

# Maitland Community Men's Shed The Shed News

March 2026



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The Maitland  
Community Men's  
Shed welcomes new  
members!

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The Maitland  
Community Men's  
Shed would like to  
acknowledge our  
major supporters



## The Shed Report.....

The Shed trundles along with several projects taking shape in the big part of the Shed. The boys have been very busy getting outdoor furniture ready for installation at Caries Place. They have requested that we at the Shed could make for them a couple of special designed Picnic Tables, a Mud Kitchen and some specially designed benches. They have been cut, painted and assembled and are nearing completion for install as soon as we receive the green light informing us that the foundations are in place.

Another job that has been undertaken in the big part of the Shed has been a rather elaborately designed "Billy Cart." I say elaborately designed, because unlike the Billy Carts of our days, this model comes complete with a hand brake. We stopped our carts by putting our feet out on the ground or, just by taking a tumble. (Modern day OH&S)

Up in the mezzanine area, the boys are feverishly working on an order for a community client to make a variety of picture frames complete with backs and glass.

Throughout the month of February the whole of the shed attended two specially called meeting to discuss ideas and then formulate plans for the Shed revamp. Attendance and enthusiasm shown at the meeting was very pleasing and already,

members have made starts on some suggestions. The cleanup and decluttering of the Shed has begun and the change is looking remarkable. Thank you, fellas, the pride is certainly coming back.

AMSA conference is happening towards the end of March and we called for two representatives to attend on behalf of the Maitland Shed. Jim Lennon and John Williams are our attendees and they will be going to several workshops and presentations and will also be able to network with many other representatives from Shed throughout Australia. Hopefully they will return with a great store of ideas that we maybe able to take on and enhance our own Shed.

Now here's a thought for you to ponder over. Have you ever wondered what were the derivation of the names for glasses of beer in NSW, or maybe the rest of Australia or the world? Considering the level of intellect within the member of establishment, there is surely somebody that could quite easily put together a thesis on this subject. So to get the ball rolling I visited Dr Google for some quick research.

The term "schooner" refers to a type of glass or serving vessel for beer, with its origins linked to maritime history. Reasonable thought when you look at maritime Carrington, early wharfies would have had many a schooner after knock off time at the many locals. (Continued Next Page)

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Now in Australia, a schooner typically hold around 15 imperial fluid ounces and is often used for serving beer. Now further research tells us that the design of a schooner glass allows for better aroma and flavour perception, making it ideal for enjoying a beer, (Why would you have it any other way.) So, overall, the schooner glass has become a popular choice for casual drinking and social gatherings.

### *Australia*

There is no legal definition of a schooner in Australia. In all parts of Australia other than South Australia, a schooner is usually a 15 imp fl oz, or three-quarters of an imperial pint.

In South Australian pubs and clubs, a schooner is a glass with a capacity of 10 imp fl oz, or half an imperial pint. This size of glass that is usually

known as a "middy" or "pot", elsewhere in Australia. Why would SA be different? Consider this they play that funny football where you score a point for missing. An argument for another day.

### *United Kingdom*

In the Mother land, a schooner is a large sherry glass. Sherry is traditionally served in one of two measures: a clipper, the smaller measure, or a schooner, the larger measure, both named after the sort of ships (clipper and schooner) that brought sherry over from Spain.

Since 2011, beer and cider have been permitted to be sold in 2/3 imperial pint glasses known by drinkers as "schooners", though these are not defined as such in UK legislation.

Newcastle Brown Ale is traditionally served in a 1/2 imperial pint glass called a schooner, or "Geordie schooner". Now when all things are considered, when they talk, they ride orses and live in ouses.

Time for a schooner, See you at the Shed,

*Charlie Sanders* - Chairman

## Helping One Another - The Heart of Our Shed.....

One of the true strengths of the Men's Shed is not just the projects we build, but the friendships we build along the way.

Recently, one of our members experienced a very serious medical episode and was hospitalised for a number of weeks. It was a difficult time, especially as he lives on his own. When the good news finally came that he would be allowed to return home, a number of his fellow shedders quietly decided that his homecoming should be made just a little easier.

While he was recovering, working bees were organised at his house. The lawns were mown, the yard was tidied, and the jobs that naturally pile up when no one is home were taken care of. We all know how quickly a yard can get away from you after a few weeks and the last thing anyone needs when coming home from hospital is to feel overwhelmed.

But the support didn't stop there. The team also noticed that the access to the back of the house was in need of repair. Without fuss, they set about building a brand-new set of stairs, making entry to his home safer and easier for his return.

This is what our Shed is truly about. Yes, we enjoy the tools, the projects, and the problem-solving but at its core, the Men's Shed is about mateship. It's

about looking out for one another. It's about stepping up when someone is doing it tough and offering practical help, quiet encouragement, and genuine care.

Well done to the team who gave their time and skills so generously. Their efforts are not only appreciated, they are a powerful reminder that friendship is the strongest thing we build at the Shed.

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



### There Was Movement at the Station.....



It was extremely heartening to see 36 of our members at the Shed reorganisation information session on Monday the 2nd of February. Thank you for giving up your time at short notice. Your attendance meant we could openly discuss the concerns raised by many members about safety, cleanliness, and fair access to space and equipment in our Shed.

A series of follow-up meetings will be announced and held over the coming few months and your contributions to these meetings will be greatly appreciated. At our next session we'll establish working groups to finalise plans for each area of the Shed, identify coordinators, and gather your ideas on practical solutions. Once all plans have been reviewed, they will be published for all members and will form our redevelopment roadmap for the remainder of 2026. It's important that every member has their say and understands what each part of the plan means for the future operation of the Shed.

By the time we reach our stage of life, we've all collected a wide range of experiences, some good, some not so good. We've learned plenty along the way, formed habits, developed opinions, and built our own ways of seeing the world. In short, each of us is unique. No two people think, know, or believe exactly the same things, even identical twins only get close.

So when a group of men come together to work toward a common purpose, like reorganising and improving our Shed, it's natural that opinions will differ. And that's healthy. Life would be dull if we all agreed on everything. Differences of opinion, when shared respectfully, give everyone the chance to consider alternatives. A consensus reached after

weighing up a range of views gives confidence that decisions are made for solid, logical reasons, not just the whim of the loudest voice.

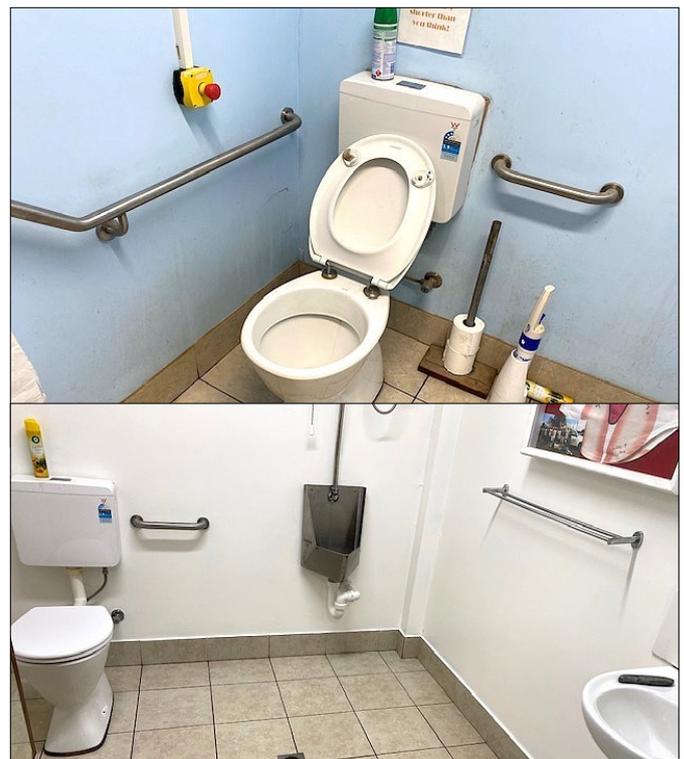
Our next steps must allow the Shed to continue its day-to-day activities while we make the strategic changes needed to address the many valid concerns you've raised. With your involvement, we can shape a Shed that works better, feels safer, and supports the way we want to operate well into the future.

#### *The Clean-up Begins*

Ray Broadbent is a member of our shed that believes that action speaks louder than words. In a flurry of activity in early February he stripped out fittings in the toilets, washed down the walls and gave the bathrooms a lick (not a turn of phrase that should be used in relation to our toilets) of paint. The results are amazing. Half a bottle of Domestos, 4 litres of paint, a bucketload of elbow grease and 2 new toilet seats completed the transformation. See the before and after photographs below.

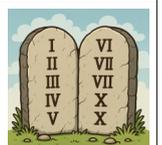
Ray has also volunteered to give the toilets a clean each Friday. His aim is to keep the facilities in an hygienic condition, your aim will be appreciated. (an oldie but a goodie).

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



#### **Shed Decluttering Commandments**

1. **THOU SHALT START SMALL** - Rome wasn't built in a day neither was the mess around the shed. Start your cleanup with a drawer, a benchtop, a shelf or a tiny corner. Make your contribution today.



## A Morning Read With a Much-Needed Ray of Light.....



For most of my life, the day has started the same way: a cup of tea, the morning paper, a skim of the headlines and, if time allowed, a crack at the crossword. It's a ritual that once felt grounding.

But lately, the news hasn't been doing me any favours. Tariffs, mass casualty events, extrajudicial killings, paedophile rings, wars, genocide, and the murky connections between monarchies, billionaires, cultural figures and political leaders splashed across the redacted Epstein files... it's hardly the sort of thing that sets you up for a cheerful day. My morning read had become more of a shadow than a sunrise.

Then I stumbled across a story that cut through all that darkness.

It was about a 13-year-old boy named Austin Applebee, holidaying with his mum, younger brother and sister at Quindalup, south of Perth. On the last day of their trip, they hired a kayak and two inflatable paddle boards for a simple day at the beach. But the weather turned quickly. The kayak

flipped, the sea grew rough, and the whole family was pushed out to sea.

By midday, they had managed to lash the kayak and boards together using the leg ropes. Realising they were drifting further from land, Austin's mum made a desperate call: she asked her 13-year-old to take the kayak and go for help.

Austin paddled against the rising swell until the kayak began taking on water. He made the decision no parent ever wants their child to face - he abandoned the kayak and began swimming for shore. He even removed his lifejacket so he could use his arms more freely.

Over the next four hours, Austin swam four kilometres through rough water. When he finally reached land, exhausted, he ran another two kilometres to reach his mum's phone and call emergency services. He collapsed soon after and was taken to hospital.

At 8.30pm, after an extensive air and sea search, Marine Rescue volunteers found his mum and siblings drifting 14 kilometres offshore. The family is now reunited, safe, and well.

It reads like a fairytale - a young hero, impossible odds, and a happy ending. Austin is an extraordinary young man, and I wouldn't be surprised if a film script is already being drafted somewhere.

More importantly, his story nudged me back toward my morning paper with a bit more optimism. The grim headlines will still be there, but I'll be skimming past the worst of them in search of the stories that remind us of what people are really capable of - courage, grit, and the instinct to protect one another.

Those are the stories worth starting the day with.

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



## Ready, Steady... Build!.....

Do you remember the old cooking show Ready Steady Cook? Each episode, the chef was handed a random bag of ingredients and given 30 minutes to turn the ordinary into something extraordinary. The presenter would call out, "Ready, steady... cook!" and off they went.

A few weeks ago, our own version of that challenge arrived at the Shed. A community member walked in carrying several large lounge cushions and a simple request: "Could the Shed make me an outdoor lounge to fit these?"

The cushions were our mystery ingredients. The lounge was the dish we had to create.

It was an unusual job, normally the upholstery is made to suit the timber frame, not the other way around. But as we all know, the Men's Shed is often the community's final frontier when every other option has been exhausted. And more often than not, these jobs land on the capable shoulders of Jim Lennon.

If Jim had a motto, it would probably be: "No job too difficult, no job too obscure."

True to form, he got stuck in and produced a made-to-measure, two-piece outdoor lounge that fitted the cushions perfectly. He even added waterproof extensions on the bottom of the legs to protect the timber from rainwater pooling on the veranda where the lounge would live. A clever, thoughtful touch.



But behind the request lay a story that was both simple and deeply moving.

The cushions came from a family motorhome. One that had carried them across the country, creating memories full of joy, adventure, and connection.

The husband can no longer drive, and the motorhome has reached the end of its travelling days. By building a lounge to hold those familiar cushions, the Shed helped create a special place at home where he can sit, reflect, and relive the great journeys of the past.

A small job for us, perhaps. A meaningful gift for a family. And a reminder of what the Shed does best - turning practical skills into something that genuinely matters.

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



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



## Carries Place - Lending a Hand.....

Most of us know that domestic and family violence is a major issue across Australia, and it affects women in our own region too. Newcastle and the Hunter have strong support services, that continue to see high demand from women seeking safety, housing, and a fresh start.

Across the country, domestic and family violence remains the leading cause of homelessness for women. Many women who leave a violent home do so with little more than the clothes they're wearing. Some leave with children. Some leave in the middle of the night. And many have nowhere safe to go.

Local services such as Carries Place and other crisis accommodation providers report that they are constantly supporting women who are either at risk of homelessness or already without a secure place to stay. Domestic violence is the most common reason they seek help. National figures show that around one in four women experience violence from a partner or family member at some point in their lives. The needs are real and its ongoing.

For us in the Shed, it's a reminder that the women in our lives - partners, daughters, granddaughters, neighbours, and friends, may face challenges we don't always see. A bit of awareness goes a long way. Understanding the link between violence and homelessness helps us appreciate why safe housing, respectful relationships, and community support matter so much.

While the Shed can't fix every problem, it can contribute its skills and know how to assist others who are better placed and qualified to help women in need. The Shed has recently embarked on a set of projects that is helping 'Carries Place' refurbish a women and children's place of refuge in the Maitland area where women and children can always feel safe. Under Mick Oakes' exacting eye and leader-



ship our team of workers have been cutting, sanding, painting and constructing for weeks. The enormous project is nearing completion, and soon some picnic tables, bench seats and planters, a mud kitchen and an investigation station for little kids to hone their enquiry skills will be ready for installation.

It can seem like our communities face too many complex challenges. Solutions aren't simple and clear. However, we can stay informed, look out for the people around us, and support the organisations doing the hard work on the ground. Sometimes the smallest acts of kindness and awareness make the biggest difference.

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

## Just a Little Joke.....

I asked my blonde neighbour how she lost her husband Johnny. She told me her sad story, "Well he was very sick and needed a blood transfusion but his blood type was not on his records, so the doctors asked me if I knew what it was, as they urgently needed to know in order to save my

Johnny's life. Tragically, I've never known his blood type so I only had time to sit and say goodbye. I'll never forget how supportive my Johnny was. Even as he was rapidly fading he kept on whispering to me "Be positive, be positive! That was my Johnny always thinking of others."

### Shed Decluttering Commandments

#### 2. THOU SHALT STORE TOOLS WHERE THEY'RE USED

If you use it at the bench, don't hide it in your locker



## BBQ News.....



## Bunnings Barbecues Coordinator Needed.....

Sadly, we were unable to field a barbecue team for the first Bunnings barbecue of 2026 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 com-

munity. If you would like to try this coordinator role there 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.....

Ted Borradaile, John Hill, Graham Masters, Glen O'Brien, Charlie Sanders, Barry Siddens, Kevin Sucker and Barbara Williams



## When Simple Jobs Aren't So Simple.....

Every now and then a job arrives at the Shed that looks straightforward... until you actually turn it over.

Recently, a moulded plywood café chair appeared with its legs hanging on by sheer optimism. One look and you could tell what had happened: someone had leaned back a little too far, balanced on the rear legs, and the heavy-duty plastic mounts had finally thrown in the towel. They'd cracked, distorted, and torn themselves clean away from the plywood seat.

Former PM Malcolm Fraser once said, "Life wasn't meant to be easy." He must have spent time fixing café chairs.

This particular chair had a story. Bought new in the 1990s as part of a matching set, it wasn't just any old seat, it was an Arne Jacobsen design, a seven-ply beechwood shell with chromed legs. Danish, iconic, and definitely not Ikea. But age had caught up with it. The 6 mm seat base was shredded where the original fixings had been, leaving very little for any new hardware to bite into. Enter John Rissler, who never met a challenge he didn't quietly outsmart.

Recognising that the original mounts were beyond saving, he set about engineering a completely new solution. Using merbau offcuts, a sharp eye, and that Shed-honed knack for making the impossible look routine.

John fabricated new anchor points and rebuilt the underside of the chair from scratch. The result? A



beautifully restored, rock-solid café chair ready for another decade of service.

It was worth saving and thanks to John's craftsmanship, it's now back where it belongs, sitting proudly around a four-seater café table. Another satisfied customer and another small triumph for the Maitland Community Men's Shed

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



# RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

The number of regulars at our shed has been slowly declining as the average age of our members increases. Its time for you to have a look at your wider circle of friends and acquaintances to identify prospective new members.

Have a hard look in the mirror and ask yourself who do I know who is as good as me? Who could/would make a new contribution and be an asset for our shed.

If you know of any good-looking, able-bodied people that would meet our rigorous physical standards and would pass our psychometric tests, people with a sense of fun and a need for adventure, encourage them to come to the shed for a visit. Its so much easier for new members to start at MCMS if they have a buddy to include them in our day-to-day activities.

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

## Why Going Digital Can Be Hard for Seniors (and Why That's OK).....

We hear it all the time: "I'm no good with computers" or "Technology's just not my thing."

If that sounds familiar, you're definitely not alone. As more services move online like banking, Medicare, bookings, emails so many seniors find there are real barriers that make it harder to join in.

*So what gets in the way?*

Confidence is a big one. A lot of blokes worry they'll press the wrong button and break something or make an expensive mistake. Unlike younger generations, many of us didn't grow up with computers at work or school, so it can feel uncomfortable right from the start.

*Scams don't help either.*

We're constantly warned about dodgy emails, fake phone calls, and online fraud and rightly so. But the fear of being scammed can put people off using technology altogether. Learning a few basic safety tips can make using the internet a lot less stressful.

*Cost matters.*

Phones, tablets, computers and internet plans all add up, especially on a fixed income. Some members are also using older devices that are slow, confusing, or no longer update properly.

*Physical challenges can creep in.*

Smaller text, stiff fingers, dodgy eyesight, or memory issues can make screens and keyboards frustrating. The good news is there are simple settings and tools that can make devices much easier to use.

*And then there's the pace of change.*

Just when you think you've worked something out, it updates or looks different. That "always playing catch-up" feeling can be enough to make anyone throw their hands up.

*Finally - support matters.*

Not everyone has someone they feel comfortable

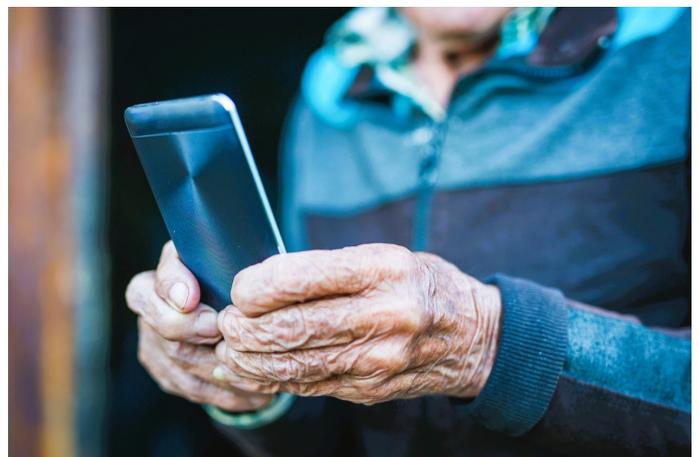


asking for help, and many people don't want to keep asking the same question over and over.

*Why digital skills still matter*

Being digitally included isn't about becoming a tech expert. It's about staying connected and independent - emailing family, booking appointments, checking the weather, looking up a shed project, or watching a YouTube "how-to".

Just like learning to use a new tool in the shed, it's easier when someone shows you the basics and lets you have a go.



*What the Men's Shed can do*

At the Men's Shed, we're good at learning together and helping each other out and digital skills are no different. Whether it's using a phone, sending an email, staying safe online, or just understanding what all the buttons do, there's no such thing as a silly question.

If you'd like some help, a refresher, or just want to learn at your own pace, let us know.

With enough interest, we can run relaxed, no-pressure computer or phone sessions with tea, bickies, and plain English included.

Digital tools are just that, tools. And like any tool, they're a lot less scary once you know how to use them.

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

# March Picture Gallery.....



## 2026 NSW Seniors Festival - Live Life in Colour.....

NSW  
**Seniors  
Festival**  
2026

2-15 March 2026

# Live life in colour



The 2026 NSW Seniors Festival is almost here, celebrating the strength, diversity, creativity and contribution of older people across the state and this year the theme is “Live Life in Colour.” From Monday 2 to Sunday 15 March, Maitland will come alive with a wide range of activities, social events, workshops, performances and opportunities for connection, learning and fun.

The Seniors Festival is Australia’s largest celebration of older people. It’s a chance for our community to come together, embrace new experiences, try something different, meet new friends and enjoy all that Maitland has to offer. Whether you’re interested in arts and culture, staying active, learning new skills, or simply having a chat over a cuppa - there’s something for everyone!

Here’s a snapshot of just some of the events happening locally around Maitland as part of ‘Live Life in Colour’:

- Colourful Community Walks - Join friendly



walking groups exploring parks and neighbourhoods around Maitland. A great way to get some gentle exercise and enjoy social conversation in the fresh air.

- Art Workshops & Exhibitions - Ever wanted to try painting, printmaking or collage? Local artists and community groups are offering hands-on workshops, plus exhibitions showcasing colourful works created by seniors.
- Live Music & Morning Tea Sessions - Relax to live performances by local musicians at community halls, with morning tea provided and perfect for catching up with friends old and new.
- Technology Taster Sessions - For those wanting to sharpen their tech skills, join interactive sessions on topics such as smartphones, iPads and using apps safely and confidently.
- Health & Wellbeing Expo - Speak with health professionals, get information about staying active and well, and discover local services that support healthy ageing.

Whatever your interests, the 2026 NSW Seniors Festival in Maitland offers a fantastic chance to Live Life in Colour - to celebrate life, stay connected and enjoy new experiences in your local community.

So mark your calendar, chat with fellow Sheddors about which events you might attend and make the most of this colourful celebration of life and community!

### Shed Decluttering Commandments

#### 3. THOU SHALT KEEP THE FLOOR CLEAR

If your eyes can't see the floor your feet won't find it either



### Simple Steps to Help Protect Your Brain.....

Dementia worries many of us as we get older. The good news is that research shows up to half of dementia cases may be preventable through simple lifestyle changes.

Neurologists, say dementia is not just “bad luck” or an unavoidable part of ageing. The habits we build now can make a real difference to our brain health in the years ahead.

Here are six practical steps we can all take.

#### 1. *Keep Your Blood Pressure Under Control*

High blood pressure can quietly damage the small blood vessels in your brain. Over time, this can lead to strokes and memory problems.

What you can do:

- Check your blood pressure regularly (home monitors are easy to use). Aim for around 120/80 (talk to your doctor about what's right for you).
- Follow medical advice about diet, exercise, and medication if needed.
- Looking after your heart is also looking after your brain.

#### 2. *Look After Your Eyes*

Poor vision doesn't just affect your sight as it can affect your brain. When you can't see clearly, your brain gets less stimulation, which may increase the risk of memory problems.

What you can do:

- Have regular eye tests.
- Wear your glasses if you need them.
- Don't ignore changes in your vision. It's a simple fix that can make a big difference.

#### 3. *Take Care of Your Teeth and Gums*

Good oral health is more important than many people realise. Gum disease and ongoing inflammation have been linked to stroke and brain changes that affect memory.

What you can do:

- Brush and floss daily.
- Don't skip dental check-ups.
- Treat gum problems early.
- A healthy mouth supports a healthy body and brain.

#### 4. *Stay Up to Date With Vaccinations*

Some infections can affect the brain. There is growing evidence that the shingles vaccine may

reduce dementia risk in older adults.

What you can do:

- Check if you're eligible for the shingles vaccine.
- Speak with your GP about recommended vaccinations.
- Preventing infections may also help protect your brain.

#### 5. *Protect Your Hearing*

Hearing loss is one of the biggest overlooked risk factors for dementia. When you struggle to hear, your brain works harder and social isolation can follow - both increase risk.

What you can do:

- Have your hearing tested if you notice changes.
- Use hearing aids if recommended.
- Wear ear protection around loud machinery (very relevant in the Shed!).
- Staying connected and engaged is vital for brain health.

#### 6. *Keep Your Brain Active*

Experts talk about building “cognitive reserve” - your brain's ability to cope with ageing and damage.

How to build it:

- Keep learning new skills.
- Stay physically active.
- Eat well.
- Stay socially connected.
- Get involved in activities like coming to the Shed!

#### *The Bottom Line*

Dementia is not an inevitable part of ageing. Many risk factors are within our control.

By:

- Managing blood pressure
- Looking after our eyes, ears, and teeth
- Staying vaccinated
- Keeping active and connected

We give ourselves the best chance of staying sharp for longer. If you're worried about memory changes, speak with your GP. Early advice and support can make a real difference.

*Disclaimer: This article is for general information only and is not medical advice. Always speak with a qualified health professional about your personal situation.*

### Shed Decluttering Commandments

#### 4. THOU SHALT NOT WORSHIP “JUST IN CASE”

If it hasn't been useful since the switch to decimal currency, it's time to let it go.



# From Technical College to Cultural Treasure: The Story of the Maitland Regional Art Gallery Building.....

Standing proudly on High Street in Maitland, the building that now houses the Maitland Regional Art Gallery (MRAG) is more than just a home for art, it's a heritage landmark that tells the story of the city's evolution, resilience, and community spirit.

### *A Site Steeped in History*

Long before the building became an art gallery, the land it sits on held deep significance for the Wonnarua people, the Traditional Custodians of the Maitland region. For more than 40,000 years, the Wonnarua nurtured and cared for this land, shaping its cultural and spiritual landscape.

The site's European history began in the mid-19th century. In 1850, the central portion of the land was sold to local merchants David and James Dickson who used it for a warehouse, which subsequently became a buggy and coach factory under new ownership in the late 1860s.

### *A New Era: Maitland Technical College*

In 1892, the site entered a new phase of community service when it became home to the Maitland Technical College. Over the following decades the college expanded to meet the educational needs of the region, offering vocational training and becoming a hub of local learning.

The striking building that we see today is an elegant example of early 20th-century public architecture that was purpose-built for the college in 1910. Designed by Walter Liberty Vernon, one of the foremost Government Architects of New South Wales (whose work includes several iconic civic buildings across the state), the structure showcased Federation Gothic details and fine craftsmanship, symbolising Maitland's civic pride and growing



importance.

For nearly a century, generations of students passed through its classrooms until the college relocated to Metford in 1987. After that, the site remained in private hands until the early 2000s.

### *A Cultural Transformation*

In 2002, Maitland City Council acquired the former college site as part of a bold vision to create a regional art gallery that matched the community's rich artistic aspirations. After careful planning and redevelopment, the building became the new home for the Maitland Regional Art Gallery in November 2003.

This move marked a major milestone, transforming educational halls and workshops into galleries and creative spaces. Over the next few years, the gallery continued to evolve: undergoing extensive renovations and a thoughtful integration of modern facilities. In August 2009, celebrated Australian artist Margaret Olley AC officially reopened the expanded gallery, solidifying its role as a dynamic cultural institution for the Hunter region.

### *A Heritage Building with New Purpose*

Today, MRAG seamlessly blends heritage architecture with contemporary design, offering spacious exhibition galleries, educational zones, event areas, and a welcoming public café. The building retains its architectural grandeur, from its historic façade to its lofty interiors, while supporting diverse arts programming that engages audiences of all ages.

As MRAG celebrates over five decades as a regional art institution, the building itself remains a powerful anchor of Maitland's cultural landscape and a space where history, creativity and community continue to intersect.

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