

## **POTTSVILLE & DISTRICT MEN'S SHED: History of the shed's first two years**

In September 2013, the men from Beachside Church in Pottsville met for a social dinner. Over dinner we discussed how we could contribute to the Pottsville community, now and into the future. The subject of a men's shed for Pottsville was presented and it was decided to investigate this further as it seemed like excellent program for retired men and would provide another option to support the families of our community.

Fast forward a couple of months and after discussions with federal, state, and local government representatives, visits to the other men's sheds in the Tweed area and input from people who had assisted with commencing other men's sheds, and we were convinced that a men's shed would be a very positive inclusion into Pottsville. However Beachside church was not large enough to support the development of a men's shed and, as it would be a community shed then the community should be involved in the establishment and development of the shed. This would make the shed uniquely a Pottsville program. Guided by an old African proverb which said that 'If you want to go quickly go alone but if you want to go far, go with a group', the research and planning part was completed alone, quickly before it was time to form up and go in a group.

The first open meeting to discuss the men's shed proposal was scheduled for the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2013 at the Pottsville Sports club. Notices of the meeting were placed around town and invitations handed out at the Pottsville Sunday market the week before the meeting. Some of the invitations were taken by men but many were taken by women for their husbands. I realised that, along with their husbands, wives also saw the potential of and the need for a men's shed. At the first meeting thirty-five men attended which included Ps. Alan Pilay and myself, Ps Alan kept a record of attendance and I provided the shed presentation.

Information from AMSA gave a comprehensive overview of men's sheds and after a couple of hours of discussion it was decided that we would meet again in December and form a steering committee to get the ball rolling. When asked who would like to be on the steering committee, twenty-one men put their hands up. This was a response beyond my expectations.

Because we were mostly new acquaintances and everyone's history unique, it was decided to form seven committees, each with three members and instead of allocating people to committees, let men join the committee where their experiences and strengths could be best used. The committees were, Policy and Procedures, Buildings and Grounds, Program committee, Site venues, Finance, Promotion, Membership, and Tools and Equipment and Materials. One person was nominated from each committee, and this became a steering committee of seven. By each small committee feeding information into the steering committee, we were able to get some forward momentum. Our first Shed committee was,

President: Allan May

Vice President: Michael Ryan

Secretary: Ron Haggart

Treasurer: Tim Whitfield

Committee members: Leighton Meredith, Ian Cooper and Noel Mather.

The shed's vision, which is essential for any organisation to achieve its future, was embraced by the men of Pottsville and the energy required to make the shed become a reality was beginning to emerge. It is said that without a vision people wander in the dark but with a vision, great things can be achieved. This essential ongoing vision is vital to guide future shedders as they grow and expand the shed through each growth phase. The presented vision was to find ½ to 1 hectare of land on which to put three sheds. This was a vision for the future, realising that without land to grow onto we would not realise our real potential.

Our primary concern was a venue which was proving difficult to find. We investigated several possibilities but finally decided on a portion of land on the oval at Black Rocks as an ideal place to establish the shed. The land was council land which allowed us to apply for government grants that would support the building and equipping of our shed. While we were waiting for approval to build at Black Rocks, and confronting some minority group objections, the Pottsville primary school offered us the use of one of their demountable classrooms, for which we were very thankful, and set this up as a workshop which we used for two years.

We also wish to acknowledge the greatly appreciated support that we received from Hutchinson builders who donated a shipping container to the shed for onsite storage. Thanks to Ps Alan Pilay for arranging this donation and Beachside Church for their much-appreciated financial support. St Laurence's College donated four work benches to us at the request of Noel Mather who was previously a coordinator of the manual arts section of the school. These benchers were essential for the successful operation of the shed. The Pottsville community was also very supportive as we faced opposition from green groups and some TSC members who wanted to close Black Rocks sports fields and revegetate the whole area. Storage was also a great challenge as donations to the shed flooded in from members of the community. With very limited funds we went to the Pottsville Storage Shed who graciously gave us the use of one of their sheds for a year at no cost, to store our excess tools and equipment until we had the time to determine what to do with it all. Throughout all of this, our shed membership continued to grow, our contribution and support for our communities continued to build with work done at the school, preschool, and around the town area. Pottsville and District Men's Shed was making a name for itself.

Files with copies of the list of the first members of our shed, the members of the first seven committees, the initial newsletters, reports, etc., are on an accompanying document.