

# WOMBAT HOLLOW



IRON BED & LAMP CO.

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## Tripping the light fantastic

**Former NSW Minister Michael Yabsley has traded in his Parliament shoes and is now giving new life to orphan artefacts in the form of unique lamps from Wombat Hollow Iron Bed & Lamp Co.**

By Tony Brown



MICHAEL YABSLEY is an ideas man. That's what it says on his business card. Only an ideas man could have envisaged an afterlife for a pair of discarded 1920s body parts canisters. They now sit proudly in his William Street office, each sporting a smart square pleated lampshade to form a very pleasing aesthetic.

"One of the exciting things about these pieces is that they had utility in their day," Michael explains enthusiastically. "They are thrown out not because they're broken but because they have become redundant in that particular role."

The idea of giving something new life appeals enormously to Michael. The former Liberal politician was a Member of Parliament from 1984-1994 and held stints as Minister for Tourism and Corrective Services. He continues to be Federal Treasurer for the Liberal Party while being a director of Government Relations Australia.

Michael has been collecting things for as long as he can remember, mcgrath.com.au

finding old tools or receptacles and storing them in the shed. "I kept them because I liked them," he says. "The artefacts I collect are not rare or precious but they all have great design merit about them."

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The inspiration for transforming these neglected pieces into lamps came from Michael's mother. "She always said a lamp makes the room," he explains. "It combines sculpture and utility and is an essential part of anyone's home."

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Michael Yabsley

The best part of the job for Michael is jumping in his 1937 Chev ute and heading into the country to forage for unwanted yet appealing items. He will scour country markets, scrap metal dealers or people's sheds. "The best discovery is a shed that is intact and the artefacts have been protected from the weather."

He then whips his booty back to the workshop on his Bowral property and begins the creation process. "I do all the collecting and design work but I use amazingly talented artisans to do the assembly." Each lamp is masterfully wired with traditional cotton covered leads and authentic certified electrical fittings.

Wombat Hollow Iron Bed & Lamp Co. is now 12 months old and has produced a stunning brochure with a fine collection of lamps made from old shoe lasts, planeing tools, antique machinery and tripods. It is the antithesis of the modern production line where each handmade component is a one-off in every sense of the word.

It's always a great buzz for Michael to see the items develop in the community. Clients from around the world send in photos of the distinctive lamps juxtaposed with sleek contemporary interiors. The business is exactly where Michael wants it to be. He is adamant that it will only ever be a cottage industry with the manufacture of about 250 lamps a year.

"There is no shortage of artefacts that give you inspiration", he says. "And it's great to be a part of recycling and seeing adaptive re-use in practice." \*

wombathollow.net.au

