



PICTURING the future . . . James Ruig says: 'The potential for the future is enormous and it's growing every year due to things like the rising cost of timber and the diminishing forests'.

Old is gold in the Big Red Shed

JAMES RUIG is looking back to the future from his Big Red Shed at inner-city Milton.

While it might look like a simple structure of timber and tin perched next to a railway line, the shed is actually turning out to be a gold mine.

Stored inside are the sort of things you don't see every day and that is what is making it a business boomer.

Old timber, colonial light fittings, staircases, claw foot bathtubs and more timber.

It's a demolition yard, but one with a difference.

Like other industries dealing with raw materials, Mr Ruig has found the benefit of value adding.

"It's not all dirt and slime,"

Mr Ruig said. "I'm trying to offer an end product."

The work can be as simple as cleaning up old wall and floor boards from demolished colonial homes for resale or more complex, such as recycling the timber into old-style furniture.

On a more heavy-duty scale, Mr Ruig also remills large timber beams to make rustic flooring and feature supports for popular barnstyle houses.

That side of the business has been so successful that a new yard has been established at Darra, on the city's western outskirts.

Much of the timber from a current project, the demolition of Brett's Wharf at Hamilton, will be taken there for remilling.

Mr Ruig gains other materials through his own demolition business, which has an emphasis on salvage, not destruction.

"The restoration building market is enormous," he said.

"I wouldn't be able to put a dollar value on it and we're involved in only a small part of it.

"There's been a move to colonial furniture and what coincides with that is a move to older building materials.

"The potential for the future is enormous and it's growing every year due to things like the rising cost of timber and the diminishing forests.

"Recycled material is becoming a good option. It's not only cheaper but also it's usually better quality material than what can be produced today."

Mr Ruig's Big Red Shed business has been at Milton for the past year but he has been in the industry for 10 years, including time spent restoring residential properties.

"Now we've moved away from physically doing the renovations of properties ourselves and are more into supply," Mr Ruig said.

"We believe in the added-value section of the market."

It's a belief, he said, that was paying off.

At the Big Red Shed the four phone lines were often jammed with calls from around Australia, he said.

"The increase in our business over the past six months has been tenfold. The demand is just incredible."