



**GOVERNANCE REVIEW
OF THE
AUSTRALIAN MEN'S SHED ASSOCIATION
2020-21**

**commissioned by the
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**undertaken by
NATIONAL ADVISORY PTY LTD
with
MERCURIUS CONSULTING PTY LTD**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| REVIEW SCOPE | 3 |
| REVIEW APPROACH..... | 4 |
| CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS | 7 |
| AMSA governance..... | 7 |
| Management of the National Shed Development Program (NSDP)..... | 7 |
| Federal Government Agreement..... | 9 |
| Building a Unified Men’s Shed Sector..... | 9 |
| AMSA GOVERNANCE..... | 11 |
| Recommendations | 16 |
| MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL SHED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (NSDP) | 18 |
| Recommendations | 25 |
| FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT..... | 27 |
| PRIORITY AT-RISK GROUPS | 35 |
| Recommendations | 37 |
| BUILDING A UNIFIED MEN’S SHED SECTOR | 39 |
| Recommendations | 45 |
| OTHER OBSERVATIONS..... | 47 |

REVIEW SCOPE

The Federal Department of Health has commissioned National Advisory Pty Ltd with Mercurius Consulting to undertake a review of the governance arrangements of the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA).

The purpose of the review is to provide advice and recommendations on possible enhancements to the AMSA's governance arrangements. Emphasis is on the key responsibilities of AMSA and its links with individual sheds and state-based men's shed organisations. The aim of the review is to encourage a unified and well-functioning national men's shed community.

The review is focused on:

- The governance of AMSA, including its links to and relationships with state-based men's shed organisations and individual sheds
- The performance of AMSA's key tasks and responsibilities, with a focus on those expected of AMSA in its agreement with the Australian Government, including:
 - o Working to present a unified movement and promote the benefits of shed participation to all Australians
 - o Partnering with men's health organisations at the national level and within jurisdictions, to increase awareness of men's health issues and support health prevention activities among men's sheds
 - o Targeting awareness and support efforts to shed participants in priority at-risk groups (e.g., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, migrants and men from non-English speaking backgrounds, unemployed men).
- The respective roles and responsibilities of AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations across Australia
- The administering by AMSA of the National Shed Development Program (NSDP).

The review's scope expressly excludes the validity or appropriateness of decision making relating to the awarding of grants under the NSDP.

REVIEW APPROACH

The review has been conducted in a way that has given stakeholders the opportunity to provide input, make submissions and have follow-up discussions. We analysed and reviewed a significant body of information provided by AMSA, the Department of Health and other men's shed organisations, and tested our thinking with AMSA, the Department of Health, other men's shed organisations, key partners and stakeholders and a cross-section of individual sheds.

A summary of the activities undertaken as part of the review is as follows.

Introductory discussions

- Initial discussions with key Department of Health staff who provided relevant information about the AMSA agreement including performance/progress reports, the NSDP and previous evaluation reports
- Initial discussions with AMSA explaining the review and the approach to it
- An information request to AMSA covering all aspects of the scope of the review
- Reaching out to other men's shed organisations informing them about the purpose of the review and asking them to provide written input
- Request to AMSA to provide written input as well as inviting their skills-based board members to input

Receipt of input and discussions

- Provision of detailed information by AMSA on its governance and management of the NSDP and Australian Government funded agreement
- Receipt of written submissions from AMSA, skills based AMSA directors, other men's shed organisations, and interested individuals
- Provision of further information from the Department of Health
- Series of detailed discussions with key AMSA personnel on key aspects of the review
- Follow up discussions with other men's shed organisations
- Follow up discussions with the Department of Health
- Discussions with the CEO of Healthy Male

Men's shed consultations

- Physical site visits to men's sheds
- Verbal consultations with selected cross-section of sheds across states and territories, including several sheds recommended by other men's shed organisations
- Meeting with a men's shed zone coordinator
- Consideration of the input provided by men's sheds through the Department of Health's feedback email address for the review
- Write-up of examples of sheds consulted to demonstrate their achievements, issues, and challenges, as well as their diversity

Follow up requests and discussions

- Follow up requests for information from AMSA
- Follow up discussions with key AMSA personnel, in person and remotely
- Ongoing communication with key personnel from other men's shed organisations
- Regular discussions with the Department of Health on the progress of the review and individual issues

- Request to observe an AMSA board meeting

Analysis and review work

- In-depth analysis of AMSA governance based on materials provided by AMSA as well as publicly available information
- Review of previous evaluations and reviews of AMSA
- Review of AMSA agreements and performance/progress reports
- Review of AMSA financial statements and membership applications
- Review of the most recent AMSA strategic plan
- Review of NSDP materials, including the application form, AMSA grant management procedures, templates and reports, and funding round reports and statistics
- Analysis of respective roles and responsibilities using information provided by AMSA, other men's shed organisations, individual sheds and third parties

Report preparation

- Consultation with AMSA about the general direction of the draft report
- Development of a draft report for consideration by the Department of Health
- Receipt of feedback from the Department of Health on the draft report and from AMSA on aspects of the draft report
- Review of draft report based on feedback received from the Department of Health and AMSA
- Provision of the Final report

We took an open and consultative approach to the review, providing the opportunity for AMSA, other men's shed organisations and individual sheds to provide written input and engage in verbal discussions. We also responded to input provided by other men's shed organisations. We made clear that our discussions were confidential so that shed organisations and sheds felt free to express their views openly without attribution.

Throughout the review, AMSA, other men's sheds organisations and individual sheds responded positively to our requests, with AMSA providing a large amount of information in relation to its internal governance and management of the Federal agreement and the NSDP while other men's shed organisations were eager to provide both written and verbal input. We appreciate the constructive and collaborative approach to the review by all stakeholders, as well as the guidance and support we have received from the Department of Health.

We made clear to the sheds we visited and spoke with that we were not reviewing their operations and encouraged them to talk about their history and activities as well as their issues and challenges. We appreciate the willingness of shed leaders to engage and welcome us into their sheds. Their input was invaluable in developing our understanding of the role of men's sheds and how they interact with AMSA and other men's shed organisations.

In undertaking this review, we were aware of disagreements between AMSA and other men's shed organisations. The scope of the review refers specifically to AMSA's relationships with state-based men's shed organisations and its work to present a unified men's shed movement in Australia. This means the issues between AMSA and other men's shed organisations are a valid part of the review. However, we made clear from the outset that the purpose of the review was not to find fault or to mediate between the parties. Our task was to understand and report on whether AMSA's approach to

governance is enabling a more unified men's shed movement or not and to recommend enhancements that could assist in addressing current issues between men's shed organisations, within the scope of the Federal funding agreement. It was not within the scope of the review to address all issues raised by men's shed organisations.

Quite deliberately, we took a positive overall approach to the review. By any measure, the men's shed movement is a highly valuable community endeavour that makes a genuinely positive difference to the lives of many men around Australia. AMSA and other men's shed organisations have played an important role in enabling this outcome. We made clear from the start that our job was to identify opportunities for AMSA to enhance its governance to the benefit of sheds, working collaboratively with government, other men's shed organisations, health partners and other stakeholders.

It is our hope that the review is of assistance in enabling the vital role of men's sheds to continue successfully in the future.

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

AMSA governance

In relation to AMSA's governance, it is recommended that:

1. The AMSA Board should:
 - a. directly contribute to the development of the AMSA Strategic Plan. Better practice is for the Board to work collaboratively with the Executive Staff throughout the development of the plan and provide final approval.
 - b. monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan through assessing performance against the agreed strategy on a regular basis, probing and sensing underlying conditions, and identifying risks and strategic inconsistencies that could threaten the organisation
 - c. review the Strategic Plan periodically and whenever a significant change might impact its execution, and revise accordingly
 - d. implement a new standing agenda item at each meeting commonly called a "Strategic environment scan" to enable members of Council to share their external perspective on relevant issues to the broader Council.
2. Directors should work with management to produce board papers in a standard format that clearly indicate what the board or committee is being asked to do, including provision of an adequate level of analysis in support of a proposed recommendation. Directors should set expectations of management in relation to board reporting and regularly reflect on, and provide feedback on, the adequacy of board papers.
3. Directors should ensure minutes are recorded in a manner that provides an appropriate level of detail to accurately represent the key points of discussion and the broad reasons for decisions. Conflicts of interest should be noted in the minutes with how they were handled, likewise a statement providing the opportunity to raise conflicts is good practice.
4. Existing AMSA directors and the AMSA CEO should undertake governance training, and qualifications and experience in board governance should be a highly desirable attribute for future AMSA board appointees.
5. AMSA should consider conducting a full membership audit, whereby the accuracy of the membership database information can be confirmed. At the same time, AMSA should clarify the nature of AMSA membership, including by clearly distinguishing its role under the Federal Government agreement and its separate member and commercial activities, including as an insurance provider. Given that AMSA is directly funded by the Federal Government to support men's sheds, a starting point should be that all bona fide men's sheds are able to receive information, support, and advice from AMSA, regardless of whether they are a member or not.

Management of the National Shed Development Program (NSDP)

In relation to AMSA's management of the NSDP, it is recommended that:

6. AMSA should develop protocols, endorsed by the Department of Health, to ensure that there is separation of its respective roles as the manager of the NSDP and a member organisation,

including its activities as an insurance provider. The protocols should cover information and data collection and storage, communications to members and non-members, staff roles, elected officials, and the role of the AMSA evaluation panel. The protocols should be communicated to sheds, men's shed organisations and other identified key stakeholders.

7. In its communications with sheds, state-based men's shed organisations, stakeholders, and the public, AMSA should continue to promote that the NSDP is a government-funded program and that NSDP grants are government grants. The role of AMSA in managing the NSDP on behalf of the Australian Government should be clearly and transparently explained in ways that are easily accessed by men's sheds and men's shed organisations.
8. AMSA provides written clarity on the NSDP website regarding the support available to sheds in preparing their applications, along with a statement that this support is consistently provided to all sheds regardless of their location or membership of AMSA.
9. The Department of Health should consider requiring AMSA to maintain a separate NSDP website as well as a stand-alone NSDP contact phone number and email address to demonstrate a clear separation between the NSDP (as a government program administered by AMSA) and AMSA's broader membership work.
10. AMSA should ensure it is (and is perceived to be) providing equal service and equal consideration to all eligible applicants in its administration of the NSDP.
 - a. AMSA should ensure the effort required to complete an NSDP application is equal for all applicants, including requiring the provision of the same application information from AMSA members and non-members.
 - b. AMSA should ensure any provision of information or advice during a NSDP grant round is done equitably for AMSA members and non-members, including the provision of information to unaligned state men's shed organisations.
 - c. AMSA should continue to maintain separate databases/CRMs for its NSDP and membership related work and document protocols regarding the internal sharing of information and data management.
11. AMSA and the Department of Health develop a written explanation of how the NSDP is managed, focussing on the role of AMSA as the program manager and the grants process, that would be proactively communicated to all relevant stakeholders and made available on AMSA's and the Department of Health's relevant communications channels.
12. AMSA provides greater transparency around the membership of the NSDP evaluation panel, including the selection process, and considers whether the composition of the evaluation panel is appropriate, including whether additional independent members would enhance its effectiveness. Further, the existence of the evaluation panel and its role in the NSDP management process should be included in any documented NSDP grant management process.
13. AMSA and the Department of Health undertake a major simplification of the NSDP grant application form as soon as possible.

14. NSDP applications move to an electronic format with appropriate transitional support provided to sheds and consideration given to a potential upgrade to AMSAs relevant IT systems to enable it to capture the efficiency benefits of reduced manual processing, together with training of relevant AMSA staff.

Federal Government Agreement

In relation to AMSA's agreement with the Australian Government and associated matters, it is recommended that:

15. current and future AMSA agreements continue to focus primarily on delivering health and wellbeing outcomes for men's sheds, with measurable key performance indicators and consideration given to undertaking an evidence-based, expert evaluation of their effectiveness in delivering the agreed health and wellbeing outcomes during the final year of each agreement
16. a summary of the AMSA agreement could be made public in a readily accessible way with the concurrence of AMSA, along with summaries of AMSA progress/performance reports
17. an outcomes-based reporting framework be considered for the AMSA agreement in line with Commonwealth grant requirements, with shorter more succinct reports supported by regular strategic meetings between AMSA and the relevant policy area of the Department of Health
18. AMSA documents a strategic approach on how it will support priority at-risk groups, including the joint activities with its health partners and state-based men's shed organisations
19. AMSA develops a plan to diversify its revenue base while maintaining its core role as a national peak body advocating for the community and public good of men's sheds.

Building a Unified Men's Shed Sector

In terms of unifying the men's shed movement, it is recommended that:

20. AMSA and other men's shed organisations consider entering into collaborative agreements that document their respective roles and responsibilities and how they will work together to the benefit of sheds, including processes to resolve any disagreements or grievances.
 - a. The agreements would acknowledge AMSA's role as the national men's shed peak body, as recognised under its agreement with the Australian Government, its role managing the NSDP, and its longstanding work providing a range of establishment, governance, quality management and preventive health support for sheds nationally.
 - b. The agreements would recognise that state-based men's shed organisations are best able to seek funding from state and territory governments and that well organised and financially sustainable state-based men's shed organisations are often best placed to collaborate with state and community-based health groups and to organise local events and activities for sheds.
 - c. The agreements would seek to build upon existing AMSA and state-based support for sheds in a coordinated way that minimises overlap and duplication.
 - d. Recognising that it makes sense to have one national men's shed organisation (AMSA) and one state-based men's shed organisation in each state and territory (the most organised and financially sustainable entity in the state/territory with the support of

the state/territory government), the agreements should seek to resolve the issue of competing organisations at the national and state and territory levels.

21. The longstanding disagreements between AMSA and certain state-based men's shed organisations be addressed as a matter of priority and that all parties be actively encouraged to make a concerted effort to re-establish a united approach to supporting and advocating on behalf of men's sheds nationally and across all the states and territories.
 - a. The exact form of this united approach needs to be reached by agreement, if necessary, facilitated by an expert in the governance of member-based, not-for-profit organisations.
 - b. The model should be based on the core principles of good governance for member-based organisations, including:
 - i. a constitution and by-laws that recognise men's sheds are grassroots organisations that should be encouraged to adopt approaches that meet their local needs
 - ii. agreed roles and responsibilities at the national and state and territory level based on a mutual recognition and respect for each other's contributions
 - iii. a clear distinguishing of AMSA's roles and responsibilities as a member organisation, its commercial activities including as an insurance provider, and its responsibilities as a Commonwealth funded service provider for all sheds
 - iv. a process of board representation that is skills-based and puts the interests of member sheds first and foremost
 - v. ensuring that national directors make decisions based on the overall interests of member sheds nationally, not just those from their respective state or territory.

22. The Regional Coordinators for Men's Sheds Initiative should encourage the forging of stronger relationships between men's shed organisations as well as providing support to sheds at the grassroots level. It should utilise and build upon the existing, knowledge, expertise, infrastructure, and volunteer workforces of AMSA, state-based men's shed organisations, zone coordinators, and individual groups of sheds, and encourage men's shed organisations to work together in a coordinated and collaborative way, sharing resources and using their combined capabilities and networks to maximise the practical support provided to sheds.

AMSA GOVERNANCE

AMSA undertook a significant governance framework review activity in 2016, engaging a legal firm to assist in the review and revision of key governance framework documentation. This activity produced a suite of documents that is largely in line with better practice that is fit-for-purpose, including:

- Governance Principles
- Governance Statement
- Board Charter
- Constitution
- By-Laws – Conditions of membership
- Code of Conduct

The AMSA Board is made up of the following:

- Directors appointed by the Board, having regard to the skills and experience of the candidate in any discipline, profession or field of knowledge which may be beneficial to AMSA (Appointed Directors)
- One Director from each of the six (6) Regions, elected by the Members from that Region (Elected Directors).

All Directors were invited to provide input to the review regarding their roles, including their understanding of their director's duties and the performance of the AMSA board. The responses received indicate that Directors have a clear understanding of their duties. Further discussions were held with the Chair and CEO regarding the operation of the governance framework, the performance of the AMSA board, and the strengths and weaknesses of AMSA.

On review of AMSA's Financial Statements since 2017, it was noted that AMSA received unqualified audit opinions for all years reviewed, which indicates robust financial management activities are being undertaken in-line with Australian Accounting Standards.

The following is a range of pertinent issues identified during the review relating to AMSA's governance.

AMSA Constitution

A company's constitution is a formal document that sets out an organisation's purpose and how the Board makes decisions and consults members. The constitution is essentially a contract between:

- the company and each member
- the company and each director
- the company and the company secretary
- a member and each other member.

The AMSA constitution largely represents better practice and fulfills all the requirements expected of a Company limited by guarantee. Furthermore, the AMSA Constitution is in line with the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC).

The review identified a particular instance where the AMSA Constitution deviates from expectation. In the AMSA Constitution, the Objects are stated as:

“AMSA is established for the purpose of promoting the prevention or control of diseases in human beings by promoting, advancing and supporting an effective and sustainable Men's Shed Movement and representing the interests of men, Shedders, Men's Sheds and the Men's Shed Movement to all stakeholders including men, their Men's Sheds, their communities, business, the health profession and all levels of government.”

The Objects of a member-based organisation is normally largely focussed on the interests of its members, the Objects of AMSA make no mention of its members. This anomaly highlights the incongruous nature of AMSA as a membership organisation and its main source of revenue, being the agreements with the Australian Government, which require AMSA to provide services to men's sheds nationally, not just to members.

Complexities resulting from the AMSA's dual roles as a membership organisation and a service provider to non-members is further detailed in the sections relating to the NSDP and the AMSA agreement with the Australian Government.

There is also another unexpected abnormality in the AMSA Constitution, where it states:

“For the avoidance of doubt, there may only be one (1) AMSA State Association Member from each State or Territory at any one time.”

This aspect of the Constitution will be dealt with in the next section relating to AMSA's By-Laws.

AMSA By Laws

The review tested AMSA's By-Laws against best practice, its congruence with existing practises, and other governance framework documents. AMSA's By-Laws generally seem fit-for-purpose and are not incongruent with the AMSA Constitution.

As previously noted, the AMSA Constitution specifically states that there may only be one State Association Member from each state. This requirement is repeated in the AMSA By-Laws. Further, the By-Laws specify that a State Association is not eligible for membership if it is a member of any other Men's Shed Association not affiliated with AMSA.

These terms that effectively eliminate the eligibility for membership for some State Associations and the ongoing requirements for State Association Members were commonly cited as drivers for the rift between AMSA and non-aligned State Associations. These eligibility conditions, together with the creation of State Associations by AMSA that now constitute the State Association Member of each state, are considered “blocking” mechanisms by former State Associations Members that demonstrate that AMSA is not willing to have the former State Association Members re-join.

Further to the above eligibility criteria, the AMSA By-Laws requires State Association members to comply with ongoing responsibilities that prima facie appear onerous, overbearing, and unusual for a membership-based organisation. While an organisation has the right to create the specific requirements of membership, and a potential member has the right to choose whether to be a member or not, the following requirements are commonly seen by some stakeholders as unnecessary, intrusive, and an attempt to control the activities of State Associations:

- State Associations Members must provide annual reports to AMSA.
- State Associations Members must not engage in competitive behaviour with alternate group providers or sponsors to those engaged or provided by AMSA.
- State Associations Members will not enter government grants, sponsorship, or partnership arrangements without getting prior AMSA approval.

These mechanisms are inconsistent with the normal flow of control for a member-based organisation. A member of an organisation is in effect the owner of the organisation with the members setting the rules for how the organisation is run. The vast flow of information from the member to the organisation and the restrictions placed on what a member can do in their normal day-to-day operations is not what you would expect in a member-based organisation created to further the interests of its members.

AMSA should consider whether these restrictions are counter-productive to a unified men’s shed movement. The Chair and CEO have indicated that a review of the AMSA By-Laws is being undertaken. This is an important review and an opportunity for AMSA to take the lead in demonstrating its commitment to a more collaborative and collegiate approach with state-based men’s shed associations.

Strategic Planning

The Governance Principles of AMSA state:

“The Board has overall responsibility for management of AMSA:

- *Setting strategic goals and direction*
- *Monitoring performance*
- *Ensuring that it has effective systems in place*
- *Complies with its legal and regulatory obligations.”*



The review tested AMSA Board meeting agendas from the past two years against this model and found the agenda items that related to strategy formulation were limited, with most agenda items falling into the Monitoring and supervising quadrant of the model.

There are many issues that demand any Board’s attention. The key to good governance is to ensure that a proper balance amongst the quadrants within the model is established. The lack of activity within the Strategy formulation quadrant is not uncommon amongst boards, with many primarily operating in the Monitoring and supervising quadrant. The current better practice challenge is to spend the appropriate amount of time in the future orientated performance roles of Strategy formulation and Policy making, ensuring the short, medium, and long-term plans of an organisation are thoroughly considered, and policies and procedures are created to allow these plans to be executed.

While the Board should consider AMSA's strategy in all aspects of its work (i.e., every agenda item), better practice is to also make time to consider the strategy directly. A new practice being implemented by many governance entities to facilitate fully informed strategic decision making that may benefit AMSA is including time in the agenda to conduct a Strategic environment scan. Environmental scanning is a critical and ongoing part of the planning process in which information on external events and trends are continuously collected and considered throughout the planning process. This practice utilises the diversity and strength of Directors' skills, knowledge, and networks to gather information and emerging risks that may assist the collective knowledge of the Board in better understanding its strategic environment.

It is also noted by the review that the AMSA 2017-2019 Strategic Plan (Framework for the Future) is out-of-date, further indicating that strategy formulation has been limited of late. Discussions with AMSA gleaned that the uncertainty regarding future government funding agreements had stymied the ability to plan past the short-term. However strategic planning can be conducted within funding cycles or can consider the need and opportunities for funding diversification. Rather than being limited by uncertainty around future funding agreements, many organisations use strategic planning processes to inform their discussions with government around future funding bids.

Without the Board being intrinsically involved in the setting and monitoring of the AMSA strategy, there is an increased risk that the AMSA Board is non-compliant with its own Governance Principles and Board Charter, and AMSA is foregoing the potential benefits offered by the collective Board's external perspectives, and diversity of expertise and experience.

Board Papers

AMSA Directors are generally provided the meeting agenda and board papers in an appropriate timeframe to undertake the appropriate preparation for the meeting. However, there are opportunities to improve the board papers to assist the decision-making of Directors.

During the period of review, the format of board papers varied significantly meeting-to-meeting and often agenda-item-to-agenda-item. Further, the papers frequently did not provide information that would assist in the decision-making process, such as the purpose of the paper and/or a narrative providing the relevant information and analysis.

Well-written, concise board papers play an important role in ensuring meetings run smoothly and facilitate the drafting of minutes. The consistent use of an agreed board paper template will assist in supporting the focus on key matters of substance.

Board papers can also be important in establishing that directors have discharged their duties, and it is essential that directors take an active role in satisfying themselves that the board papers are adequate, and that they have sufficient information on which to base decisions.

Board Minutes

During the period of review, the minutes of Board meetings only contained the bare minimum required. In most instances minutes only contained the Agenda Item title and if relevant, the Board decision. The minutes rarely contained any record of the discussions relating to the Agenda Item, which together with the lack of information and analysis within the board papers, provides a poor record of the activities of the AMSA Board. In addition, the minutes rarely included a list of actions arising from the meeting.

Board minutes are a record of board decisions and the process by which those decisions have been made. In worst case scenarios, board papers can be used as evidence in court about what the board knew, considered, and authorised. In addition to being a legal record, the minutes convey these

decisions to the executives who implement and serve as a reference for the board if they wish to revisit them.

It is also advisable to include the key points of discussion and the broad reasons for decisions in the minutes. This may help to establish that directors have exercised their powers and discharged their duties to act with care and diligence and in good faith, for a proper purpose and in the best interests of the company. Informative board papers together with the minutes will often demonstrate the reason a decision has been taken. It is appropriate for board minutes to refer to, without repeating, the contents of board papers and other supporting documents.

While it is a matter for judgment in each case, minutes should typically record significant issues raised with management by directors and the responses received or action promised. It is neither necessary nor desirable to record every question put and every response received. It will normally be sufficient to record the thrust of significant issues raised in non-emotive and impartial language. Key points of discussion should be recorded so that these can be reviewed quickly if the topic is revisited.

One of the key defences for Directors for a breach of duty and/or fiduciary duty is the defence known as the business judgement rule. This defence relies on the fact that the director made a business judgment with sufficient care and diligence, and:

- made the judgment in good faith for a proper purpose
- did not have a significant personal interest in the subject matter of the judgment
- informed themselves about the subject matter to the extent they reasonably believed was appropriate
- rationally believed that the judgment was in the best interests of the corporation.

There is an increased risk to Directors that this defence is not available to them, where there is no evidence in support of any of the above.

The Governance Principles make mention that all directors must act in the best interest of AMSA, and “Declaration of interests” has recently become a standing item in the agenda of Board meetings. However, board minutes do not record whether any conflicts of interest have been declared, and if so, how they were managed. Similarly, there were no statements within the minutes that no conflicts had been declared.

Taken together, these deficiencies in AMSA's board's operations point to the need for the existing AMSA board members and the CEO to undertake governance training as well as making qualifications and experience in board governance a highly desirable attribute for future AMSA board appointees.

Membership

During consultations with external stakeholders, the validity of AMSA's claim about its membership numbers was often questioned, particularly the circumstances surrounding the initial granting of membership to individual sheds and the lack of a membership fee and/or membership renewal process.

A sample of membership applications was reviewed with evidence of the relevant membership application provided for 100% of the men's sheds tested. This result was further reinforced during discussions with individual shed representatives with all but two expressing their firm belief that they were indeed a valid member of AMSA. The instances where the shed representative did not believe their shed was a member of AMSA resulted in one case from a belief that when their state-based organisation ceased membership of AMSA the shed membership also ceased and, in the other case, a claim that AMSA had not acted on the shed's instruction to be struck off the Shed Locator website tool. As the Shed Locator tool is a requirement of the AMSA Federal agreement to enable individuals

to identify sheds in their proximity and those interested in setting up a shed to see if one has already been established nearby, it is important that men's sheds are on the Shed Locator, regardless of whether they are AMSA member sheds or not. That said, there may be sheds that AMSA is unaware of and if a shed explicitly asks to be removed from the Shed Locator, AMSA believes it is obligated to do so under privacy law.

While the review did not find any evidence of substantive inaccuracies, it is good governance for member organisations to undertake occasional audits of their membership lists. Given the significant increase in the number of sheds in recent years as well as AMSA's responsibilities under its Federal Government agreement, there would be value in AMSA undertaking a full audit of its member database. It could be conducted in conjunction with AMSA's broader member communication work that provides men's sheds with the opportunity to offer feedback on the services they receive from AMSA. This full audit would be in addition to AMSA's current checks through its annual AMSA insurance renewals (which does not include all AMSA members) and its review of postage returns and electronic email bounce backs.

At the same time, AMSA should look to clarify the nature of AMSA membership, including by clearly distinguishing its role under the Federal Government agreement and its separate member and commercial activities, including as an insurance provider. Given that AMSA is directly funded by the Federal Government to support men's sheds, a starting point should be that all bona fide men's sheds are able to receive information, support, and advice from AMSA, regardless of whether they are a member or not.

Recommendations

In relation to AMSA's governance, it is recommended that:

1. The AMSA Board should:
 - a. directly contribute to the development of the AMSA Strategic Plan. Better practice is for the Board to work collaboratively with the Executive Staff throughout the development of the plan and provide final approval.
 - b. monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan through assessing performance against the agreed strategy on a regular basis, probing and sensing underlying conditions, and identifying risks and strategic inconsistencies that could threaten the organisation
 - c. review the Strategic Plan periodically and whenever a significant change might impact its execution, and revise accordingly
 - d. implement a new standing agenda item at each meeting commonly called a "Strategic environment scan" to enable members of Council to share their external perspective on relevant issues to the broader Council.
2. Directors should work with management to produce board papers in a standard format that clearly indicate what the board or committee is being asked to do, including provision of an adequate level of analysis in support of a proposed recommendation. Directors should set expectations of management in relation to board reporting and regularly reflect on, and provide feedback on, the adequacy of board papers.
3. Directors should ensure minutes are recorded in a manner that provides an appropriate level of detail to accurately represent the key points of discussion and the broad reasons for

decisions. Conflicts of interest should be noted in the minutes with how they were handled, likewise a statement providing the opportunity to raise conflicts is good practice.

4. Existing AMSA directors and the AMSA CEO should undertake governance training, and qualifications and experience in board governance should be a highly desirable attribute for future AMSA board appointees.
5. AMSA should consider conducting a full membership audit, whereby the accuracy of its membership database information can be confirmed. At the same time, AMSA should clarify the nature of AMSA membership, including by clearly distinguishing its role under the Federal Government agreement and its separate member and commercial activities, including as an insurance provider. Given that AMSA is directly funded by the Federal Government to support men's sheds, a starting point should be that all bona fide men's sheds are able to receive information, support, and advice from AMSA, regardless of whether they are a member or not.

MANAGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL SHED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (NSDP)

One of AMSA's primary activities is managing the National Shed Development Program (NSDP) on behalf of the Australian Government. The NSDP is a Federally funded program that provides grants to men's sheds around Australia in three separate categories: health and wellbeing events; shed improvements; and equipment. There are two funding rounds each year. The NSDP gives preference to sheds that provide support to designated priority groups. AMSA has been involved in administering the NSDP since 2010. The current funding level for NSDP grants is \$1 million per annum. AMSA is funded to manage the NSDP as part of its broader agreement with the Australian Government.

The NSDP is an important community grants program which provides significant practical benefits to men's sheds, enabling them to support the health and well-being of shed participants with a focus on prioritising support for priority disadvantaged groups.

We have considered relevant documentation, including the materials on the AMSA website relating to the NSDP, detailed statistics on the distribution of NSDP grants, more recent NSDP grant application forms, and relevant reviews, evaluations and AMSA agreement reports that reference the NSDP. We have had detailed briefings from the relevant AMSA staff member who is responsible for managing the NSDP as well as AMSA leadership. We have sought input from state-based men's shed organisations and individual sheds about the NSDP and AMSA's management of it. Finally, we have held discussions with relevant Department of Health officials who have responsibility for policy oversight of the NSDP.

Over the years, there have been stakeholder concerns expressed about AMSA's management of the NSDP, largely related to the equitable promotion of NSDP funding rounds and distribution of grants. Historically, these concerns may have some merit, particularly given the reported low levels of awareness by sheds of NSDP funding opportunities and the prima facie proportion of grants awarded to sheds in NSW. However, in recent years, the Department of Health has worked with AMSA to take actions to address these concerns, resulting in increased numbers of grant applications across Australia and a distribution of grants that more closely reflects the geographic spread of sheds across the states and territories.

Overall observations

From our discussions with and written input from AMSA staff, other shed organisations, individual sheds and Department of Health officials and our examination of relevant available information, it is our view that the NSDP is effectively administered by AMSA. AMSA has established processes, assessment criteria and grant administration procedures, which are consistently applied across grant funding rounds. Further, detailed documentation is retained for use in subsequent evaluations or reviews. There is an ongoing working relationship between AMSA and Department of Health officials, and diligent and knowledgeable AMSA staff committed to delivering the best outcomes for sheds in a way that adheres to the program's requirements.

There are opportunities to make NSDP program administration more efficient, consistent, transparent, and accountable through the strengthening of AMSA's governance of the NSDP; reducing the paperwork for men's sheds in making applications; improving transparency and communications; and ensuring there is effective separation of AMSA's roles as a grants program manager and a member organisation.

As the NSDP is an Australian Government grants program that is managed by AMSA, it is important that AMSA and the Department of Health continue working together in identifying areas of improvement, agreeing the changes to be made and implementing them effectively. Both AMSA and

the Department of Health have a mutual interest in ensuring that the NSDP delivers the best possible outcomes for men's sheds, maintaining high levels of support and confidence in the program.

The following is a range of pertinent issues identified during the review relating to AMSA's management of the NSDP.

Separation of AMSA's Member and NSDP responsibilities

A key consideration in examining AMSA's governance of the NSDP relates to how the organisation distinguishes between its dual roles as a member organisation and as the manager of a Federal Government funded grants program as well as its broader agreement with the Federal Government. These roles are not necessarily aligned and have the potential to create real or perceived conflicts of interest for AMSA. As a member organisation, AMSA's primary purpose is to serve the interests of its men's shed members. However, under its agreement with the Australian Government and in its role managing the NSDP, AMSA has a contractual responsibility to treat all eligible men's sheds equally, whether they are AMSA members or not.

Often when governments make member organisations responsible for managing taxpayer funded programs, they put in place specific requirements that ensure there is a clear separation from the organisations' work representing its members interests. These requirements may include separate staff, separate IT systems, separate webpages, and marketing materials, written protocols in relation to communications, information sharing and data management, and the express exclusion of elected officials who might stand to benefit from any funding decisions.

An experienced, capable, and committed AMSA staff member has the primary responsibility for managing the NSDP and this entails a significant amount of work throughout the year. AMSA provided a detailed Position Description for this role, which includes responsibilities in addition to managing the NSDP. It is important that there are written protocols in place for this staff member so there is not a perception that AMSA members might gain any advantage over non-members from AMSA's responsibilities managing the NSDP.

AMSA maintains a separate NSDP system to its member database, but there is the potential for information to be shared or transferred between the NSDP and member focused IT environments.

AMSA has a separate page on its website for the NSDP under the general banner of "Grants and Funding". The AMSA logo is at the top of the page with the Commonwealth Crest and the words "Australian Government Department of Health" underneath. The webpage makes clear in large writing that the NSDP is an Australian Government program administered by AMSA and this statement is repeated in the introductory paragraph. The right hand of the NSDP page includes banners providing links to other AMSA services including "insurance".

Given the historic concerns and the importance of adopting best-practice approaches, it makes sense to enhance the level of transparency around AMSA's role as the manager of the NSDP. A clear and publicly accessible explanation of how the NSDP is administered, including AMSA's role as the program manager, would increase the overall level of understanding and confidence in the program. When changes are made to the NSDP, including prioritising certain needs in individual funding rounds, this should also be proactively communicated to sheds and men's shed organisations.

We are not aware of documented information, marketing, and data management protocols in relation to the NSDP; however, AMSA has a risk management plan and a conflict-of-interest policy. There are also procedures in place to separate AMSA board members from NSDP related grants decisions. Overall, there many safeguards to help ensure an appropriate separation of AMSA's member and

grants management activities. However, there are several gaps in this separation, including a lack of documented information, communication, and data management protocols; and easily accessible public information that clearly and transparently explains the role of AMSA in managing the NSDP on behalf of the Federal Government as the funder.

The establishment and implementation of documented protocols that ensure an appropriate separation of AMSA's role managing the NSDP and its broader role as a member organisation is an appropriate governance and risk management approach in this situation. It will also provide increased confidence and assurance to sheds, other men's shed organisations and the Australian Government that AMSA is administering the NSDP in a way that is member agnostic and does not favour its own members over non-members.

The protocols should cover the collection, management and use of shed related information that is provided to AMSA in its role managing the NSDP, including whether the provision of AMSA membership and insurance details and shed governance information should be included in grant applications. They should deal with the maintenance of separate NSDP and member databases, data storage, access to NSDP information by AMSA staff and officials, the potential use of separate websites, logos and email addresses, data analysis and the sharing of information with third parties.

The protocols should also cover relevant AMSA internal governance issues, including the appropriate defining and separation of staff roles and responsibilities, the level of AMSA support provided to sheds in preparing applications, procedures to ensure that elected AMSA officials are not conflicted by being involved in NSDP funding decisions, and the role of the AMSA evaluation panel including the selection of appropriately skilled and independent panellists.

Treatment of AMSA Members and Non-Members

It is not unusual for government agencies to contract out the management of grants programs to member organisations that bring both an in-depth understanding of the sector that is being supported and an established means of communicating with potential grant recipients. However, it is important that when member organisations take on the responsibility for managing government grant programs that they do so in a way that ensures all eligible grant recipients are treated equally, regardless of whether they are members or not.

During the review, we considered whether there was a difference between AMSA members and non-members in relation to the provision of NSDP grants. The NSDP grant requirements make clear that in managing the program, AMSA needs to provide information equally to AMSA members and non-members. AMSA has provided statistics which indicate that most NSDP eligible sheds are AMSA members. AMSA also demonstrated that they have systems in place to ensure they are member agnostic when assessing NSDP applications, including through de-identifying applications, and ensuring a strict adherence to the grant guidelines. However, AMSA does provide advice and support to NSDP applicants upon request and the Department of Health has informed us that AMSA has been involved in the development of some grant concepts (e.g. regional tours). This means there is the potential for a perception that AMSA favours certain NSDP applicants or grant approaches. Overall, we did not find a significant difference in the grant success rates of AMSA members and non-members in accessing NSDP grants within the grant rounds reviewed.

We note that the AMSA By-Laws require AMSA Men's Shed Members to be:

"an incorporated Association in accordance with the relevant associations legislation in the respective State which operates a Men's Shed".

The description under the heading “What is a men’s shed” on AMSA’s NSDP webpage does not include this pre-requisite. This means that men’s sheds that may not meet the pre-requisites of AMSA membership remain eligible for NSDP grants, highlighting the importance of ensuring that information about upcoming NSDP grant rounds is effectively disseminated to all eligible men’s sheds, not just those that are AMSA members.

Several stakeholders questioned whether AMSA provided more favourable consideration to men’s sheds in those states or territories where the state-based men’s shed organisation is affiliated with AMSA. There are two principal elements to these concerns. First, there is a view that AMSA may promote the NSDP more actively in AMSA affiliated states and territories than it does in non-affiliated states and territories. Second, there is a view that AMSA provides more hands-on support for certain member sheds in preparing their applications than it does for other sheds.

These concerns are longstanding and have been raised during earlier reviews. AMSA informed us about its evolving multi-faceted approach to promoting grant rounds to men’s sheds across all states and territories. Our discussions with individual sheds revealed that there appears to be an appropriate overall awareness of the NSDP and the status of funding rounds. However, it is important to note that earlier reviews did find that a significant percentage of sheds had low levels of awareness about NSDP grant opportunities. While differences in overall awareness levels of the NSDP generally and individual funding rounds may be more historic than current, there remains a perception that there is a lower level of awareness among sheds in states and territories where the state-based men’s shed organisation is not affiliated with AMSA. The key point is not whether a bias exists or not, rather that clear actions are taken by AMSA to overcome any perceptions of a bias that could result in some sheds being reluctant to apply for grants and undermine the value of AMSA’s role managing the NSDP.

We were assured by AMSA that it does not discriminate between AMSA members and non-members (or between states and territories) in the provision of advice in the preparation of NSDP grant applications. While this indicates there is not a bias towards AMSA member sheds or sheds in AMSA affiliated states, the availability of application preparation support for sheds is not, to our knowledge, formally documented and the level of support provided is largely reliant upon the goodwill and time constraints of the AMSA official who has day-to-day responsibility for managing the NSDP. To avoid perceptions of bias, it would be sensible for AMSA to provide written clarity regarding the support available to sheds in preparing their applications, and this support is consistently provided to all sheds regardless of their location or membership of AMSA.

It is also noteworthy that the grant application form includes an additional section that non-AMSA members must fill out requiring them to provide a significant amount of information in relation to community consultation, management structure, risk management and work supporting the health and wellbeing of participants, as well as providing a copy of relevant auspice agreements or MOUs and making undertakings about their purpose and values. The requirement to provide this additional information could leave non-AMSA affiliated sheds with the impression that their applications are assessed differently to AMSA members. From our discussions with the Department of Health, we note that it is replacing this additional attachment with a requirement that applicants provide evidence that they are a bona fide shed.

AMSA is required to ensure that information about the NSDP is communicated equally to all sheds, regardless of whether they are AMSA members or are in states and territories where the state-based men’s shed organisation is not affiliated with AMSA. As part of meeting this requirement, the review was informed by AMSA that it distributes all NSDP information to every contact on its data base, as well as to state-based men’s shed organisations to redistribute.

To answer any concerns about possible favourable treatment, it is important that this requirement is clearly stated in the publicly available explanation of AMSA's role as the manager of the NSDP. It is important that AMSA informs all state-based men's shed organisations, including those with which it is not affiliated, equally about NSDP grant opportunities and that it encourages all state-based men's shed organisations to communicate information about the NSDP to their members in a way that is consistent with the AMSA communications. Broadening the communications channels makes sense in terms of raising the overall level of awareness about NSDP funding opportunities. Opportunities to build on these communications channels through local media and social media could be considered.

Geographic distribution of NSDP grants

There were stakeholder queries whether the distribution of AMSA grants is representative of the overall geographic distribution of men's sheds. In considering this issue, we compared the distribution of successful NSDP grant applicants with the overall distribution of men's sheds and considered the percentages of successful NSDP applicants in each state and territory. In more recent grant rounds, the percentage of NSDP grant recipients in each state and territory appears to generally reflect the overall distribution of men's sheds. Additionally, the percentages of NSDP applicants that are successful appears to be relatively consistent across all states and territories. Our assessment focused on more recent NSDP grant rounds, so we are not able to rule out the possibility of a level of geographic bias in NSDP grant recipients in earlier funding rounds, recognising that this may have reflected the larger number of applicants from certain states and territories.

Perception that the NSDP grants are 'AMSA grants'

During our discussions, we have received feedback that the NSDP grants are seen to be AMSA grants, rather than Federal Government funded grants. To a significant extent, this misconception may be historic as an increased effort is evident in recent years to make sure it is clearly stated in program materials and on the AMSA website that the NSDP grants are funded by the Federal Government. However, despite these efforts, a not insignificant number of individual sheds that we visited or spoke to continue to describe the NSDP grants as "AMSA grants".

The Department of Health informed us that AMSA provides recommendations which are reviewed by them. The Department of Health may seek further information and decide to amend specific decisions of AMSA, but there is no formal 'decision' made about the grants. The grant outcomes are advised to the Federal Minister for Health, they are not ratified. We were not made aware of an easily accessible explanation for NSDP grant applicants that clearly explains the process involved in assessing applications and making decisions about grant recipients and see value in developing a process map that could be included on both AMSA's and the Department of Health websites.

Perceptions about the ownership of the NSDP are also likely to be influenced by who informs applicants whether their applications have been successful or not and who is responsible for the formal contracting paperwork with successful applicants. It is our understanding that AMSA remains responsible for the formal paperwork and has also historically informed applicants about the outcomes of their applications.

AMSA's NSDP evaluation panel

AMSA utilises an evaluation panel as part of their process of assessing NSDP grant applications. The evaluation panel's role is to review and provide feedback on the grant assessments that have been made by AMSA staff before they are formally passed on as recommendations to the Department of Health. The evaluation panel uses an evaluation methodology to undertake this work.

AMSA informed the review that originally the Department of Health required the evaluation panel to consist of a Chair (from AMSA) someone from a community development background, someone from a health background and someone from a men's shed background (independent from AMSA but selected by AMSA) as well as the AMSA Membership Manager. AMSA informed the review that this criterion was relaxed in 2015 with AMSA becoming responsible for appointing the panel.

AMSA sees value in the evaluation panel because it provides expertise in relation to frequently used men's shed equipment, grant related assessments and governance. It also provides oversight that ensures the quality of assessments and identifies areas where further attention might be required. While the evaluation panel appears to serve a worthwhile purpose, it is important that it provides independent advice and that panel members collectively have the necessary skills and experience to provide feedback and advice that is consistent with the NSDP guidelines.

The evaluation panel is currently made up of volunteers selected by AMSA, with some having links to the AMSA board and management. We were not made aware of formal selection criteria outlining their expertise or a documented panel recruitment process, the existence of which could instil greater confidence that the panellists have the requisite skills and experience and are sufficiently independent to undertake their duties at arm's length from AMSA.

The evaluation panel is not currently formally recognised by the Department of Health and is seen as an internal AMSA process. There also appears to be little knowledge or visibility of the role of the evaluation panel in the grant assessment process among state-based men's shed organisations or individual men's sheds.

NSDP grant application form

As part of the review, we examined the grant application form for Round 21 of the NSDP. This application reform is 12 pages long and requires applicants to provide answers to at least 51 separate questions (58 separate questions for non AMSA members). Some of these questions have multiple parts to them or require attachments, while sheds that are applying for grants in multiple categories must answer further questions in relation to each category. The application form includes questions about the governance and strategic oversight of the individual shed as well as details about its business structure, insurance, and previous grants received from all levels of government. AMSA member sheds are required to provide their AMSA membership number and state whether they are insured under the AMSA Group Insurance Policy.

A deal of this information may be superfluous and not necessary in terms of enabling assessments to be made against the grant criteria. Non AMSA members are required to provide additional details and attachments relating to their governance, operations, and values and principles.

The application form also requires preparatory work from sheds, which must be included with the application, including the provision of multiple quotes for health and wellbeing events, pieces of equipment, and shed improvement works, as well as site plans, council permits, and site owner details and written permissions. Further, a shed created under an auspice arrangement must provide a copy of the MOU or agreement between the shed and the auspice organisation.

The complexity, time and effort entailed in preparing NSDP grant applications was raised by state-based men's shed organisations and individual sheds in earlier reviews. During consultations with individual sheds, many relayed that the work entailed in completing NSDP applications is a real, practical disincentive against seeking funding under the NSDP. There is little doubt that some sheds

make decisions not to apply for NSDP grants due to the complex and detailed information that is required in the application, even though the NSDP grants would be of material benefit to them.

As a first step, it makes sense for AMSA and the Department of Health to jointly undertake a simplification of the NSDP application form to reduce the amount of information provided by sheds to that required to make a valid and properly informed assessment against the grant criteria. This simplification should occur as soon as possible so as not to continue burdening men's sheds, AMSA and the Department of Health with excessive paperwork in future funding rounds.

As part of this simplification, consideration could be given to the greater use of checklists with appropriate assurances from applicants rather than requiring the attachment of multiple quotes, site plans and permits, MOUs and agreements. In some cases, these assurances or documents can be provided at the grant approval stage rather than the application stage. Consideration could also be given to removing the requirement for sheds to provide information in applications about their membership of AMSA and whether they are insured under the AMSA Group Policy, as well as the requirement for additional information from sheds that are not AMSA members. This will not only simplify the application form but will also provide greater confidence that AMSA is managing the NSDP in a way that is agnostic in terms of whether applicants are AMSA members or not.

Electronic applications

NSDP grant applications are submitted in a paper-based form, resulting in a significant amount of re-keying work by AMSA staff. AMSA staff manually enter grant application data into AMSA's systems and further manual data entry is required during the assessment, grant provision, and reporting phases. While earlier reviews have pointed to the potential efficiency benefits of moving to online applications (e.g., by adopting the Smart E-Grants format) this has not been progressed due to concerns that sheds do not have the IT equipment or skills.

A previous upgrade of AMSA's customer relationship management (CRM) system for the NSDP appears to have been only partially successful due to a combination of factors, including specifications that may have been overly ambitious and not sufficiently well defined, insufficient investment, and a lack of internal implementation capabilities within AMSA.

There is potential for significant efficiencies in NSDP administration by moving to an electronic format, preferably in a way that is as consistent as possible with electronic formats used for other grant programs. In encouraging this transition, we note that shed IT enhancements are eligible for NSDP grant funding and individual sheds are increasingly reliant on online communications channels to access broader health information and interact with other sheds as well as with AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations. The transition to electronic applications should be carefully planned in a way that is mindful that some sheds will be slower to embrace online technologies and that AMSA needs to reconfigure its own systems and processes to accept and efficiently manage electronic applications through the approvals process.

The review notes that not all sheds will embrace online applications and a paper form should be retained for these instances.

In terms of AMSA's own systems, the transition should consider whether the CRM that AMSA uses to manage the NSDP is fit-for-purpose or requires an upgrade of its functionality for an electronic applications environment. If an upgrade is required, the Department of Health and AMSA should consider what additional investment may be required based on a detailed upgrade plan from a software systems developer with demonstrated expertise in electronic grant management systems

and an acknowledgement that relevant AMSA staff need to be trained in the effective use of these systems.

Recommendations

In relation to AMSA's management of the NSDP, it is recommended that:

7. AMSA should develop protocols, endorsed by the Department of Health, to ensure that there is separation of its respective roles as the manager of the NSDP and a member organisation, including its activities as an insurance provider. The protocols should cover information and data collection and storage, communications to members and non-members, staff roles, elected officials, and the role of the AMSA evaluation panel. The protocols should be communicated to sheds, men's shed organisations and other identified key stakeholders.
8. In its communications with sheds, state-based men's shed organisations, stakeholders, and the public, AMSA should continue to promote that the NSDP is a government-funded program and that NSDP grants are government grants. The role of AMSA in managing the NSDP on behalf of the Australian Government should be clearly and transparently explained in ways that are easily accessed by men's sheds and men's shed organisations.
9. AMSA provides written clarity on the NSDP website regarding the support available to sheds in preparing their applications, along with a statement that this support is consistently provided to all sheds regardless of their location or membership of AMSA.
10. The Department of Health should consider requiring AMSA to maintain a separate NSDP website as well as a standalone NSDP contact phone number and email address to demonstrate a clear separation between the NSDP (as a government program administered by AMSA) and AMSA's broader membership work.
11. AMSA should ensure it is (and is perceived to be) providing equal service and equal consideration to all eligible applicants in its administration of the NSDP.
 - a. AMSA should ensure the effort required to complete an NSDP application is equal for all applicants, including requiring the provision of the same application information from AMSA members and non-members.
 - b. AMSA should ensure any provision of information or advice during a NSDP grant round is done equitably for AMSA members and non-members, including the provision of information to unaligned state men's shed organisations.
 - c. AMSA should continue to maintain separate databases/CRMs for its NSDP and membership related work and document protocols regarding the internal sharing of information and data management.
12. AMSA and the Department of Health develop a written explanation of how the NSDP is managed, focussing on the role of AMSA as the program manager and the grants process, that would be proactively communicated to all relevant stakeholders and made available on AMSA's and the Department of Health's relevant communications channels.
13. AMSA provides greater transparency around the membership of the NSDP evaluation panel, including the selection process, and considers whether the composition of the evaluation panel is appropriate, including whether additional independent members would enhance its

effectiveness. Further, the existence of the evaluation panel and its role in the NSDP management process should be included in any documented NSDP grant management process.

14. AMSA and the Department of Health undertake a major simplification of the NSDP grant application form as soon as possible.
15. NSDP applications move to an electronic format with appropriate transitional support provided to sheds and consideration given to a potential upgrade to AMSAs relevant IT systems to enable it to capture the efficiency benefits of reduced manual processing, together with training of relevant AMSA staff.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT

AMSA has had agreements with the Australian Government since 2010. The most recent of these agreements was signed in June 2020 and continues until the end of 2021 (final report due by February 2022). AMSA's agreement with the Federal Government is its largest source of direct revenue at \$1,900,000 a year, which includes \$1 million a year in NSDP grants that are distributed to men's sheds in twice yearly funding rounds.

As well as managing the NSDP, AMSA has historically been required to undertake a range of administrative and shed support activities laid down in these agreements. These activities have included surveys, monitoring sheds' compliance with national standards, provision of web-based resources, maintenance of a member database and a publicly available shed locator tool, communications, information, and resources to sheds, health related activities, cooperation with zone-based volunteers, IT upgrades, internal governance, and reporting.

The Current Agreement

The Federal Government Agreement is primarily focused on AMSA providing health and wellbeing related support to sheds with the stated purpose to:

“provide support to Men’s Shed nationally through AMSA and the NSDP to assist Men’s Shed in facilitating preventive health benefits for its participants”.

There are six grant objectives, four of which relate directly to health and wellbeing, one that refers to a plan for AMSA to be self-sufficient and one that relates to the management of the NSDP. A seventh objective entails AMSA supporting sheds to undertake health activities, should the COVID-19 restrictions be eased.

The current agreement lists six intended outcomes of the activity, namely: increasing the participation of target populations in men's shed activities and events; enhancing the health and wellbeing of shed participants; improved delivery and management of shed activities; improved facilities and sustainability of sheds; increased awareness of the preventive health benefits of men's sheds; and increased awareness of and participation in the NSDP. There are six performance indicators that the activity is to be measured against, namely: an annual membership survey; monitoring compliance with national standards; monitoring use of web-based resources; updating of the membership database; maintaining and updating the shed locator website tool; and administering and delivering the NSDP.

AMSA's overall approach to the agreements

AMSA's successive agreements with the Federal Government since 2010 have enabled the organisation to remain financially viable and to continue providing support to sheds, with an increasing focus on the health and wellbeing of shed participants.

Generally, AMSA's governance of its responsibilities under these agreements is of an acceptable standard. It undertakes and provides detailed reports on its progress/performance in relation to the required activities in the agreements. It treats the agreement as a whole-of-organisation priority and has addressed most of the gaps identified in previous Siggins Miller evaluations¹. It has a comprehensive annual AMSA communications strategy that includes objectives, key performance indicators, a communications channel plan, an annual calendar and detailed lists of activities and events. This communications planning has helped AMSA to significantly enhance its online

¹ Certain recommendations have not been completed, including a cost-effective upgrade of AMSA's information technology systems and a best-practice succession planning approach to the AMSA CEO position.

communications offering as recommended by the Siggins Miller evaluation, including through the introduction of Shed Wireless, a new podcast series, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Agreement and the management of the NSDP are the primary drivers of the organisation's day-to-day work and the main subject of management's reporting to the AMSA board. In many ways, the agreement defines what AMSA does and does not do in terms of its provision of services and information to sheds. To an extent, this is because the activities included in the agreements largely reflect AMSA's existing (and often longstanding) activities. However, it also means there is a risk that the high priority that AMSA affords to the agreement could confine the organisation's work and discourage it from innovating in other areas.

The following is a range of pertinent issues identified during the review relating to AMSA's agreement with the Australian Government.

Transparency of the agreement

The transparency of the Australian Government agreement with AMSA was raised numerous times during our consultations with other men's shed organisations and with individual sheds. They appear to have a lack of understanding about the purpose and objectives of AMSA's agreement with the Australian Government, as well as the outcomes and deliverables required of AMSA under the agreement.

We see value in making the agreement, or at least its key elements, including its purpose, objectives, outcomes, priority activities and key performance indicators, publicly accessible together with the progress/performance reports demonstrating the activities of AMSA in achieving the agreement's objectives and outcomes.

An increased level of transparency around the agreement will help other stakeholders, including other men's shed organisations, potential funders, sponsors, and partners to better understand the focus of the agreement and the expectations it places on AMSA. In turn, this will help these third parties identify ways in which they can work with AMSA that complement and add-value to the agreement to the maximum benefit of sheds.

Further, increased transparency of the ASMA Agreement could provide greater confidence to the broader sector and encourage AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations to reach agreement on their respective roles and responsibilities and how they will work more effectively together to the benefit of men's sheds.

AMSA's revenue base

AMSA's 2017-2019 Strategic Plan (Framework for the Future) seeks to broaden the organisation's priorities, with a focus on exploring new revenue opportunities through partnerships and diversified fund raising, including a national art union and workplace giving.

It is not clear the extent to which AMSA has been able to progress these priorities, including its longer-term financial sustainability, as stipulated in its funding agreement with the Australian Government. AMSA has a significant number of partnerships and sponsorships, with the 2019-20 financial statements including revenues of approximately \$244K from donations and \$759K from services along with Government grants of \$1.4 million (about 60% of total revenues). Over the last seven years, the percentage of AMSA's annual revenues sourced from Government grants is relatively unchanged, with the variability of income resulting from one-off donations.

AMSA's ability to maintain its current level of support for sheds nationally is heavily reliant upon retaining its Government grant funding. As the 2016 Siggins-Miller evaluation found:

"the current alternative sources of (AMSA) income would be insufficient to maintain AMSA operations should government funding eventually cease".

In its 2018 summary update report, Siggins Miller concludes that:

"it is highly unlikely that any men's shed peak body (at State or National level) will be sustainable without support from government".

One of the objectives of the current agreement is to:

"develop a plan to enable AMSA to be self-sufficient and support future independence and sustainability".

It is important that AMSA's board and management give high priority to this objective. As the Siggins-Miller 2018 update states:

"AMSA's future financial viability and sustainability will rely on strategic and business decisions that are to be made by the new skills-based Board. Such decisions are likely to support opportunities to diversify AMSA's income sources and/or increase its income from existing sources."

AMSA needs to be realistic in pursuing this objective, recognising that its primary purpose is to assist men's sheds, which are community assets that serve a public good by supporting the health and wellbeing of men at risk of social isolation. A more diversified revenue base is likely to be founded in significant part upon AMSA's ability to secure funding from other government funding sources. Any future plan to increase AMSA's financial self-sufficiency should not undermine its core role of supporting the community and health related objectives of men's sheds.

Agreement reporting

Under the current agreement, AMSA is required to provide:

- Six-monthly Performance Reports
- Six-monthly reports on the NSDP funding round outcomes
- Annual Financial Acquittals
- A Final Report.

The six-monthly Performance Reports are required to report on:

- performance against Performance Indicators
- commentary on the extent to which any activity has not been met
- proposed changes to the Activity Work Plan
- progress to date on the implementation of the findings from the evaluation
- explanation of how any issues, problems or delays are being addressed.

The Department of Health has provided us with copies of the most recent progress/performance reports which are comprehensive and detail a significant range of activities. The most recent of the reports provided is for January to June 2020, a period that precedes the signing of the current agreement. As the report was lodged in July 2020, it is formally part of the current agreement, but understandably it focuses on the delivery of the activities in the previous agreement.

It is not clear from the regular progress reports the extent to which the activities undertaken by AMSA are effective in delivering enhanced health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals who attend men's sheds. This is not to infer that the activities do not provide benefits to sheds and shed participants. On the contrary, the range of activities outlined under the previous agreement, to which the most recent reports relate, appear to be directly relevant to the value-adding role both of men's sheds themselves and AMSA as an organisation tasked with providing practical support to sheds nationally.

What is less clear from the progress/performance reports is the outcomes these activities are seeking to deliver and the extent to which they are achieving them based on measurable key performance indicators. There is the opportunity to rectify this in future progress/performance reports with the current agreement clearly stipulating objectives, outcomes, performance indicators and how they will be measured. To this end, it is important to ensure the performance indicators are aligned with the strong health related focus in the agreement objectives and outcomes.

In our discussions with AMSA and from previous reviews, there is a recurring theme of excessive reporting. As the 2018 Siggins-Miller update report states:

"the reporting processes required of AMSA have been changed, but not simplified. There is considerable duplication in the reporting requirements, which is inefficient both for AMSA and the Department."

The main opportunity to achieve efficiency in reporting requirements is through the six-monthly progress/performance reports. While the current reporting template, which has been put in place since the Siggins-Miller updated report, indicates that each section should be a maximum of 300 words, the large number of individual milestones/deliverables continues to result in progress reports of more than 20 pages in length, as well as the inclusion of detailed attachments.

It is not clear whether this level of detail is required to hold AMSA accountable or to inform future policy work and agreements. The preparation of these reports takes up a significant amount of time for the relatively small number of AMSA staff, presumably time that could be devoted to delivering services and support to sheds.

Going forward, it would be sensible to transition to a more succinct and concise, outcomes-based reporting framework that remain consistent with Commonwealth grant requirements. The framework would focus on measuring and reporting the extent to which agreed outcomes, aligned with the broader health priorities and continuous improvement by AMSA in the support of men's sheds, are being achieved. The outcomes-based reporting would be shorter form with less need for detailed listing of activities and would be complemented by regular strategic discussions between AMSA and the responsible policy area of the Department of Health.

Annual member survey

One means by which the agreement attempts to measure the effectiveness of AMSA as an organisation is through the annual men's shed member survey, which is required to be undertaken as one of the agreement key performance indicators.

The most recent member survey conducted in early 2020 (pre COVID) attracted a response rate of just under 30 per cent. While on face value this does not represent a high response rate, it is not unusually low or significantly different when compared to previous AMSA member surveys.

In the main, the survey respondents were positive about AMSA's performance and the support that it provides to sheds as well as its management of the NSDP. There is also a growing recognition among

sheds about the importance of supporting the health and wellbeing of shed participants. There was a significant uptake of AMSA support with 86% of recipients having contact with AMSA and 70% using web resources.

The one area where sheds were noticeably less positive about AMSA's performance was in relation to the organisation of local events for individual sheds or groups of sheds. This is hardly surprising given AMSA is a national organisation with limited staff and resources. Further, in some states and territories, the AMSA aligned state-based organisations appear to be not well organised nor is there an established network of volunteer zone coordinators to facilitate local events and other activities. The exception is the NSW Men's Shed Association, affiliated with AMSA, where there is an established system of regional coordinators who provide practical services and support to sheds in their zones.

This area of comparative weakness for AMSA is relevant to at least three of the six outcomes in the current agreement, namely:

- increasing the participation of target populations in men's shed activities and events
- improved delivery and management of shed activities
- enhancing the health and wellbeing of shed participants.

This is not to say that AMSA does not do important work in these areas. In fact, it provides a significant amount of online and paper-based health related information through its core Spanner in the Works preventative health program supported by more than 40 partnerships with health organisations.

AMSA staff members conduct a significant number of shed visits and organise multi-shed events across the country. These initiatives are in addition to the large amount of AMSA information that is made available to member sheds across a diverse array of subject matters, which is widely accessed and genuinely appreciated by sheds. However, it is simply unrealistic to expect an organisation with about 10 staff in one central office to deliver or manage local activities for more than 1,200 sheds that are spread across the length and breadth of Australia.

Health and wellbeing

It is clear from the reading of successive AMSA agreements as well as the evolution of the NSDP that the Australian Government is looking for AMSA to focus on providing health and wellbeing related support to men's sheds. This is entirely understandable given that supporting men's health and wellbeing is a primary reason why men's sheds exist; AMSA is the national body representing men's sheds; and the Federal funding for AMSA and, through NSDP, for sheds directly is linked with the Federal Government's National Men's Health Strategy 2020-2030.

The National Men's Health Strategy identifies both priority health issues and priority populations that are reflected in the focus of the NSDP and, to an extent, also the current AMSA agreement. In effect, this means AMSA's longer term funding is linked to the National Men's Health Strategy, so it is reasonable and sensible that its agreement with the Australian Government focuses primarily on supporting men's health and wellbeing.

The provision of evidence-based health support and advice is not the core skill set of AMSA's staff and board. Their expertise relates far more to how to establish, operate, and maintain a well-functioning national network of men's sheds. The value-add that AMSA provides is its ability to enable the effective and efficient distribution of men's health related information and advice to a large population cohort that is at risk of the priority health conditions identified in the National Men's Health Strategy.

Health Partnerships

AMSA's most significant health partnership is with Healthy Male (formerly Andrology Australia) which, like AMSA, was also funded under the National Men's Health Policy. Under this partnership, Healthy Male has the primary responsibility for the development of key men's preventive health messages and activities, including in relation to the Spanner in the Works health promotion program, which encourages older men to take care of their health and get regular check-ups, just as they would with their motor vehicles. Under the "When was your Last Service" tagline, the core message of the Spanner in the Works program is that:

"knowing when to have your car checked is no different than keeping your body in peak condition".

The Spanner in the Works program produces a range of information material for use by individuals, sheds and in broader information session and events. These include a booklet, an event kit, posters and flyers, fold-out Z-cards, a "service schedule", presentations and speakers notes and a web-based tool, as well as blogs and a regular newsletter. The Shed Wireless podcast has been established and an "Ask the Doc - Q&As" segment has been added to Shed Wireless.

Healthy Male and AMSA work with around 40 health partners, with Healthy Male honing the key message into a consistent format and AMSA having responsibility for ensuring that the information and messaging is distributed to and accessible by sheds around Australia. The health partners comprise Federal and State government departments and agencies and many national and state based non-government health promotion and patient advocate groups. Many of the partnerships focus on physical health conditions and disease states. There is less of an emphasis on mental health specifically, although it is recognised that addressing self-isolation, which is one of the primary benefits of men's sheds, is key in preventing the onset of mental health issues.

The extensive member resource library on the AMSA website also includes detailed information from many of AMSA's health partners about relevant health issues and conditions as well as links to the partners' own websites and other sources of information and practical support. As well as providing useful health information, AMSA's health partners are a source of expert speakers for AMSA and men's shed activities, media and member communications content and a channel through which AMSA can input into broader health related working groups.

Value of the Health Partnerships

CEO of Healthy Male, Simon von Saldern is very complimentary of Healthy Male's partnership with AMSA. In particular, he points to the significant benefits of AMSA being able to readily distribute men's health promotional material to an estimated 120,000 (mainly older) men through the men's sheds network. He also points to the flexible, can-do approach that is exhibited by both organisations in developing new tools and channels, such as the Shed Wireless Podcast, as well as the fact that AMSA acknowledges it is not a health expert. This is important as the information provided must be accurate and credible, with the imprimatur of Healthy Male's clinical experts. Finally, the many partnerships with other health organisations have enabled a broadening out of the health messages beyond issues of sexual health and dysfunction.

The CEOs of Healthy Male and AMSA both see opportunities to further enhance their relationship, particularly the formalisation of the relationship with a clear joint strategic plan. Sensibly, this joint strategic plan could be developed as both organisations move to their next agreements with the Australian Government. This would also assist in ensuring there is maximum alignment between the

two agreements on related health and wellbeing objectives, outcomes, and key performance indicators. Consideration also should be given to more effective data collection and evaluation to build a greater understanding of the value of these men's health promotion program and how they can be enhanced in the future. Further, there is the opportunity to continue building links between the AMSA/Health Male partnership and other government-funded health promotion and preventative health programs, particularly in relation to mental health.

The two Siggins Miller evaluations of AMSA's agreements that were undertaken in 2016 and 2018 commented on AMSA's health partnerships. The 2016 evaluation pointed to the need for AMSA to develop additional health partnerships, including in relation to men's mental health. The 2018 evaluation concluded that AMSA had largely addressed the recommendations from its earlier evaluation; that there had been a large increase in the number of health-related grants accessed by AMSA and that the organisation's work with its health partners was positively recognised by its men's shed members.

Our own consultations with individual sheds and zone coordinators found a similar recognition of AMSA's increasing focus on men's health issues, with widespread visibility of Spanner in the Works posters and other materials. However, some shed leaders found it challenging to interest their fellow shed participants in health information that is distributed by AMSA and there was a consistent theme that the most effective health related messaging usually came from the informal conversations between shed participants as they discussed their personal health circumstances and needs; with the AMSA or other local health materials a complementary source of information or contacts.

Going forward, the development of future AMSA agreements could be enhanced by more formally consulting with AMSA's key health partners, particularly Healthy Male, as well as with state-based men's shed organisations about the most important health and wellbeing outcomes and how they can best be delivered and measured through the agreement.

Grassroots health activities

In many cases, sheds pointed to the value of bringing local health professionals (e.g., general practitioners, pharmacists, allied health professionals) and community-based health providers into the sheds for informal discussions. The value of these interactions with local health professionals was also emphasised by Healthy Male, which sees them as vital in terms of encouraging and facilitating health conversations, building awareness of local health services, and overcoming the reticence that many men have about talking with their local health professionals. For men aged 50 and over, the local GP and pharmacist were considered the most important local source of health information.

There was some recognition by individual sheds of AMSA's grassroots health activities, including its talks, BBQs, conferences, field days and expos, with a higher level of recall of AMSA's work during men's health week.

The effectiveness of AMSA's localised health and other activities was questioned by state-based men's shed organisations, particularly the cost of delivering these activities from a central national office and concern that they are sometimes undertaken without their knowledge, creating the potential for overlap and contradictory communication with individual sheds.

The CEO of Healthy Male also acknowledged the logistical and cost challenges for his national organisation of delivering the Spanner in the Works and other men's health messages through local events. At the same time, he was strongly supportive of working with AMSA as a national organisation

delivering consistent paper-based and online messages to sheds around Australia and pointed to the complexities and inefficiencies of working with multiple state-based organisations.

In its agreement related reporting for 2019-20, AMSA listed some 45 localised health related activities, many of which involved multiple engagements across multiple sheds. While this is a significant amount of work, it is not surprising that these hands-on, grassroots activities are not physically able to reach more than a small percentage of the 1,200 sheds located in towns, suburbs, and local communities across Australia.

Regional Coordinators for Men's Sheds Initiative

From our discussions with individual sheds, there is a genuine enthusiasm for the Regional Coordinators for Men's Sheds Initiative. Sheds see significant benefit in assisting with the organisation of health-related activities and information sessions across multiple sheds, utilising local health professionals and presentations from health experts. They also see the Initiative as a means to encourage groups of sheds to get together to compare their experiences, share their successes and disseminate best-practice approaches.

It is important that the Regional Coordinators for Men's Sheds Initiative utilises and builds upon the existing, knowledge, expertise, infrastructure, and volunteer workforces of AMSA, state-based men's shed organisations, zone coordinators, and individual groups of sheds. It should encourage men's shed organisations to work together in a coordinated and collaborative way, sharing resources and using their combined capabilities and networks to maximise the practical support provided to sheds.

AMSA's IT systems

One of the priority activities in the previous Australian Government agreement with AMSA was for AMSA to transition to new, interoperable IT systems. Currently AMSA maintains multiple databases and CRMs that do not have the capability to enable seamless sharing and transfer of data. This means that there is a need to transfer data manually, for example between the membership database and the shed locator tool, that otherwise could be sourced from one 'sole source of truth' database or be able to be transferred electronically.

As the Siggins Miller 2018 update report points out, the planned upgrade of AMSA's IT systems was not successfully completed. In addition, the management of NSDP is largely spreadsheet-based rather than AMSA utilising a fit-for-purpose online grant management system along with web-based, rather than paper, applications. At this stage, it does not appear that an effective IT upgrade plan has been developed by AMSA and agreed by the Department of Health, and the current agreement appears to de-prioritise this issue.

For an organisation of AMSA's importance with ongoing responsibility for managing a significant Federal Government program and which receives long term funding to meet the broader needs of the men's shed constituency, it makes sense for the IT upgrade to be professionally scoped and managed with a level of investment agreed between the agreement partners to ensure that the upgrade and follow-up staff training are successfully completed.

There is benefit to AMSA and the Department of Health discussing the current IT deficiencies, how they can be most efficiently addressed, the investment required and how the upgrade can be effectively managed. The oversight and support of IT experts should be considered to ensure the best opportunity for a successful outcome.

PRIORITY AT-RISK GROUPS

The scope of the review refers to AMSA's tasks and responsibilities under its agreement with the Federal Government as they pertain to awareness and support of shed participants in priority at-risk groups. The scope makes specific reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, migrants and men from non-English speaking backgrounds, and unemployed men.

One of the stated objectives of AMSA's current agreement with the Federal Government agreement is to:

"advance the wellbeing and health of Men's Sheds participants, especially those that may be at greater risk of poor health outcomes such as Original and Torres Strait Islander males, migrants, defence veterans, unemployed, older men, those suffering a mental illness, those suffering from alcohol or drug abuse and those who need support due to relationship issues."

The first of the intended outcomes of the activity under the agreement is to:

"increase participation of men from target population groups in Men's Sheds event and activities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, migrants, defence veterans, unemployed, older men, those suffering a mental illness, those suffering from alcohol or drug abuse and those who need support due to relationship issues."

This focus is consistent with previous AMSA agreements with the Federal Government with a strong focus on disadvantaged and at-risk men being a core theme of the AMSA agreements with the Federal Government since their inception in 2010.

This assistance to sheds through the National Shed Development Program (NSDP) and more broadly is strongly focused on 12 Priority Groups, namely:

- Males living in rural and remote areas
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males
- Males who are socially disadvantaged
- Males out of work
- Males with a disability
- Males with a mental illness
- Migrant males
- Males who are isolated (e.g., live at home alone)
- Defence veterans
- Males suffering drug abuse
- Males suffering alcohol abuse
- Males who need support due to relationship issues.

The first four of these 12 Priority Groups are assessed using the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) product that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The remaining eight Priority Groups are self-declared by sheds in their applications. The NSDP also has occasional additional priorities for individual funding rounds; for examples priority has recently been given to men's sheds in communities affected by the bushfires or by COVID-19.

Observations

From our consideration of AMSA's progress/performance reports, discussions with AMSA staff and board members and other stakeholders, including other men's shed organisations, as well as an information request to AMSA specifically in relation to priority at-risk groups, there is clear evidence of AMSA's focus on activities and support targeted to these priority at-risk groups.

In its regular performance/progress reports to the Australian Government, AMSA refers to health activities to support these priority at-risk groups but does not necessarily break them out from other more general activities. In addition, AMSA provided the review with a sizeable list of activities that are organised by its health coordinator to benefit these priority at-risk groups.

AMSA has developed partnerships with health and other organisations that are focused on the needs of priority at-risk groups. Its core partnership with Healthy Male in relation to Spanner in the Works also has a focus on disadvantaged men's groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. For example, there is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander version of the Spanner in the Works materials, which was updated in 2018.

AMSA has also responded to requests from government departments and other health promotion organisations to facilitate access to materials and support for priority at-risk groups, including unemployed men, veterans, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, through men's sheds. For example, AMSA informed the review that it had successfully applied for a grant during 2020-21 to provide communication and education activities through men's sheds in relation to the responsible use of medicines, as part of the Federal Government's opioid reforms.

From our discussions with AMSA staff and study of NSDP assessment documentation, it is evident that AMSA seeks to diligently apply the NSDP guidelines and evaluation methodology in relation to the 12 designated priority at-risk groups, albeit manually. AMSA and some men's sheds did express verbal concerns that these priorities work to the benefit of some sheds that are regularly able to access NSDP grants and to the detriment of others that are deemed to have lower eligibility scores because of the emphasis on the priority at-risk groups.

AMSA did express frustration that it does not have sufficient resources to support priority at-risk groups and indicated that most of its activities for these groups are funded by parties outside the agreement. It pointed to a recent unsuccessful funding request for an additional staff member who could focus on providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and indicated that resourcing constraints meant it had not been able to put an ATSI reference group in place. Despite this, AMSA has developed an anti-discrimination policy for use by sheds and looks, wherever possible, to refer to the valuable role sheds play in supporting at-risk men in its communications materials.

Views of sheds

During consultations with individual sheds, many shed representatives were able to point to support and advice they had received from AMSA in relation to members who are from priority at-risk groups or who might have special needs. In the main, the sheds found AMSA to be responsive to these requests and able to provide practical information that is of assistance in supporting these members.

A good example of this practical information is the manual for men's sheds that has been developed by Dementia Australia in partnership with AMSA. Many sheds are supporting members who either have dementia or have a spouse with dementia. Dementia is likely to become more of a priority for sheds going forward, reflecting the increased focus on health issues in the current AMSA agreement with the Australian Government.

Some sheds questioned the extent to which AMSA is practically able to provide on-the-ground assistance to individual sheds to support men from these priority at-risk groups, believing that this assistance can be more effectively provided through properly resourced state-based men's shed organisations, local community groups and local or state-based health partnerships. Some sheds have proactively organised this assistance themselves through local health professionals and other government programs.

Where AMSA is not able to provide on-the-ground assistance itself, it should be working to identify appropriate groups and providers and to link them with the sheds. Regional coordinators can also assist in this regard.

Conclusion

Overall, we found that AMSA does pay considerable attention to the priority at-risk groups that are referred to in its agreements with the Federal Government and in the NSDP. It does this in numerous ways, including: the provision of information; organising activities; and through partnerships with other organisations that represent and advocate for these priority at-risk groups.

However, we were unable to identify a clearly enunciated AMSA plan of support for these priority at-risk groups nor does AMSA's most recent strategic plan (Framework for the Future) include a commitment to such a plan. Instead, AMSA's focus appears to be on utilising funding and partnership opportunities to support these priority at-risk groups as they arise as well as relying on the focus of the NSDP, organising activities to the extent that resources allow, and responding to requests from individual sheds that are supporting at-risk men in their local communities. This ad hoc approach means there is not a clearly documented long-term focus. There is also no consistent measurement of the effectiveness of AMSA's existing activities and the potential upside of alternative approaches.

There is an opportunity to enhance support for priority at-risk groups through the combination of:

- a more outcomes-based approach to the Federal Government agreement
- a stronger focus on priority at-risk groups in a formalised agreement between AMSA and Healthy Male
- a more coordinated and collaborative approach between AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations with agreement on their respective roles and responsibilities.

Recommendations

In relation to AMSA's agreement with the Australian Government and associated matters, it is recommended that:

16. current and future AMSA agreements continue to focus primarily on delivering health and wellbeing outcomes for men's sheds, with measurable key performance indicators and consideration given to undertaking an evidence-based, expert evaluation of their effectiveness in delivering the agreed health and wellbeing outcomes during the final year of each agreement.
17. a summary of the AMSA agreement could be made public in a readily accessible way with the concurrence of AMSA, along with summaries of AMSA progress/performance reports.
18. an outcomes-based reporting framework be considered for the AMSA agreement, in line with Commonwealth grant requirements, with shorter more succinct reports supported by regular strategic meetings between AMSA and the relevant policy area of the Department of Health.

19. AMSA documents a strategic approach on how it will support priority at-risk groups, including the joint activities with its health partners and state-based men's shed organisations.
20. AMSA develops a plan to diversify its revenue base while maintaining its core role as a national peak body advocating for the community and public good of men's sheds.

BUILDING A UNIFIED MEN'S SHED SECTOR

Men's Sheds Australia (MSA) was established in 2006 for the purpose of supporting initiatives to establish sheds nationally. AMSA was established in 2007, with its members being the state-based men's shed organisations and established itself as the peak body representing men's shed across Australia, with MSA largely put in abeyance.

In more recent years, AMSA has adopted a membership model with both state-based men's shed organisations and individual sheds being eligible for membership of AMSA. In addition, AMSA has moved to a combination of a skills-based and elected directors, which is a divergence from the previous board structure of state representation by the relevant President from each state-based men's shed organisation. These changes (amongst other disagreements) have seen many of the established state-based men's shed organisations no longer being members of AMSA and remain unaligned to a national body or have joined with other state-based men's shed organisations to re-establish MSA under the new name of the Council of Australian Men's Sheds Associations (CAMSA).

The current structure of men's shed organisations across Australia is as follows.

- AMSA is the main national organisation with men's shed members from all the states and territories.
- MSWA², TMSA³ and VMSA⁴ represent and support men's sheds in their respective states with some level of funding from their respective state governments. MSWA and TMSA are affiliated with CAMSA while VMSA is not formally affiliated with either AMSA or CAMSA.
- In Qld there are two men's shed organisations, the QMSA⁵ and the Qld Regional Men's Network (QRMN). Neither receives state government funding to support men's sheds and their membership numbers seem to be relatively small. The QRMN is affiliated with CAMSA and QMSA is a member of AMSA following a period where the relationship between the two organisations broke down.
- CAMSA is a multi-state body, which considers itself a potential alternative to AMSA and comprises several affiliated state-based men's shed organisations, including WAMSA, TMSA and the QRMN, each of which have men's sheds as members.
- The NSWMSA⁶ has an MOU with AMSA outlining their respective responsibilities and receives a small amount of state government funding to run a network of volunteers who provide support for sheds in their designated zones. The ACT is part of the NSWMSA.
- South Australia does not have a notable state-based men's shed association nor does the NT.
- In recent years, AMSA has established men's shed entities in each of the six states but none of them apart from NSWMSA and QMSA appear to provide active support to sheds.

Roles and responsibilities

There is no clear delineation of responsibilities between AMSA, CAMSA and the various state-based men's shed organisations, other than AMSA's responsibilities under its Australian Government agreement, including the management of the NSDP on behalf of the Australian Government.

AMSA offers insurance to men's sheds nationally through a group insurance policy, a service not provided by other men's shed organisations. The Spanner in the Works preventive health program is

² Men's Sheds of WA

³ Tasmanian Men's Shed Association

⁴ Victorian Men's Shed Association

⁵ Queensland Men's Shed Association

⁶ New South Wales Men's Shed Association

run by AMSA in a national partnership with Healthy Male, supported by a significant number of government and non-government health partners. AMSA works with men's shed organisations internationally and maintains the mensshed.org/find-a-shed national shed locator tool.

Some state governments provide grants for men's sheds to assist with infrastructure and activities, working with their state-based men's shed organisations. The Qld Government provides some support to Qld sheds through AMSA.

All the men's shed organisations communicate with and provide information to men's sheds. Both AMSA and state-based men's shed organisation are involved in organising activities for sheds, including activities that involve multiple sheds and having a presence at broader community events.

In NSW, AMSA organises a network of volunteer zone coordinators on behalf of the NSWMSA who provide support for and organise links and activities between the sheds in their zones. There is no indication of AMSA having a similar state-wide network of zone coordinators outside NSW. In Victoria and Tasmania, similar zone-based support for sheds through a network of volunteers is operated by VMMSA and TMSA, respectively.

Both AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations seek and secure sponsors to provide financial or in-kind support for sheds, with some evidence of overlapping sponsorships.

AMSA, CAMSA and state-based men's shed organisations advocate to governments on behalf of men's sheds, with evidence of state-based organisations advocating and seeking funding support at the Federal level and AMSA advocating and securing funding at the state government level.

The following is a range of pertinent issues identified during the review relating to the current state of men's shed organisations across Australia.

Coordination between men's shed organisations

We are not aware of any formal documentation detailing the respective roles and responsibilities of AMSA and the state-based men's shed organisations and how they will work in a coordinated way in the provision of services, support, and information to sheds.

There is nothing in AMSA's 2017-19 strategic plan, Framework for the Future, that covers these matters, in fact the document makes little reference to the existence of state-based men's shed organisations.

Nor to our knowledge have the various state-based men's shed organisations actively sought to tackle the issue of duplicate and overlapping roles and responsibilities. However, both AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations have expressed concerns about the other encroaching on or duplicating what they consider to be their responsibilities. For example, AMSA has expressed concern about other men's shed organisations utilising its information and support materials without its permission.

One of the frequently expressed concerns from state-based men's shed organisations about AMSA relates to claims that it organises activities, events and shed visits in their jurisdictions without informing them.

Both AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations also express concern that the other is seeking sponsorships without consulting them. The advocacy by AMSA and the state-based men's shed organisations at varying levels of government, without consulting or coordinating with each other, is another demonstration of the lack of clarity and coordination in relation to roles and responsibilities.

There are many reasons for this lack of a coordinated and collaborative approach, however, the belief by all parties that each side of the disagreement has acted inappropriately is a major impediment to any relationship remediation. The lack of a coordinated and collaborative approach between men's shed organisations increases the risk that individual men's sheds are not receiving the most effective support, with evidence of duplication, overlaps, inefficiencies, gaps, and a lack of clarity for sheds in relation to how they access information and support.

Further, the lack of a coordinated and collaborative approach between men's shed organisations increases the risk that governments and other funders, partners and sponsors could begin to lose confidence in the value of the men's shed movement and reconsider their investments in it. There is also a risk that individual sheds will lose confidence in the leadership of the men's shed movement.

As a result of the relationship breakdown, neither AMSA nor state-based organisations feel obligated to restrict their roles to the areas where one would normally expect a national or a state organisation to focus their attention. At the same time, the failure to have any working agreement on respective roles and responsibilities is one of the main tensions that has undermined the relationship between AMSA and its state counterparts. Given that it is both a cause and an effect of the current disagreements between AMSA and the state-based organisations, the need for clarity in relation to roles and responsibilities should be one of the highest priorities in ensuring a more collaborative and coordinated approach to shed support going forward.

Principles of an agreement on roles and responsibilities

Ideally, an agreement between the national and state-based men's shed organisations in relation to their respective roles and responsibilities would be based on underlying principles:

- An agreed understanding of the types of support that will be provided to sheds and who is best placed to provide this support in an efficient way that delivers most benefit to sheds.
- An assessment of the capabilities of each of the organisations and their ability to access the necessary financial and human resources to deliver the agreed support for sheds.
- Minimising duplication and building upon existing successful approaches.
- Recognition that there will not always be a clear delineation of roles and in some cases (e.g., health related partnerships) a joint approach may be most effective.
- The division of roles and responsibilities may vary from state to state and can evolve over time depending on the development of capabilities and access to enhanced resources.
- Local activities are likely to be more effective if they are organised at a grassroots level that is physically close to the sheds being supported.
- Conversely, other areas such as quality standards and compliance should be as consistent as possible, and a national approach is more likely to be effective.
- It makes sense to align roles and responsibilities with relevant government functions and funding sources, acknowledging that state governments generally want to deal with state-based organisations and the Federal Government wants to deal with national organisations.
- Regardless of who has responsibility for delivering a particular area of support, it is important that all organisations communicate with sheds in a coordinated way about the support that is available, including that being provided by the counterpart organisation.
- There will be inevitable overlaps, disagreements and miscommunications that need to be addressed collegiately without allowing them to escalate into disputes that undermine the broader relationship between organisations.

Any agreement between AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations should be documented, include processes to resolve any issues that arise and provide for periodic reviews. However, to be successful and lasting, any documented agreement on roles and responsibilities agreement must be underpinned by a culture of constructive collaboration and a genuine commitment from the leaders of all parties to work together in the interests of men's sheds. Without this commitment, it is highly unlikely that any documented agreement will be effective or withstand the test of time.

To assist men's shed organisations in considering the most appropriate distribution of roles and responsibilities, we have listed below a summary of the existing areas of support provided to sheds. This list has been compiled from relevant documents and websites as well as discussions we have had with men's shed organisations and individual sheds. While it will inevitably not include some areas of support provided by men's shed organisations, it is provided as a starting point, along with the principles referred to above, to guide the development of an agreement on roles and responsibilities.

Existing areas of support for men's sheds include:

- information and advice in relation to the establishment of a men's shed
- information and advice in relation to the ongoing operation of a men's shed
- information and advice in relation to workplace health and standards
- information and advice in relation to Federal, state, and local government regulations
- preventive health information
- identifying and making sheds aware of funding opportunities
- information and assistance with grant applications, including for the NSDP
- maintaining the online shed locator tool
- advocacy and seeking funding from the Federal Government on behalf of men's sheds
- advocacy and seeking funding from State Governments on behalf of men's sheds
- information and advice about applying for DGR status
- marketing and public awareness of the vital role of men's sheds in local communities
- paper-based and online communications with men's sheds and their participants
- maintenance of a web and social media presence
- sharing information about the experiences and successes of men's sheds
- developing and managing health and wellbeing related partnerships
- procuring and managing sponsorships at the national, state, and local level
- providing advice in relation to local community engagement
- general membership support and responding to shed inquiries
- provision of shed insurance
- management of the NSDP on behalf of the Australian Government
- conducting shed visits
- organising local shed events
- organising and facilitating a men's shed presence at broader community and health events
- holding and attending conferences
- managing a network of zone-based volunteers supporting men's sheds and assisting with multi-shed activities
- liaison with other men's shed organisations in Australia
- liaison with other men's shed organisations internationally
- responding to media inquiries
- maintaining the men's shed brand and reputation

Unifying the broader shed movement

The scope of the review refers to AMSA's work unifying the broader shed movement which is an entirely reasonable proposition given that AMSA is a Federally funded national peak body representing men's sheds. Previous Siggins Miller evaluations have recognised that AMSA is a bona fide peak national body. The long-term Federal funding for AMSA validates this position. However, it comes with an important national leadership responsibility to work constructively with the broader men's shed sector, including other men's shed organisations and individual sheds.

The implications of not having a unified men's shed sector with all men's shed organisations having a clear and agreed understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities are obvious. There will continue to be disagreements between men's shed organisations that will distract them from focusing their time and attention on providing support to sheds. There will continue to be less than efficient service provision to sheds with duplication of resources and confusion and disputes regarding roles and responsibilities. Over time, this risks undermining the positive reputation that the men's shed movement has built with governments, partners, sponsors, local communities and sheds themselves. It is in everyone's interests to resolve the current issues between the various men's shed organisations, and it would be an indictment on the protagonists and a disservice to the men's shed movement if they are not addressed as a matter of priority.

During the review we asked and received written submissions from AMSA and other men's shed organisations including CAMSA and state-based men's shed organisations. We also held follow-up discussions with AMSA and the other men's shed organisations. In both our request for submissions and during our follow-up discussions, we explicitly asked for feedback on AMSA's performance in unifying the broader men's shed movement and referred to the known disagreements between AMSA and other men's shed organisations.

It is not the role of the review to rule on whether the various assertions made by the disagreeing parties are right or wrong or to mediate or arbitrate on the issues of disagreement between them. However, it does make sense to outline what the issues are as well as their impact on men's sheds and AMSA's ability to unify the broader men's shed movement.

From AMSA's perspective, the disagreements are primarily about the other men's shed organisations wanting to have greater control in the running of AMSA through a federated governance structure with the AMSA board made up of representatives of the state-based men's shed organisations. This would be a return to the previous governance structure which existed prior to AMSA moving to a combination of appointed skills-based directors and individual elected member directors from each of the states.

AMSA acknowledges that the By-Laws introduced in 2017 have been a source of irritation for state-based men's shed organisations that see them as overly prescriptive and restrictive. These By-Laws are currently being reviewed by AMSA as part of an ongoing corporate governance review program.

As well as expressing concern about the AMSA By-Laws, the other men's shed organisations believe AMSA is not sufficiently respectful of their role in supporting sheds. They are particularly concerned that AMSA staff visit local sheds and organise multi-shed activities without consulting them and see AMSA taking on roles which they see as their responsibilities. They are concerned AMSA does not sufficiently recognise their existence and cite AMSA's establishment of additional state-based entities that they see as having little practical role other than to compete against them. The three state-based organisations aligned with CAMSA support a federated model, while the VMSA seems more concerned

about the By-Laws and AMSA not being sufficiently collaborative and acknowledging of their complementary role at the state level.

The disparate level of financial resourcing of AMSA and other men's shed organisations is a further point of contention. AMSA does not consider that the state-based organisations have the resources and the capabilities to provide the support required by sheds and that it needs to fill the gaps, including in areas which would normally be the responsibility of state-based organisations.

CAMSA and the state-based organisations express concern that they have no visibility of AMSA's agreement with the Australian Government and that they get no flow-through benefit from it. Some state-based organisations are also concerned that AMSA encroaches on their relationships with state governments, sponsors, and health partners. AMSA contends that these funders are more interested in dealing with them due to their proven record and stronger governance arrangements.

Viewpoint of individual sheds

From our discussions with individual men's sheds, the majority are aware of the disagreements between AMSA and other men's shed organisations. Most see the disagreements as a counterproductive distraction that is not in the interests of sheds. Some expressed concern that the leaders of these organisations seem more interested in 'playing politics' than focusing on the needs of sheds. They are also concerned that the in-fighting might result in the men's sheds sector losing the confidence of government and other funders to the ultimate financial detriment of individual sheds.

Overwhelmingly, the men's sheds we consulted with want the issues between the men's shed organisations to be resolved and for them to concentrate on providing support to sheds and advocating to governments on their behalf. They believe that it is important to have AMSA as a national peak body advocating at the Federal Government level but that state-based organisations, if they are resourced and well-run, are likely to be more effective in helping organise local shed activities. There was strong support from the men's sheds we spoke to for the concept of regional coordinators helping local volunteers in organising multi-shed events and activities and facilitating the sharing of information between sheds.

Commitment to a resolution

While the disagreements between AMSA and the other men's shed organisations are long running, our discussions with board members and senior management gleaned that most would like to see a lasting resolution. They recognise that the disagreements take up a significant amount of time and resources which would be better devoted to providing practical support and advocacy for sheds.

However, differences between individuals and a lack of a clear plan to move towards an amicable resolution mean that little headway has been able to be made. Assuming a genuine willingness to work together in the interests of men's sheds, the issues are far from insurmountable, and a resolution may be assisted through engagement of an expert facilitator with experience in working with membership organisations.

While an optimal governance structure is an important driver to help organisations work effectively, ultimately it is the commitment of an organisation's leaders to work as a cohesive and functioning unit while casting aside their differences that will decide whether the organisation is effective or not. Adoption of established, best-practice governance approaches and processes and ensuring that directors have the requisite skills to provide strategic direction and oversight and perform their collective duties as a board to a high-quality standard are key enablers of well-functioning, not-for-profit and member-based organisations. However, the best governance arrangements must be

accompanied by a genuine, ongoing commitment to a team-based approach that puts the interests of members first and foremost.

Clearly, there is a need to bring an end to the long running differences between AMSA and other men's shed organisations and it is the responsibility of all involved to ensure this occurs. Most of the leaders of men's shed organisations want a resolution while sheds see the continuing disagreements as a counterproductive distraction that could ultimately put the reputation of the broader shed movement at risk.

The rollout of the Federally funded Regional Coordinators for Men's Sheds Initiative provides a timely incentive for AMSA and the state-based organisations to demonstrate they can work together utilising their combined capabilities in delivering practical outcomes in an area of support that previous evaluations and our own consultations have demonstrated has the widespread backing of sheds.

Resolution of the current disagreements will be founded on a commitment by the leaders of AMSA and other men's shed organisations to work together, based on a mutual recognition and respect for each other's contributions, an agreement on their respective roles and responsibilities and underpinned by best practice governance arrangements that put the interests of sheds first.

Recommendations

In terms of unifying the men's shed movement, it is recommended that:

21. AMSA and other men's shed organisations consider entering into collaborative agreements that document their respective roles and responsibilities and how they will work together to the benefit of sheds, including processes to resolve any disagreements or grievances.
 - e. The agreements would acknowledge AMSA's role as the national men's shed peak body, as recognised under its agreement with the Australian Government, its role managing the NSDP, and its longstanding work providing a range of establishment, governance, quality management and preventive health support for sheds nationally.
 - f. The agreements would recognise that state-based men's shed organisations are best able to seek funding from state and territory governments and that well organised and financially sustainable state-based men's shed organisations are often best placed to collaborate with state and community-based health groups and to organise local events and activities for sheds.
 - g. The agreements would seek to build upon existing AMSA and state-based support for sheds in a coordinated way that minimises overlap and duplication.
 - h. Recognising that it makes sense to have one national men's shed organisation (AMSA) and one state-based men's shed organisation in each state and territory (the most organised and financially sustainable entity in the state/territory with the support of the state/territory government), the agreements should seek to resolve the issue of competing organisations at the national and state and territory levels.

22. The longstanding disagreements between AMSA and certain state-based men's shed organisations be addressed as a matter of priority and that all parties be actively encouraged to make a concerted effort to re-establish a united approach to supporting and advocating on behalf of men's sheds nationally and across all the states and territories.
 - c. The exact form of this united approach needs to be reached by agreement, if necessary, facilitated by an expert in the governance of member-based, not-for-profit organisations.

- d. The model should be based on core principles of good governance, including:
 - i. a constitution and by-laws that recognise men's sheds are grassroots organisations that should be encouraged to adopt approaches that meet their local needs
 - ii. agreed roles and responsibilities at the national and state and territory level based on a mutual recognition and respect for each other's contributions
 - iii. a clear distinguishing of AMSA's roles and responsibilities as a member organisation, its commercial activities including as an insurance provider, and its responsibilities as a Commonwealth funded service provider for all sheds
 - iv. a process of board representation that is skills-based and puts the interests of member sheds first and foremost
 - v. ensuring that national directors make decisions based on the overall interests of member sheds nationally, not just those from their respective state or territory.

23. The Regional Coordinators for Men's Sheds Initiative should encourage the forging of stronger relationships between men's shed organisations as well as providing support to sheds at the grassroots level. It should utilise and build upon the existing, knowledge, expertise, infrastructure, and volunteer workforces of AMSA, state-based men's shed organisations, zone coordinators, and individual groups of sheds, and encourage men's shed organisations to work together in a coordinated and collaborative way, sharing resources and using their combined capabilities and networks to maximise the practical support provided to sheds.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

As part of the review, we visited men's sheds and held discussions with individual shed leaders from a cross-section of sheds from around Australia. A significant number of individual sheds also provided written input to the review through the Department of Health's review email address. Most of the elected officials with whom we consulted from the various men's shed organisations are or have been leaders of individual sheds.

The overwhelming assessment from the visits, written input, and conversations with individual shed leaders is that sheds deliver significant tangible benefits both to shed participants and their local communities. The high levels of public, political and community support enjoyed by men's sheds is entirely justified. Sheds provide a friendly, safe, and supportive environment, particularly for mature age and older men, including those from priority at-risk groups, who are often at risk of becoming socially isolated to the detriment of their health and wellbeing.

We were consistently told during our discussions how men's sheds had brought renewed meaning to the lives of shed participants, instilling in them a greater sense of self-confidence, and providing genuine enjoyment from learning new skills, contributing positively to the local community, and benefiting from the camaraderie of their peers. On multiple occasions, shed leaders referred to fellow shedders who they believed would not "be here" if it were not for getting involved in their local shed.

Consistently, shed leaders and shed participants spoke about the importance of discussions about health in the shed environment. AMSA's Spanner in the Works program was widely acknowledged and supported by sheds, as much as a conversation starter about men's health issues as a source of detailed health information. Repeatedly we were told about how sheds provide a safe environment for men to open-up about their prostate and other physical health issues, as well as increasingly their mental health challenges. Often, these discussions are informal chats with peers with the added benefit of encouraging reluctant shedders to seek help from health professionals. Many sheds invite local general practitioners, community nurses, pharmacists, or allied health professionals to attend meetings to discuss health issues, again breaking down the barriers that may prevent men from taking personal responsibility for their own health care.

Another clear take-out from our visits and discussions with sheds is how embedded most sheds are in their local communities. The relationships between sheds and their local communities are mutually beneficial with many sheds contributing their trades and other skills to support community groups, schools, and councils, while the broader communities provide sheds with financial and in-kind support as well as access to facilities and events. The vital role of councils and community health groups cannot be understated, with many sheds heavily reliant upon them for the provision of physical shed infrastructure, contributions for utility costs and governance and other support. Many local businesses and major hardware chains are also incredibly supportive of sheds in terms of providing tools and equipment, as well as facilitating fundraisers.

The voluntary contributions of shed leaders are very significant, usually over extended periods of time, and is tantamount to their overall success. Most sheds are open multiple days per week with significant additional work entailed in governance, upkeep, workplace safety, writing grant applications and building and maintaining community networks. We also found many shed leaders take a personal responsibility to regularly check-on and support members who are having difficulties.

Establishing and running a men's shed entails a multiplicity of skills, a significant amount of effort, ingenuity and inventiveness, and an ability to access and manage often scarce resources in a tight financial environment. Shed leaders come from a variety of backgrounds, often with relevant

community and professional experience. The most successful sheds seem to rely on a combination of complementary skills together with strong leadership in a team-based environment. Most sheds are happy to help their colleagues in other sheds and in some cases have informal networks with other local sheds, sharing knowledge and resources.

Men's sheds are very practical operations. Shed leaders and participants are genuinely appreciative of the information and support they receive from AMSA and state-based men's shed organisations to the extent that it adds practical value for them. On the contrary, they have no time for disagreements between men's shed organisations which they see as irrelevant, political game playing. Nor do they like red tape that makes it more difficult to get things done, whether it be overly prescriptive grant applications, wading through excessive web-based information or perceived unnecessary local rules and regulations.

Overall, men's sheds are a quintessentially Australian success story delivering tangible, often life-changing, benefits to shed participants and the communities in which they operate. Much of their value emanates from the fact that men's sheds are truly grassroots operations, built from the ground up by local shed leaders to meet the specific needs in their communities. The fact that there are well over 1,000 sheds operating in towns and suburbs the length and breadth of Australia is testament to the success of the model and the support for it from governments, corporate sponsors, health partners and the communities themselves. The exponential growth in the number of operational sheds since their inception in the early 2000s is also a demonstration of the support provided by AMSA in terms of shed establishment, national standards, and overall shed governance.

During our consultations, several shed leaders raised the issue of succession planning in their sheds. Many shed leaders have run their sheds since establishment and are reaching a stage in their lives where it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the requisite commitment and devotion of their time. They are concerned there are not readily apparent successors within their membership to take on their leadership roles. Some also pointed to reducing levels of interest in the traditional trade-related activities in sheds which could reflect the broader professional backgrounds, interests, and hobbies of an emerging, younger cohort of recent retirees. These trends point to the need for sheds to continue evolving so they remain relevant to current and future members and for shed leaders to be open to change and actively mentor prospective new leaders who can pick up the cudgels and bring in new skills and perspectives. As the national peak-body, AMSA has a key role to play in guiding and supporting sheds to manage these risks.

Finally, the question of women's participation in men's sheds was raised during our visits and consultations as well as in the written input to the review. While this issue is outside the scope of the review, it bears briefly commenting upon. A fundamental element of men's sheds is that they provide a physical location where men can assemble to talk about issues that they may not feel comfortable discussing in the company of women. That is certainly not to say that individual men's shed should not invite women to play a role or participate in events. In fact, a significant number of sheds that we visited or consulted with actively involved women in various aspects of their operations without controversy and to the overall benefit of the sheds. However, any legal or other requirement that men's sheds must allow female members could potentially put at risk the core benefit of men's shed participation, which may not be able to be delivered through other community-based organisations.