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**Maitland Community Men's Shed welcomes new members!**

**We are here to assist our supporters**

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and friends.

**The Maitland Community Men's Shed would like to**

## The Shed Report.....

The Shed is back in business and humming. The Horse whisperer is back in the swing, or as you might realise, respectfully turning long lost loved rocking horses back to their original form, using his many skills and loving touches. We wait to see what charms he will deliver this time-around, I am sure it will be another gem.

Out in the project area, the crew are finalising the finishing touches to bring back to our local Aspect School, the playground equipment that we at the Shed had constructed for them just a couple of years ago. The equipment had weathered over time and were due for a birthday upgrade, so over the Christmas break, the team brought the "picnic suites" back to the Shed for a good cleanup and a new coat of paint. As well, a mud kitchen and a new picnic table have been constructed. The picnic table will be installed in the Rose garden at the entrance to the School.

The Minister for dots and dashes, is keen to start his computer and mobile telephone lessons. I can only assume that these will be bigger and better than previous, as he now has a very large TV screen to work with and his IT skills are endless, as is his imagination.

We indulged with our first BBQ for the year

after some diligent members found a couple of packs of sausages in the freezer. So, it was planned for the following Monday and about 25 or so members enjoyed a sausage, onions, sauce on a bread roll for diner. Chef Grommet supplied his culinary skills to prepare the feast.

The ground maintenance team, ably led by our Landscape man, Marcus, have the gardens and grounds cleaned up and looking good.

Finally, another reflection on what we do at the Shed: -

Some men don't open-up easily. They open toolboxes. They open sheds.

At our Men's Shed, men (and Ladies) come together - not to be fixed, but to belong.

They work shoulder to shoulder, share stories when they're ready and build friendships that last.

From small suburbs to city neighbourhoods, Men's Sheds are helping Maitland men stay connected, active, and well.

Take care and see you at the Shed.

*Charlie Sanders* - Chairman



### Aspect School 2026 Reno.....

In August last year, during a visit to Hunter Aspect School for their 'Brilliant Brunch' morning tea we were reminded of the shed's long association with the school dating back to at least 2015. In the early days of the development of the land and building of the school, volunteers from MCMS attended the work site on a regular basis. They set up camp in the shade of the remnant gumtrees with eskies of ice and water and a place for storing lunches and biscuits for morning tea. A shed always marches on its stomach, even Napoleon Bonaparte knew that.

During these early years of the school, Maitland Community Men's Shed purpose built a large barbecue table and benches, painted classrooms, built and provided a cubby house and potting shed and built and installed benches throughout the school. Testimony to the workmanship and care of the earlier volunteers the furniture was still standing. It had stood the test of time but just like us, we noticed it could do with a bit of a makeover.

During November and December 2025 work started on the manufacture of a mud kitchen and a new table and bench for Aspect to provide more outdoor furniture for students and staff. This work was completed by the end of 2025 and is now awaiting the construction of concrete slabs at Aspect for final installation.

The renovation of the legacy benches and tables has proved a bigger challenge. This work could only be completed when the school was free of students. This coincided with some of our hottest weather during the Christmas holidays and included MCMS' end of year shutdown. Undaunted, the MCMS crew attended the school mid-January, disassembled the large tables and benches and transported the timber parts to the shed for repair and repainting. In all we have now refurbished the Rose Garden table, repainted the coffee shop furniture, and recondi-



tioned 3 large tables and benches.

This has been a considerable body of work made possible by the efforts principally of Mick Oates, Ken Smith, Kevin Sucker, David Saunders, Big John Peters, Wayne Bailey, Ian Wroe, Barry Sidens, Graham Masters, Graham Smith, and a range of other members who have helped with sanding, painting and unloading. This project has had something for everyone and has served to engage and focus everyone's efforts at the beginning of a new year. Well done team.

It's important to list the breadth and depth of this work, not to 'pump up our tyres' but to provide an opportunity for us to recognise ourselves at our best. Giving back to our community is an important mission of our shed. A job well done to everyone who played a part. It provides useful resources to Aspect but importantly shows that we care too!

Writer: **John Williams** - Men's Shed Reporter



## New Year, New Resolutions... Same Blokes!.....

Every January, something magical happens. No, not smashing the Poms in the Ashes, not the Boxing Day sales or the last of the Christmas leftovers.

I'm talking about New Year's Resolutions, that age old tradition where perfectly sensible people decide that this will be the year they become fitter, tidier, more organised, and somehow capable of finding things without asking three other people for help. Here's an MCMS selection for 2026.

*Resolution #1: "I'll finally finish all my jobs"*

A classic. A favourite. A complete fantasy. If unfinished jobs were an Olympic sport, we would bring home more medals than Ian Thorpe.

But look, there's no shame in it. A job isn't truly unfinished - it's simply waiting for future inspiration. Or a missing bolt. Or the right piece of timber. Or the cooler months. Or someone else to have a go.

An unfinished job is really a guarantee of purpose for the future!

*Resolution #2: "I'm going to get healthy this year."*

Absolutely! Right after the sausage sizzle. And the morning tea when biscuits return to the menu. And when the jam and scones that Brian brought in are finished.

Let's be honest: the Shed is a place of wellness already. Laughter, mateship, and the occasional argument about whether that screw is technically a wood screw or a metal screw. We all run with an idea, raise a question, get the ball rolling, touch base, stick to our guns, put our foot down, regularly flag an issue and seasonally plant a seed. These are

## BBQ lunch.....

In early January, an impromptu BBQ lunch was organised for the shed members who happened to be on site that day, a great example of the easy-going, supportive culture that makes our Shed such a special place. With a few sausages still left over



high energy activities we all engage that improve our cardio performance, build strength, enhance our cognitive function and that's all good for the heart.

*Resolution #3: "We'll keep the Shed tidy."*

This one appears every year and was written on a whiteboard as a reminder. Sadly, the whiteboard has been missing since 2019.

The problem is simple: every man has a different definition of "tidy."

- For some, it means "I can see the bench."
- For others, "I can see a bench."
- And for a select few, "I can see the floor, so we're doing well."

Still, hope springs eternal. Maybe 2026, with our shed refurb, will be the year we find out what's actually in that bottom drawer.

Writer: **John Williams** - Men's Shed Reporter

from our previous BBQ, it didn't take much to turn a normal shed day into a shared meal.

Shed Chairman Charlie even made a quick stop at his local bakery on the way in, returning with a supply of fresh buns to complete the feast. Before long, tools were put down, the BBQ was fired up, and members gathered around to enjoy lunch, a chat, and a few laughs.

It's moments like these, just sitting together over a simple BBQ, that help build friendships, strengthen connections, and remind us that the Shed is just as much about social wellbeing as it is about projects and tools. The lunch was thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated by all. A big thank you to Grahame and Charlie for doing the cooking and helping create another great Shed moment.

Writer: **Steve O'Brien** - Shed News Editor

## Our Shed Refurbishment - Time for a Reset.....

Most of us hang on to things we don't use, need, or even remember owning. Then one day we look around and wonder how on earth it all piled up. Sound familiar? It certainly describes our Shed at the moment - creeping clutter, shrinking workspace, and shelves groaning under "might be useful one day" treasures.

As we plan a refresh of the Shed, it's a good moment for all of us to take stock of our own work areas and pitch in. We can't reorganise anything while we're stuck in gridlock. First, we need to make some space. A few simple habits will get us moving in the right direction.

### 1. Start small - really small

Don't try to conquer the whole Shed in one heroic burst. Pick a shelf, a drawer, or one corner of your bench. Clear it, sort it, and enjoy the quick win. Momentum grows from there.

### 2. Store things where you actually use them

Not where there's room - where they belong. When tools and materials live close to where they're used, they're easier to find and easier to put back.

### 3. Keep the floor clear

Anything stored on the floor becomes harder to clean around, harder to see, and somehow multiplies overnight. Let's keep walkways and work areas open and safe.

### 4. Our Shed has a serious case of "just in case"

We've all said it: "Keep that, it might come in handy." But just in case of what? Over time we've become a storage depot instead of a workshop. It's time to let go of the "maybe one day" items.

### 5. We don't have a storage problem - we have a stuff problem

If something gets replaced, the old version needs to go. No exceptions.

We also need to stop collecting random tubs and containers "for later" and stop accepting donations we don't actually need. And before buying new consumables, check the shelves - chances are we already have paint, screws, bolts or timber that will do the job.

### 6. Clutter is just delayed decisions

Every pile is a decision we haven't made yet. Sorting things forces us to choose what stays and what goes. Organisation grows from those choices.

### 7. Good is good enough

The Shed will never be perfect and that's fine. What we need is a system that works, that we can maintain, and that keeps the place safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Writer: **John Williams** - Men's Shed Reporter



**Remember, "This Is Your Shed". Be PROUD Of It And Contribute Where You Can.**



## Sam the Shedder Says... Let's Get This Year Started!.....

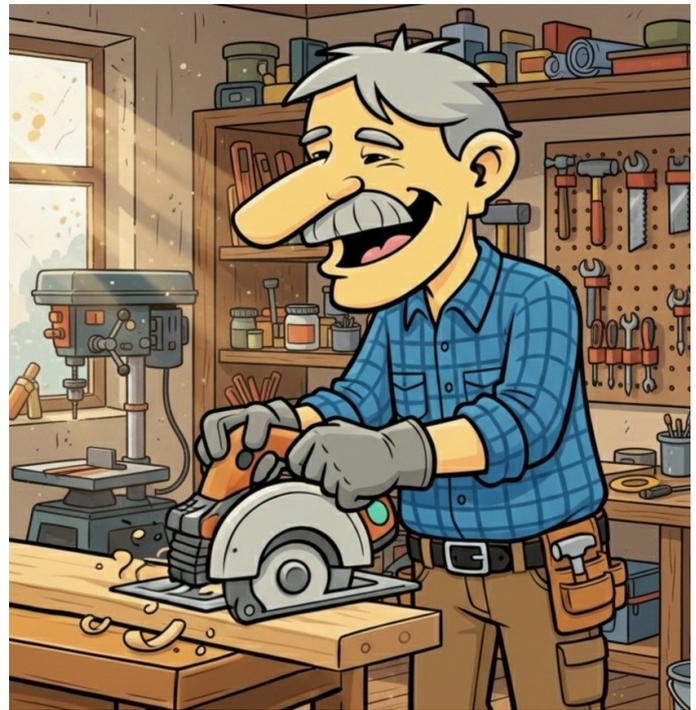
G'day Shedders! Seeing were now into February, welcome back to another year at the Maitland Community Men's Shed. I hope you've all had a good break, topped up the batteries, and maybe even snuck in a bit of tinkering at home. Now it's time to roll up the sleeves, dust off the tools, and get back to doing what we do best - together.

A new year at the Shed always brings a fresh buzz of enthusiasm. There are benches to share, projects to tackle, skills to pass on, and plenty of good yarns waiting to be told over a cuppa. Whether you're a long-time Shed legend or someone just finding their feet, every bloke here has something valuable to contribute.

What makes our Shed special isn't just the timber we shape or the things we fix - it's the way we stand shoulder to shoulder. We look out for one another, lend a hand when it's needed, and quietly make a difference in our local community. From small repairs to big projects, it all adds up to something pretty special.

This year let's keep the Shed doors open, the laughter flowing, and the spirit of mateship strong. Have a go, learn something new, share what you know, and don't be afraid to ask for help - that's what the Shed is all about.

So, here's to another great year of sawdust, team-



work, and community spirit. I'll see you around the benches.

Cheers,

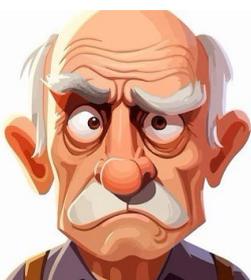
*Sam the Shedder*

## Just a Little Joke.....

This young blond decided she wanted to pay off all her bills. She started going door to door in her neighbourhood asking if anyone needed something done for a little money. She knocks on her first door. An elderly man answers.

"Hello. I'm trying to make some extra money to pay off bills. Do you have any odd jobs you need done?"

The old man replies, "Well, you can paint the porch". She jumps for joy and says "Great! How much will you pay?"



"One hundred dollars", said the old man. "The paint, rollers, and brushes are in the garage. Knock on the door when you're done and I'll pay you".

The old man goes back inside as the young blond



bounds off to the garage. "Does that poor girl know our porch wraps around the whole house?", asks the old man's wife. "Of course she does. You've heard too many dumb blond jokes".

Just at that moment there was a knock at the door. The old man opens it to find a smiling face, "I'm done. And I had enough paint to give it two coats. By the way mister, that's a Lexus. Not a Porche".

## BBQ News.....



## Bunnings Barbecues Coordinator Needed.....

The first Bunnings barbecue of 2026 is set to kick off on Saturday the 14th February at Rutherford. We desperately need a member to accept the role as coordinator for this year.

If you are interested in helping out with this role, Graham Masters is ready and willing to help with a handover.

The Bunnings Barbecue is a reliable fundraiser for the shed and serves to raise our profile in the community. If you would like to try this coordinator

role they will plenty of support while you master (unintended pun) the details. You won't be left holding the can by yourself because as we know many hands make light work!

As well as a coordinator we need members to help out with the cooking, serving customers as well as generally helping out. Put your name down and come along, you might be surprised and have a great day.

Writer: **John Williams** - Men's Shed Reporter



## Birthdays This Month.....

Keith Bush, Warren Cheney, Mark Corcoran, Jim Fellows, Carolyn Humby, Daryl Pullen and Howard Rogers



## Using AI on Your Phone - Imagining Before You Build.....

Recently, a simple discussion at home about replacing a front door and security door turned into a great example of just how useful modern technology can be.

Like many home projects, the hardest part wasn't the work itself, it was imagining the end result. What style of door would suit the house? What colour would look best? Timber or modern? Light or dark?

Trying to picture all that in your head can be tricky, and standing in a showroom doesn't always help. That's when I thought, why not use a bit of AI?

I'd already been using Gemini, Google's AI app, on my phone to tidy up and edit a few Christmas photos. So, I took a photo of the front of the house, opened Gemini, and asked it to replace the existing door with different styles and colours. The results were impressive.

Within moments, the old door was replaced with modern designs, classic timber looks, different colours, and even different security door styles. Suddenly, what had been hard to imagine was right there on the screen. It made discussing options much easier and avoided a lot of "I'm not sure" moments.

### *Why This Matters for Men's Shed Members*

Many of us enjoy making, fixing, and improving things, whether it's at home or at the Shed. AI tools like Gemini aren't about replacing skills or experience. They're about helping us visualise ideas before we commit time, money, or materials.

*Here are just a few ways Shed members could use AI on their phones:*

- Visualising home projects (doors, fences, sheds, paint colours).
- Seeing how a refurbished item might look before starting work. (See photo)
- Improving photos of Shed projects for newsletters or social media.
- Getting step-by-step explanations for tools or techniques.
- Turning a rough idea into a clearer plan. You Don't Need to Be a Tech Expert.

One of the best things about using AI on a phone is how simple it is. If you can: Take a photo, open an app, type or speak a question ...you can use AI.

There's no special language required and no complicated setup. You just ask, much like you would ask a mate for advice.

*A Tool, Not a Replacement*



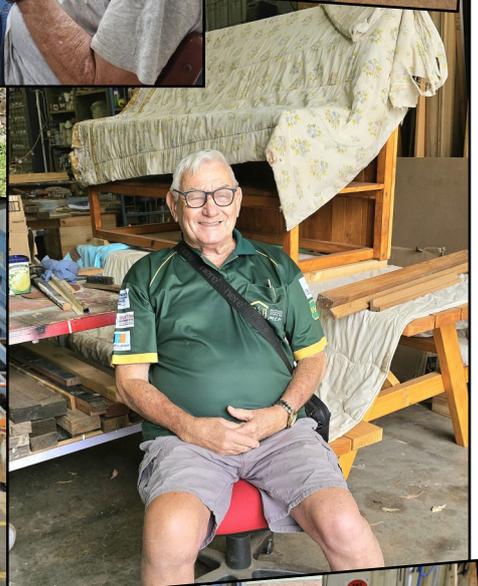
AI won't replace hands-on skills, common sense, or experience and that's where Men's Sheds shine. But it can be a very handy tool for planning, learning, and sharing ideas.

As more of these tools appear on our phones, they're becoming just another useful item in the toolbox alongside the hammer, drill, and tape measure. If you're curious, give it a try. You might be surprised at how helpful it can be.

Writer: *Steve O'Brien* - Shed News Editor



# February Picture Gallery.....



## Maitland Farewells Summer with Free Live Music.....

Maitland will wrap up the 2025–26 summer season in style with Summer Night Sounds x Dashville, a free evening of live music and family-friendly fun on Saturday the 28th of February 2026, from 4pm to 9pm at Harold Gregson Reserve.

Presented by Maitland City Council in partnership with Dashville, the event will transform one of the city's most loved green spaces into a vibrant celebration of local music and community on the final day of summer. The amphitheatre will host a carefully curated lineup of folk and indie-influenced performances from Johnston City, Magpie Diaries, Dave Wells, Georgie Winchester, and Kingsley James & The Forest Keepers.



“Families can skate around the basketball court at the Roller Disco, then settle into the amphitheatre for live music as the sun sets. It’s a great way to make the most of our parks and support local talent,” he added.

Dashville, best known for Hunter region events such as The Gum Ball music festival, is widely recognised for supporting regional touring artists and creating meaningful community experiences. Their involvement brings a strong local focus and high-quality live music program to Maitland’s summer celebrations.

Matt Johnston, founder of Dashville Community Records, said the partnership is a win for both artists and audiences.

“Summer Night Sounds is a great initiative from Council, and teaming up with Dashville Community Records is an excellent opportunity to showcase how rich the local music scene is in Maitland, while also helping build audiences for these world-class artists who live and breathe the area,” he said.

Summer Night Sounds x Dashville is free to attend and no bookings are required.

*For more information phone: 02 4931 2800*

*Or visit:*

*[mait.city/SummerNightSoundsDashville](http://mait.city/SummerNightSoundsDashville)*



Attendees are encouraged to bring a picnic rug and their own drinks, relax under the open sky, and enjoy a variety of food available from on-site vendors while soaking up the live music.

Families are also in for a treat, with a free Roller Disco running from 5pm to 8pm at the Harold Gregson basketball court. With a live DJ spinning the tunes, it’s set to be a hit with kids and adults alike.

Maitland Mayor Philip Penfold said the event reflects Council’s ongoing commitment to activating public spaces and supporting accessible live music experiences for the community.

“Summer Night Sounds x Dashville is a fantastic way to bring people together in our parks and open spaces,” Mayor Penfold said.

“The combination of music and community activities allows families, young people and music lovers of all ages to discover local talent and celebrate summer in Maitland.”



### Heatwaves and Older Men - Staying Safe When the Temperature Rises.....

Hot weather is something most of us are used to, but during a heatwave it can become more than just uncomfortable. For older people, especially those with existing health issues, extreme heat can be dangerous and in some cases, life-threatening. That's why it's important to understand why heat affects us more as we age and what we can do to protect ourselves and each other.

As we get older, our bodies don't cool down as efficiently as they once did. Normally, the heart sends blood to the skin to release heat, and sweating helps cool the body as it evaporates. With age, both blood flow and sweating are reduced, which means heat stays trapped in the body for longer. This makes it harder to cope when temperatures stay high for several days in a row.

The real danger during a heatwave is often not heatstroke itself, but the extra strain heat puts on the heart and other organs. In hot conditions, the heart has to work harder to cool the body while still supplying oxygen to vital organs. This is why hospitals often see more people with worsening health conditions during heatwaves, such as heart disease, lung problems, kidney issues and diabetes. The more long-term health conditions a person has, the greater the risk.

Some common medications can also make it harder for the body to cope with heat. Diuretics can increase the risk of dehydration, while other medications can reduce sweating or affect how the body regulates temperature. If you're unsure whether your medication increases your risk in hot weather, it's worth having a chat with your GP or pharmacist.

Social factors can make heatwaves even more dangerous. Rising power costs mean some older people may avoid using air conditioning, even when they really need it. Others may live alone, be less mobile, or have memory problems that make it harder to recognise the danger or remember to drink enough fluids. This is why checking in on mates, neighbours and fellow Shed members during extreme heat is so important.

The signs that someone is struggling in the heat are not always obvious. Early warning signs can include unusual tiredness, feeling weak or unsteady on your feet, confusion, shortness of breath, or passing less urine than usual. Dark-coloured urine can be a sign of dehydration. If someone has an existing health condition, any worsening of their usual symptoms



should be taken seriously.

Heat exhaustion is more serious and needs prompt action. Symptoms can include heavy sweating, nausea, headaches and muscle cramps. Moving to a cool place, resting and drinking fluids can help. Heat stroke, however, is a medical emergency. It may involve confusion, slurred speech, fainting or hot, dry skin. If this happens, call 000 immediately.

There are simple things we can all do to stay safer during hot weather. Air conditioning is the most effective way to stay cool. If you don't have it at home, consider spending time in places like shopping centres or libraries during the hottest part of the day. If you do use air conditioning, setting it to around 26–27 degrees and using a fan can keep you comfortable while reducing power use.

Fans can also help, particularly if the skin or clothing is slightly damp, which improves cooling. However, for older people, fans become less effective as temperatures rise above the mid-30s. In very hot conditions, it's important to use other cooling methods as well. One simple and effective trick is placing your hands and forearms in cool tap water for about ten minutes every half hour. This can significantly lower body temperature and reduce strain on the heart.

The bottom line is that heatwaves don't affect everyone equally. Older people are at greater risk, but with awareness, simple precautions and a bit of looking out for each other, many heat-related problems can be prevented. During hot weather, take care of yourself, check in on your mates, and don't hesitate to seek help if something doesn't feel right.

Writer: *Steve O'Brien* - Shed News Editor

### Maitland Gaol: The Historic Landmark Watching Over Our City.....

Perched high on a hill in East Maitland, looking out across the city and the Hunter Valley beyond, Maitland Gaol is one of those places many locals have seen countless times, yet know surprisingly little about.

Maitland Gaol was built in the mid-1800s using sandstone sourced from the local area including Morpeth and Farley. Positioned prominently on top of a hill in East Maitland, the foundation stone was laid in 1844, with the first prisoners incarcerated in the multi-building complex in December 1848.

Maitland Gaol is one of the oldest surviving prisons in Australia. For more than 150 years, it housed thousands of inmates and played a major role in the region's colonial and social history. Its commanding position was no accident; the location was chosen both for security and for its sweeping views, allowing guards to watch over the surrounding area.

Behind its thick sandstone walls are stories that range from fascinating to chilling. The gaol held men, women and children at various times, including bushrangers, petty criminals and people imprisoned for offences that today would barely raise an eyebrow.

Over the years, the gaol expanded and changed, reflecting shifts in attitudes toward punishment and rehabilitation.

One of the most striking features of Maitland Gaol is how self-contained it was. The site included exercise yards, solitary confinement cells and later, more modern accommodation blocks. Executions were also carried out there in its early years, adding to the gaol's sombre reputation.

The gaol officially closed in 1998, but its story was far from over. Since then, it was carefully preserved and transformed into a major heritage and cultural attraction. Visitors could take guided tours, explore the cell blocks, learn about famous inmates, and hear firsthand accounts of daily life behind bars. The gaol was a popular venue for events, exhibitions and even film productions.

For a building that has loomed quietly over Maitland for generations, Maitland Gaol has a powerful story to tell. It stands as a reminder of how much our community and our justice system, has changed over time.

Next time you spot that imposing structure on the hill in East Maitland, take a moment to think about the history contained within those walls. Maitland Gaol is currently closed to the public until further notice due to significant, urgent fire and electrical safety issues discovered in early 2024.

Writer: *Steve O'Brien* - Shed News Editor

