

**MOUNT ELIZA MEN'S SHED INC**

# **FOUNDATION YEARS**

**INCLUDING THE FIRST ANNUAL REPORT  
AS AN INCORPORATED ASSOCIATION  
FOR 2018/2019**



**Mount Eliza Men's Shed Inc.**

**An Organisation Auspiced by Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House up until 1 March 2019, &**

**An Incorporated Association from 1 March up to 30 June 2019**

**Initial Sponsors: The Rotary Club of Mount Eliza, the Mount Eliza Lions' Club,**

**Bendigo Community Bank – Mount Eliza Branch, & Mount Eliza Mount Eliza  
Neighbourhood House, and supported by the Mount Eliza Country Club**

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



In approaching this report to the Shed's first Annual General Meeting as an incorporated association, I have adopted a three-part approach: firstly, historical; secondly, a report on the financial year just passed; and a short Post-Script for the months July to 28 October, 2019. I hope this approach will be useful to chart the foundation years. It maps progression since the vision of a Men's Shed for Mount Eliza first emerged. Hence, I have cast an eye across our journey since 2013, with a final note up to the present.

A shed is a shed – in one form or another. It is conceptualised as a building – larger or smaller, flash or otherwise! For Mount Eliza, the idea of a Men's Shed – was just that – an idea, a vision. No building, no local base for blokes to come together: no surplus community building, or even a block of land on which to put a Shed!

In 2014/2015, while exploring initial possibilities, a Board Member of the Neighbourhood House recalled a disused small garage in the grounds of the Mount Eliza Country Club. A public meeting of interested men, and community organisations, confirmed there was a need for a place to be established for men

who had reached retirement age, but felt they still had something to give, as well as to get to know other men in the local community. So, a decision was made to 'have a go' to establish something to meet an unmet need – and the Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House offered to auspice a fledgling Shed, with very early thoughts dating back to 2013.

The Mount Eliza Country Club, via President Ian Davey and Committee members Matt Kirk, were keen to assist in getting a Shed established, and offered access to their old garage to get us started. The notion of broader community involvement was a new concept for the Country Club – and Ian and Matt were keen to see that happen.

An interim Men's Shed group was formed – with the key element being the close and supportive involvement of a number of community organisations: - as well as the Neighbourhood House and the Country Club, the Rotary Club of Mount Eliza came on board, as did the Lions Club and the local community branch of the Bendigo Bank. The first formal meeting of a Shed Committee of Management convened in later 2015!

By the end of 2016, our first full year of operation as a functioning Shed, we had twelve Sheddors. A great start with a diverse group of men with a common ideal: to do something for Mount Eliza. A largely neglected and disused single garage took on a new life. Over earlier years this garage had fallen into a state of disrepair.

Since getting underway, activities within the Shed have been varied – from personal projects to larger community projects; and smaller group activities to make items for sale - such as the production of tea-trays, small turned wooden objects. The latter signals longer-term potential to strengthen and extend wood-turning skills amongst Shedders. Our first community project was the rebuilding of garden-bed benches at the George Vowells Centre, then assistance with a joint Shire-Community project to erect safety signs outside local schools, followed by the construction of a boat-shaped sandpit for pre-schoolers at the Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House. For the future, there remains considerable scope for more of these community projects as the Shed's local presence is both recognised and accepted.

Shed members during the inaugural year were drawn from a wide variety of earlier occupational backgrounds, producing a rich blend of expertise and interests. A strong bond developed amongst our regular attenders – so much so that establishing a second weekly group proved elusive during these early years.

Locating a suitable site for so long proved elusive: vacant Shire-owned land in Mount Eliza is in extremely short supply. The Committee identified three possible sites – and all these proposed sites met with refusal or non-acceptance by Shire planners – as they had other plans!

In terms of fitting out and equipping our Shed, local supporters and donors have been most generous. With donated

materials the Shed has been fitted out with both work benches and tool wall-boards. A wide variety of tools has been donated. Several suppliers have donated new items – from power tools to hand-tools. Several families have donated pre-loved tools and equipment from family members of deceased estates or from generous residents who no longer have a need for cherished tools. Equipment includes electric power tools such as drills, sanders, a saw bench, compressor, wood-lathes and circular saws to hand-tools such as hammers, chisels, screwdrivers and almost every other imaginable tool – some could be classified as vintage tools. We have had hardware such as nuts and bolts and screws donated. Supplies of both new and used timber have been donated – and continue to be so!

An essential aspect of the early Shed was the necessity of connecting both power and water to ensure the powering of day-to-day operations. This was made possible through support of the local Federal member and a \$10,000 grant from the Federal Government. Ongoing interest and support from both State and Federal local Members has been encouraging.

### **2018/2019 (Covering First AGM As A Incorporated Association)**

Nine Men's Sheds have been established within the Shire, with most receiving significant financial and in-kind support from the Shire – but we are battling to have our voice heard as other towns and villages are seen as having 'greater needs', together with the advantage of readily available public land. However, the need

for a Shed in one of the largest population centres exists and our efforts continue undaunted here in Mount Eliza.

The 2018/2019 year saw us engaged in a relentless pursuit to make positive improvement – but, seemingly, we now are on the way to getting our own Shed – although much, much work is still to be done! To date, overtures to the Shire with possibilities have numbered at least five. On each occasion we have not received one positive reply or response, although a local Ward Councillor has been very persistent with her efforts to assist. It seems that as we are small in numbers, and the Shire has priorities beyond Mount Eliza, their recurring argument being that we should join another Shed. Both Committee of Management, and Shedders, are firmly of the view that a local community population the size of Mount Eliza deserves a facility with its prime focus being to enhance health and well-being for local Men (especially as older men are an increasing segment of retirees – especially in our locality). We are not seeking a vast facility the size of a factory to accommodate a huge membership: a modest Shed is all we are seeking!

In late 2018, an alert Shedder, identified a possible site within the extensive grounds of the Mount Eliza Secondary College. A formal request put by the Shed to the College Council received their enthusiastic and positive support in March 2019. Since then, much 'behind the scenes', but necessary spadework has been quietly progressing – although not fast enough for some Shedders. As reported,

previously, our current shortage of space has hindered membership growth.

At the close 2018/2019 reporting year, Shedder numbers steadily increased to sixteen, with a number of other potential members being deterred by our limited space. With membership growth have come increasing challenges. Although great efforts have been made to 'create' extra Shed space and enhance work facilities, this process has brought with it some difficulties. We have been severely hampered by the lack of a suitably sized Shed to cater for a larger number of Shedders at any one session. Now the Shed has been fully equipped, and with the construction of a sturdy central work bench, there really is only room for half a dozen actual workers in the Shed at any one time. When more Shedders attend on any one day there is a need for fine weather to permit some work to be undertaken outdoors. Rain is an outdoor deterrent, and very hot weather has proven to be an indoor deterrent! So, whilst growth in membership numbers has been restricted, the earlier strong foundation of Shedder camaraderie was being tested as 2019 progressed.

The Mount Eliza Country Club has been a supportive host, the Rotary Club of Mount Eliza and the Mount Eliza Lions Club have both been strong financial supporters, and the local branch of the Bendigo Community Bank has provided both financial and in-kind support. The bank has kindly provided a shop-front for the sale of our products such as bird nesting boxes and feeders, and tea-trays. The Lions Club has invited the Shed to conduct

several barbeques up at the Sunday Village Market on their behalf – and these have been most profitable. Rotary is a regular contributor via the proceeds of raffles at local events, and also purchased a much-needed radial drop-saw.

Fund-raising throughout the year continued – with Shedders raising funds through Farmers' Market BBQs, sale of garden items, undertaking projects for individual members of the community, and larger organisational projects for Kunyung Primary School and the Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House. The Rotary Club of Mount Eliza has been a significant regular donor, the Lions Club has provided regular 'in kind' support for our BBQs, as well as an annual financial contribution. The Mount Eliza Branch of the Bendigo Community Bank has provided assistance on several fronts, in particular through its Community Pitch: not only did this event produce a significant financial donation, but it also brought the Shed into contact with donor-sponsors who now are contributing with design and planning pro bono assistance for a new Shed.

The Shed has become a valuable contributor to other community projects, a practical educator and mentor to our youth, a helping hand for men in seeking to re-enter the workforce in mid-career, and a point of social connection and wellness for men in their retirement years.

Monash University OT students on placements: their projects included establishment of a regular newsletter (OffCuts – and More), a sailing dinghy

restoration project, establishment of a Website and a Shed Statement of Purpose chart. The Neighbourhood House sponsored a series of cooking classes for Shedders – to improve their culinary skills.

Shed activities throughout the year centred around weekly Sessions, with the pattern now firmly based on two strongly attended sessions each morning of Tuesday and Thursday. A Shedder initiated moves for the embossing of Shedder Polo and Tee Shirts. We had our first end-of-year Dinner, accompanied by spouses. An essential, low key component of what Men's Sheds are about, was the additional support provided to several Shedders encountering health issues. Lastly, it must be noted that hardware chain, Bunnings, via its Mornington store, regularly provided material contributions and project support throughout the year.

Purchase of a major piece of machinery, a table saw, brought a major improvement in Shed capabilities and individual skill development. An ongoing challenge for our Shed is the attention to Occupational Health & Safety, with formal training sessions required. Each Shedder has been issued with a basic personal safety equipment kit. The earlier purchase and installation of a ducted, dust-extraction system is proving beneficial.

We remain members of the Victorian Men's Shed Association (VMSA). They continue to provide great local support and advice. VMSA holds regular gatherings across the state – and it has been helpful to attend and find out what other Sheds are doing, and learn from

their challenges. My conversations at these gatherings confirms other Sheds experience slow initial progress to establish a firm organisation for any new Shed: Mount Eliza is not alone!

Early days of any project often raise questions as to what does the future hold. Not only is it the quest for a building/Shed, An enormous amount of work, often behind the scenes, is needed to create and establish a new member-based organisation. This has remained an ongoing challenge in our formative years.

As inaugural President, I have been able to see first-hand the positive benefits that a Shed can bring to the local community – and reluctant, but understanding acceptance by founding Sheddors that ‘Rome was not built in a day!’

An increasingly frustrating ‘Catch-22’ problem for our Shed is that, lacking a larger working area, the existing, very limited space has deterred potential members – yet, without a larger membership a claim for a Shed in Mount Eliza gets overlooked among the strident and relentless claims of local sporting groups. The recently designated, non-Shire owned site has enabled commencement of more detailed concept plans together with obtaining some preliminary costing estimates: at last, this has allowed the gradual emergence of real, and achievable progress towards a new Shed. Disheartenment is all too easy to set in when initial steps, for some, seem all too slow.

Throughout the Foundation Years, I have been ably supported by a committed

Committee of Management. It has provided both guidance and support right from the outset. It has nurtured the funds both raised, and donated – to such an extent that we have a very positive start towards the construction of a new, purpose-built Shed.

Members of Committee of Management (2018 – 2019):

- Dr Don Reeves – President [Shedder];
- Leigh Eustace – Vice-President [Neighbourhood House];
- Matt Kirk – Secretary [Community]
- Ian Davey – Treasurer [Lions];
- Linda Morris [Rotary];
- Alex Godfrey (Bendigo Bank);
- Malcolm Tucker [Community];
- Lester Doig – [Neighbourhood House];
- Patrick Davenport – [Shedder].

Most of the above Committee members are inaugural Committee members, and all are to be commended for the support they continue to provide to the Shed.

Thank you to John for doing that – but this commitment was only for an interim period. A long-term arrangement now rests with new leadership arrangements – and a new Committee of Management.

2013 - 28 October 2019



The Shed conversion completed – early 2016



Dr Don Reeves,

President,

2013 - 28 October 2019