



Australian Men's Shed Association
SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA)

A Chronological History

Registration Dates (Source ASIC)

Australian Men's Shed Association Inc	22/01/2007	NSW Fair Trading
Victorian Men's Shed Association Inc	24/09/2007	Consumer Affairs Victoria
New South Wales Men's Shed Association Inc	17/11/2008	NSW Fair Trading
Queensland Men's Shed Association Inc	18/06/2009	Office of Fair Trading QLD
Tasmanian Men's Shed Association Inc	6/07/2009	Department of Justice TAS
Western Australian Men's Shed Association	7/07/2010	Department of Commerce WA
South Australian Men's Shed (SAMSA) Inc	16/08/2013	Office of Consumer and Business Affairs SA

Introduction

Men's Sheds had developed, often quite spontaneously, in many different areas of Australia over a number of years before AMSA was created.

These notes are not intended to be a history of how Men's Sheds developed but are purely limited to the events involved in the creation and development of AMSA.

Whilst these developments were going on, a great deal of other extremely useful and important work was being done in the development of the Sheds themselves, and State Associations, by people who were not directly involved in AMSA, but whose work greatly assisted the growth of the National Association.

One of the early Sheds was the Lane Cove Community Men's Shed that opened on the 8th December 1998. After a few months, the Shed sponsors (North Sydney Region of UnitingCare Ageing) recruited Ruth Van Herk as Coordinator. Because at that time there was little knowledge of Men's Sheds, it quickly started receiving queries about how Sheds operate, how to start one and, because they were keen to help and pass on information, Lane Cove soon became a resource centre for new Sheds. The networking and contacting was carried out by Ruth and the technical and practical experience provided by Ted Donnelly (an original founder member of the Shed).

2005

Estimated 25 sheds operating in South East Australia

June to October 2005

Development of Men's Sheds Discussion Forum Website.

From the early work in developing new Sheds it was obvious that there was a need to have a convenient way of exchanging information. Ted Donnelly (with the aid of several library books) produced a website with the aim of developing it as a communications hub where Sheds could share ideas on projects, training, materials, local events etc. It was basically a discussion forum but also included details of existing Sheds. The discussion forum was not widely used but the Shed details section became very important and formed the basis for the subsequent AMSA database.

The costs involved in this development were covered by UnitingCare Ageing (North Sydney Region) and, at the 2005 Lakes Entrance Conference, the website was introduced and made available to any Shed that wished to use it.

November 2005

Lakes Entrance Conference.

Sheds had been developing in a number of States and there was a strong grouping in Victoria. Gary Green from the Orbost Men's Shed organised a Conference to bring the Sheds together, explain some of the research that was going and look at some of the health advantages that were already becoming apparent in Men's Sheds.

When news of the Conference circulated, representatives from Sheds all over the country signed up producing a very vigorous and inspiring Conference and the 'Shedders' began to realise that there were a lot of other Sheds around.

In the networking conversations outside the formal presentations suggestions were made that we should all join together to form an Association. However, it was not clear how the Association would work or what it would do and so, even though the seeds had been sown, no action was taken on forming a national Association. However, the idea was taken up by the Victorian Sheds who eventually set up a State Association in August 2007.

January 2007

Registration of 'Australian Men's Shed Association' (AMSA)

After the 1st National conference at Lakes Entrance, the 2nd National conference was allocated to the Lane Cove Community Men's Shed and was to be held at Manly in September 2007. The Shed concept had been growing rapidly and by the time of the 2007 Conference the website database listed 214 Sheds, although this number is questionable as to the number of sheds that were actually operational.

There were also a significant number of other groups who, for a variety of reasons, were not listed. About 40% of these Sheds were still in the Researching, Planning or Starting up stages and all were looking for information and advice. Because there was no central reference source a great deal of duplication and 'wheel re-invention' was occurring.

In addition, there was now a lot of interest by outside bodies such as Government Departments, Charitable and Welfare organisations, Men's Health groups and, of course, the Media. This interest was increasing rapidly because of the publicity for the forthcoming Conference in September.

These factors had been building up for a while but a major problem that triggered the need for an Association was the influence of a competitive organisation that claimed to be the peak body for Men's Sheds and to be the representative organisation throughout Australia.

This was having a detrimental effect on the planning of the Conference because many people who did not approve of this other organisation were under the mistaken impression that the Conference organisers were part of this company. It was also creating confusion among the media and other organisations because, with their skilful marketing, they were gaining the PR advantage utilizing existing work and rebranding it as theirs.

It became important, therefore, that we became a separate defined entity and the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) was registered as a NSW Incorporated Association in January 2007.

This enabled the Conference committee to put out a Disclaimer Notice stating that there was no relationship between the two organisations.

AMSA was incorporated as a NSW State Association because this was much cheaper and simpler than setting up a National Association under the traditional modelling as a Company Limited by Guarantee with the ASIC.

Although it was a State registered Association, the rules permitted that committee members from other States could be included and therefore AMSA had the functionality of a National organisation, could get organised to help other groups, to promote our idea of Independent Community Men's Sheds throughout Australia and to source adequate funding.

January to April 2007 Establishment of Working Group

When the Incorporation Certificate was obtained, Ted Donnelly contacted a number of people who were well known for their experience and long term interest in Men's Sheds and invited them to form an 'ad hoc' working group to get the Association going. To ensure a national interest, the working group covered most States where the Shed idea was active.

The members of the initial workgroup were:

- Gary Green (VIC),
- Neil Wakeman (VIC),
- John Waters (TAS),
- Bill Johnstone (WA),
- Keith Bettany (SA),
- Stuart Holmes (NSW) and
- Ted Donnelly (NSW).

No funds were available for meetings and contact was almost entirely through emails and phone calls at personal expense.

Because the Conference Committee was so heavily involved with Men's Sheds, many of the points that were relevant to the future AMSA came from their suggestions and particularly the discussions between Ted Donnelly and Ruth van Herk. Ruth, as the sponsors' representative, was heavily involved with the Conference and concentrated on that, whilst Ted took on the development of AMSA.

The Aims of the Association were drawn up, subsequently approved by the workgroup, and are still the basic aims for AMSA.

Aims of the Association

- To maintain communications between 'Sheds'
- To publicise and promote the Men's shed concept
- To represent Men's Sheds to Governments Funding sources etc.
- To provide start up information, documentation and assistance.
- To assist in training, OH&S, funding and insurance advice.
- To act as a neutral body where overall collective decisions are required regarding the Association.
- The Association will not have any direct control or responsibility for any individual 'Shed'.

In April, all the Sheds on the website were contacted and the Aims of AMSA were explained to assess the level of interest. There was a very favourable and positive response to setting up the Association.

June 2007

CatholicCare Newcastle (Centacare) and the Shed at Windale published the results of the first shed survey.

Question 4 of the survey asked 'What are the main operations/activities of your facility?' This was an open answer question and was aimed at identifying the risks associated with sheds as to assist in the development of a group insurance scheme.

Surprisingly the survey showed that 77.4% of sheds answered in relation to Men's Health/ companionship as the main activity.

This triggered a new thought process as a possible source of funding and also attracted the attention of Professor John MacDonald from the University of Western Sydney who was campaigning for the development of a National Male Health Policy that would focus on social health as well as physical.

John would later become a Patron of the AMSA.

May to July 2007

An early task was to arrange an election for Committee members. It was proposed that each Shed could vote for their State representatives and that the numbers of Committee members per State should be pro rata to the number of Sheds in the State.

Nominations for candidates were requested by 1st August so that the Sheds who could not attend the Conference could send in their votes in advance. The election of the Committee would take place at the Conference in September.

However, it became clear that a large number of Sheds were still in the planning or early start up stages and there had not been much, or any, contact with other Sheds. They, therefore, had little knowledge of people that they may be asked to vote for and this made a meaningful and validated vote difficult.

In July, therefore, it was suggested that the existing working group be approved as the Interim Committee for a year.

All of the Sheds who expressed an opinion were in favour of this action and this was the proposal to be voted on at the Conference.

The Interim Committee had, as a major aim, the setting up of elections in 12 months and helping to develop regional groups of Sheds to improve personal knowledge of who they might nominate as their representatives for future Committees.

August 2007

As AMSA had not received any funding at this point all the communications were through Ted's home computer and the free use of the telephone at Lane Cove Shed.

In August, however, we received our first donation from a small engineering company based in Lane Cove (Chamberlain Australia Pty Ltd) and we obtained a Government grant for \$1,500. This enabled us to cover the 'one off' set up costs of a computer, printer, telephone, stationery etc and to establish a direct AMSA e-mail link.

September 2007 Release of Manual on 'Setting up a Men's Shed'

A Manual on 'Setting up a Men's Shed' had been gradually developed by Ruth and Ted at Lane Cove over a long period of time. After some degree of involvement with the start-up of about 60 new sheds it was clear that the same questions and problems were occurring with most sheds and, using their experience of helping these developments, the manual was developed. This covered all the aspects that usually crop up and also included standard administrative and OH&S forms together with signs for the machines and workshop.

In September 2007 the Manual was finalised ready for release at the Manly Conference. The Shed sponsors (North Sydney Region of UnitingCare Ageing) covered the costs of the first printing and offered all sales proceeds to go to AMSA.

12-14 Sept 2007 National Men's Shed Conference at Manly

This was the second National Men's Shed Conference and was organised by the Lane Cove Community Men's Shed together with their sponsors Uniting Care Ageing (North Sydney region). However, by the time of the Conference, AMSA had been established and it was agreed that they should be regarded as a co-organiser making it the first AMSA National Conference.

The event proved to be very successful and, whereas the Lakes Entrance Conference showed Shed members that they were not alone and that other Sheds existed, at the

Manly Conference, because of a heavy publicity campaign, we showed the world outside that Men's Sheds existed.

During the key opening address Professor Barry Golding, who later became a Patron of AMSA, said the infamous word that went on to become the motto for the Association and the sentiment of all sheds *“Men don't talk face to face they talk shoulder to shoulder”*

Although Barry has always maintained that he did not pen the phrase and that he had actually heard it said by a Conference delegate at a function the evening before, Barry has been credited with originating the statement.

First AMSA meeting

On 13 September 2007, during the Conference, a meeting was held to explain the basic aims and objectives of AMSA and to formally establish the Association by a vote of national representatives.

This inaugural meeting consisted of 60 people representing 28 Sheds from all around Australia.

The following motion was carried unanimously:-

“That this meeting of representatives of active Men's Sheds from around Australia move to form the Australian Men's Shed Association Inc.”

The meeting also agreed that the Interim Committee should remain in place for another 12 months and an election for a National Executive should be established by October 2008.

Whilst Ted Donnelly had concentrated on developing AMSA, other members of the committee had been establishing Associations in their own States (Gary Green in Victoria, John Waters in Tasmania and Bill Johnstone in WA.).

Victoria had already had three meetings and was well on the way to Incorporation but wanted to link in with AMSA. It was agreed that there was no problem with this and in fact there were merits in having State Branches to the National organisation.

It was explained that AMSA aimed to be a communications hub where Sheds could share ideas on projects, training, materials, local events, committee business and other relevant information.

Whilst this would partly be via the website it was obvious that a regular newsletter was required and David Helmers from the Windale Shed offered to organise this using their existing facility. David also offered to assist the working committee for the remaining 6 months left on his Employment Contract with CatholicCare utilizing his skills from his previous role in managing a large Association.

October 2007

First AMSA Newsletter produced.

The first edition of the AMSA Newsletter was produced and sent out to all Sheds on the website and also to a wide range of other interested groups including Sponsors, Councils, Government agencies, Health authorities and the media.

The Newsletter has continued to be published and copies are archived on the AMSA website.

December 2007

2009 National Men's Sheds Conference

The AMSA Committee confirmed that the 2009 National Men's Sheds Conference would be held in Tasmania.

January - July 2008

During this period the administration of records, database, website, printing and sending out Manuals and general queries was being carried out by Ted Donnelly working from his home.

The Manual proved to be extremely successful and, in addition to the 150 that were sold at the Conference, an additional 280 were distributed during this period throughout Australia and overseas.

A number of organisations were approached for funding but the interest that had been shown before the Manly Conference did not follow through. As a result of this lack of funds no Committee meetings were held during this period.

A Constitution was drafted to replace the Model Rules that were accepted for the original Incorporation but because the election details had not been resolved it could not be finalised.

David had discussions with Insurance companies and quotes obtained for a Group Public Liability Insurance Scheme to reduce expenses but it proved difficult to get the numbers of interested sheds and this did not progress until late 2008/ early 2009.

To this point all the administration and background work had been voluntary but it became clear that if AMSA was to progress quickly and efficiently then staff would have to be employed.

July 2008

Funding obtained for Executive Officer.

The decision at the Manly Conference that the Interim Committee should set up a suitable structure, organise elections and hand over a functioning Association to the newly elected Committee proved to be very difficult because the Committee members were all heavily involved in other activities.

In addition, AMSA did not have any money to enable people to get together to discuss and carry out this plan and it was also very clear that AMSA could not develop using only voluntary help.

For an Association of this complexity, which was growing so rapidly (239 Sheds on the website by this stage), to progress its work, staff would have to be employed.

In July 2008 an opportunity to do this occurred.

Over the previous four years Centacare in Newcastle had received funds from several Federal Government grants to set up Men's Sheds in their area and they employed David Helmers to develop the 'Shed @ Windale'. This program had been successful and Windale had become a fully sustainable men's shed. David's brief was then extended to setting up or assisting other Sheds in the area and this subsequently developed into the 'Hunter Valley Cluster Group'.

In July 2008 the newly elected government had rolled over the Windale funding for another 12 months and Centacare decided that these developments had reached a satisfactory status and, in consultation with the funding body, offered to widen the brief and use part of the funding to cover the employment expenses for David for a year to help in properly establishing AMSA. This offer was unanimously accepted by the Interim Committee and David joined AMSA as Executive Officer on 1st August 2008.

10-11 November 2008 Canberra – Committee Planning Meeting

Members of the AMSA Working Committee from Victoria, NSW, Tasmania & Queensland met in Canberra for a two day forum to discuss the progress of the Association. Because of cost restraints this was the first meeting that had been held since the Manly Conference and the aim was to plan future strategy and prepare a presentation for the Federal Government.

A draft Constitution was discussed and a major point that required clarification was the legal structure of AMSA.

When AMSA was established it had to be 'Incorporated' and the obvious and cheapest way to do this was to set up an 'Association' registered as such the NSW Department of Fair Trading.

This structure specifies the number of Office Bearers and Committee members and inevitably leads to a large bureaucratic structure. Organizing this on a National basis had proved difficult.

Advice was sought from a number of legal sources and they recommended that AMSA, being a national body, should be set up as a 'Not for Profit Company Limited by Guarantee' and not as an Association.

Initially this did not seem to agree with the aims of Shedders but further investigation clarified that this was a way to use the less bureaucratic structure of a company and was different to a conventional Trading Company that owned capital and earned and distributed profits/dividends.

This process was not completed until July 2010 when AMSA had received its first Commonwealth Government contract and AMSA was given special dispensation from ASIC to replace the words 'Limited by Guarantee' with 'Association' on the basis of the organisation having a democratic process in place for the election of Office Bearers.

Guarantee Companies are very widespread and this is the structure used by clubs, sports' associations (Cricket Australia), worker's cooperatives, Industry and Trade Associations, Non Government organizations (NGOs) and charities (Oxfam). Guarantee Companies do not have share capital and, in the case of AMSA, the shareholders would be the State Associations who would hold one share per State. They would appoint their representatives to the AMSA Board of Directors.

The meeting gave approval to convert AMSA to the simpler company structure and the Constitution was modified to permit this change.

Following the meeting, three AMSA delegates met with senior staff at the offices of the Federal Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA). The rationale was to introduce AMSA and explain our future plans with the aim of seeking future funding from various government agencies.

January 2009

AMSA office and 1300 number functional

AMSA secured the office at 20 Lake Street Windale at the very reasonable rate of \$3500 per year, after the Windale Community Group Inc vacated the facility.

At the same time, David had also been seconded to work on the 2008 World Youth Day for the Maitland Newcastle Catholic Diocese. On completion of this, he secured the 1300 number that was used for WYD and had it transferred to AMSA.

This new dedicated 1300 telephone number greatly increased the quantity of enquiries and calls from Shed members.

As part of this development a new database managing software called 'ACT' was installed and a grant of \$33,000 was allocated by the NSW Government through the local State Member for Charlestown, Matthew Morris.

These funds were for the installation of a new server and associated software and travel expenses associated with the establishment of AMSA.

It must also be noted that these funds paid for Committee members to attend meetings and for David to travel throughout 2009/2010 to meetings assisting the formation of new State Associations.

19 March 2009

Male Health Policy Roundtable Canberra

At the invitation of the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, David attended the Round Table discussion representing AMSA. This, and the following Community Consultation processes, had a great impact on the policy and in securing AMSA funding in 2010. David attended several of the Community Forums with representatives from local sheds making up a large percentage of the delegates in attendance.

This also marked the first formal recognition by government of Men's Sheds in relation to preventative health.

March 2009

Senate Hearing into Male Health

In March 2009 a Senate Select Committee was established and invited submissions.

AMSA sent a request out to all of the current members requesting their support and input to the submission. Ted and David prepared the 28 page Submission (Summary below)

Senate Committees 'Terms of Reference'

General issues related to the availability and effectiveness of education, supports and services for men's health, including but not limited to:

- level of Commonwealth, state and other funding addressing men's health, particularly prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and depression,
- adequacy of existing education and awareness campaigns regarding men's health for both men and the wider community,
- prevailing attitudes of men towards their own health and sense of wellbeing and how these are affecting men's health in general, and
- extent, funding and adequacy for treatment services and general support programs for men's health in metropolitan, rural, regional and remote areas.

Summary

Men require a different environment to women in which to talk out their problems and issues with fellow men. Men feel more comfortable talking about such issues while working with their "mates".

In the past decade a wide range of Community-based Men's Sheds has sprung up each with its own unique identity and purpose. Activities within Sheds are many and various and the membership is similarly diverse. Men from all backgrounds, ethnic and social mixes enjoy a Men's Shed bringing their unique cultural characteristics to enliven the activities.

As identified in the 2007 AMSA shed survey, the common theme in all Sheds is about men retaining self esteem, feeling useful, contributing again to their communities and having a

meaningful purpose in life. Learning or sharing skills, making friends, networking and availing themselves of health support information programmes and opportunities.

The Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) was set up by the Independent Community Men's Sheds to be their official Peak Body representative Association, with affiliation Associations in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia creating a democratic system for the election of the Officials.

AMSA has developed a nationwide structure of State Associations and Regional Cluster Groups and through this network provides assistance and support to those who manage Men's Sheds. At present the work of these groups is limited because of lack of funding.

The role of AMSA is vital for the stability and cohesion of the broader SHED community by providing:

- A coordinated and universal approach to establishment procedures; operational procedures and viability opportunities.*
- Grant opportunities can be synchronised by the "single approach" method for SHEDS seeking funding assistance, thereby providing a standard approach while removing the demand from the domestic environment.*
- Promotion of the men's health message through the several area cluster groups that now exist, a key feature of the men's shed movement.*
- A cascade effect for consistent and dependable communication between the individual SHED; the relevant cluster group and each State association.*
- Assistance in resolving problems arising with government and non government agencies for SHED related matters.*
- A vehicle for the pursuance of a single insurance cover for public liability and equipment.*
- A national web-site that would encompass information and communication for SHEDS at a national and world wide level.*

AMSA does not charge fees to Sheds or Funding Authorities for providing start-up information and assistance, existing solely to help Men's Sheds. Learning from all shed projects around the nation over the past 3 years AMSA has developed policies and procedures for Men's Sheds to be self managed and self sufficient with minimal set up expense for State and Federal Governments. This information is being freely shared between communities wishing to establish such a facility to the benefit of men's health as well as encouraging social inclusion within the community.

Shed members have a very determined view that stems from their own experience "if a little more was spent on sheds, they would save the government that amount tenfold in health services". While the accuracy of this statement is arguable, the point is acknowledged and supported in a variety of articles addressing the need to increase men's' health issues and the related cost to the taxpayer.

Youth mentoring programs are popular activities within Men's Sheds and often with the mentor and the mentored both experiencing positive benefits from the programs. Mentoring programs range from arrangements between individuals, youth welfare organisations, local high schools and technical education providers and even High Risk or socially disadvantaged children. Such programs provide career skills learning but more importantly "life skills" awareness from males who themselves have real life experience

and have a “been there - done that” base of knowledge to draw upon. Men’s Sheds are viewed as a preventative health measure and have provided an avenue of support for men retiring from the workforce.

Once in retirement men can often feel socially isolated leading to boredom and depression and loss of determination to continue fulfilment in life. Many individual statements are available from men regarding the improvement involvement in Sheds has had upon their lives and their health, but to date research into this effect of men’s sheds in relation to men’s health has not been undertaken. A study is strongly recommended to investigate this factor.

Many Sheds exist within aged care facilities. Traditionally in aged care activities have been female orientated due to the majority of residents and staff being female. However, men are living longer and the need of care and support and male nurses in aged care are becoming more common. Men in aged care are known to isolate themselves and are reluctant to participate in the traditional activities provided. Establishing Men’s Sheds in Aged Care has provided meaningful recreation for male residents, encouraging communication and giving them a place of belonging and meaning.

Involvement in Sheds has an effect on the physiological health of participants. The sense of meaningful belonging, a purpose and camaraderie all contribute to the wellbeing of men, but most importantly a shed provides a comfortable environment for men to talk openly about personal, and sometimes private, issues in life including their health issues.

‘Beyondblue’ recently conducted training sessions for shed facilitators giving them a better understanding of male depression, its impact, what signs to keep an eye out for, and most importantly it explained some basic tools and approaches to give someone a helping hand when they’re struggling. This project is now being offered to all sheds through the development of a specific Men’s Shed training package. Men’s Sheds role in relation to men’s health is one of prevention and delivery but sheds are also a platform of delivery for men’s health initiatives.

Sheds are now involved, through cross referral programs, with professionals from other organisations. Currently through an agreement between the New South Wales Men’s Shed Association and the Royal Institute of General Practitioners they are working in partnership on the M5 Project with Men’s Sheds being utilised for the delivery of the project. Representatives will be able to talk directly to men in the community, open days with GP’s are planned to be held within men’s sheds, as the shed provides a more comfortable environment for men to discuss issues surrounding their health rather than a clinic or other public venues.

In his latest report Professor Golding summarises a major problem: "Despite these significant and diverse benefits, because they are grassroots, relatively new and poorly understood by most funding bodies, sheds in community contexts struggle to cope with the initial costs and complexities associated with establishing a safe working environment and to get ongoing funding to assist with supervision of participants."

Currently AMSA is funded from a rollover of funding by Jenny Macklin, Minister for the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for the Lake

Macquarie Shed Project auspiced by Centacare Newcastle. The scope of this project was expanded to allow/ assist in the development of the Australian Men's Shed Association to benefit men's health as well as encouraging social inclusion within the community. The current funding expires in 2009 and without further funding the association's development shall be impaired, faltering the economical development of new sheds and leaving the existing communication network frayed. Men's in sheds often discuss how sports bodies fund the education of professional elite athletes on "Life after the career has ended" but currently little effort is made to prepare men for "life after their career".

7 April 2009 Sydney

Senate Hearing on Male Health

A total of 137 submissions were received by the Committee with 48 of these being invited to be a witness at formal hearings. David was invited to represent AMSA at the Sydney Hearing on the 7th of April.

The response from the hearing was favourable and supportive of the concept of AMSA and Men's Sheds which is apparent in the hearing transcripts and the Committees recommendations to the Government.

24-25 August 2009

Hobart Conference

After considerable effort and at a high financial risk, the 2009 Hobart conference was held and proved a huge success with over 300 delegates in attendance. The event also marked the first Annual General Meeting of AMSA where Mort Shearer was elected as Chairman.

At the Conference a presentation was given outlining the aims and objectives of AMSA to provide support to sheds from a central source and our efforts to date in pursuing funding to broaden these operations.

At the time there were approximately 300 sheds registered with AMSA and although there was only one 'employee' AMSA was dealing with an average of 100 inquiries per week.

It was also becoming quite apparent at the Conference that the perception of AMSA being a large corporate body with a huge amount of resources was beginning to evolve. This misguided perception went on to become an issue for some time with the growth of sheds far exceeding AMSA's resources.

There was also an underlining theme from some that AMSA was an 'empire' striving to become larger and more powerful to dictate to sheds.

The AMSA Group Insurance Scheme was also launched at the Conference.

November 2009

AMSA Insurance Scheme

Following its launch at the Conference, the AMSA Group Policy was finally initiated in November with the first sheds joining the policy in March 2010.

The original policy was brokered with Jardine Lloyd Thomson and was later changed to Inter Risk (2011) following AMSA dissatisfaction of service and errors made by JLT. This was underpinned by AMSA not being a broker and therefore limitations on how we could charge an administrative fee. To date, in accordance to ASIC regulations with Group Schemes, the AMSA sells membership that is inclusive of insurance coverage not insurance as a stand-alone product.

January- March 2010

With no forthcoming known source of potential funding available, a great deal of uncertainty surrounded AMSA's future.

Since the Hobart Conference the media interest in men's sheds and AMSA was extraordinary and on the 15th of March 2010, the Herald Sun in Melbourne published a full page article on page 2 titled '*Men's Sheds Facing Closure*' placing further pressure on the government to provide financial support.

This article had mixed results- while raising our profile and support, the article caused considerable reaction from our existing funding body FaCHSIA (Minister Jenny Macklin) with our auspicing body, Catholic Care. Most of this was due to a lack of understanding of the reporting material provided but it did create some anxious moments.

During this period David kept in close contact with advisors from Minister Snowdon's Office and the Prime Minister's Office on the progress of the Male Health Policy.

19 March 2010

David was contacted by Helen Rankin from the Department of Health and Ageing. This was followed by a series of meetings where AMSA was requested to provide a funding submission.

The submission was to be for a 3 year funding period and was to be aimed at providing practical support to sheds as well as deliver health services to sheds in a project that would be later known as "Spanner in the Works?"

7 May 2010

Launch of the Male Health Policy

With current funding due to expire on 30 June, David was contacted by Minister Snowdon's office and later by Helen Rankin informing him that AMSA was to be funded as per the funding submission and an announcement would be made at the launch of the Male Health Policy on the 7th of May by Prime Minister Rudd at Whittlesea Men's Shed.

June 2010

A formal Letter of Offer and a service delivery Funding Agreement were received from the Department of Health and Ageing on the 9th of June.

This contract was for \$3.3m (GST Inclusive) over 3 years and included a quarantined amount of \$750,000 for distribution as direct financial assistance to sheds- this was known as the Shed Development Grants Program.

The Funding Agreement had 4 stages of delivery:

Stage 1 (commencing on execution – 30 June 2010)

- *Commencement of employment of Executive Officer and Administration/ Membership manager*
- *Commencement of recruitment action to engage a National Marketing/ Fundraising/ OH&S/Insurance Manager.*
- *Review of AMSA Constitution finalised.*
- *Criteria for provision of financial assistance to sheds developed and made available on the AMSA Website by August. These criteria must be agreed to be the Department. Criteria must give priority to hard to establish sheds (geographical) and special needs groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men; men in rural and remote area; men with a disability, including a mental illness; migrant men; and socially disadvantaged men. Assistance to include as needed: AMSA staff time for negotiation and practical support; equipment; state/territory rental; state/territory coordinator; any other upfront costs. Funding rounds will be to be conducted quarterly.*

Stage 2 (1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011)

- *Business Plan developed incorporating mission and values.*
- *Project Plan detailing actions required to complete activities funded under this agreement developed and agreed with the Commonwealth by 30 July 2010.*
- *Identify areas in need of high priority assistance and allocate funds to existing sheds or establish new sheds, with funding to sheds to commence by 1 October 2010.*

- *Structure of AMSA entity formalised, including documentation of responsibilities for all staff.*
- *Implementation of corporate governance and management systems.*
- *Effective communications systems established, including interactive website and virtual on-line shed in partnership with beyondblue*
- *Development of a Men's Health Week project to increase awareness of men's health issues, including health screening and health information distribution.*
- *Develop partnerships programs with men's health service providers and engage a Health Services Coordinator to work with organisations.*
- *Develop an interactive program to address OH&S issues within sheds, including a shed management tool and capacity for collection of data on health and wellbeing information.*
- *Development and dissemination of the second edition of How to Set Up a Men's Shed Manual*
- *Develop a marketing plan to attract and secure corporate sponsorship, raise awareness of men's sheds and encourage participation by 31 December 2010.*
- *Establishment of a register detailing all member and public enquiries.*

Stage 3 (1 July 2011 – 30 June 2012)

- *Continue to identify areas in need of high priority assistance and allocate funds to existing sheds or establish new sheds.*
- *Continue to develop partnerships programs with men's health service providers and engage a Health Services Coordinator to work with organisations.*
- *Maintenance of the interactive program to address OH&S issues within sheds, including a shed management tool and capacity for collection of data on health and wellbeing information.*
- *Implementation of the marketing plan to attract and secure corporate sponsorship, raise awareness of men's sheds and encourage participation.*
- *Areas for improvement identified for continuous quality improvement.*
- *Continued assistance to the development of new men's sheds including development of self sustainability management and financial programs.*
- *Continued development of new strategic alliances with national and state and territory health organisations.*
- *Delivery of Men's Health Week 2012 project to increase awareness of men's health issues, including health screening and health information distribution.*

- *Maintenance of the register detailing all member and public enquiries.*

Stage 4 (1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013)

- *Continue to identify areas in need of high priority assistance and allocate funds to existing sheds or establish new sheds.*
- *Continue to develop partnerships programs with men's health service providers and engage a Health Services Coordinator to work with organisations.*
- *Maintenance of the interactive program to address OH&S issues within sheds, including a shed management tool and capacity for collection of data on health and wellbeing information.*
- *Implementation of the marketing plan to attract and secure corporate sponsorship, raise awareness of men's sheds and encourage participation.*
- *Maintenance of the register detailing all member and public enquiries.*
- *Areas for improvement identified for continuous quality improvement*
- *Continued assistance to the development of new men's sheds including development of self sustainability programs.*
- *Continued development of new strategic alliances with national and state and territory health organisations*
- *Project evaluation*

28 June 2010

AMSA is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee and is given permission to replace the words 'Limited by Guarantee' with 'Association'. All Board members are registered with ASIC as Directors and AMSA is now a fully independent organisation employing the first two staff members.

Establishment of State Associations

With AMSA and the VMSA both formally registering in 2008 (AMSA in January and the VMSA in August) an emphasis was placed on assisting other states to incorporate if for no other purpose than to elect a committee person to AMSA so that the organisation could meet the requirements of ASIC to maintain the word 'Association' in name.

VMSA

The Victorian Men's Sheds Association is the earliest (established in 2005, incorporated in August 2007) and one of the most consistently active State Men's Shed Associations in Australia. The VMSA has been represented on the AMSA Board originally by Gary Green who was replaced by Paul Sladdin in 2010 following Gary's resignation to take up a employment with the AMSA.

The then Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, was Guest Speaker at VMSA's inaugural Annual General Meeting at the Brimbank Men's Shed on 17 Oct 2008.

VMSA was meticulously and deliberately built as an organisation that fully and regularly involves affiliated men's sheds in Victoria and strongly values their grassroots ethos, volunteerism and collaborative approach. It has the advantage of covering a large number of sheds in a relatively small State (by Australian standards).

Victoria is the only State with many years of experience of significant State funding for shed start ups.

It has adopted a deliberately de-centralised meeting strategy with meetings held alternately in rural and city venues, and also adopted a purpose statement that is deliberately broad and inclusive of women who participate and work in some sheds.

NSWMSA

Although NSWMSA was registered in November 2008 it is of some interest to note here that despite these early and very positive state plans in New South Wales, the state has been less successful as a state in reconciling internal and regional differences or organising and supporting its own state sector. Partly because of the subsequent location of AMSA's national office in Newcastle, also in NSW, and the two key persons working within AMSA at the time, Ted and David, who were focusing their attention towards the national program rather than a state based body. Ted was the initial NSW representative to the AMSA Ted was replaced by Kevin Callinan and then John Sharples following both being sequentially appointed as AMSA chair.

A most acrimonious meeting of NSWMSA on 27 November as part of a 'State Gathering' of the NSW Men's Sheds Association organised by AMSA at Myuna Bay November 2010 whose 2011 January Newsletter simply records that the election of the NSWMSA that *'was planned to be completed and announced instead it was a robust discussion on the Constitution and election which raised a number of legal queries primarily by one delegate'*.

While the specifics of this 'robust discussion' have since been largely resolved, it is a reminder and evidence that there are several strands to the shed movement.

Since then the NSWMSA has successfully adopted a structure of Zones (the original AMSA concept was the same except used the word 'Clusters'). Sheds are located within a geographical Zone which in turn nominates a Zone representative who then make up the NSWMSA Committee, thus giving the committee fair representation.

QLDMSA

The establishment of the Men's Shed Movement lagged well behind southern States, until 2007 when the Brisbane City Council (BCC) took the initiative with their community development programs.

In 2008 the BCC provided seeding funding to the Sunnybank RSL and to Shed West, a local group in their Pullenvale Ward specifically formed from "grass-roots" for the purpose. Each group received \$12,000 to pilot their Men's Shed project and determine if the concept was viable in Brisbane. Twelve months later the success of these two Sheds led the Council to make available a total of \$100,000 in Grants for Sheds in the city. The BCC maintained that as an annual sum until 2014 when it was reduced to \$80,000.

The BCC invited Graeme Curnow (Foundation President of Shed West) to join their delegation to the Men's Shed National Conference at Manly in 2007.

By November 2008 the BCC asked Graeme Curnow to take up the invitation to attend the Canberra – Committee Planning Meeting on Nov 10 - 11.

On the 10th December 2008 at a meeting of the fledgling Queensland Men's Shed Network it was decided to form a Queensland Affiliate of the Australian Men's Shed Association. Four representatives (Shed West, Ridley Road, Labrador and Sunnybank) were appointed as a Steering Committee to incorporate the Network as the Queensland Men's Shed Association Inc. (QMSA).

Graeme Curnow was elected as the Queensland Representative on the AMSA Board in 2009, a 2 year appointment which has been re-confirmed at AGM's. The Association was granted Incorporation on 18th June 2010

QMSA has remained a totally voluntary organisation. Until late in 2012 all costs of QMSA activities had to be paid for by the volunteer Committee. This serious lack of funds severely curtailed QMSA support and involvement with the Qld. Sheds and with the community at large.

Successive State Governments, while courteous and interested in the Movement, have not set up a program for Men's Sheds in Queensland. They have maintained that position despite regular lobbying by the QMSA Committee. QMSA has been seeking State Government support for a scheme, similar to N.S.W, whereby surplus Crown Land is made available to establish premises for Men's Sheds.

Early in 2010 QMSA successfully tendered for hosting the 4th National Men's Shed Conference in 2011. The Conference was held in the iconic Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre where 360 or so Sheddors attended. QMSA independently sourced,

from, within Queensland, sponsorship for the Conference of \$55,550. Regrettably there were no funds left over to allocate to QMSA.

This was the first AMSA Conference where there was a visible presence and participation by Indigenous men. Interest and growth in the numbers of Queensland Men's Sheds was stimulated so by April 2014 there were 160 Sheds of which 14 were Indigenous Men's Sheds with the majority located on Cape York.

Communicating around the Sheds in the Queensland network is difficult, given the limited resources. However QMSA has used the volunteer services available.

In 2012 QMSA was selected by the organisers of the Queensland Supply and Logistics Conference as the worthwhile organisation they would raise funds for, at their Annual Conference. Funds raised by auction benefitted QMSA to the tune of \$10000. This allowed QMSA to expand the Committee and bring on wider representation from Sheds distributed around the State.

Committeemen regularly address interested groups and embryonic Sheds on the establishment of a Men's Shed and, where invited, to advise established Sheds on internal problems they are experiencing.

TASMSA

The TMSA was formally registered in July 2009 but, like the VMSA, had been in existence in principle, since 2007 with John Waters, the late Jeff White and George Startup utilising their knowledge and volunteering to support the establishment of sheds.

With the TMSA and the auspicing body of 'Pete's Shed' in dispute over hosting the AMSA 2009 Conference, David travelled to Hobart in April 2009 to provide support and review the situation. The auspicing body was removed and the TMSA was incorporated.

The Hobart Conference held in August 2009 was a success and was the first Conference AMSA hosted independently without any financial guarantee. This was at considerable risk but the Conference was, and still is, considered to be one of AMSA's most valuable assets and if this event did not go ahead the history of AMSA may have been very different.

The TMSA was formed in 2009 to provide assistance locally through support, information and auspicing and exists through the efforts of volunteers from various sheds around Tasmania. The TMSA has been represented on the AMSA Board originally by John Waters who was replaced by Peter Shelley in August 2013 who then resigned in early 2014.

Organised into three broad regions: North West, North East and Southern, the TMSA Committee lobbies local and state government for funding on behalf of registered sheds. Early in 2014 relations with the AMSA soured with the Tasmanian Association resigning from AMSA.

WAMSA

The Freo Men's Shed (originally called the Fremanshed) began operation in February 2005, spearheaded by ex-teachers Bill Johnstone and Allan Gowland with Bill representing WA as one of the original members of the AMSA Steering Committee.

Prior to the 2009 Hobart Conference, AMSA was contacted by Ann Brandis from Mukinbudin Shire requesting support to host a regional Conference in WA. This was followed by discussions between Bill and AMSA where AMSA pledged to support the Conference to be held in September 2009 following the Hobart event as a means of bringing a smaller scale Conference to WA where the cost of travel to the East coast was prohibitive for many shedders.

David attended the Conference along with Patrons Professors Golding and MacDonald.

During the Conference David made a presentation on the necessity of establishing a State Association. Similar resistance to the concept of another layer of was met similar to that in QLD.

Once the necessity of this was explained, the delegates resolved to form a Western Australian Men's Shed Association (WAMSA) and 12 delegates volunteered to join the Steering Committee with Bill Johnstone leading the immediate direction of the Steering Committee. This led to the WAMSA being incorporated in July 2010. Bill maintained his position on the AMSA board until he retired in 2010 and was then replaced by Mike Murphy until 2013 who was later replaced by Brett Pollack and then Mike Wiggin 2014.

Professor Barry Golding in the final session of the Conference was quoted as saying that *"this was the best Conference I have ever attended - anywhere in the world. The passion and support of the organizers and community, the feeling amongst the Conference delegates, the facilities, the food, the social program, the support of people billeting delegates, the quality of the presentations and presenters were all nothing short of outstanding."*

This was also perceived by AMSA at the time to set an ideal precedent for coordinating smaller state gatherings in the in-between years of the AMSA Conference.

SAMSA

It is widely known that many of the pioneering Men's Sheds originated in South Australia however the SAMSA did not formally establish until the 16 August 2013.

Keith Bettany was a health worker on the York Peninsular and was heavily involved in the formation of Sheds in the area with a focus on providing activities for older men within the aged care sector. Keith also had some major achievements working with men within high care facilities (some of this work was highlighted in the AMSA Senate Submission on Male Health).

Dr Leon Earle was also based in South Australia and appears to be the first academic who recognised the value of social inclusion within older males (with fellow South Australian academic Tony Earle and Florida geriontologist Otto von Mering),

In 1996 Earle had published '*Recreation for older adults*ⁱ which included a 16 page sub-section by the same name as the '*Sheds and male retirement*' but some of his earlier research goes back to 1978.

Keith did provide some input into the formation of AMSA and was supportive of the organisation but due to his work commitments had very little time to allocate to contribute to the organisation.

During the founding years AMSA struggled to find representation from SA and on the 1 November 2010, Evan Ray, who was employed by the City of Burnside Council as the Men's Shed Coordinator, joined the AMSA Board and was aiming at establishing a State Association. This proved difficult with SA sheds being supportive members of AMSA but questioning the necessity of another level of structure.

Evan Ray resigned from the Board on the 17 July 2012 and Bryce Routley was then appointed as the SA representative to the AMSA Board.
