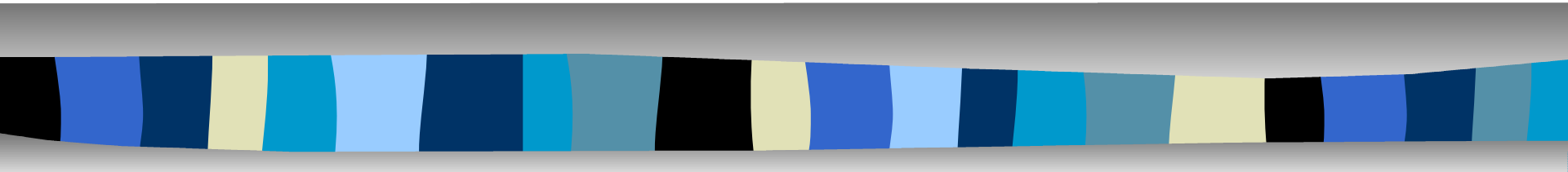


The way sheds have spread



in Australia and internationally

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Australian Men's Sheds Association 3rd National Conference
Wrest Point, Hobart, Tasmania, 24-25 August 2009



Outline

- Where did community sheds spring from?
- How have sheds spread geographically within Australia and beyond?
- Where are sheds (& where aren't they)?
- What forms (and names) have they tended to take in different places and why? SHOW
- What has helped the spread?
- What is currently shaping the 'sector'?
- Some possible future scenarios ...



Invitation to participate

- Share your own insights and ideas.
- Some of this stuff is about personalities & folklore: not a lot is written down.
- Most information is from visits (& research interviews) to shed-based organisations in most states (except Queensland, NT & ACT) & NZ.
- Lots of sheds think they are ‘the first’ in some way (and they are probably right!).
- It’s a bit early in the life of the ‘shed movement’ to know exactly where it’s going.
- **Apologies** to people or organisations ‘left out’ of this potted & partial history.



Community sheds sprang from:

- Backyard, house & garden sheds
- Fire brigade & footy sheds
- Woodworkers/turners workshops
- Vietnam Veterans organisations (eg SA)
- Places & organisations where workers want to keep trade skills and traditions alive.
- Ideas planted in media & books (Mark Thompson).
- Men's health & wellbeing workers, academics, activists & gerontologists.
- Shed 'pioneers' & innovators in all states
- *Existing organisations & sheds*



Sheds & innovators pre-2005 include

(but are not restricted to ...)

- **Grenfell Shed**, (Len Wallace, rural NSW; inappropriately colonized by Mensheds Australia)
- **NSW sheds** (as a health intervention; in low SES areas, via Uniting & Catholic Churches: Anthony Brown*, Bob Nelson, UWS, Ruth Van Herk & Ted Donnelly)
- **SA** (rural sheds, for veterans and over 50s: Keith Bettany & Karen Wright - for men with dementia)
- **Victorian urban** (Rick Hayes & Nick Morey @ Darebin; Ric Blackburn @ Manningham; Lyn Kinder @ Brimbank; Denis Minogue @ Keysborough)
- **Victorian country** (Gary Green* @ Orbost, Yarram, Bendigo)
- **Tasmanian sheds** (Pete's Shed @ Bridgewater - John Waters*, Jeff White & the late George Startup; Dorset; St Helens)
- **WA sheds** (Alan Gowland & Bill Johnstone* @Fremanshed; Donnybrook)

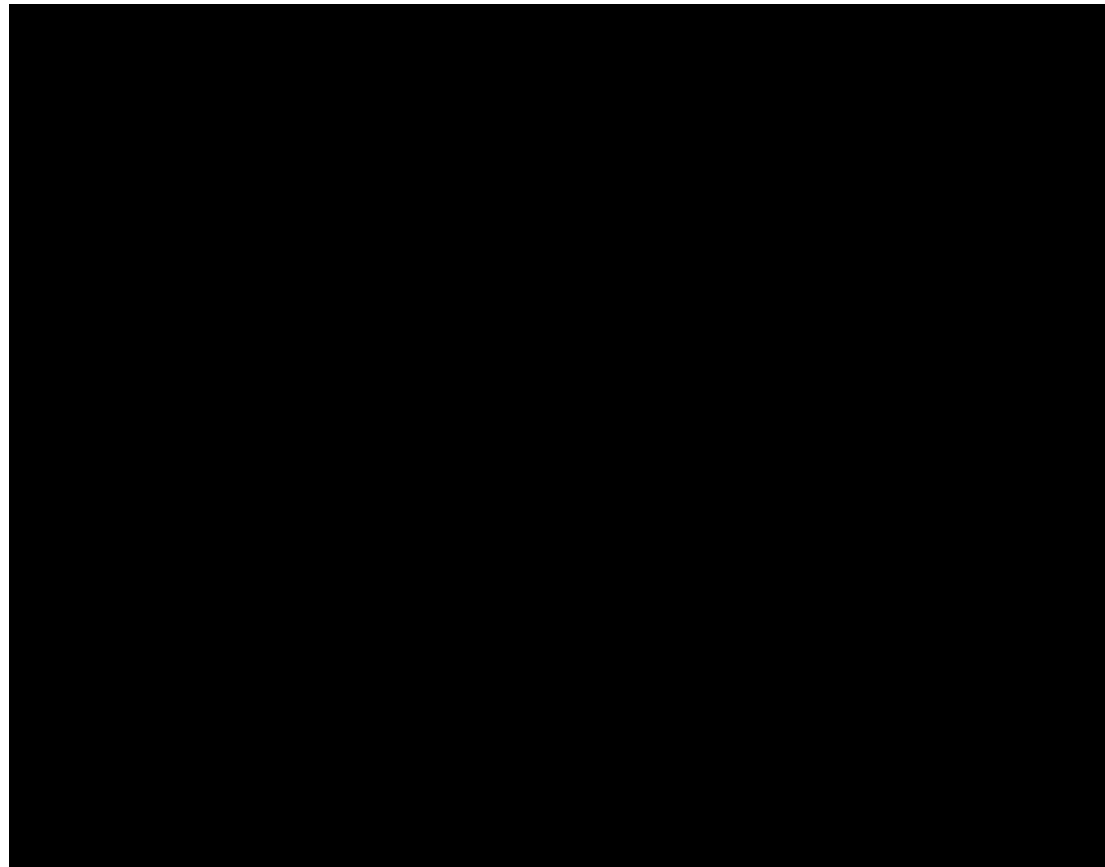


The national & *state* conferences

- **1st National Men's Shed Conference 2005** Lakes Entrance, Victoria, via Gary Green & Orbost Men's Shed.
- *Tasmanian Men's Sheds Conference 2006, Pontville , via Pete's Shed, Bridgewater (John Waters, Jeff White & the late George Startup).*
- **2nd National Conference** Manly NSW, Sept 2007, via Ruth Van Herk & Ted Donnelly, Lane Cove Men's Shed & Uniting Church
- **3rd National Conference** (Hobart, Tasmania: Aug 2009 AMSA with Pete's Shed, Bridgewater)
- *Western Australian Men's Shed Conference, Mukinbudin WA, via Ann Brandis & Shire of Mukinbudin, 3-4 Sept 2009.*
- *In my opinion, South Australia remains a state with considerable numbers & shed diversity, as yet without effective State coordination, and a lot for other sheds to potentially learn from...*

Where were community-based men's sheds in Australia to 2007?

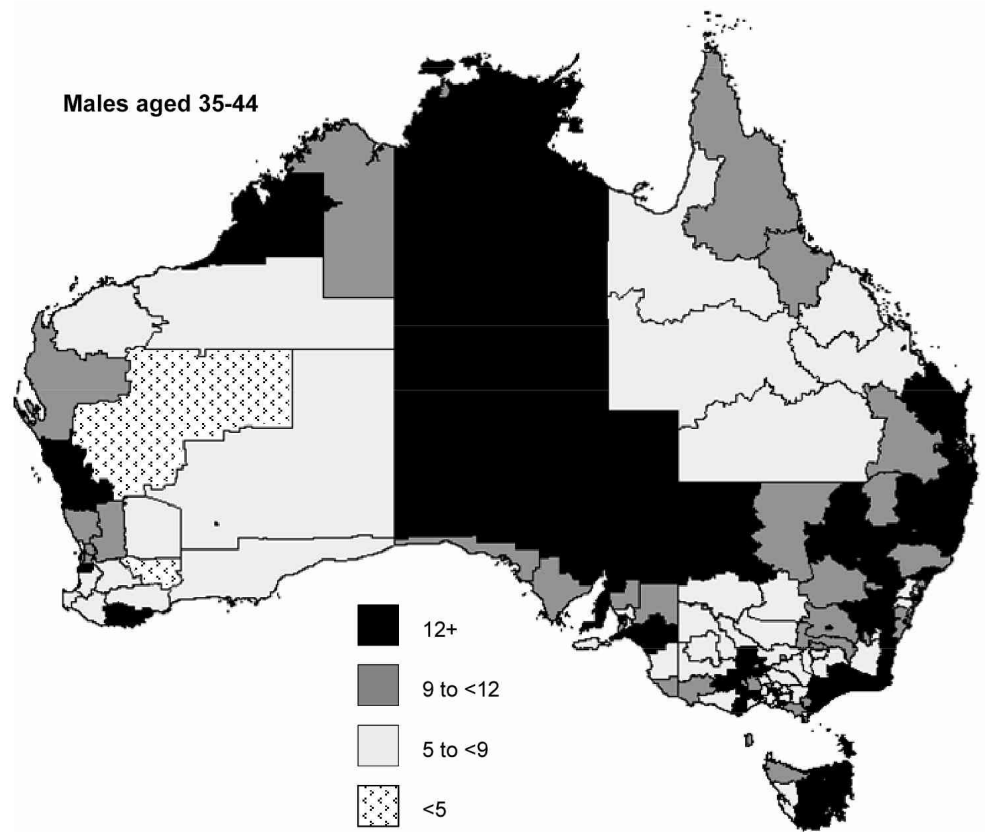
Community-based men's sheds in Australia to 2006 from Golding, Brown, Foley et al (2007)



Sheds are most common *in rural areas* where men are more likely to be not in paid work ...

■ The proportion of men aged 35-44 in Australia not in paid work.

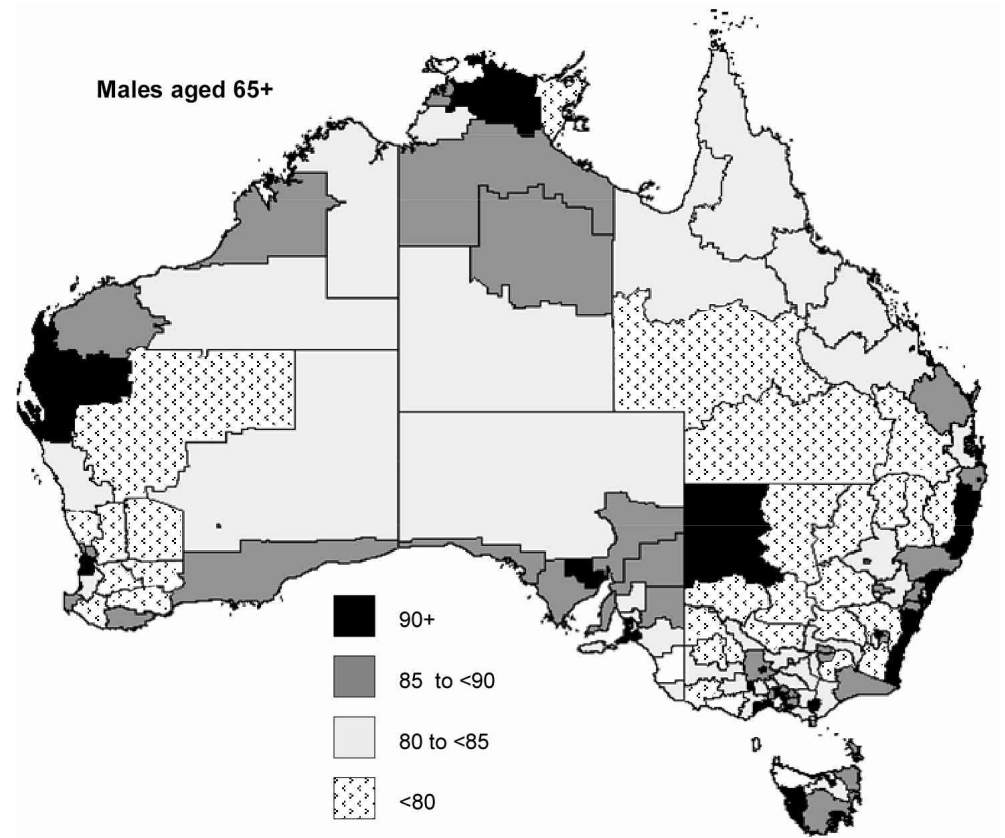
From *Men not at work*, Lattimore, 2007, p.71



... particularly older men.

■ The proportion of men aged 65+ in Australia not in paid work

■ From *Men not at work*, Lattimore, 2007, p.72



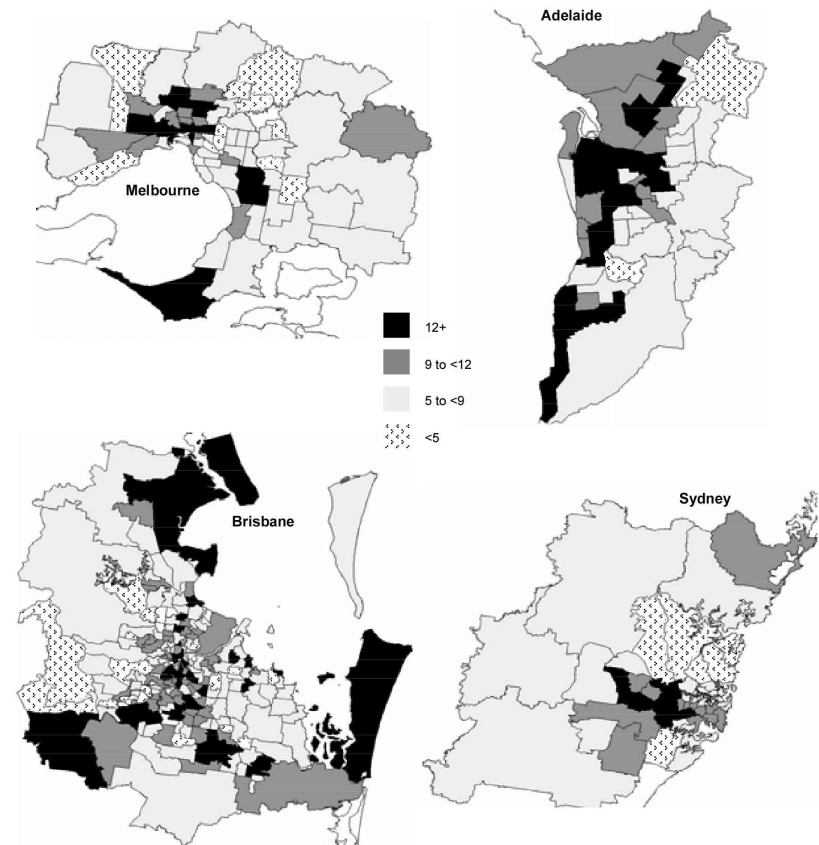


How have sheds spread geographically within Australia?

- **SA:** Very diverse and early origins, widely spread, poorly networked.
- **NSW:** Initially via church & university health outreach. Now spreading very fast in north coast & west of Divide with AMSA support.
- **Victoria:** Initially via health organisations; given a boost via the 2005 Lakes Entrance Conference; now proliferating quickly via ACE providers and DPCD (Dept of Planning & Community Development) annual funding rounds and with strong VMSA & AMSA support.
- **Tasmania:** Several strong sheds in a loose network. Likely to be boosted by AMSA 2009 Conference.
- **WA:** Diverse but slow to develop momentum; likely to be boosted via Sept 09 Mukinbudin conference, AMSA support & WAMSA formation.
- **Queensland:** Slow to develop momentum, but spreading fast and recently, now with AMSA & QMSA support.

In Australian capital cities, community-based men's sheds tend to have flourished where the proportion of prime aged men (35-44) not in work is higher than average.

- The proportion of men aged 35-44, in Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney not in paid work
- From *Men not at work*, Lattimore, 2007, p.73





Sheds have tended to thrive in ...

- Post-industrial suburban areas
- Rural and regional areas (where farmers have moved to town or where ex-tradesmen are concentrated)
- Areas hit by crisis & change (lower SES)
- Areas where the proportion of men 'beyond paid work' (unemployed, out of the workforce, retired) is higher than average.



Overseas spread

- Facilitated by international media (eg BBC), internet, overseas travel, conferences, publications & research networks.
- Men's sheds and workshops are popular sometimes important, but rarely as iconic, in many western countries.
- **New Zealand** (via ACE Aotearoa) & a few shed 'pioneers' (Neil Bruce @ Hamilton, Ian Drury @ Thames).
- **UK & Ireland:** considerable interest in the potential of sheds, and some attempts at startup: John Evoy @ New Ross, County Wexford, Ireland (at this conference).



Books, internet, media, research

- Mark Thompson's series of books
- AMSA (previously Lane Cove Shed) web site
- The national & international electronic media (particularly in the wake of our *Men's shed in Australia*, NCVER (2007) report and the 2nd National Shed Conference in Manly.
- Research dissemination (eg RAVE, Golding, Foley, Brown) via academic publications and articles for the media. See Handout.
- Others?



Women... have actively assisted the spread

- Women have played major roles in developing & championing many sheds, the sector & national & state associations.
- Women have been behind many shed start ups & the procurement of funds.
- Many sheds have a female coordinator.
- Some sheds make a local decision to include women as participants.
- Men sometimes shift 'the boring bullshit' (that they don't want to deal with) to women (eg paperwork, budgeting, accountability).
- Men with female partners typically participate with their strong support (& encouragement).
- Most major media stories have been reported by women.



Mensheds Australia

Website, Newsletter, media

- *'The elephant in the shed'? (or bull in a china shop?)*
- Presenting as a 'not for profit organisation',
- but in receipt of significant public funding &
- backed by significant capital, commercial interest & desire to 'corner the shed market'.
- Not representing, respectful or cognizant of the community men's shed sector.
- **Has been involved in several fiascos:** one disastrous shed 'takeover' (Grenfell); a botched commercial startup (though a commercial joinery in Armidale), now into Aboriginal communities ...
- Subject to a number of government inquiries about the accuracy & legitimacy of its claims.
- *In my opinion, on the evidence, deliberately confusing & counterproductive. Get your good advice free through AMSA.*



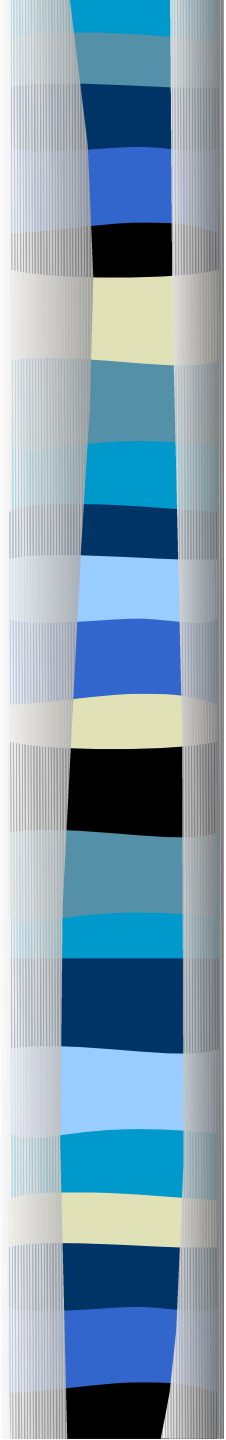
Government funding & *policy*

- Department of Planning & Community Development (DPCD) initiative in Victoria (funding rounds in 2008 & 2009)
- *National Men's Health Policy Process*
- Men's Health ambassadors including Tim Mathieson, Prof John Macdonald and Prof David de Kretzer with knowledge & support of men's health & sheds
- Timely post this Conference for AMSA to seek national & state support.



Where are sheds concentrated?

- Numbers of sheds?
- Shed densities per head of population?
- Shed diversity (particularly by auspice organisations)?
- Overseas? (NZ, UK & Ireland: embryonic: see Neil Bruce's presentation)



What forms (and names) have they tended to take in different places and why? Some:

- ... communities or organisations are uncomfortable about ‘naming’ the shed as a men’s space (Some find other ways...)
- ... sheds take the name of the location
- ... take the name of the auspice organisation
- ... sheds are ‘out the back’ of another organisation & the name is no ‘big deal’.
- have distinctive ‘badging’ (logos, uniforms, caps, websites, Others?)



What has helped the spread?

- Word of mouth and referral by agencies
- Information sharing through 'eyeballing' & networking at Conferences & meetings
- AMSA (VMSA, QMSA, other States, regional shed networks)
- Research dissemination
- Media
- Internet & Email
- 'Grey nomads' visiting other sheds.



What is currently shaping the ‘sector’?

- Diverse community-based organisations that auspice sheds & service providers.
- **AMSA & state associations** (contact David Helmers, Mort Shearer (AMSA Pres) or state assoc presidents: Iain Beggs (Vic), John Waters (Tas), Ted Donnelly (NSW) or Bruce Turnbull (Qld) if you can lend support).
- **State Govt Support** eg DPCD in Victoria: other states likely to follow suit - once evidence is there of hard outcomes & ‘throughput’ (a double-edged sword ...)
- **potentially more from Federal Govt** but need for new, up to date national research & evidence on outcomes
- **NGO support** (eg Uniting & Catholic Church)
- **Others?**



Some likely future scenarios ...

- Needs will increase (1/2 men not in paid work by 2030) and research into outcomes will improve.
- Sheds will proliferate (in type and number to most towns across Australia)
- The *exponential* growth will slow (doubling every 2 years is not sustainable...)
- Some govts (local, state, national, OS) will recognize the holistic value of sheds: for their cost effective, preventative, health, wellbeing, productive ageing, lifelong & lifewide learning & community building roles (but need evidence)
- Not all sheds will succeed. Some will/should do themselves out of a job.
- Community sheds (or a local equivalent) will spread to other nations: with ageing demographics, where post-work identities are an issue and where 'workshops' (sometimes by another name) are attractive or iconic for some (but not all) men.



Some interesting & important questions

- Will community sheds, mainly for men become like community houses - mainly for women (ie a diverse, mature 'sector' for people not in work)?
- In 30+ years time, will today's young men (now 30) have similar problems with learning to cope with life's ages & stages?
- When will governments realize the social (& economic) value of grassroots wellbeing organisations rather than the cost (in comparison to the huge cost of fixing people when they are already broken)?



Questions?

- *All of this good work by shedders is being done ‘on the shoulders of giants’.*
- Handouts of the Powerpoint slides are available afterwards.
- A sheet is available afterwards summarizing our completed & ongoing (2009) research into men’s learning & wellbeing for WA Department of Education & Training (in Fremantle, Kwinana, Albany, Denmark, Carnarvon & Denham) and National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre (in Blacktown & Lismore in NSW, Oatlands & Bridgewater, Tasmania & Ceduna & Noarlunga in South Australia).