

# Council of Woodwork Clubs AGM 2019 – Presidents Report

Welcome everyone to the 2019 Council of Woodwork Clubs Annual General Meeting.

Fortunately we have been able to keep the insurance premiums the same as last year thanks to the work of Max Grigg our treasurer – thanks Max.

The past 12 months again has seen a slight decline in the number of members of some clubs and a slight decline in the number of clubs.

It is ridiculously obvious to anyone that if this pattern continues to its logical conclusion then Woodwork Clubs will be a fond memory of the past. Does this have to happen? Do we want this to happen? Who needs to do something to reverse the trend?

There are quite a few progressive clubs and there are a small number of clubs in the “palliative care ward”. Why? Have Woodwork Clubs run their race? Have they become less relevant?

Why would someone want to join your woodwork club? What has your woodwork club got to offer rather than obtaining skills from the internet or joining some other organisation?

It is true that the environment that existed when woodwork clubs first formed has dramatically changed. Successful woodwork clubs have adapted to the changing environment and other organisations or mediums are filling the voids left by those clubs who have not adapted.

We have seen a dramatic decline in Technical Schools, teaching of crafts in Secondary Schools and a steep decline of manufacturing in Australia hence less people (mainly men) have basic manual skills. In the past, many new members to woodwork clubs had basic manual skills and were seeking to build on these skills. Today there are far less people with these skills hence appealing for new members from this pool is less effective.

The Internet offers instant solutions from experts and “experts” 24/7. Differentiating between experts and “experts” is difficult to impossible for the novice so the internet could be seen as a viable alternative to joining a woodwork club that meets only every fortnight at a set time.

Joining a woodwork club having almost zero manual skills due to no fault of your own could be so daunting and intimidating that you wouldn't dream of joining a woodwork club with no program for absolutely raw beginners particularly more for senior new members.

Our society has changed, there is now much greater diversity than when Woodwork Clubs began. This gives Woodwork Clubs an opportunity to attract new members from a much larger pool. More progressive clubs have female members who not only undertake the higher end woodwork projects but are highly regarded and sought after as instructors. Clubs who reflect and embrace these positive changes in their membership and higher responsibilities within the club seem to be prospering quite well.

Retired males in particular often have difficulty adapting from their senior roles at work to being another old codger with far too much time on their hands. It leads to serious mental issues and or loneliness. This is a big problem for our communities.

The Mens Sheds cater very well and are most successful with their programs that also include a range of manual skilled opportunities. The Mens Sheds attract funding because of the important role they perform so well.

The manual skills in a woodwork sense at Mens Sheds range from very basic (nails in end grain with a bit of putty – looks great mate!) to much higher skills such as sound joinery, turning and carving. It depends on the skills of the coordinators. Mens Sheds are open many days of the week plus they offer physical and mental health information sessions.

Woodwork Club members know that woodwork clubs not only offer the skilled higher end of what Mens Sheds offer but go much further to the extent of pushing the boundaries of their craft. Who else knows this? Is this fact known to those who administer grants? How can they be enlightened?

Mens Sheds are far better funded by Governments than woodworks clubs because they market their broad range of activities and services and they implement them very well. Their programs are attractive for Governments to fund, those people managing grants can tick lots of boxes.

Woodwork Clubs and Mens Sheds are not 100% competitors and can work in conjunction with each other as demonstrated by the close association between some woodwork clubs and Mens Sheds. For such relationships to be successful there has to be a clear distinction between the two organisations including recognising common ground.

The Council of Woodwork Clubs would like to hear of success stories of how clubs have adapted to our changing social environment and if your club has formed a partnership with another organisation such as a Mens Shed.

We would like to distribute these experiences to all clubs so we can help transfer those clubs in the "palliative care ward" to the gymnasium!

Recently Clubs were sent a call of help from AWTEX. If action isn't taken soon, AWTEX will become another fond memory. For all those Woodwork Clubs and members who have enjoyed contributing to AWTEX in the form of entries, here is your chance to keep AWTEX going for those in the future to enjoy.

The Council of Woodwork Clubs Committee consists of committed members all of whom have served many years on this committee. It is important that new committee members are found.

Below is a quote from my 2006 report to the AGM.

***The clear majority of people at today's AGM are no busier or are no less able to become committee members as past or current committee members. You must consider becoming actively involved on the committee for the sake of Woodwork Clubs around Australia.***

The members we have on today's committee are the same as back then! We are all thirteen years older.

Please consider joining the committee, many of our decisions are made by telephone calls and emails.

Thanks to Alison who keeps the wheels of the Council of Woodwork Clubs turning.

Thanks to all the committee members for their input so we can make sound decisions based on a broad range of people and experiences.

A special thanks to Judy Wheeler who keeps us all focussed and enthusiastic.

- Rob Allan

President Council of Woodwork Clubs