, since a proportion of respondents indicated irritation at the detailed/repetitive level of questions and gave angry or humorous answers. Nevertheless, completion rates for surveys both rounds were high (41%). This may have been attributable to the opportunity to enter a prize draw to win a valuable safety saw, that had been donated by the manufacturer.

<sup>5</sup> Twenty-five telephone interviews were conducted. Data was then entered into online surveys and included in the overall data.

<sup>6</sup> Only one Shed chose to participate in a telephone focus group. Data was then entered into online surveys and included in the overall Member Survey data.

- The number of Sheds nationally has been consistent over the past three years, after a period of rapid growth. This suggests that most Sheds are sustaining themselves.
- A decreasing proportion of Sheds are applying for NSDP grant funding (<20%)<sup>7</sup> and members consistently report that their Sheds are seeking funding from more than one source. AMSA's information about available funding sources is sought and used by 74% of Sheds.
- Members are dissatisfied with and need more clarity about several aspects of the NSDP, but these are policy issues rather than administrative and require Departmental involvement.
- More than half the Sheds reported independently organising their own, additional health-related activities, often using resources developed by AMSA.
- Shed safety advice, shed management advice, insurance advice and insurance policies are the most commonly used AMSA management resources of member Sheds.
- AMSA is run efficiently and within budget, but without diversification of income sources, AMSA itself could not sustain the same levels of service provision if government funding were to cease.

#### *Opportunities to increase AMSA's capability and sustainability*

- Proposed improvements to AMSA's IT systems and capability pose both an opportunity and a threat.
 

Technology upgrades and online grant applications will deliver greater efficiencies and, by simplifying most administrative processes, potentially facilitate increased presence of staff in the field. This will address Members' needs for more local contact with AMSA. It also provides the opportunity to cross train all staff and review roles and ways of working.

If not resourced and implemented appropriately (and maintaining legacy systems for those Sheds with low technical capacity), the move to digitalisation poses a threat to AMSA's reputation for service delivery.
- AMSA's strong reputation and successful track record in collaboration with its Health Partners provide an opportunity for joint approaches to funding bodies and other opportunities for targeted activities in men's health.
- Recent governance changes provide the opportunity to benefit from a skills-based Board that will strategically identify opportunities for income diversification, marketing and partnerships to improve AMSA's financial viability.

#### **Recommendations**

1. Increase communication and the presence of AMSA with local Sheds and individual Sheddors.
2. Prioritise regional or zone based activities and facilitate greater information sharing and collaboration between Sheds.
3. Increase the focus on AMSA mental health-related activities, including through new health partnerships, to better address the Sheddors' top health priority.
4. In collaboration with the Department of Health, conduct a complete review of the NSDP, with a focus on policy and starting with clarification of the NSDP objectives and how best to measure the outcomes/benefits of the grants program.

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<sup>7</sup> This decrease may be due to perceived ineligibility of a Shed, but the figure is included to indicate sustainability in the absence of NSDP funding.

5. Prepare implementation plans and allocate adequate resources to deal with the convergence of three major changes in AMSA: a new skills-based Board and new roles for State bodies, new technologies to support operations and new ways of working within the AMSA team.

Detailed recommendations for each part of the evaluation have also been included within in each sub-section of the report.<sup>8</sup> A **full list of recommendations** is included in **Attachment 1** of this Summary Report.

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## Demographics

### Men's Sheds

Shed Office Holders' surveys were viewed by 833 people. Of these, 567 commenced a survey and 232 completed all the survey, representing a completion rate of 41%. All responses (whether the AMSA member completed all or only part of the survey) have been reported in the results.

Respondents to the Office Holders' surveys represented Men's Sheds from all jurisdictions in proportions that closely mirror the distribution of the whole AMSA Shed Membership by State/Territory and by type of location. The largest group of Sheds were located in rural towns (36%), followed by regional cities (20%), outer metropolitan areas of capital cities (18%), small rural/remote communities (13%), capital city metropolitan areas (13%). One Shed was from a very remote area and was an Indigenous Men's Shed.

The majority of Sheds had memberships of more than 40 men (44%) although Sheds with memberships of all sizes responded to the survey. The Sheds had been operating for 3-5 years (43%), 6-10 years (40%), 2 years or less (13%) or more than 10 years (5%).

The majority of Office Holders (50%) responding to the survey had been an office holder for 2-5 years; and 24% had been office holders for more than 5 years. The remaining respondents had been office holders for 1-2 years (13%) or less than one year (13%).

### Individual Shed members

One hundred and fifty individual Shed members participated in the research by completing an online survey or participating in a telephone interview or a small focus group (using the same survey questions). The majority of Sheddors (72%) had been members of a Shed for more than 3 years. Most of the Sheddors (59%) were in the 66-75 years' age group. Most of them spoke English at home.<sup>9</sup> One Sheddor identified as being a Torres Strait Islander.

### Reasons for joining

The three most common reasons why *Sheds joined AMSA* were: assistance in setting up a Men's Shed (33%); advice on insurance (32%); and resources (30%).

The most common reasons why *men joined a Shed* were: to meet new friends (24%) and to give back to the community (22%). These findings support those of a 2013 study of Men's Sheds.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> With the exception of Part 3.

<sup>9</sup> Other languages were: Dutch (n=2), German (n=2); Polish (n=1) Tagalog (n=1); Indonesian & Mandarin (n=1). Other respondents said "Australian".

<sup>10</sup> Flood, P. & Blair, S. (2013). *Men's Sheds in Australia: Effects on Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing*. BeyondBlue /Ultrafeed/ LaTrobe University.

## Communication facilities

To inform answers to the questions of appropriate and effective service provision from AMSA, preliminary survey questions aimed to identify (for both Sheds and Shedders) the availability of and capacity to use communication technologies. This was identified as a priority due to the stated Departmental policy of shifting towards greater use of online platforms.

### How best to communicate with Sheds and Shedders

The surveys asked Office Holders about communication facilities at their Sheds. Twenty per cent of Office Holders said that their Sheds had one or more of these technologies at the Shed: internet access, a computer, a telephone, a printer, a scanner. This figure of 20% of Sheds with internet/computer facilities is higher than the figure reported by individual Shed members (where, in separate surveys 13% of Shedders said they had internet access at their Shed). Twenty-one Sheds said they had none of these facilities (i.e. no telephone or other communication technology at the Shed).

Office Holders said that their Members get information about their Shed and local Shed activities through word of mouth (23%), Shed meetings (22%), hard copy materials (18%), the internet (16%), promotional events at the Shed (11%) and local newspapers (9%).

Most Shedders (90%+) said they used either a computer or a smart phone or both and most (61%) said that they had internet access at home. The Shedders said that the best way to for AMSA to get information to them is via the Shed coordinator (28%) or Shed meetings (26%) or printed materials (19%). Using the AMSA website or a local shed website were less favoured options (16% and 11%).

## Findings

### Does AMSA provide appropriate, effective and efficient support to men's sheds across Australia?

Based on the Shed's reason for joining AMSA, 89% of Office Holders felt that AMSA has met their Shed's needs well or very well. Ninety-six percent of those who had contacted AMSA for assistance rated the contact as helpful or very helpful: prompt, courteous, responsive and meeting their needs. Sixty-five percent of respondents reported that AMSA *provides resources and support that is appropriate for their local population groups* either well or very well (25% neutral; 9% negative).<sup>11</sup>

Most Sheds had used the *Management Resources* provided by AMSA: shed safety information and advice, the AMSA Handbook, insurance policies, information on starting and running a Men's Shed, insurance information, the Shed Locator, information about legal obligations and information on funding sources – and 99% of Office Holders rated them useful or very useful. The areas for improvement were identified as: improving the SMART resource;<sup>12</sup> more insurance; health and safety guidelines; and financial management resources.

Shedders indicated that their Sheds were well managed (90%), welcoming to men of all backgrounds (95%), safe (90+%); and that their Sheds seek funding from different sources (95%), provide information on activities and events (93%), provide health information (88%) and organise health-related activities (78%).

Most Sheds reported organising *AMSA Health Improvement Activities* and overall 86% of Sheds found the activities useful or very useful. Individual Shedders also reported participating in these activities and 90+% rated the activities as useful. In addition, most Sheds organise local health improvement activities. Sheds identified the following areas for additional or improved health-related activities: *preventive*

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<sup>11</sup> Negative comments related to geographic location (e.g. AMSA a national body).

<sup>12</sup> For this computer-based management resource, the maintenance contract had lapsed and upgrades had been missed due to resource shortfalls (see IT Review).

health (healthy ageing, health screening, activity and exercise, suicide prevention, health awareness); greater AMSA presence locally (e.g. regional health events, funding of local events); and defibrillator provision and training.

AMSA online health resources, especially ‘Spanner in the Works?’ had been accessed (67% of Sheds) in the past 12 months. The Indigenous Men’s Health Manual was the least accessed resource<sup>13</sup> (7% of Sheds). The usefulness of each of the AMSA online health resources, was consistently between 93% and 100%. Similarly, (although in fewer numbers) Shedders reported accessing ‘Spanner in the Works?’ and the Shed Online<sup>14</sup> and finding them useful.

Shedders identified their top 4 health information priorities and 60%+ indicated that this information is supplied by their Shed.

Shedder health information priorities		Yes, information supplied by Shed
1. Keeping mentally healthy.	95%	68%
2. Keeping physically healthy.	76%	64%
3. Where to seek help if needed.	52%	66%
4. Warning signs of poor health.	49%	59%

Some Sheds and Shedders indicated that health is not the primary focus of their Shed. Shedders were mostly satisfied with the information provided, but some made suggestions about how to meet Shedders’ needs as follows: *communication* (seek local input, communicate to all Shedders directly, inform the public about Sheds, improve the website); provide more *funding* and resources for Sheds; assist with local Shed *governance*; increase *cooperation* and interaction between Sheds; have fewer *rules*.

**AMSA’s Health Partners** (health-related agencies and other government bodies with an interest in the health of men) uniformly reported AMSA’s support and involvement in partnership activities as effective, efficient, responsive. The agencies found AMSA proactive and easy to work with and intend to continue their partnerships and would recommend AMSA as a potential partner to any groups interested in supporting men’s health.<sup>15</sup>

### Conclusion

The majority of AMSA Members are satisfied or very satisfied that the services provided by AMSA are appropriate, effective and efficient.

Where improvements were suggested, these were to

- increase the amount of information/ activity provided
- increasing communication between AMSA and the sheds (including on-site presence or local representatives)
- increase communication between sheds (information sharing, learning from other sheds).

Evaluators observed a potential gap between the Shedders’ top health information priority (mental

<sup>13</sup> At the time of the project there were eight Indigenous Men’s Sheds registered with AMSA, that is 1% of the AMSA Men’s Shed membership. The sample has included two respondents who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (one respondent was a Shedder, the other was an Office Holder in an Indigenous Men’s Shed).

<sup>14</sup> Shed Online was a chat room/ men’s health information platform hosted by Beyond Blue and arising from a partnership with AMSA until its funding ceased in July 2016.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 2

health) and the information and activities available through AMSA.

The profiles of Sheds and their membership are such that, for the foreseeable future, digital services and information alone will not meet all Members' needs.

**Are AMSA's organisational structure, governance arrangements, staffing profile and skills, and training arrangements appropriate to deliver support to men's sheds?**

AMSA's constitutional arrangements are not within the scope of or governed by the Funding Agreement. However AMSA's leadership and management of the Association as a national body are relevant to AMSA's capacity to deliver its contractual obligations. The new Constitution and By-Laws (which were prepared by the legal firm Gadens<sup>16</sup> in consultation with the current Board) have been circulated to the State Associations and member sheds for consideration and response. The key areas of change are:

- Board membership and procedures
- The role of State Associations
- AMSA brand and reputation management

The reasons for changing the constitution were to '*preserve and maintain AMSA's mandate as a single national peak body which represents all AMSA Member Men's Sheds in Australia in the most appropriate governance and membership structure;*'<sup>17</sup> move from a representation-based Directorship to a predominantly skills-based Directorship; protect the brand and reputation of AMSA; and better ensure that AMSA acts as a unified national body and presents to potential funding bodies as such.

There are risks and potential benefits to the constitutional changes, with the key risk being a decline in membership numbers and the key benefits being the infusion of new external expertise into the senior management of AMSA and the reduction of factional/territorial issues that have distracted the Board from strategic planning and sustainability matters.

In terms of both Board members and staff, training has been a relatively low priority, or has been provided in one-off or targeted ways to address immediate needs. None of these issues are uncommon in the Not for Profit (NFP) sector. AMSA staff are very experienced in the Men's Shed Movement, work efficiently (albeit with old technology) and have developed considerable expertise in their respective areas of responsibility. AMSA has usually functioned with a core of four full-time staff, although this has recently increased. The internal organisation of AMSA is a relatively flat structure, but people tend to work in a siloed way, with considerable informal exchange of information. Key functions tend to be performed by a single staff member who is responsible for that portfolio. The only concern expressed by AMSA's Health Partners was related to the small staff numbers and the internal allocation of work portfolios. Board members also expressed concern about the small staff size and potential burn out. Internal informants commonly identified the need for increased resources, skills and capacity in accounting and business management, and in marketing and communications, which would also ease the workload for existing staff.

**Conclusion**

Major constitutional changes are likely impact positively on the skills and effectiveness of the Board.

The internal AMSA organisational structure and ways of working will need to change to improve capacity and sustainability to meet future demand.

<sup>16</sup> www.gadens.com.

<sup>17</sup> Explanatory Memorandum to membership about changes to Constitution, June 2016.

The internal governance policies around succession planning need to be expanded and updated.

Learning and sharing information within the team will be the key priority to implement change and support future activity.

The gap in accounting and business management capacity has recently been addressed, but the gap in marketing and communications skills will need to be addressed to meet Members' needs.

### **Is AMSA's current operating model financially viable and sustainable?**

AMSA's audited financial statements over the past three years indicate that reliance on government funding has been as high as 87% (2013), but decreased in 2014 and 2015 to a low of 64% as alternative sources of income (such as membership fees, commission on insurance policies) became available to AMSA. Recent additional funding from the Department of Health (February 2016) of \$220,000 per annum until 2018-19 will again increase the proportion of income from government, therefore increasing AMSA's reliance on one source of funding and its vulnerability to loss of that income stream.

AMSA has operated within budget and achieved surpluses over the three financial years examined. It is financially viable in terms of delivering the current three-year funding agreement, based on the Department of Finance assessment guidelines.

While AMSA Members' views on membership fees are positive (89% felt the fees are appropriate and reasonable), there are different views within the AMSA management about the sustainability of the current membership fee levels and model. Overall, there is little appetite among the current Board for increasing fees. The other key source of income is a small commission on AMSA insurance policies (the amount of which is limited by ASIC regulations for group insurance).

AMSA's identity as an 'association' and a facilitator and supporter, rather than a governing body or a peak body, has meant that donations and sponsorships achieved at the national level have often been passed on to the Member Sheds and have not contributed to the running costs of AMSA itself. The informants were aware of the need to diversify and increase AMSA's income sources if it is to remain viable without government funding. The move to a skills-based Board is intended to assist the identification of new strategies and approaches to revenue raising and promotion of AMSA, thereby enhancing its financial viability and sustainability.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear, and internal stakeholders are aware, that without ongoing government funding AMSA would not be able to sustain its operations at the current level.

AMSA has operated economically and within budget and has managed to accrue surpluses, but would not independently be able to deliver the same number and type of services into the future without increasing its revenue and identifying alternative sources of income.

It is in a sound financial position to fulfill its current contractual arrangements (2016-19).

### **Are AMSA's business processes, including the administration of the National Shed Development Programme (NSDP), effective and efficient?**

#### *The National Shed Development Programme (NSDP)*

It is important to note that AMSA 'administers' and does not 'manage' the NSDP process. It is contracted, under the funding agreement, to execute the policy decisions of the Department of Health. The NSDP has been delivered, essentially, by one staff member. Its administration is heavily reliant on goodwill, pro bono contributions and unpaid overtime. Changes to evaluation of applications

procedures have added additional tasks to the administration of the program (e.g. an offer to provide individual feedback to successful and unsuccessful applicants should they request it).

Survey results show that Men's Sheds are satisfied or very satisfied with AMSA's administration of the NSDP. The evaluators found that, given AMSA's size and resources it is managing the program well. Where the feedback from Sheds was negative about AMSA, it was sometimes a case of 'shooting the messenger'. It was policy decisions (e.g. the amount of funding, eligibility for funding, the categories of funding, the schedule, the types of questions on application forms) that drew complaints and these are not within AMSA's authority to change.

There are whole-of-program issues that should be resolved before any additional operational level change is introduced in the AMSA administration of the NSDP. These start with clarifying the overall objectives of the grants program. The two most significant quality issues are frequent change at the policy level (lack of stability) and short time frames. Other operational quality issues cascade from these factors.

Preparatory work has commenced to introduce an online application system for the NSDP. Based on feedback from surveys and interviews, any such introduction, while eventually leading to improved ease of application and greater efficiency, would not meet the needs of all members and the legacy system of paper applications will need to remain available to Sheds, at least for a defined period. Any such major change would require more, not fewer, resources in its introduction.

### *Business Processes*

Through document review, stakeholder interviews and observations the Evaluators found that:

AMSA is a small not for profit that has successfully managed its operations and service delivery within budget and to the satisfaction of its membership. Regulatory and contractual requirements have been met, although the government funding body has concerns with how contractual requirements are met (meaning the administrative processes and technology used).

The supporting IT systems have been inefficient, but are being replaced. This opens opportunity for changes to AMSA's ways of working. The staffing structure is siloed and there is limited capacity to deputise or back up other team members who tend to work in isolation, covering a whole area of responsibility (all tasks - low and high complexity).

Greater clarity in communication about contractual reporting requirements has commenced between the Department and AMSA and will greatly benefit the working relationship.

### **Conclusion**

There has been frequent change in NSDP policy, which has worked against efficient program delivery.

The schedule does not allow for evaluation and review or the measuring of the outcomes of the grants (i.e. the benefits to Sheds arising from using the grants).

The working arrangements and delegation of authority between the Department and AMSA are preventing efficiency gains.

The current arrangements within the AMSA are not sustainable into the medium term without some change to operational procedures, resource allocation and staff training, especially considering the proposed changes to technology infrastructure.

**Are AMSA's IT systems (website Shed Locator, membership database, accounting system and NSDP grants) able to achieve interoperability?**

The IT systems were independently reviewed by Mansol.<sup>18</sup> The current server and client infrastructure and maintenance arrangements were found to be of a high standard and serviced at a very competitive rate.

There are three elements to the planned upgrading of the existing AMSA IT systems. First, upgrading the SMART application to a web based application will address the concerns expressed by Sheds in the survey. It will provide both a mechanism for updating SMART functionality in the future and will remove the need for member sheds to do backups. Second, a planned Online Grant Manager system (supporting online submission and assessment of grant applications). Third, the replacement of the existing ACT Contact Manager (membership database) with a web based Client Relationship Management (CRM) system that will provide a connection between the CRM and shed website for common data such as member shed details, usernames and passwords.

The web based SMART application and the planned Online Grant Manager will greatly reduce the double handling of member and contact data. The new CRM will eliminate a current five-step process to update member details across the currently separate IT systems. Providing a single source of data for member details such as login credentials will also cut down the effort required in maintaining member information. Linking to email and phone calls will also greatly increase the functionality of the CRM and provide the necessary history of contact with the member sheds.

The quotations provided to AMSA by potential suppliers of these upgrades were found to be appropriate to the identified needs of AMSA; achievable and priced competitively. Maintenance contracts for the upgrades were for a period of three years, which would cover the existing funding agreement period.

The IT Review provided advice to AMSA about the level of broadband required and the need to connect to the NBN before August 2017, when the current copper-based service to the area where the AMSA is located will be discontinued. The review also recommended that AMSA maintain both the current paper based grants program and the new web based version because of the varying levels of technical resources and ability at the sheds.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Managed Solutions, a Qld-based IT company. mansol.com.au

<sup>19</sup> The extent of internet access and computer literacy across the whole Shed membership remains a 'known unknown' and the maintenance of a paper-based option for the NSDP Grants process, at least for a transition period, is recommended. This could data could be a part of annual data collection with membership renewal.

## **ATTACHMENT 1 – Full List of Recommendations**

### **Service provision to members**

1. AMSA to review its mental health activities and resources to ensure that it continues to meet the Shedders' top health priority
2. Explore new or increased partnership activity in men's mental health (including joint funding applications with partner organisations)
3. Expand the use of expos and cooperative activities between local networks of Sheds
4. Increase the local presence of AMSA, e.g. through zone representatives and/or staff involvement in regional events
5. Continue the use of multiple modes of communication to Sheds (hard copy as well as digital) to maximize the reach to all Shedders.

### **AMSA Governance**

1. Ensure that implementation plans are developed to manage the concurrent changes occurring in AMSA in 2016.
2. Ensure adequate resources are allocated to this implementation.
3. Put into action the existing draft Emergency Succession Plan, but apply it to all key roles in AMSA.
4. Use this period of change as an opportunity to review all roles with a view to improving deputation, internal training and mentoring.
5. Consider directing any savings from cessation of accounting outsourcing and from revised Board meeting processes towards building internal marketing and communication capacity.
6. Prioritise the review of all internal plans (business, marketing, communications, etc.) to reflect and capitalise on the changes occurring in AMSA.

### **National Shed Development Programme (NSDP)**

1. Hold discussions between the funder and the provider to clarify the overarching purpose of the NSDP, the appropriate goals in terms of program outcomes and consequent measures of success.
2. A collaborative approach to addressing whole-of-program issues to achieve stability in the NSDP and a realistic time frame that will support quality service delivery.
3. A collaborative approach to developing an implementation plan for new online NSDP application processing, while maintaining the legacy system over an agreed period to ensure equity of access for Men's Sheds.

4. Consider shifting the participation of senior departmental and government stakeholders from the outputs phase (distribution of funds) to the outcomes phase (acquittal process).
5. Clear written delegations from the Department to AMSA to facilitate prompt minor process change and service improvement without risk to the program.
6. Use the opportunity of implementing a new online system to develop operational guidelines and to equip other AMSA staff to provide back up for the NSDP.
7. Use the anticipated benefits of the new online system to allocate more resources to NSDP promotion and quality assurance.

### **AMSA Business Processes**

1. Collaborate with the Department to develop agreed, simplified reporting requirements and templates to replace the previous Departmental reporting requirements.
2. Work with the contracted IT suppliers to develop implementation plans for the transition to the new, inter-operative IT systems and concurrently identify minimal core IT proficiency and business proficiency for all staff members to utilise the new IT systems.
3. Develop and maintain simple operational manuals for all new business processes.
4. Identify separate processes that can be combined in the future and maximise opportunities to collect data from annual processes.
5. Identify areas where IT upgrades and simpler reporting requirements will save resources and develop plans to transfer these resources to deliver more field work in Sheds.

### **AMSA IT Systems**

1. Proceed with the proposed upgrades to infrastructure and software, based on the quotations received.
2. Maintain both the current paper-based version of the Grants Programme as well as the proposed new online system, at least for a transition period.
3. Ensure that AMSA connects to a 12MB/1MB NBN service before 11 August 2017.