

Strathalbyn Woodcraft Group Inc

Training & Safety Report

January 2023

“Our role is to look out for people, not look after people”- AMSA Doc

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All information contained in this report is of an advisory nature and cannot be relied on without further due diligence by the reader.

Purpose and Objective of this Report

The topics of Shed Induction, Safety and Member Training have been discussion points for the Committee for some time now. The challenges in reaching a consensus have been largely around the following points:

- How do we protect the mental and physical well-being of our Members?
- What are our Legal and Insurance responsibilities?
- What does AMSA expect or recommend?
- What are the expectations of our Members?
- How much or how little do we need to do?
- What would/could an Induction Safety & Training Plan look like?

My approach in this report is to try and develop a response to each of these questions and perhaps provide some greater clarification around those points.

Section 1:

What Induction, Safety & Training approach will protect the mental and physical well-being of our Members?

It could be argued that our current Safety and Training approach is adequate given the excellent Safety record of the Shed over many years and more pointedly, over recent times.

Given the amount of activity each week at our new site and the variety of equipment used it is a credit to the Members that an injury requiring serious First Aid has never occurred (separate to Medical episodes). Is this because of good management or good luck? The answer can depend on who you ask.

Anecdotally we are aware of near misses and circumstances where Members are not using equipment in a safe manner, risking injury to themselves and damage to the equipment. We are realistic enough to acknowledge that no amount of training and focus on Work Health & Safety (WH&S) will eliminate poor decision making and the human inclination to take “short cuts”.

Some aspects to consider when our priority is looking after our members are:

1. What kind of shed environment do Members want? Is the current “culture” of the shed the culture Members want? How can we find out?
2. How are we communicating with our members? Are we regularly updating and reminding members of WH&S issues related to the shed? How are we doing this? AMSA suggests strongly that communicating effectively with Members is an important strategy in Shed management.

3. How do we manage “Dignity of risk” in our shed. In the Aged Care and Disability sectors Dignity of Risk is an important consideration when considering activities for people. “Dignity of Risk” is accepting that a Member participating in an activity may lead to an injury but to disallow the member to do the activity would create significant mental anguish and could appear disrespectful. A number of our Members could be considered to be Aged or to have a Disability. Some Members may require differing support or have a modulating capacity to operate equipment on any given day due to their personal health fluctuations. How do we manage this?

I think it is accepted that a “laissez-faire” approach is not enough but neither will a WH&S heavy regime encourage members to attend and enjoy the shed. Where is the balance between meeting WH&S requirements and maintaining a friendly and relaxed Shed setting? Hopefully we can suggest a balance in the final recommendations of this report. In relation to points 1&2 of this section I would recommend:

Recommendations:

- 1.1 That a special meeting be called for the purpose of having a general discussion with the membership on developing a Shed culture of Respect, Encourage & Nurture**
- 1.2 That short 5-10 minute “tool box” meetings are held on a regular basis for the purpose of covering any Risk Management issues and general Shed operations.**
- 1.3 That we regularly email Members re Shed matters (including Committee Meeting Minutes) and the newsletter be used for WH&S topics as well.**

Section 2

For Safety and Training what are our Legal and Insurance responsibilities?

Safe Work Australia – How Volunteer organisations can comply with the Model Work Health and safety Act. Legislative Fact Series. (Doc attached to email)

I utilised the above document for information. By my reading what we are doing will position us well in meeting our Legal responsibilities under the Act.

Not all organisations owe work health and safety (WHS) duties to volunteers under the model WHS laws. But those that do must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the physical and mental health and safety of all workers, including volunteers. Organisations covered by the model WHS laws must protect the health and safety of their volunteers. I could not determine our Woodshed status in relation to the Act however at this stage I don't believe it will influence our intended outcomes.

Extracts:

“Volunteers, like other workers, face a wide range of possible risks and injuries from carrying out work. Such injuries may be physical or psychological and can result from common activities carried out by volunteers undertaking community services. The level of care that is required will depend on individual circumstances, such as the age of the volunteer, where the work is carried out and the relationship between the duty holder and volunteer.....

“The duty to take reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health and safety of workers, means a Person Carrying out Business or activity, PCBU needs to identify the hazards and assess the risks associated with the type of work that its workers and volunteers carry out. Some specific examples of the types of environments volunteers work in and the tasks they carry out that should be assessed for risks.”

“There are some volunteer organisations, called ‘volunteer associations’ which the model work health and safety laws explicitly exclude. These are groups of volunteers, whether unincorporated or incorporated associations, working together for one or more community purposes, which do not employ any workers to carry out work for the organisation. For more information about volunteer associations, see the fact sheet Volunteer organisations and the model Work Health and Safety Act.

Even where the work health and safety laws do not apply, the general law duties of volunteer organisations to volunteers are well established. Australian courts have long recognised that volunteers are owed a general duty of care by the people and the organisations they support.”

Section 3

What does AMSA expect or recommend for Induction, Safety and Training?

“The risk assessment of a Men’s Shed would consider many kind of events that could happen and threaten the operation of the Shed, its financial status or the health & safety of people including members, contractors, mentored children / adolescents, and other visitors.

The management aspect deals with actions needed to reduce risk to an acceptable level. Actions also need to be managed by assigning tasks and resources to fix problem areas.

All Men’s Sheds need to regularly assess the risk and ensure action plans are implemented and working properly to reduce risk.” (Extract: Mens Shed Risk Management Policy - Jan 2020)

I believe AMSA would expect our Shed would have conducted a Risk Assessment for our Site and Activities and Equipment.

Risk Management Process - Identify, Assess, Review, Control, Mitigate, Monitor

To the best of my knowledge a Risk Assessment has not been done for our current site and activities. I believe as a starting point a Risk Assessment needs to be completed as soon practical. Although in the first instance this will require a reasonable amount of time to complete, the ongoing maintenance of it doesn't appear onerous.

Recommendation:

3.1 That a Risk Assessment be completed for the Woodshed site, activities and equipment

3.2 *Men's Shed Safety Policy* (Pg 22/101 AMSA Health & Safety Manual Oct 2020)

The extract below largely outlines by summary the range of actions and expectations AMSA has on Mens Shed operations. The what and how appears to be a little flexible as the approach of individual Men's Sheds may vary greatly because of vastly different membership numbers and the activities being undertaken.

Extract:

"The Australian Men's Sheds Association understands that operating in a safe and responsible manner is fundamental to the continued success and growth of the Men's Shed services throughout Australia. Sound safety practices result in low accident rates and consequently low Insurance premiums. A careless approach to safe work practices may lead to a claim for insurance being denied by the Insurer.

We value our members and place the utmost importance on the safety of all persons working or visiting our Men's Sheds.

We are committed to:

- Encouraging and supporting a culture whereby all members may identify, report, assess and control safety risks in their Men's Shed
- Continuously improving our safety to reduce work related injury, illness and harm
- The provision of induction training and briefings to ensure all members, subcontractors and visitors have the relevant skills and knowledge to understand risks and their safety obligations
- Compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, statutory obligations and other relevant Requirements
- Ensuring we have the resources and skills necessary to effectively manage our identified safety risks
- Maintaining and improving a safety management system
- Consulting and communicating with our members about safety and

- Providing information and documentation to assist with effective safety management.

Recommendation

3.2 That the Committee develop new Member Induction Safety and Training processes and procedures that are well aligned with existing AMSA resources.

NOTE: Recommendation 3.2 is linked with Recommendations 6.1-6.5

3.3 AMSA Health & Safety Manual Oct 2020

This Document is an excellent resource that we could use going forward. The scope of topics covered in the Manual covers all aspects of a Shed's operations. Once we have developed our own forms, procedures and processes for New Member Induction, Training and Safety I would suggest we would then look at the other areas listed here.

Table Of Contents

- 1. New Member Induction Package**
- 2. Men's Shed Health & Hygiene Policy**
- 3. Health & Hygiene Procedures**
- 4. Men's Shed Risk Management Policy**
- 5. Men's Shed Safety Policy Jan 2020**
- 6. Men's Shed Safety Procedures Jan 2020**
- 7. General Safety Rules**
- 8. Safe Handling of Wood and Wood based products April 2018**
- 9. Food and Kitchen Hygiene Information Sheet January 2020**
- 10. AMSA Policy Statement Working with Children January 2020**
- 11. AMSA Policy Statement Working with People with a Disability December 2019**
- 12. Incident and Near Miss- Recording & Reporting**
- 13. Safe Use of Specific Equipment x power tools**
- 14. Safe Use of Specific Equipment x hand tools**
- 15. Ladder safety campaign brochure**
- 16. Ladder safety campaign poster**

Appendices

- 1. Grievance Policy & Procedures**
- 2. Typical Start Up Equipment and Tooling List**
- 3. Risk Management Assessment worksheets and Support Documents**
- 3a. Risk Analysis Thinking Prompts**
- 4. Sample of a Safety Data Sheet (SDS)-All Purpose Detergent Page 1**
- 5. Quarterly Health & Safety Self Audit Checklist**
- 6. Sample Safety Signage for printing and laminating**
- 7. First Aid Register – Sample template**

Recommendation

3.3 That following the development of a new member Induction, Training and Safety strategy the Committee will review the other areas of Health and Safety contained in the manual.

Section 4: What are the expectations of our Members?

From anecdotal evidence I feel Members have an expectation and feel they can come to the Shed and participate in activities in a safe psychological and physical environment. The Shed's Culture of Encourage, Respect and Nurture indicates an approach that is supportive and caring for members, and an approach which I believe many members are truly committed to.

In relation to Shed operations and safety the role of the "Duty Officer" has recently been reviewed as the Management Committee has had difficulty finding Members who will volunteer for that role. The Committee recently re-defined the Duty Officer role to clarify that the Duty Officer was not a Safety Officer. Working in a safe manner was instead everyone's responsibility.

Recently there has been some negative comments re the disorganised way the Shed has been Inducting new members and conducting its safety Training for Members. There has not been a designated person or consistent approach for some time. The Committee has recognised this situation and has acknowledged improvements could be made. Finding the resources to solve the problem has been difficult. This report is the committee's attempt to examine the issues and find a way forward.

The increasing member numbers (approx. 70) has created some strain for the management Committee. This is a number that is more difficult to manage and more difficult to develop the kind of close relationships AMSA would like to see developed to enable the social support and environment Mens Sheds are known for. Bigger in many ways is not better.

The administration requirements of the Shed have increased the workload for some members who have put their hands up to help. The current President has encouraged the fractioning of roles to lessen the load on individuals. Finding volunteers can be challenging.

In 2018 a well-attended Meeting was held with Members to develop a Future Plan for the Shed. This really hasn't progressed further but I believe the need to develop a Business Plan for the shed is still very relevant to our future ongoing planning, management and operations.

At this meeting I would also outline the new Training & Safety proposals to members for feedback.

Recommendation

4.1 That a special meeting be called to outline the proposed Training and Safety procedures and to discuss future short, medium and long term options/planning for the Shed.

Section 5: How much or how little do we need to do?

I have gone through a lot of the Woodshed's existing paper and Digital records looking for evidence of previous Training of Members. These records are currently scattered and lacking in information. I have started checking current members against this information to see whether we have evidence that they have completed an Induction or any Safety Training. I have found gaps in what has been recorded and what has actually been completed. The Badges are also behind in showing Training has been completed.

Recommendation

5.1 That a review of and update of Training records be completed for all current members. That an accurate ongoing record be maintained.

From my reading of AMSA documents, I believe that as a minimum we need to develop and implement a recorded process of Inducting and Training new members to the Shed as well as supporting Members on an ongoing basis with safety updates etc. This would involve developing appropriate Documentation (much of it can be taken from AMSA resources) to support an Induction Procedure and a Safety/Training Procedure

Section 6: What would/could an Induction, Safety & Training Plan look like?

There are a number of resources available through AMSA that we could use.

- There are good Membership application forms that gather information that can help the Shed identify and meet the needs of a Member.
- There are good resources providing suggestions for Induction Programs.
- There are good resources that provide suggestions for Safety and Training Programs.

What we need to decide is what our particular Shed approach is going to be in these areas. I would suggest that we:

Recommendation

- 6.1. Review and modify, if needed, current Membership Application forms to ensure we capture information that can be used to assess the individual needs of a new member and provide a safe space for that member. (AMSA resources)**
- 6.2. Develop a formal Induction program, using AMSA Docs, as an introduction to the Shed for new members.**
- 6.3. Develop a Safety and Training strategy that supports members when they join and then continue to support them on an ongoing basis.**
- 6.4. Review our Emergency Procedure processes.**
- 6.5. Review our Accident/Incident record keeping procedures to ensure they meet AMSA requirements.**

Please accept this Report as a starting point and basis for further discussions. I would suggest the Committee look at it over the next few weeks and read the accompanying resources. The following timeline could be followed...

February – Committee Meeting – Accept/change the Report and Recommendations

March – Hold a General Meeting with members to discuss the issues surrounding Induction and Safety Training as well as Shed Culture.

April – June Working Group Develops resources and processes

July – Committee evaluates proposals

AGM – Present new Induction Training and Safety Procedures for ratification.