

Blue Skies Conference Report

Kaiapoi 15 – 17 April 2016

Diversity, Collaboration and Health



A year ago, planning started for the Christchurch conference. Initially a collaborative effort representatives of 3 sheds; Kaiapoi, Amberley, and New Brighton, they were later joined by Oxford and Bishopdale. In 2015, MENZSHED NZ set the conference parameters of \$100 registration and the conference to be self funding. MENZSHED NZ also provided startup funding and later, a commitment to underwrite the conference.

In April 2016, the planning committee delivered a conference with the \$100 registration fee including all meals, a venue with affordable accommodation and a surplus. Despite this, some sheds still found the cost to attend was beyond their means, travel costs the primary reason given.

There were 65 sheddies (27 NZ sheds and the Flowerdale shed, Victoria, AU), 10 partners and 19 sponsors / exhibitors / demonstrators / volunteers registered for the conference. A year of planning culminated in a most enjoyable weekend of good company, information sharing and contacts made or renewed.

The theme for the conference was “Diversity, Collaboration and Health”.

- Diversity – recognising the variety of sheds, solutions employed and issues affecting operations
- Collaboration – working with the community, other charities and sheds
- Health – achieving improvements in men's health

Themes that were reflected throughout the conference in the formal and informal sessions.



Carbatec SawStop demonstration

Friday 15 April

Starting with lunch, this was the social day, a chance to get to know each other. Participants were taken on a tour of the Patience & Nicholson drill factory and a model engineering workshop. Back at Blue Skies there was a woodturning demonstration, and stands for Carbatec, Ryman's, Cabot's, Cancer Society and 3M/Blackwoods Protector.

The evening provided more opportunity for socialising, viewing of the “Our shed in a shoebox” exhibition and a BBQ dinner sponsored by Carbatec with drinks sponsored by Ryman's and Coca-Cola.

Saturday 16 April

The formal opening of the conference was made by David Ayers, Mayor of the Waimakariri District.

David Helmers of the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) outlined what has been happening in Australia.

950 sheds, down from 1200 as a result of tightening up on membership criteria. The focus is on men's sheds, defined as:

- Open to all men
- Can be indigenous or within aged care environment.

What sheds are not:

- A business
- Competitors with other organisations
- Dictatorship



- Wasteful of resources.

David estimated about half of sheds are mixed gender membership (might have a “Women’s Wednesday”). Men only sheds must apply to [Human Rights Commission](#) for an exemption and this is usually granted.

AMSA are proposing to open their member only resources to MENZSHED NZ members. We will look at how our membership database can be shared or other process to provide login information.

John Robinson (Linwood Men’s Shed) and Martin Witt (Cancer Society) shared a session on Men’s sheds and their impact on health. John brought the shed into the conference with his use of volunteers and a couple of impact drivers for effect. Martin left us with some indelible images in his [presentation](#) and advice on what to look for and how to manage cancer.



John Robinson (Linwood) and assistants

After lunch, Paul Hendry of [Worksafe NZ](#) outlined some of the safety issues they see and the impact of the new H&S act on sheds.

- NZ workplace safety record twice as bad as Australia, 3 times that of the UK
- Weekly average - 1 fatality and 15 disease related incidents.
- Focus is on risk management rather than hazard management.
- Culture and behaviour are important elements in the workplace.
- Conversations between men regarding safety will be important.
- Site visits to New Brighton and Halswell sheds did not raise concerns.
- Men’s Sheds would not be a focus for WORKSAFE.

Although sheds that do not employ staff are not deemed workplaces and are not covered by the act, the information on the Worksafe website is still relevant to their safe operation and well worth reading are the Worksafe information sheets on [Volunteers](#) and [Volunteers as Officers](#).

Continuing the theme of diversity were presentations by 3 very different sheds; Havelock Menzshed, Manurewa Boomer Business and Halswell Men’s Shed. Halswell as part of their [presentation](#) compiled a video which can be seen on [Facebook](#). Manurewa’s presentation can be seen [here](#).



Havelock Menzshed

Trevor Scott of Mclver’s Oxford Community Men’s Shed outlined some of the issues to be aware under the heading [“Is it a shed or a business?”](#).

The final [presentation](#) of the day was from Harald Breiding-Buss of [Christchurch Community Accounting](#) on the topic of Financial and charities reporting.

For sheds registered with Charities Services, spreadsheets to help with XRB reporting requirements can be downloaded from [their site](#).

- Schedule of Assets must include tools and equipment at cost, including donated items.
- No depreciation required for tier 4 accounts.
- Take care recording related party transactions - these would include donations that board members may have made to the shed.
- Balance Sheet no longer required, therefore no Equity Value to calculate.

Two comments stood out from the presentations; “People before projects” and “Men before sheds”.

A few social drinks before we all headed off to the Conference dinner at the Kaiapoi Golf Club, sponsored by Fair Dinkum Sheds with wine again sponsored by Rymans. Some light entertainment was provided during the meal by Frank Spencer (alias Bob Smith of [Mainland Fasteners](#)).

Sunday 17 April

Question and Answer time

The panel comprised representatives from five sheds throughout NZ. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions and the following are a bullet point summary of responses from the panel.

Question - In and Out work, sheddies working off-site?

- Permitted, sheddies must be in pairs as a minimum
- Not competing with tradespeople
- No work that requires a permit or certification
- What is the shed liability for unintended consequences
- Sheddies don't like police vetting
- Not permitted - the shed is the hub, keep guys at shed for fellowship
- Equipment goes missing
- No community out-work, it must be brought to the site
- Only community out-work, no out-work in private homes.
- Sheds make their own policies.

Question - How to handle deceased estate offers of equipment and materials?

- Let family have first opportunity
- May be preferable to ensure there is a support person for the donor (family, executor etc.)
- Shed members must not take gear or buy for personal use
- Sell on widower's behalf
- Send to auction room
- No strings attached basis...
 - Some gear to shed
 - Some to TradeMe
 - \$1 box for sheddies
 - Remainder to dump.
- Sell on behalf, 80% to widow
- Share with other sheds
- Have a policy
- Document the offer.

Question - Sheddies personalities (bullying, inappropriate actions)?

- Watch out for those seeking power
- Create culture and values
- Have the difficult conversations early
- Do shed rules provide for termination of membership? Follow the process.

Question - Dodgy member applicants?

- OK, as long as they adapt to shed culture
- Assess job placement workers promptly - they stay or depart
- Beware of being cased for theft.

Question - Experienced ACC claim?

- No shed had experienced a claim
- Claimants need to disclose where the injury happened.

Question - What do you use for accounting?

- Spreadsheets
- [Quickbooks](#)
- [Cashbook Complete](#)

Question - How to leave a shed legacy?

- Alternative hours
- Inclusive culture
- Encourage young people/students
- Programmes for unemployed
- What is the will of the shed
- Don't over commit
- Beware venturing into areas with no experience.

Question - What are membership charges?

- \$20p.a. with \$10 going to Community House auspicing organisation
- \$30p.a. + \$1 per day
- \$25p.a. + gold coin per day
- \$35p.a.
- \$10p.a. + \$1 per day or \$100p.a. in advance
- \$20p.a. + \$1 per day
- \$25p.a.

AGM

The conference concluded with the AGM. Minutes will be distributed shortly.

Partner programme

The partner programme included a trip to the private [Northbrook Colonial Museum](#), Rangiora on the Friday afternoon and on Saturday a tour of Christchurch. As there were only a small number of partners, the detail of programme was left to them to decide. There was no partner programme on the Sunday but an impromptu morning tea was organised.

A special vote of thanks goes to Pauline Nelmes of Amberley and Mandy Grenier of Kaiapoi for their help.

Volunteer helpers

The [Canterbury Men's Centre](#) continued their support of men's sheds in NZ by sponsoring two social worker students as volunteers for the weekend. They both enjoyed the experience and went away enthused with the concept of men's sheds.



Sharon and Lorina

A vote of thanks

To all the participants in the conference. It was your conference and your willingness to share experiences and knowledge was essential to making it a success.

To David Helmers of AMSA for committing early to attending the conference and willingly sharing knowledge and experiences of Australian sheds.

To the drivers, Alastair Mackley (Kaiapoi), John Forster (Kaiapoi), Stuart Reesby (Amberley) and Pauline Nelmes (Amberley).

To the organising committee, Frank Overend (Kaiapoi), Stuart Reesby (Amberley), Trevor Scott (Oxford) and Bill Greenwood (Bishopdale). Your willingness to get involved in the planning over the past year is really appreciated, collaboration between sheds can really achieve great outcomes.

To Pauline at [Blue Skies](#) and Mike at [Country Catering](#) at the Kaiapoi Golf Club, the food and venues were ideal for our conference and your suggestions and support through the planning period made the committees job that much easier.

Our special thanks to the supporters of the conference

[Fair Dinkum Sheds](#) and [Carbatec](#) , the major sponsors.



[Patience & Nicholson](#), and Graham Chisnall for hosting the external tours.



Rex Marshall for his woodturning demonstration.

[Ryman Healthcare](#), [Cabot's](#), [Cancer Society](#) and [3M](#) / [Blackwoods Protector](#) for donations and being a part of the conference.



Donations or product support were also received from; [Progressive Financial Planning](#), [New World Kaiapoi Supermarket](#), [Mitre10](#), [Bunnings](#) , [Christchurch City Council](#), [Placemakers Kaiapoi](#), [Rothbury](#), [Coca-Cola](#) and [GoBus](#).



Ray Hall
Chairman, MENZSHED New Zealand
26 April 2016