# 2014 WAMSA Conference Chairman’s Speech

# Welcome and acknowledgements:

On behalf of the Western Australian Men’s Shed Association, I welcome you to the 2014 Beyond Tools Men’s Shed Conference.

I would like to mention in particular out speakers and interstate guests… and some, like Gary Green, are both!

It would be remiss of me not to thank the major sponsors of the Conference; Beyond Tools and LotteryWest

## Thanks to workers:

1. The 2014 Conference Committee who put in the time and resources to develop and deliver this conference for us all. I know they have put in months of work to make this all possible and I would like you all to join with me to thank them for their efforts.
2. Then there’s the Station St Shed Volunteers who have provided the workers to set this up and who will be feeding us and providing the drinks and so on.

# Key Developments for the past year:

## Health Dept Funding Agreement Outcomes

WAMSA has an agreement with the WA Health Department by which we are assessed for funding from the Department over the term of the agreement. The criteria are:-

Increase membership of WAMSA by 25%

There were 35 members in 2010-11, the base figure, target was 44 members over the period. At 30 June 2014 there were 83 financial members.

Promote at least three health initiatives to WA sheds each year

1. Subsidised first aid training was taken up by 44 shed members at 16 sheds.
2. The February Warbler included an article on prostate cancer.
3. The June Warbler included an article on organ and tissue donations.
4. It also included an article on research conducted by BeyondBlue that reinforced the clear social, emotional and physical benefits experienced by men by participating in a men’s shed.
5. Details of Mental Health First Aid courses were also included in the June newsletter.

Arrange an annual seminar/workshop or a major conference every second year

The presentations from the 2013 seminar have been made available on the website.

Develop strategies to assist sheds to cater for men with special needs

1. An officer of the Equal Opportunity Commission addressed the WAMSA Committee and has been invited to speak at this conference.
2. Two committee members attended the Reconnect Career Expo at the Karnet prison open day on 14 March. The prison is interested in establishing a men’s shed.
3. Another two committee members attended Bunbury Regional Prison on 9 May. Over 100 persons came through and there were 7 genuine enquires about the locations of the sheds in their towns.
4. A meeting was held with a Parkinson’s WA Board member.
5. A meeting was held with the Beananging Kwuurt Institute at Queen’s Park to discuss formation of an Aboriginal Men’s Shed.
6. An advertisement was placed in the Prostate Cancer Foundation magazine that was published by The West Australian on 11 June 2014 as part of Men’s Health Week.
7. The Chairman will raise the issue of how well are sheds welcoming men with a variety of backgrounds in his opening address at this conference … we’ll get to that!.

Provide a web based “Shed in a Box” that compliments the resources provided by AMSA

The “Shed in a Box” is being made available in both printed and electronic formats on a USB. Other information will be continuously added.

WA database of WA sheds is established and maintained

There are 155 sheds on the data base. However a number of these are in the planning stage and some may not proceed.

Advocate the benefits of Men’s Sheds to at least five Local Authorities and/or Community Organisations per year

The Promotions and Development Officer, Executive Officer and some committee members continue to speak to various organisations and have information tables at events, including:

* Farming and Beyond at Southern Cross
* Attended the AGM of the Kojunup Men’s Shed and met with the Shire CEO.
* An information table at Wagin Woolarama 7- 9 March
* Spoke to the Rotary Clubs of Dalkeith and Morley
* “No Falls” event at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital on 2 April
* An information table at the “Designing for an Ageing Population” Forum held on 10 April
* Meeting with the Chief Commissioner of the WA Scouts Association. An MOU is being prepared.
* Meeting with the Grand Master of Freemasons. An MOU is proposed.
* An information table at the “Men’s Mind Matters Forum” at the State Library conducted by Palmerston, Outcare and DAWN on 9 June as part of Men’s Health Week.

Number of queries responded to:

Hundreds!

Other

A proposal for men’s sheds to carry out maintenance and minor repairs on wheelchairs and other aids for people with a disability has been discussed with the Country Health Service and the Disability Services Commission.

A drop down menu titled “Committee” was added to the contact page of the website <http://www.wamsa.org.au/committee> It has a list of committee members, plus the policy on transparency and contains a summary of the outcomes from each committee meeting.

The Executive Officer attended a Donatelife and NGO Partnership Forum on 27 May.

There is a lot on the agenda for today:-

* Development of sheds around WA, Australia and overseas
* What does the Equal Opportunity Act mean for Sheds?
* How can sheds accommodate men with a disability, particularly those who require a carer?
* Obtaining assistance from Local Government?
* Partnerships with Scouts WA and the Masonic Lodge
* The WAMSA strategic plan
* The role of women in the management of sheds
* Spanner in the Works program
* How can sheds enhance their image in the community?

I don’t want to steal anyone’s thunder, but there is one issue that I want to emphasise particularly.

# Diversity in Sheds

We live in a diverse society, one that is much more diverse than the one I grew up in.

When I was a kid, there were, apparently, no gay men, no non-white men, no non-English speakers and nobody who was out in public had a mental illness, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or any other weakness… even though, we now know, all of these types of men *were* in our society.

Cripples were kept hidden, old people died early and foreigners were universally suspect or second rate.

It’s just a little different these days, so… would your shed welcome:

* An ex-servicemen or returning veteran?
* Fly in Fly out worker?
* An unemployed man?
* Refugee or migrant?
* An ex-prisoner?
* An Aboriginal man?
* A young man in his 20’s or 30’s?
* A gay man?
* A man with a mental ill-health issue? (*Pat McGorrie’s non-judgemental term*)
* A man with dementia or Alzheimer‘s disease?

I’m sure that many Sheds in WA, and around the world, that already do welcome such men, and I congratulate them for it, but, as a Men’s Movement, we need to get past seeing the differences and start seeing the men instead.

These are issues that are now, or soon will be, day to day realities for many of our Sheds. It’s critical that we, as the fastest growing Men’s organisation in Australia, understand the importance of getting this right in both the legal and ethical senses.

Your WAMSA management committee has met with a representative from the Equal Opportunity Commission so we can better understand our legal responsibilities and I hope that, as a result of what you here at today’s Conference, you guys will go away with a better understanding of the issues too.

In addition to the information that you will gain from the excellent speakers, please take the opportunity to talk to the people at the various trade displays. Please introduce yourself to people from another shed and share your experiences and ideas. Together we can all contribute to the success of sheds throughout Western Australia and in turn enhance the health and well-being of the men involved and the communities in which they live

Finally, a very big thank you to our naming rights Sponsor, Beyond Tools, for their generous contribution to the funding of this Conference

and to Lotterywest which has assisted so many country sheds to attend.