



## House of Assembly

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### MEN'S SHEDS

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO ( Light ) ( 15:19 ):** Today, I would like to bring to the house's attention a special week. This week is the Australian Men's Shed Association's inaugural Men's Shed Week. The Men's Shed Week runs from 6 to 12 March and, during this week, various men's sheds right across the country will have open days, shed tours, barbecues and information shared at various local shopping centres, etc. The aim of the week is obviously to increase the profile and awareness of the existence of men's sheds and also the important work they perform in our various communities.

I am aware that, right throughout the whole state, there are a number of men's sheds in both urban and rural areas. I am also aware that, in a lot of rural communities, men's sheds play an important role and, in a moment, I will speak

about the shed in my town of Gawler. The sheds play an important role in providing a safe place for men to socialise.

A lot of the men who attend are people who have retired, or who, for example, may not be employed, or who, for whatever reason, attend to engage in friendship with other men. Apart from it being a safe place in which to socialise, there is an opportunity to have a coffee with other men and share their stories and life experiences. There is also an opportunity to learn new skills. A lot of men who go to men's sheds are retired tradespeople, and they are obviously prepared to share the skills they have learnt through their working life.

In some cases, men's sheds play an important role in dealing with the isolation that some men experience through that part of their life, whether the isolation is caused by a partner's death and they are by themselves, whether it is isolation caused by the breakup of the marriage, where they are again by themselves, or because the family has moved away, etc. There are also men who have lost employment.

What the men's sheds achieve and seek to do varies from community to community, depending on how the shed is actually established. Some sheds are started by church groups and some sheds are started by farm groups. The shed in my town, for example, was established by a men's

health group. Every shed plays a different role, and they come in different shapes and forms. Some are literally in the centre of town and some are sheds on somebody's farm, etc. I understand that, in one of the communities in my electorate, we may have one of the first pop-up sheds.

The one shed I would like to talk about in a bit more detail today is Willo's Men's Shed which is in Gawler. Willo's Men's Shed opened in 2007. Just to put it on the record, Willo's is located in a big shed which was actually then operated by Employment Directions, which was a not-for-profit organisation in Little Paxton Street, Willaston.

The shed, back in 2007, was the result of a collaboration of many people working together, and I think it is important to acknowledge that. There was the then fatherhood worker in the community, Aaron Phillips; mental health worker, Nigel Davies; Debbie Martin, who was then the manager of community services; Erik Moen, the CEO of the Gawler Health Services; and also Mr Mark Abrook, a member of the Gawler Men's Health Group at the time. They also received support from the then CEO of Employment Directions, Carmel Rosier.

With a grant of \$50,000 from the then Wakefield Health, the shed was established, and it has gone from strength to strength. The shed provides a whole range of opportunities for

men to do things which men like to do. It is not a case of men having to do these things: they actually agree amongst themselves on what is important to them.

For example, in the Willo's Men's Shed, they have got a workshop there and they tinker with, obviously, a lot of equipment. They actually make toys, which they sell to raise funds, and repair furniture for people in nursing homes and other community organisations. They also provide cooking classes for men.

The Willo's Men's Shed, under the current leadership of chairperson Neville Voigt, secretary Kevin Douglas, treasurer Wayne Marks, and committee members Andrew Scholtz, Dougie Lloyd, Henry Loveridge, Rodney Mold and David Dawson, provides a very important support mechanism for men in our community. I would like to congratulate the Australian Men's Shed Association for this inaugural Men's Shed Week.