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Men's business

by JENNY D'ANGER

DETERMINED to have a place for men to forge mateships over a hot powertool, the blokes at Fremanshed did it the hard way.

The group of 12 found their own shed and raised funds to equip it, opening the doors in 2005 after two years of yakka.

The Nannine Street, White Gum Valley, shed was the first in WA but these days authorities recognise the social value of men's sheds, and seem willing to chuck money at anybody wishing to set one up.

"We have a real community shed because it's organic," co-founder Bill Johnstone said of his homespun version. "We kept with the vision."

Having blokes to chinwag with as they work has quite literally been a life saver for men depressed over a marriage break-up, job loss or health issues. It's also been a great opportunity for retired men to find an outlet for unused energy, Mr Johnstone said.

Fred Parker, 75, has become a permanent fixture since joining three weeks ago. "I should have joined years ago," he enthused.

The Fremanshed is still self-funded, with the occasional cash boost when it runs workshops for a variety of government agencies. Housed in the former Pigeon Club next to Kim Beazley School, Fremanshed is on borrowed time with development plans for the area in the next couple of years.

However the group has a written undertaking by Fremantle council to find a new shed, Alan Gowland said.

"We're keeping that somewhere safe," he said of the letter.

Insurance is also a major concern and although the shed has public liability the budget doesn't stretch to fire and theft.

Fremanshed is holding a giant community garage sale Saturday March 8, 8am to noon to boost its coffers.

Surplus tools and machinery be flogged off, and anyone else wanting to clear out their cupboards can join in at $5 per bay. For more info phone Mr Johnston on 0411 134 808.

• Peter Tagliaferri is up for sale, seen here with Alex Marshall, Bill Johnstone, Alan Gowland and Brian Knox.
Photo by Dave D'Anger