

## **Text Letter of Editor of the Listener, published in Listener for 30 July 2011**

Thank you for the article on Men's Sheds (Sawdust & Solutions, 23/7) we need the community to know more about us, and what we are trying to achieve.

I was drawn to the concept about a year ago, as it seemed to be a possible solution for some men that I knew. For one reason or another they lived alone, and clearly longed for companionship. That's a difficult commodity to find in today's world, and while the Internet may let you know what's happening, it's not always the most appropriate way of making friends.

Our shed is the Wellington City MenzShed. No, that's not a typo. We want you to know this is a New Zealand Shed. We are there for any man who wants to find companionship, revive past skills, and learn new skills. We hold a Grumpy Old Men's' session where we can sit around, and rail against the world while sipping tea and eating stale biscuits. That helps get rid of some of the frustration, but next day we're repainting stools for the Kindergarten, repairing furniture for refugees or putting up shelves at the Medical Centre.

It is encouraging to see some of our "sheddies" emerging from their protective shells, and sharing and enjoying the companionship of others.

That's the good side of things, but there is a matter of concern.

In order to operate we need a shed, somewhere to store our tools, where that we can work on projects, and just meet. In Wellington we are lucky at the moment. An old workshop has been rented with grants from the Wellington City Council and the DHB. However the building has an "Earthquake Risk" notice pasted on the front door, and grants can never be guaranteed.

Every part of the community says they support what we are doing. We are helping a growing section of our community – the older men, who've lost jobs, lost families, and lost interest in life. At the Men Sheds they are revived, and able to contribute once again to our community.

So this is the conundrum, and I have no doubt it applies to many other Men's Sheds.

None of us are paid; we give our labour and our skills to help others. Since we are helping the more needy groups in the community the income from a Shed's activities will probably cover the operating cost of maintaining tool, and buying some milk and tea. We will never have sufficient money to purchase a "shed", and unless one of us is a professional fundraiser we're unlikely to be able to raise the \$15,000 year for the current rent

How can we ensure that Men's Sheds have a shed for as long as they are needed?

John Shrapnell  
Secretary, Wellington City MenzShed

