

TMSA – NHT Information Sheet

The Tasmanian Men's Sheds Association and Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania are working together to support members, staff and volunteers in Houses and Sheds for the benefit of their community. We have developed a Memorandum of Understanding, which you can view at this link: <http://nht.org.au/resources/mens-and-community-sheds/>The main point of the MOU is that the TMSA and NHT have agreed to work together in the service of our respective memberships.

Our broader aims are:

- to work together to support the good work being done through Houses and Sheds to support their local community;
- ensure that benefit is maximised for both organisations and their members and problems are minimised;
- meet together as needs and opportunities arise – at AGM's, regional meetings or conferences.

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief explanation of some of the common issues that arise between staff, volunteers and committees of Houses, and those of Sheds, and hopefully solutions for dealing with some of those differences. It particularly focuses on the situation where a Shed is being auspiced by a Neighbourhood House.

What are Neighbourhood Houses and how do they operate?

Neighbourhood Houses are run by the community, for the community and offer a wide range of programs and activities to support the needs of local people.

Houses are required by their funding agreement to be open a certain number of Hours per week, to consult with the community about the activities and programs they will deliver – and to respond to the needs and issues identified by their community.

Houses, and the programs delivered there, are also required to be open to anyone in the community and are not allowed to discriminate or exclude people because of their sex or gender identity, ethnicity, religion or political beliefs. Houses do however have a significant range of policies that they are obliged to abide by.

More information about what Houses are and how they operate can be found here:

<http://nht.org.au/home/neighbourhood-houses-in-tasmania/>

What are Men's Sheds or Community Sheds.

Sheds are community spaces oriented around social interaction and activities typically carried out in shed like environments – woodworking, metal work, or other practical and manual activities.

More information about what Men's and Community Shed are and how they operate can be found here: <http://www.tasmanianmensshed.org.au/>

In the world of Sheds, there are some Sheds who are run under their own incorporated association, and others that are auspiced by a Neighbourhood House. This document is aimed at providing some clarity on the differences the two models of governance might experience. This document is no way intended to tell any Shed or Neighbourhood House how they should operate.

A good working relationship between the House and a Shed auspiced by that House, will be very important. Whenever a difference of opinion arises on how things should be done in an auspiced House, talking directly, openly and respectfully, with the intention of working together for the best outcomes for everyone is very important.

A few definitions:

Auspicing – Some Sheds do not have their own committee or board of management, and operate as a program of a Neighbourhood House. The Incorporated Association is the legal entity for the strategic, legal and financial oversight of a program or set of programs. Some sheds may have their own committee of management. Others are auspiced by a Neighbourhood House, or another organisation. An information sheet about Auspicing is available here: <https://www.nfplaw.org.au/auspicing>

Governance – is the framework of rules and practices by which a board of management ensures accountability, fairness and transparency in organisational relationships with all stakeholders (clients, funders, management, employees, government and the community).

The Board of an organisation has ultimate responsibility for the safety, security and financial accountability of people involved in the activities of an organisation. Primarily they are responsible for the Strategic Direction, Financial and Human Resources, Performance, Compliance, Risk and Accountability of that organisation.

Resolving differences.

Working in community settings means that differences of opinion do occur from time to time, and that is quite normal. The issue then is how those differences are resolved. Good practice around resolving conflicts or grievances suggests the following approach:

1. That the two people or groups with different perspectives take time to listen to the perspective of the other. This means really listening to understand that perspective. If there are groups on each side of an issue, it's probably worth appointing a rep from each group to talk to each other.
2. If resolution cannot be found through the above approach, a third person, independent of the specific situation could be sought to provide assistance.
3. If resolution cannot be found through the above approaches, you could seek assistance from the executive officers of both TMSA or NHT.

	Sheds Auspiced by Houses	Independent Sheds
Who is responsible for the overall safety in the Shed.	The House Committee They may delegate a level of responsibility to a coordinator, to a volunteer shed supervisor. Even if there is a sub-committee of shed participants, the House Committee is still liable and therefore responsible. The House committee will want to see strong policies and procedures in place to ensure safety and good practice.	The Shed Committee The shed committee may be made up of a range of people who use the shed, some of whom may have good understandings of safety practices and use of tools etc.
Who can attend the shed, and who dictates this?	Neighbourhood House funding agreements with DHHS dictate that activities and programs must remain open to the community. Some people in Sheds may want to have a time when it is open for men only, or for women only. Ultimately this is the decision of the Neighbourhood House committee. Sheds auspiced by Neighbourhood Houses, cannot exclude women or other groups in the population completely.	For further details, the funding agreement of the TMSA will articulate this, but in general, Sheds should be open to the community, and should not be run as a club for the select few who started the shed, or who may be current members.
Guidelines and policies for managing Houses and Sheds	Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania provides lots of resources to assist in the governance and management of Houses, and these are free for Sheds to access. There are manuals, guidelines and templates available on the NHT website http://nht.org.au/resources/guides-policies-and-procedures-toolbox/guides-policies-procedures-toolbox/	Sheds are welcome to access any of these documents and to adapt them for the use of their Shed.
Managing grants and finances	Although people in the Shed may have put in a lot of time and energy to completing a grant application, to obtaining quotes and deciding what equipment will be purchased and grants spent on, the House committee is still responsible for all funds received and for reporting against the funding agreement of a grant.	

<p>Who owns the tools, and materials of the Shed</p>	<p>The House Committee as representatives of the community are responsible (own) the tools and materials of the Shed. Even if a grant was awarded for Shed purposes and purchases, those tools etc are still the property of that Neighbourhood House Inc.</p>	
<p>How do we manage differences between people running Sheds and running Neighbourhood Houses</p>	<p>Houses have clear policies and procedures for managing grievances. Guides and template policies are available in the <u>NHT Governance toolbox</u>. Confidentiality is important in managing differences and conflicts. Again most Houses have clear policies around confidentiality as required by our funding body. See below for more suggestions on managing differences.</p>	
<p>When there is no leader in a Shed</p>	<p>House committees are still legally liable for activities that occur in the Shed whether there is a leader or not. They still have a duty of care to ensure safety of all participants. Committees delegate the responsibility for management of day to day operations to House Managers who may delegate responsibility for the Shed to the Shed Coordinator. Participants and volunteers in Sheds need to work with, and are answerable to the Manager of the House, or Shed Coordinator, who themselves may be answerable to the House Manager.</p>	
<p>What if there is a problem or grievance by a Shed member with the way the Shed is being managed or treated</p>	<p>The Manager of the Neighbourhood House is responsible for the day to day management of programs and activities run through the House. The House Manager has the authority to direct participants in how a program, activity, or shed should be run. Hopefully such direction will be given respectfully.</p>	

	<p>If a shed volunteer, coordinator or participant has a problem with decisions of the Manager, they should approach the House Manager first, and follow House grievance policies and codes of conduct beyond that.</p>	
<p>Men and women running Houses and Sheds</p>	<p>It may be that there are mainly men running a shed, and they are needing to report to a woman managing the House. It is understandable many people particularly in Sheds may not have worked in such a situation before. Perhaps being aware of this fact, will help some people to adjust to the different dynamics. It doesn't really matter who is in what role or situation, we need to work together respectfully, to get the best outcomes for everyone in the community.</p>	
<p>What is community development?</p>	<p>Community Development is different from business and traditional workplaces.</p> <p>Many shed users may be used to a work environment which is hierarchical, and male dominated. Sheds and Houses are workplaces and of course have hierarchy, but the aims are different to a workplace. They operate under a community development framework, meaning that there is a strong emphasis on activities and premises being open to anyone, benefitting the community, working together to resolve differences, and doing things for a shared benefit, not just for the agenda of an individual, or a small select group of people. For more information on Community Development, see the NHT website: http://nht.org.au/resources/community-development/</p>	