





Ballina Community

Men's Shed

Aspiced by the Ballina Salt & Light Inc - a community project of the Ballina Baptist Church PO Box 904, Ballina NSW 2478

- Member of the Australian Men's Shed Association -

October 13, 2010

Submission Summary

The Ballina Community Men's Shed would like to enter into a partnership with Ballina Shire Council wherein the Council would provide land upon which a Men's Shed workshop and home base could be established and run by the Ballina Community Men's Shed for the benefit of the Ballina community. We are seeking to make application for the NSW Government Community Building Partnership 2011 funding round (applications close October 31, 2011) and to commence work on the project in 2012.

What is a Men's Shed?

The Men's Shed phenomena is a movement sweeping Australia. Recently three delegates from Ballina attended the 4th National Conference in Brisbane where the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) announced it's 600th men's Shed, and that it now has in excess of 50,000 members (Rotary has about 30,000) and that it was now attracting growing international interest with delegates present from England and Ireland. The Honourable Warren Snowdon MP, the Federal minister for Vet Affairs, Defence Science and Personnel and Indigenous Health opened the conference by affirming the important role Men's Sheds are playing in improving men's health in Australia. Prof Barry Golding presented research into the health and community benefits of Men's Sheds. Steve Biddulph a significant writer in the area of family, boyhood and manhood was a keynote speaker and commended highly the work of the Men's Shed Movement. Tim Mathieson, the partner of the Prime Minister is the national patron of the movement.

We would commend to you a DVD Community Service Announcement on the Men's Shed (9minutes) where the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard introduces the Men's Shed (An AMSA Production).

AMSA has as it's slogan "Men don't talk face to face, they talk shoulder to shoulder". Health professionals all over are discovering the preventative and recovery health benefits of this communal men's space. Basically the Men's Shed consists of men coming together on a voluntary basis sharing their gifts, talents, skills and experience and enjoying the fellowship and camaraderie while working together on diverse community projects usually in a workplace setting. Activities often include woodworking, metalwork, computers, electronics, painting, cooking, whatever.

Typically Men's Sheds consist primarily of people who are not in full-time regular employment. Members include, retirees, people with disabilities, unemployed people gaining experience and job readiness, people on sick leave, people with disabilities, students being mentored and part-time workers. Many have downsized and no longer have a workshop at home or no longer consider it safe to work alone on projects. It also attracts many who are community minded.

Men's Sheds are different to Woodcrafters clubs. Men's Sheds seem to stress and develop the social and communal aspects of the sessions, are often less expensive, more open and accepting to the disadvantaged and are engaged in more diverse activities (ie metalwork, gardening etc).

Why A Men's Shed?

There is growing recognition of the health needs of men. On average :

Males die 5 years earlier than females

Half of men are overweight compared to a 3rd of females being over weight

60% more males die from cancer

Heart disease kills 63% more males than females

Men's suicide rate is four times higher than women.

We recognize that by having healthier and happier men we're helping to strengthen, their families and community. The fulfillment and fellowship of a Men's Shed where they share their rich experience and make a significant contribution to others is a tonic for many, and especially isolated men and men with depression.

Ballina District has a disproportionately high number of retirees and pensioners. There are growing numbers of smaller dwellings and hence less home space for sheds. There are comparatively limited communal activities for men when compared to women in Ballina.

The Ballina Community Men's Shed

The Ballina Community Men's Shed was commenced just over two years ago. It was auspiced by the Ballina Baptist Church and now by it's community ministries body 'Ballina Salt & Light Incorporated. The Ballina Community Men's Shed has been operating a Community Garden in partnership with Ballina District Community Services Association at 33 Swift Street and a workshop in partnership with Southern Cross K-12 School at the school in Chickiba Dr. East Ballina. We currently have 33 paid up members and are growing strongly. There has been phenomenal community interest.

Apart from the small garden project we have mainly concentrated so far on woodcraft projects. We have enjoyed ongoing community support through donations of wood, tools, machines and materials. We have received project orders from Ballina Hospital and the Rehabilitation Hospital, businesses, private individuals, the Toy Library and other clubs. We have made book cases, blanket boxes, coffee tables, therapy equipment, games (remember the old Bob's sets) breadboards, crafts, shuttleboards, croquet mallets, planter boxes etc. We have restored furniture for a family who went through the Brisbane floods.

The garden operates on a Tuesday morning while the workshop operates at the school Monday and Wednesday mornings. Some scheduled mentoring of year 10 school students also happen for an hour each week.

While we are extremely grateful for our current partners who gave us a crucial start we now find ourselves severely limited and potential growth restricted.

Our Monday morning time slot is at maximum and can take no more.

We are commencing further sessions on the Tuesday as the school timetable allows.

We have wood stored at several other locations, some way out of town.

Space restricts us to working just with wood at the moment and some like metal work, etc

We have no quiet space to retreat to talk with a person away from the workshop area.

We really need a dedicated space to fit it out well – more professionally and safely.

We have little timber storage space.

All agree we have had a great beginning but we are at the crossroads and desperately need a dedicated place of our own.

The Vision

There is widespread and growing community support for the Men's Shed. We believe this opportunity should be harnessed for tremendous community benefit. The Committee of the Ballina Community Men's Shed have been talking with Council staff about a bold vision for a Men's Shed

We envisage a Men's Shed base where in the future we can have the following activities and projects: woodwork, metalwork, electronics, computers (repair & instruction), garden, upholstery, mechanical, cooking, games (cards, scrabble, other), art, craft and painting.

We envisage a flexible Shed facility having a main workshop/assembly area, a separate noise and dust room, painting room, metalwork room, a mechanics area, adequate store rooms, adequate facilities for sheet timber and metal storage, a place for a trailer storage and receiving area and 'smoko' room. Another section which also would have toilets (incl disabled), office & reception, kitchen, a meeting room, computer bay area, a display area and a lounge/interview area. We envisage an enclosed outdoor storage area and a garden area, security fencing and adequate driveway access and parking.

A 40m x 15m main shed plus a 40m x 3.6m adjoining section to the side – shell only, would approximately cost \$160,000. We hope to receive the bulk of this from the NSW Government Community Building Partnership funding. We are looking to the Council to help us with suitable land. We, the Ballina Community Men's Shed would raise support to fit out the shed, run and maintain it.

If the Ballina Shire Council owned the land and therefore ultimately the building and if the Ballina Community Men's Shed could have some certainty of tenure, it could run and maintain this important community project from its already established and proven voluntary group and community support without ongoing staffing costs from Council.

While the focus of the group is for the communal life and health of men we recognize that many women enjoy and could benefit from the same activities and facilities. We are open to the possibilities of special (or regular) women's days or times as well.

Final Appeal

We, the Ballina Community Men's Shed are at the crossroads. Help from Council at this critical time could bring great benefit directly to a very large proportion of the community and indirectly to many more.

Thank you for your consideration.

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On behalf of the Committee