



## KNOCK, KNOCK, **KNOCKIN' UP A COFFIN** AT HEAVEN'S DOOR

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PHOTOGRAPHY **PATRICK GEE**

**T**urns out making your own coffin is at least half the price of the cheapest available coffin you can buy. And for some, that's an offer simply too good to walk away from, says former carpenter Peter Marshall.

He's been running the coffin-making courses at the men's shed linked to the West Moonah Community House since they started in March last year. So far he's helped create 16, with four more currently on the go — including one for 80-year-old

Berris Mortimer (pictured), who has brought a friend in to help her because she's using a walker after two hip replacements. He only allows four at a time in his workshop, mostly because the people he's helping haven't ever used a power saw or a drill.

Marshall says building the "\$500 box", as he calls them, is fairly straightforward but a unique experience for everyone.

Some have put their finished product underneath the house and breathed a sigh of relief for another job done and dusted, while others use their coffin as a coffee table until it's needed for its original purpose.

Legally, a coffin has to be lined with plastic and

then calico can be used to cover it up, but for some Marshall says that's just not good enough.

"The boxes are decorated in lots of weird and wonderful ways," Marshall says.

"A lot of the girls have tizzied up their coffins," he says. "Some have lined them with velvet and silk and even rabbit fur ... they tidy them up with all sorts of things."

He's not "an old softie" but at the end of the day it does feel good to help people, he says.

"It's expensive to die. To me it's just a box, but I've worked out the best way to make them so if more people want help to make them then we'll keep this going."



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