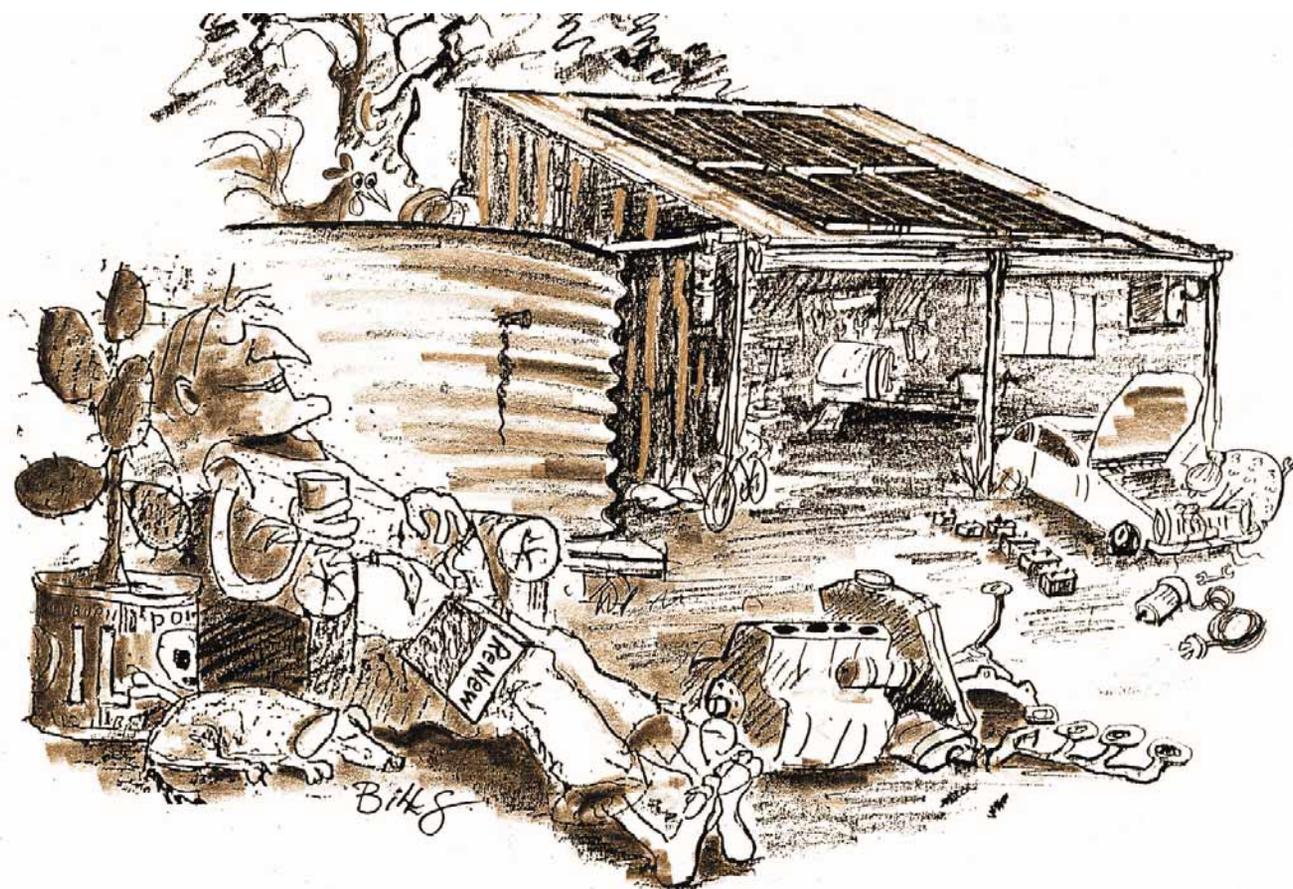


Sustainable sheds competition



Above: illustration by Bill Gresham
Right: Jacinda Brown's workshop shed

Thanks to Mark Thomson from the Institute of Backyard Studies for help judging the competition—www.ibys.org
Thanks also to Oatley Electronics for donating the solar panel and regulator for the main prize—www.oatleyelectronics.com

How on earth did we judge it...

LOOKING THROUGH THE entries to the Sustainable Sheds competition, we realised we had a pretty fortunate view. No detail was spared when people shared their stories about building, retrofitting or working within their sheds.

With the word sustainable added to the front, this competition was asking for just a little bit more than your average shed. Some entrants might not have thought of their shed as 'sustainable', as

this way of living is often a necessity in remote areas. Water tank? Of course there's a water tank—it's essential. And solar? Well, living far away from the grid means that solar is best.

In some ways the sustainable aspect is demonstrated by what people actually do in the shed, or as shed entrant John Hermans puts it, "concentrate on things that are useful to your daily needs. Fix a push-bike rather than a jet ski, make some double-glazed windows rather than a table to hold a new mega kilowatt flat screen." For others the shed is the base for their life's work committed to environmental education or awareness raising. The shed is where it all happens.

Alas, we had to make a decision regarding the three prizes. Ranking the sheds was not easy, after all, who can say that one shed is better than another? Sheds were assessed on their sustainable construction, be it a retrofit or an outright build-it-from-scratch job, renewable energy use within the shed, the

projects carried out in the shed and whether or not the overall package was essentially...good.

These winning sheds are featured on the following pages in no particular order. They include Jacinda Brown's sheds in the Northern Territory, John Hermans' sheds in Victoria and Peter and Ben Risby Jones' shed in Queensland. We're sure you'll have your own personal favourite. These three winning entrants will each receive a solar panel, solar regulator kit plus LED lights from Oatley Electronics, as well as a copy of *Makers, Breakers & Fixers: Inside Australia's Most Resourceful Sheds* by sustainable shed judge Mark Thomson.

There were many more sheds than we could feature on these pages and we're looking forward to including them in future issues of *ReNew*. A big thanks to everyone who entered.

Jacinta Cleary, Lance Turner and Mark Thomson—Sustainable sheds assessors.



An array of Top End sheds

Made from salvaged materials, Jacinda Brown's sheds are made for the tropics.

Like many rural Territorians, our home is a shed. Actually, it's a series of sheds, serving different purposes and projects. Last year, our local member of parliament sent a letter beginning, 'There have been many rumours recently about people being thrown out of their homes because they are 'sheds' and not 'houses'...' It goes on, and includes a link to a government fact sheet, *When is a shed not a shed?* which explains the difference between a shed and a house, its intended use and the 'requirements in terms of structural, health, safety and amenity standards.' Heeding this, all our buildings fit into the shed category. Lucky we live in an area without building codes.

I live on a bush block 100km outside Darwin with George and our son Rover. We have four sheds; the kitchen shed, the workshop, the metal shed and the chook shed studio. George built them all, starting with the kitchen shed.

Kitchen shed

We began construction of the kitchen shed in 2000 and it is now our primary dwelling place. Except for the posts, it is made with secondhand salvaged materials. The rafters and purlins are stringy-



The chook shed, named so because it is made from materials from an old battery chicken shed. Right: The metal shed.

bark bush poles and local bamboo. The roof and the few walls are made with reused corrugated iron and screws. The roof is 13 feet high, which keeps the heat down, and the lack of walls ensures plenty of ventilation. When it's cold we have a fire which we also cook on. The kitchen floor is dirt and cement, the living area concrete with rocks.

It is solar powered with our brand new 4kWh RAPS system. This runs our chest fridge and freezer, lights and a fan

for Rover to sleep comfortably with.

George is a carpenter/builder and our internal structures and furniture are beautifully hand-crafted using a variety of scavenged timbers. The concept that possessions should be beautiful, useful and durable, which Satish Kumar advocates, rings true in this shed.

Metal shed

To save us cutting down all the trees around the kitchen shed, the metal shed

was built as a roof for the solar panels. We used new steel, but reused tin and screws. An old shipping container lives here where we house the solar components and anything else that needs to stay dry. It is also George's new mechanics and welding shed and a perfect place to get that biodiesel plant going. All the sheds get water via a solar powered bore, which pumps to a header tank and gravity feeds to different locations. All waste water feeds the gardens.



Photos: Jacinda Brown

Workshop shed

The workshop shed is made completely from recycled and salvaged materials, old steel posts and trusses, bush pole rafters and old tin. It has a dirt and sawdust floor. This is where George makes all the furniture, grinds the flour by hand and fixes everything. I have diagnosed him with 'compulsive fix-it disorder', but he says it's because I always bring home broken things. I'm a compulsive scavenger! The current project is converting the hand-powered grinder to pedal power with an exercise bike a friend gave us. In this shed, George made our wood-fired 'donkey', a hot water shower made with an old gas bottle and old tap fittings welded up using a generator. It is fuelled with workshop off-cuts. Luxury!

Chook shed

The chook shed studio doesn't house chooks, but got its name because most of the materials used to build it came from some old battery chook sheds being demolished. Steel posts and beams, seven-metre wooden rafters, concrete blocks, bolts, screws and the most beautiful old rustic tin came off these sheds. We bought enough steel to do the rafters, bearers and some posts; timber to do the joists, purlins, doors, wall and window framing; and enough tin for the roof and cladding.

The louvre galleys and glass came from

Sheds



Above: The kitchen shed. Bottom: The workshop shed. A photo inside the workshop is on page 47.

the tip shop and an old shutter window frame from hard waste. The window sills are cyprus pine, which grew and was milled at a friend's place. The louvres and clerestory window gives ample air-flow and passive cooling. We couldn't find recycled floorboards, so these are new termite resistant cyprus pine. This shed has its own 4kWh solar power system as the sheds are too far apart to join the systems.

The chook shed is where all the tech stuff lives, protected by walls! I am an environmental photographer, focusing on the local bush. It is here that I work on educational books for children and slide shows to teach about plants, critters, biodiversity and gardening, as well as tell stories from our bush sanctuary. George better watch out for his bike grinder, as I may have to schnaffle it for my pedal-powered slide show which I plan to take to schools to educate about local environment and responsible power use. It includes a bit of physical

education and mathematics chucked in too, such as 'how many kilometres at 10 kilometres per hour do we have to ride to run a 15 minute slide show with a data projector using 300 watts?'

Before I moved here I had little building experience and knew nothing about solar power, so the things I have learnt

have been most inspiring. One thing that stands out is to keep the tools and equipment in good nick. Working efficiently is more enjoyable and there's more time for those 'gunna be' projects. No more building though, because until Rover needs one, I reckon we have enough sheds for now. ✨

