



## **House of Assembly**

**Extract from Hansard**

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012  
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### **Willow's Men's Shed**

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (15:38): Today I would like to speak briefly about the Willo's Men's Shed, which is located in Little Paxton Street in Willaston in my electorate. It was established five years ago with a \$50,000 grant from Wakefield Health, with the assistance of Employment Directions, which actually had the head lease on the site. The Men's Shed was established to provide a shed substitute for retired men who may no longer have access to their own shed, garage or workspace which they can call their own. Importantly, though, the shed also exists to provide men with a setting distinct from the pub or a football club—there is often nowhere else for men of a certain age to go.

Willo's Men's Shed also provides a place to enjoy the company of other men and a cuppa in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere created by blokes

working shoulder to shoulder with other like-minded men. I think yesterday in this place the member for Florey spoke about a Men's Shed in her electorate. Willo's Men's Shed consists of three sections. There is the leisure room, a kitchen (which is used, obviously, for cooking and sharing meals) and a workshop (which contains workbenches, tools for woodwork, metalwork, etc.)

The Willo's Men's Shed consists of a core group of 35 to 40 active members, with a five-person management committee. Currently, the chair of the committee is Colleen Moyne, supported by Graham Carse, Ian Polkinghorne, Dwayne Reed, and Steve Frisdorf. In its five-year history, around 600 men have passed through the doors of the shed, some coming from outside the electorate itself. Also, I would like to acknowledge the work done by Mr Aaron Phillips and the Gawler Men's Health Group in establishing the shed five years ago.

In the workshop the men work on their own projects or do a lot of community work. They do repair work on furniture, etc, for the local nursing home, the show, etc. All the moneys made by the shed are reinvested in the shed itself.

There is also a group called Blokes at the Shed (BATS), and they meet on Tuesdays. It is a social group with a health focus, and around about 12 guys attend that event regularly, supported by Gawler Health Service volunteers. That group is particularly supportive of men who are isolated because of depression or divorce, etc. The shed also provides monthly

cooking classes and men learn to cook quick, simple, healthy meals, either for themselves if they are divorced, widowed or single, or for their families if they are just trying to pull their weight at home.

There is also the Talk 'n' Tools, which is in collaboration with Employment Directions (who are now moving on) and a Gawler Health Service youth worker and is about assisting at-risk young men who are not attending school. They come into the shed and work in small groups with the guys and learn a whole range of hands-on skills but, also, importantly, socialisation skills which, often, isolated young men do not have. It is a very important program.

The reason I raise this today is that the Men's Shed is under threat of closure. Unfortunately, the head lease, held by Employment Directions, is ending (they are moving) and the landlord (the Town of Gawler) cannot give a commitment to pass on that lease to the group. It would be a travesty if the Men's Shed was closed down because it provides such an important service, particularly in improving men's health.

On the point of men's health, I also congratulate the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Adelaide Produce Market, who held a Pit Stop at the markets yesterday morning. A Pit Stop is one of those places where men come to have some basic health checks. It is often held with other events and, in this case, it was held in the workplace, which is the Adelaide Produce Market. It is being held this year because of the Clipsal 500, and it is about getting things serviced and repaired.

It is interesting to note that these Pit Stops are quite good at identifying health issues for men. Yesterday, for example, I am told that, as a result of the checks, nine men ended up seeing a doctor on the same day because of blood pressure and other issues which they were unaware of, so there are some benefits from that.

The reason Men's Sheds are important is that, generally speaking, men tend to have poorer health outcomes and the men's shed is a subtle or soft way of introducing men to talking about their own personal issues and also providing information in a supportive environment. It also gets men talking about their own situation. Australian men are more likely to get sick from serious health problems such as cancer than Australian women. At the end of the day, we need to remember that men are fathers, sons, brothers and partners; and they need to be healthy physically and mentally.

**TIME EXPIRED**