

A new era for Shed

By Tania Phillips

Rockhampton's Men's Shed is going on a membership drive as it prepares for the opening of its brand new sheds at CQ University in October.

The Men's Shed, which first opened its doors in 2010, will be able to welcome more members – particularly women when the new facility opens group chairman Jim Lawler said.

"We started in an old building in Wandal and we were there for a few years and Cyclone Marcia put paid to that – the ceiling started to sag and it was full of asbestos so we took up an offer from the University up here from Scott Bowman who was the vice-chancellor at the time," he said.

"He offered us a building there and we've been there since 2012 until now and we're in the process of building our own sheds on the university campus.

"We built our first one about 12 months ago we're trying to fund the sewage connection and the power, we're connecting the sewage now with the help of a couple of volunteer plumbers and our own members.

"We hoping to be in there in October. The next building, a third of it will be for our ladies auxiliary – they will have projects of their own, there will be a gym, first aid room, storeroom and office and a meeting room."

The group has 50 members but they have had to cap it due to the size of the building but are starting to open up their books now. Secretary-Treasurer Marian Lawler (Jim's wife) said the second building was funded by the Bush-fire Flexible Funding.

She said because the group is a member of Volunteer Organisations In Active Disaster they are eligible to apply for funding through the Rockhampton Regional Council.

"We applied for it and the idea is if the Disaster Management Group decide look for a hub in the Northside - our building would be offered as that hub for any disasters that happen. That's the second building but the third one is our community centre," Marian explained.

"We've got funding for the third one. The Iwasaki Foundation have funded two of our buildings, they funded the first and third shed. The Community Benefits fund put down the slab."



Desley Rail from Iwasaki Foundation turns the first sod.



The skeleton of the shed.

The group wanted three decent sized buildings to be operate property.

"Yes that was the whole idea," Marian said. "The men have got building one – that has all our wood work and metal work in it and that's we get our resources from to get going. The second shed the ladies have part of that and because we're an aging membership we needed a first aid room, an office as well and the small gym – we used to have a gym at Wandal so we're creating the gym for the men's and ladies help.

"What happens is the ladies don't go into the men's shed, that's where they have all their machinery and we respect the fact that men will talk to men when they won't talk to clinicians. At the moment we have a tiny little room and if the men want to come in and talk to us and view some of our projects we don't have a problem with but we decided we respect the men's privacy and need to talk and we don't go into their part



Barry Kajewski puts up the sign.

for morning tea. The idea of the community centre at the front means we all come together and we can have functions and things like that."

Marian said they can now open the membership up and she was currently actively looking for ladies at the moment.

"We've only got four because of the space that we had but we will have room to take about 20 ladies," she said.

"Our library will be active again and we will be teaching the men to cook again and things like that.

"We have a lot of diverse program, if somebody came to us and said what do you think of doing this we would all sit down and have a talk about it and if the majority ruled that project would go in."

For more information head to their website rockhamptonmensshed.org.au.