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Men's Shed, gearing up for big opening

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 **PROJECT:** Recently, Men's Shed founding member Bryan Walter and Bruce Smith built 30 bird boxes for the Katherine Bird Festival.

The Katherine Men's Shed is mere weeks away from a grand opening.

Since its official inception at the beginning of the year the steering committee has worked tirelessly to get the shed off the ground – the biggest project the men have taken on so far.

From a dilapidated structure built in 1993, by one of the current Men's Shed founders, the shed is being re-erected to meet current 21st century building standards.

[Thanks to a generous donation from the construction company](#) currently working on Katherine's \$7.2 million service station, WA-based Mitie Construction, the concrete pad is down.

This weekend, the team will begin to re-erect the walls.


"It is just like we are putting together an overgrown Meccano construction set," one of the Men's Shed founding members Bryan Walter said.

"I was part of the team to build the original structure at the Rotary Club, it just wouldn't meet the building standards anymore," he said.

Working to a budget, the new and improved shed will mostly be made out of the old building's materials.

"The old building wasn't strong enough, it had no front door and the columns were just... very bad," Mr Walter said, "but we have managed to recycle most of it."



 Some of Katherine's best concreters from Hy-Tech Concrete put down a new pad, forming the base of the shed. Picture: Men's Shed.

The steering committee had a grand goal of raising \$30,000 for the project and as of two weeks ago that goal was met.

"The Katherine community has really rallied together to raise money for this shed, we have also received a lot of in-kind support. We didn't think we could get to \$30,000, and in such a short amount of time," Men's Shed secretary Chris Dixon said.


"We have had a lot of equipment donated so far: work benches, tools, grinder disks.

"We have had organisations donate equipment out of the blue, which shows how important and needed a Men's Shed is to the community.

"Nighthawk Transport brought the revamped shed materials to Katherine at no charge," Mr Dixon said.

As one of the founding members, Mr Walter said he knew first hand the importance of a Men's Shed in the fight against depression and loneliness.



 The Katherine Men's Shed established a brother site at the Rocky Ridge Nursing Home to get some of the residents into more activities. Picture: Men's Shed.

"When my wife passed it was the friendships that really helped get me through. [We are here for the blokes who find themselves alone](#) or lost and don't know what to do," Mr Walter said.

"We are committed to the enhancement of men's health and wellbeing through providing practical support, specialised services and resources under the motto 'Men don't talk face to face they talk shoulder to shoulder'.

"The Katherine Men's Shed is for the entire Katherine district and its early membership is inclusive of medical, education, IT, trades professionals as well as indigenous representatives. The skills set / knowledge base is ever increasing," he said.

Katherine Men's Shed secretary Chris Dixon had the idea over five years ago following calls for a community space.

There was little interest then, but it has definitely picked up now with 10 current members and interest increasing every day.

Already, the Katherine High School and the Katherine Men's Shelter – which helps single men aged over 18 years who are experiencing homelessness – have reached out, interested in becoming involved.

"Most of the men currently involved have valuable life skills to pass on, it would be a terrible waste not to pass on our knowledge," Mr Walter said.



While the re-erection of the actual shed may turn out to be the biggest of the projects, there are many more in the works.

And all of them will benefit the community.

“What ever we make we want to sell back to the community, [to benefit the community and fund future projects](#),” Mr Dixon said.

“We are looking at updating the 18 hole mini golf course located at the Rotary Park with crazy structures for each hole.

“Re-erecting the actual shed though is our biggest project so far and a great opportunity for men interested to come along, help out and meet new people,” he said.

The Men’s Shed will be officially opened with a community BBQ early next year.

To get involved in this weekend’s re-erecting of the shed please get in contact with Chris Dixon or Bryan Walter at mens.shed.kath@gmail.com.