



## IMSO NEWS

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### International Sheddards meet in Belfast

On the 21st of October 2016 representatives of the Men Sheds Movement from seven countries met in Belfast in Northern Ireland. The Men's Sheds Associations of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Kenya, Scotland and The UK enjoyed a very successful afternoon of information sharing and planning. Our friends from New Zealand, Sweden and the USA unfortunately and understandably could not attend.

A representative from each country gave an input on "where men's Sheds are at" in their jurisdictions. John Evoy then gave a short presentation on where IMSO has come from and how it might evolve. This included the outcomes of the stakeholder consultation survey that is discussed in another article in this newsletter.

In summary; there was recognition that the Men's Sheds in the different countries were at various stages of development and their relationship with the international network of Sheds would vary accordingly.

The needs for newer Shed Movements included information, supports, knowledge and funds and a desire to be in line with the Shed movement globally. There was also an acknowledgement that even the newest of Movements had valuable information and experiences to share with others. Everyone present was very willing to share what they had learned up to this point.



Attendees at the IMSO meeting, Belfast, October 21st 2016

It was agreed that there is added value in seeing how others deal with similar challenges. One advantage of the global network is letting each government know how big the movement is in other countries and how willing the other countries are to help. The countries with more established resources are all very willing to share them with other countries.

It was pointed out the strength of the Men's Sheds Movement is based on the strength of the network, and by strengthening the network anywhere; locally, nationally or internationally, then we are strengthening it in its entirety.

There was an agreement that each country would be asked in writing to nominate a person who would represent their country in communication with IMSO and to report back what they hear / learn. This would be done in the coming months.

Everyone present was enthusiastic about the possibilities of working together as the Men's Sheds Movement continues to develop and flourish into the future.

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## ***Too good to be true, Sheds heading to the Great Rift Valley.***



### **Men's Sheds in Kenya - George Kuria**

When John Evoy made his journey 7 years ago to Australia to find out more about the relatively little known movement of shedders, little did he know that in years to come the ripple effect will spread across the continents.

A small town in the heart of the Great Rift Valley in Kenya has not been left out; it's the first place where the planting of seeds by the International Men's Sheds Organisation have firmly taken root.

Kenya is famous for its great world class runners and the famous wild beast migration at the Maasai Mara. The Shed is based in Naivasha in a community of farmers and small traders at Ihindu centre. Naivasha has been known for the great fresh water lake which is a great tourist attraction with places like Hell's Gate, Mt Longonot, Ol Karia and top class tourist hotels among other places of interest. The weather is great all year around making it a top spot destination.

This 1<sup>st</sup> shed in Africa has been the initiative of George Kuria a Kenyan residing in Drogheda, Ireland who saw the success of the Sheds in Ireland and thought of introducing the concept in his country. George is currently pursuing MA International Development, Environment & Conflict at Dublin City University Ireland and has several years of running community development projects in his native country. He was able to bring together several men's groups in Kenya and hold workshops creating awareness about the sheds movement and its benefits to individuals and the community while relating to their situations. The men were very excited for this was very new to them and seemed to answer lots of questions that are relevant to their situations. The men have been feeling neglected and isolated for a long time and this has led to increase in substance abuse and high suicide levels. The Men's shed has landed in Kenya at a perfect time when local communities and the government have been trying to look for a solution to the national outcry of men wasting away with alcohol addiction and helplessness.

With the support of IMSO, George and Julian Carr have been able to set up a small committee to oversee the pilot sheds take off from which others can follow suit and learn from in terms of management and organisation. There has been great successes and testimonials from the 1<sup>st</sup> informal shed that has been in operation for since August 2016. The men testify to have finally gotten a safe and secure space of their own free of alcohol and other distractions where they can meet and network with each other freely. The community has felt the impact of the shed with the local chief being a shedder the men have been actively involved in a few community related activities like

supporting families during bereavement, visiting and fundraising for a fellow shedder in hospital.

They have been fundraising to acquire chairs in preparation with hopes of getting a premise of their own for currently they have been meeting in makeshift premises.

There are several other sheds groups in waiting seeking support and mentorship of any kind from tools to health related support from well-wishers and are appealing to good hearted sheds and shedders out there for help. Any shed out there that would wish to adopt or twin with a shed in Kenya kindly contact George through the IMSO and give these shedders a hand and hope that they too will make it and become an inspiration to others.

George Kuria email: [menshedkenya@outlook.com](mailto:menshedkenya@outlook.com)

Follow the Kenyan Sheds on twitter: @happysheds

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## IMSO Consultation Survey

During the months of August and September 2016, in order for us to best meet the needs of the Men's Sheds community globally, we endeavoured to request and hear the ideas and opinions of key stakeholders to help inform how our organisation develops over the coming months and years.

The survey included responses from seven countries. A number of very useful common points emerged which we will use to guide the work of IMSO. Here is a summary of the results of the IMSO stakeholder survey.

- The strength of the Men's Sheds Movement is based on the strength of the network; locally, nationally or internationally. Developing these networks is a worthwhile activity.
- Those involved in Sheds & Shed associations are busy and don't want extra work loads but they do want to be properly informed.
- Nobody wants IMSO to become an added burden on existing national Men's Shed Associations but rather a support and information sharing mechanism. There should not be a membership fee.
- IMSO's main focus should be on helping Sheds get started where there is not yet a Men's Sheds Association (MSA).
- IMSO should be low key and 'in the back ground', Public Relations efforts should focus on Sheds and MSA's.
- There is a demand for IMSO to protect the global image and brand of Men's Sheds.
- MSA's would prefer that IMSO offered supports and services, at no cost and with no time commitment.
- IMSO should source its funds from outside current sources of funds and never compete with national bodies for funding.

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## Some thoughts about Men's Shed Research internationally

Adjunct Professor Barry Golding

Whilst the Men's Shed Movement could likely survive nationally and international *without* further research, there is no doubt that a little bit of the right sort of information about how it all works and for whom is extremely valuable for a number of reasons. First, it has the capacity to get others on board, including non-government and government agencies, professionals, local communities and the general public. Second, it helps individual Men's Sheds 'see' the bigger picture and learn about the fundamentals of why it works and what might work elsewhere. Third, it provides critically important information to communities, organisations and nations where Men's Sheds do *not* yet exist about what is and might be possible. Fourth and finally, it serves to emphasise to professionals, academics and governments that Men's Sheds



Dr. Lucia Carragher

are by their nature already and very effectively 'joined up'. Good research effectively confirms to others what we already know.

Research about Men's Sheds internationally, summarised to early 2015 in Part 4 of my *Men's Shed Movement* book See <http://wp.me/p3nVDL-7c>, is not the last word. An additional 21 articles were published in the 18 months since to July 2016 (see the research update



at <http://wp.me/p3nVDL-a9>). The detail aside, this body of research confirms that there are other more effective ways of thinking and acting – apart from doing things *for* people and communities from particular service-based, disciplinary silos (for example just by providing professional services for men's health, education, training, aged care, occupational therapy, social work).

So where are the gaps? Unsurprisingly, we have a lot of information from Australian Men's Sheds, but it now needs to be brought up to date, expanded and broadened. While Lucia Carragher did some excellent early research work in Ireland there is very limited contemporary research information about Irish Men's Sheds, and almost none from the UK or New Zealand.

One of my aims in the next few years is to help others internationally to identify both the research gaps and opportunities. Some of the work I am doing 'on the ground' in Scotland (Aberdeenshire & Glasgow), Ireland, Sweden and Denmark in October 2016 has this fundamental aim. There are always opportunities for Men's Sheds to make direct contact with universities and academics - who are always looking for something new and cutting edge to study and have an impact. It's very positive for you to go first to them.

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## The Exciting 'Dawn' of the US Men's Sheds Movement in 2016

*The article below was first published through the UKMSA website: <http://menssheds.org.uk/the-dawn-of-usa-sheds/> It is worth publishing again here with the added information that the first meeting with the aim of setting up a US Men's Sheds Association took place on November 11 via teleconference and was attended by a representative of IMSO and 3 US Sheddors.*



At the launch of his book, *The Men's Shed Movement: The Company of Men*, Professor Barry Golding described the origins of the Men's Sheds Movement, in the late 1990's in Australia, as being like the tributaries of a river that rose in different places but came together to create a powerful river of considerable force.

History could be about to repeat itself in the USA almost 20 years later. Here is a brief background to why Men's Sheds may be about to take off in the US.

In a world connected by internet technology some of the transmission of ideas about Men's Sheds in community settings has occurred via the internet and email. Some of it has come from the publication and dissemination of articles in US-based international journals and some of it through US-based researchers and practitioners visiting other countries and 'rubbing shoulders' with international delegates.

In June 2007 when Barry Golding first spoke to Canadian and US-based adult education researchers about early Men's Sheds in Australia at a combined adult education conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia (in nearby Canada), there was some interest. But this was 'early days'. There was limited 'hard evidence'. It was also much too early to know how big Men's Sheds were actually going to get in Australia, and at that stage there were none elsewhere in the world.

By Nov 2013 when Barry returned to the US and presented about Men's Sheds at the American Adult Education Conference in Lexington, Kentucky there was much more evidence about how and why it worked, and also about international spread and success beyond Australia, and much more interest. One year later at a Common Ground-organised 'Aging and Society' Conference in Manchester, England in November 2014, the US-based (Champaign, Illinois) publisher,

Common Ground was interested enough in the power of the considerable evidence base to agree to publish *The Men's Shed Movement* book. Perhaps fortuitously, the principals in Common Ground, Professors Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope were former Australian university professors from Melbourne.

While there may have been some unsuccessful earlier attempts, the first Men's Shed to actually open in the USA that we are aware of was the Shed in Honolulu, set up by Glen Sears. Glen discovered the concept through his connections with the Rotary International. An article about Men's Sheds had appeared in the Rotary's newsletter *The Rotarian*.

We now know of at least ten other places right across the US that are, in late 2016, taking the first steps towards setting up a Men's Shed.

The growing activity of the USA's closest neighbours in Canadian Men's Sheds Association is another considerable factor. Doug Mackie, the founder of the first Shed in Canada, in Winnipeg has had numerous conversations with interested parties from across the border.

The UKMSA's Mike Jenn was interviewed for a recent article in the *New York Times*, which tackled the issue of loneliness. The article, that would have a vast readership, described Men's Sheds as having the aim of bringing "older men together in a more familiar and comfortable environment — working side by side in a woodworking shop." This article seems to have ignited a lot of interest in Sheds stateside.

Another indicator of the interest in Men's Sheds from the US, was shared by David Helmers, EO of the Australian Men's Sheds Association (AMSA). He explained how, following a slow stream of interest for the past few years that for the first time, visits to the AMSA website [mensshed.org](http://mensshed.org) from the US has surpassed visits from any other country including countries where Sheds are already well established such as Ireland, New Zealand and the UK. AMSA's team also share their considerable experience with those interested in Sheds from the US by sending them their condensed Men's Sheds Manual.

My recent visit to the US was because of an invitation to participate in the [changeX.org](http://changeX.org) launch in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. [changeX.org](http://changeX.org) is an online platform that aims to bring proven solutions to social problems to communities across the world. Originally established in Dublin the state of Minnesota was chosen for their US launch. To start with they are highlighting ten social innovations, including Men's Sheds, which can help transform the communities where they are established. During this trip I also had the opportunity to speak to the students of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul and to meet with several people interested in the concept of Men's Sheds, notably the representatives of the Twin Cities Men's Centre that has delivering services in the area for 40 years.

We have recently started to collect and respond to all of the expressions of interest in Men's Sheds from the USA that come through the different existing Associations of Australia, the U.K., New Zealand and Ireland. These expressions of interest include quite a number from the Irish diaspora who have heard from their homeland how Men's Sheds have established themselves in most small towns in the country. There has also been a lot of contact through the Honolulu Shed and with the UKMSA due to the *New York Times* article. The UK MSA now has over 50 contacts from the US in their database.

At this point IMSO will maintain contact with the interested parties from the US and as momentum grows, we will put them in touch with other interested parties in their state or region. Who knows, it may not be too long before there is a USMSA which will be leading the development of Men's Sheds across the US in their own unique way?

For now if you are in the US and are interested in finding out if anyone near you has expressed an interest, or you just want to find out more about Men's Sheds, please contact me, John Evoy at [imso.johnevoy@mensshed.net](mailto:imso.johnevoy@mensshed.net)

I would also love to hear from you if you have any additional information that would have made this account more complete or accurate. I would like to thank Barry Golding for his contribution to this article.



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