

# Peter Blackler honoured with workshop name

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MenzShed Kāpiti has played a key part in Peter Blackler's retirement years. Photo / David Haxton

Some people have grandstands named in their honour, some have street names, but for Peter Blackler, it's a workshop that will bear his name.

Blackler has been an instrumental figure at MenzShed Kāpiti, in Waikanae Beach, since the branch opened many years ago.

The large 170sq m workshop is the latest development at the branch and its naming is a fitting tribute to someone who has made a huge tireless contribution.

"It's quite an honour really," the 80-year-old said.

The workshop will mainly be a woodworking area with benches, lathes and more.

Blackler is one of those blokes every organisation would be glad to have – knowledgeable, respected, personable – in other words a go-to guy.

His skill set and temperament were developed over a lifetime of hands-on and mentally challenging work.

Blackler grew up on a small farm in Marton and acquired a lot of handyman skills early on with a passion for anything mechanical or electrical.

After leaving school he trained as a radio technician and completed an electrical engineering degree at Canterbury University.

His career started in 1961 at Civil Aviation where he largely worked in a variety of important roles, and held senior management roles, until retiring in 2011.

It was in 2010 when wandering through the Easter market in Mahara Place, Waikanae, that he read a flyer about an upcoming meeting to discuss the possibility of creating a Menzshed chapter for Kāpiti.

It intrigued him, especially as he had recently used his skills to extensively renovate his Waikanae home, and was keen to get involved with something else.

At the end of the meeting, Blackler was one of 27 men who signed up and paid the \$10 membership fee to enable MenzShed Kāpiti to become registered as an incorporated society.

After discussions with Kāpiti Coast District Council, a small building at the council's works depot in Rangihiroa St was offered to the group for \$1 rent per year.

A year later, the council relocated their works facility to Paraparaumu, which enabled the branch to broaden its footprint to a three-bay tractor shed, and beyond.



And as the years progressed, and membership increased, more facilities were developed including a veranda, large meeting room/purpose-built kitchen/accessible toilets, and more.

The building work has mostly been done by members, under the supervision of a qualified builder, but could not have been completed without the generous support of funding partners and valuable assistance from local suppliers and service companies.

Blackler has been a leader in site development because of his engineering and management experience.

He was also involved with MenzShed New Zealand where he played a key role in developing the constitution and rules.

He's stepped down as the national body's treasurer and will stand aside from his branch treasurer role next month.

"Unfortunately I haven't got the energy to carry on with it all."

Despite taking a step back from responsibilities, he's always available for people who need to "tap into the institutional knowledge and so forth".

Moreover, it was "great to see the other guys taking on the responsibilities".

Today MenzShed Kāpiti has about 140 members which typically, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, attracts 50 to 60 men who work on various community projects as well as enjoy comradeship.

Blackler, who has also been a long-time member of Wellington Vintage Machinery Incorporated, has loved his involvement with the branch.

"The development of the facilities has been amazing to see.

"It's also shown there's a great need for the branch.

"Over the years, a number of them [members] have said that if it wasn't for the shed they probably wouldn't be around.

"I didn't take that too seriously until I got involved with a suicide prevention group and realised what the guys were potentially telling me.

“Overall though there has been a great satisfaction to see how it has developed and a lot of enjoyment for the conversations and banter.

“It is fantastic.”

The Peter Blackler Workshop will be officially opened on Saturday, August 26 - 2023