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Maitland Community
Men's Shed welcomes
new members!

We are here to assist
our supporters and
friends.

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



The Shed Report.....

Reflecting on the year that was, it would be fair to say that the Shed, as a whole, had a good and mixed year. We were kept busy with projects, BBQ's, the garage finally moved into fruition. Community involvement remained as an important focus for the Shed, taking on a student from the local Aspect School at Thornton, High School campus, and leading him through some basic woodworking skills. Mud kitchens, tables and chairs, Street libraries, picnic tables and benches are other items that found their way to ELC's and other learning facilities. Our furry friends also were recipients of the Shed's handy work, with many a dog bed being crafted from recycled pallet materials.

We have been blessed with an array of bread boards, cheese boards, and other fine small tables. From the same area within the Shed, the CNC machine has been in full swing turning out a phenomenal range of items. It would seem that the member operating that machine has certainly managed to take control of the machine.

We must not forget the other sections of our little establishment, the King Clock section was in full swing, letting us know on the hour that repairs were in progress. The IT section meandered along and had an upgrade and well-deserved tidy-up of the wiring and layout. The gardens and grounds fraternity gained new members and have transpired into something that shows that someone lives here.

It would be remiss not to mention the constant playing of euchre in the quiet room and now the two Euchre tournaments in memory of John O'Keefe and Holy Moly (Gary Grant). Toward the end of the year, it was unearthed, a writing and singing talent of one of our IT members. This song has been put together on a video compiled by another IT guru.

During the year we had visits from a few

organisations with information on Road rules for seniors, Strokes, wills, power of attorney's, enduring guardianship. All full of good and valuable information.

There have been many plusses and instances in the Shed year that gave us a warm and fuzzy feeling, when life was going along fine and we have not had a care in the world. Then out of the blue, without warning, our day-to-day life makes a change. The Shed has lost some members, member's partners health situation has changed and we find that we must change our lives and what we used to do. Several of our members have also found themselves in a similar situation, and again we have found a need to make change to handle the circumstances.

When you think about what has happened and no doubt will continue to happen, the ideals of the Men's Shed movement is primarily about Men's health and that includes, our wellbeing and our family's wellbeing.

Football had finished and cricket had not started, so seeking some entertainment, I decided to try "U tube" and liking good military music I came across "The Mountbatten Festival of Music 2020" from the Royal Albert Hall, worth a try. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The following is from a section from the performance and as it turns out relates to what I have been highlighting and what we do at the Shed. Please take time to have a read.

Mental Health (The Sound of Silence), PTSD, Dementia, Antenatal Depression, Postnatal Depression, Anxiety because of my ADHD, Depression, Bipolar and Performance Anxiety. Let's open our Minds, our eyes, our hearts and learn to look at people differently with understanding, with respect, with tolerance and with compassion. Together, Let's help break the Sound of Silence.

Take care and see you at the Shed.

Charlie Sanders - Chairman

Re-organization of MCMS - What's Happening?

In early December, a few of your Board members rolled up their sleeves and formed a Steering Committee to tackle the big question: "What's happening with the re-organisation of the Shed?"

You might think the end of the year is a strange time to start such a big job. But we figured it's the perfect moment to set the agenda for 2026 and beyond.

Who's on the Steering Committee?

- John Rissler
- Andre Van Der Valde
- John Williams
- Ray Broadbent

These blokes will be your point of contact throughout the restructure. Their job is to guide how we reorganise, not dictate what the final shape will be.

What We've Learned So Far

The 2023 Shed Survey gave us a strong starting point. Members were clear about:

- WHAT needs to change to improve the Shed's future.
- HOW decisions should be made, with everyone having a say.

After all, it's OUR Shed. That means every member should have access to the decision-making process, contribute ideas, and, when needed, lend a bit of muscle to make it happen.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Restructuring won't just be about shifting machinery around. Think of it as "building a new aircraft while it's already in flight." It'll get messy at times -

chaos before cosmos and yes, it might feel worse before it gets better.

We all know the sayings:

"You can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs."

"The only constant in life is change."

"No pain, no gain."

With patience, cooperation, and commitment, we'll meet the challenges together, like we always do. And MCMS will be stronger for it.

Communication is Key

The Steering Committee will:

- Share updates and decisions regularly.
- Help set timelines and coordinate actions.
- Gather concerns and suggestions.
- Liaise closely with the Board.
- Have Your Say

By now, you should have received a copy of the current Shed floor plan. Please take the time to mark up your ideas and send them back to John Rissler. Your input will be consolidated and reported at the first Board meeting in 2026.

Final Word

2026 is our chance for a fresh start. Remember: "If you always do what you've always done, you only get what you've always got." Let's make sure the Shed's future reflects the skills, ideas, and spirit of all its members.

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



Grandparent Privilege - Good for the Grandkids, Great for You.....

Let's be honest, most of us try to be the "sensible grandparent"... but somehow end up being the silly one. You know the drill:

- Answering endless "Why?" questions (sometimes making up the bits you don't know).
- Cracking Poppy jokes that earn eye rolls and groans of "Ahh, POPPY!".
- Acting your shoe size instead of your age when the grandkids are around.
- Sneaking ice cream into breakfast smoothies or sharing your secret stash of lollies in the car.

Sound familiar? If so, you're exercising your grandparent privilege and it turns out, it's not just fun, it's good for your health.

A major university study followed over 12,000 healthy Aussies aged 70+ for nine years. The results were eye opening:

- Grandfathers who regularly cared for their grandkids had a 40% lower mortality rate.
- Grandmothers had a 17% lower rate.

Grandparent carers were more socially active, more involved in their communities, and even ate more fruit and veg.

Looking after kids isn't just babysitting, it's a workout for body and mind:

- Physical activity: chasing little ones counts as cardio.

- Better diet: planning and cooking meals together improves what goes on the plate.
- Brain exercise: explaining life's mysteries keeps the mind sharp.
- Purpose: knowing those little faces are counting on you boosts mood and wellbeing.

Grandparenting gives us meaning, keeps us active, and helps us stay connected.

Here in Australia:

- Around 70% of grandparents provide some sort of care for their families.
- In 20% of households, three generations live under one roof.

And with the global population ageing fast, by 2050 one in six people worldwide will be over 65. That makes understanding how to stay healthy and connected more important than ever.

So next time you're accused of being silly, remember, you're not just spoiling the grandkids, you're investing in your own wellbeing. Grandparenting is more than childcare; it's mateship, purpose, and a reminder that life's best medicine might just be a laugh, a lolly, and a game of chasing in the backyard.

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



A Biker Walks Into the Men's Shed.....



It sounds like the start of a joke, but it was a genuine moment at Maitland Community Men's Shed when Craig A. Jeans, who rides an Indian Springfield, walked in and asked:

“How much do you want for the rocking horse? The one with the Merbau legs!”

The rocking horse he admired was no ordinary toy. Lovingly crafted by Glen, our very own “rocking horse whisperer,” and his team of helpers, it was a true heirloom piece.

That horse will now feature in a major auction in Armidale on 20 March, raising funds for the incredible work of Camp Quality.

We're proud that our shed could play a small part in supporting such a worthy cause - Rolling Strong for Kids Facing Cancer

Craig is part of a 100-strong band of riders who will mark 10 years of fundraising rides for kids impacted by cancer with a milestone journey through northern NSW in 2026.

This year's ride, from 19 - 21 of March, will pass through Newcastle and the Armidale region, raising both funds and awareness for Camp Quality.

Why It Matters

- Every month in Australia, 64 children are diagnosed with cancer.
- For over 40 years, Camp Quality has been improving the lives of kids and families who

have been impacted by cancer.

- Their programs build optimism and resilience through community, education, and fun.
- They support children aged 0 - 15 dealing with their own diagnosis, or that of a sibling, parent, or carer.
- Last year, Camp Quality reached 1 in 3 kids diagnosed with cancer. Their goal is to reach them all.

How You Can Help

If you'd like to support this fundraiser, check out Motorcycle and Camp Quality online for details on how to donate. Together, we can help bring hope, resilience, and joy to kids who need it most.

<https://fundraise.campquality.org.au/event/motocyc/home>

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



Hunter New England ESTEEM Program Visit.....

In early December last year, members of the Maitland Community Men's Shed were pleased to welcome representatives from Hunter New England Health's ESTEEM Program, who delivered an engaging and highly informative talk on stroke - what it is, how to recognise it, and how we can reduce our risk.

Stroke is one of Australia's leading causes of disability, and the ESTEEM team explained that while strokes can happen suddenly, many are preventable. The session focused on practical information that all of us can use in our everyday lives, particularly as we get older.

One of the key messages was the importance of recognising the warning signs of stroke and acting quickly. Members were introduced to the well-known F.A.S.T. test:

- **F** - Face: Has the face dropped on one side?
- **A** - Arms: Can the person lift both arms?
- **S** - Speech: Is their speech slurred or difficult to understand?
- **T** - Time: Time is critical – call 000 immediately.

The presenters stressed that every minute counts

when someone is having a stroke. Getting medical help quickly can significantly reduce the impact of a stroke and, in many cases, save a life.

The talk also covered risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking, lack of physical activity, poor diet, excessive alcohol consumption and unmanaged conditions like diabetes. Importantly, the ESTEEM team highlighted that making small, positive life-style changes, staying active, eating well, attending regular check-ups and staying socially connected can make a big difference.

Members appreciated the clear, down-to-earth approach of the presenters and the opportunity to ask questions in a relaxed setting. Sessions like this reinforce that Men's Sheds are not just about making and fixing things, but also about looking after our health and looking out for one another.

We thank the Hunter New England ESTEEM Program for taking the time to visit our Shed and for providing such valuable information. It's a reminder to all of us: know the signs, reduce the risks, and act fast as it could save a life.

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



Just a Little Joke.....

Two racehorses are in the stable. One says to the other: "You know, before that last race ..."
"The one that you won?" asks the other horse.
"Yeah, before that last race, I felt a pinch in my hindquarters."

The other horse says: "Funny, I felt a pinch in my hindquarters before the race that I won."

A dog walking by hears them and says to them:

"You idiots, you're being doped. They're injecting you with a drug that makes you run faster!"

One horse turns to the other and screams: "Argh! A talking dog!"



Christmas Party.....

Last year's Christmas function was held at the East Maitland Bowling Club on Monday, 15 December. Around 45 members and their guests attended and enjoyed a bountiful lunch kindly provided by the club.

Guests began arriving from 11.30 am, taking the opportunity to enjoy a drink and catch up with friends before proceedings officially began. Shed Chairman, Charlie Sanders, then addressed the gathering, thanking everyone for their contributions to the shed throughout the year. He made special mention of Matthew and Karen, whose hard work and organisation ensured the function was such a great success.

Lunch offered a wonderful selection of four roast meats - lamb, pork, chicken and beef, accompanied by baked vegetables and fresh salads. Many guests

were happy to return for seconds before enjoying dessert, followed by tea and coffee.

After lunch, Karen ran a lucky number raffle, with each guest receiving four lucky numbers. A total of 30 prizes were up for grabs, and those whose numbers were drawn were invited to choose a prize from the table, adding plenty of fun and excitement to the afternoon.

Once again, we extend our thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of the Maitland Community Men's Shed over the past year including our members, supporters, community groups and local businesses. We hope the year ahead will be just as successful.

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



Birthdays This Month.....

Mick Dawson, Ian Goldsworthy, Neil Horne, Peter Mitchell, John Peters, Barrie Robinson and Steve Schumacher



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



Australia's New Social Media Ban: What It Means for Families, Mates, and Communities.....

Starting December 10, Australia rolled out a world-first law: no social media accounts for anyone under 16. That means platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Reddit, and YouTube must shut down underage accounts and stop new sign-ups or risk fines of up to \$50 million.

The government says this is about giving parents peace of mind and helping kids reconnect with the real world. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese even compared it to the drinking age - a clear national standard that makes family rules easier to stick to.

It's worth thinking about how this plays out around the dinner table. Families will be having conversations about what kids can and can't do online. We've all seen how tricky it can be for parents to set boundaries—sometimes a calm word from a grandparent, can help.

Experts reckon the ban could ease anxiety, reduce online bullying, minimise access to inappropriate online content and relationships, boost self-esteem, and encourage more face-to-face socialising. Without the constant ping of notifications, teens might spend more time on schoolwork, hobbies, or kicking a footy around.

Of course, enforcement won't be perfect. Age checks rely on things like facial recognition and ID scans, which raise privacy concerns. Some teens will try to sneak around the rules or jump onto less-



er-known apps. Critics also warn that bans alone won't solve all the problems of online safety.

For rural families and isolated youth, the ban may feel like a loss of connection. Social media has often been a lifeline for those in remote areas. Policymakers will need to find ways to support these kids offline—but so can we.

It's a chance to strengthen ties across generations and show young people that real-world connections are stronger than anything online. This legislation is intended to give our kids time to develop resilience and build strategies to engage responsibly online with discernment and understanding. It's not punishment! It's giving back childhood to children because we know kids grow up too fast even without social media.

This ban isn't just about kids losing TikTok - it's about families, communities, and opportunities for us to step up. Whether it's grandparenting, sharing skills, or simply being present, we can play a big role in helping the next generation thrive without relying on social media.

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



January Picture Gallery.....



What's On in Maitland for Australia Day 2026.....

HAPPY
Australia Day



Maitland is gearing up for a big Australia Day celebration on Monday the 26th of January 2026, with fun and community-focused activities for all ages happening throughout the day.

Australia Day in Maitland Park

The heart of the celebrations will be in Maitland Park, where families and friends can come together for a full day of festivities. The event kicks off early with a free barbecue breakfast and a range of fun activities in the park, including games, craft stalls, live entertainment, and performances designed to bring people of all ages together. Entry to both the Maitland and East Maitland Aquatic Centres is free for Australia Day, so you can cool off and enjoy a swim as part of your celebrations.

Official Ceremony & Citizen Celebrations

An official Australia Day ceremony will take place during the morning, celebrating local pride and community spirit. This includes formal acknowledge-

ments and recognition of new citizens, a meaningful tradition that highlights Maitland's diverse and growing population.

Dive In Cinema Under the Stars

Dive in Cinema will be held at Maitland Aquatic Centre on Monday the 26th of January 2026 from 5 - 9pm, featuring movies Moana 2 and Lilo & Stitch. Grab your floaties and swimwear, or simply relax by the poolside, and immerse yourself in an unforgettable movie experience under the stars. What a unique and memorable way to finish off the day's festivities under the evening sky.

Food, Entertainment & Community Spirit

Throughout the day there will be opportunities to enjoy delicious food and drinks from various vendors, enjoy community performances, and partake in activities that celebrate local culture and the spirit of Australia Day.

AUSTRALIA DAY
IN MAITLAND



Sitting Too Long Can Be as Risky as Smoking.....

Many of us enjoy a good sit-down, whether it's watching the footy, reading the paper, doing a bit of computer work, or having a cuppa and a chat. But research highlighted by YourLifeChoices has found that sitting for more than eight hours a day without regular physical activity can carry a risk of early death similar to that of obesity and smoking. That's a pretty sobering thought.

Why Is Sitting Such A Problem?

When we sit for long periods, our bodies slow right down. Muscles burn less energy, blood flow decreases, and the body becomes less efficient at regulating blood sugar and cholesterol. Over time, this increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and premature death.

According to YourLifeChoices, it's not just how much we sit that matters, it's whether we balance sitting time with regular movement. Even people who are otherwise healthy can be at risk if most of their day is spent sitting still.

The Good News - It's Fixable

The encouraging part of the research is that you don't need to become a marathon runner to reduce the risk. Regular movement throughout the day can make a big difference.

Simple Actions Help:

- Standing up and stretching every 30 - 60 minutes.
- Taking short walks, even just around the shed or the yard.
- Doing light tasks such as sweeping, tidying, or working at a bench.
- Joining in shed activities that keep you moving.

YourLifeChoices points out that even moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking for 30 - 40 minutes a day, can significantly offset the risks of long sitting periods.

Our Monday Walking Group

One easy way to put this into practice is our Men's Shed walking group, which meets every Monday morning at 10.30am after morning tea. The walk is relaxed, social, and suitable for all fitness levels. It's not about speed or distance, it's about getting moving, enjoying a chat, and starting the week on a positive note. New walkers are always welcome, so if you've been thinking about it, why not give it a go?

Why The Men's Shed Helps

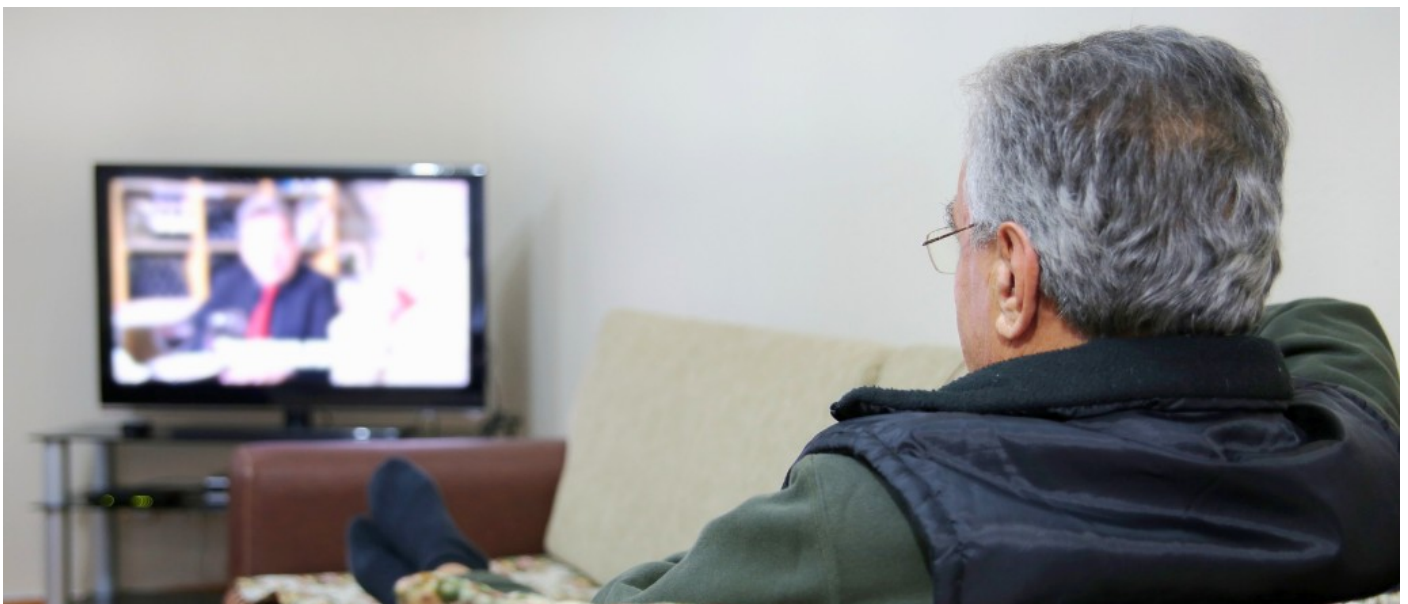
This is where the Men's Shed really shines. Coming to the shed naturally breaks up sitting time. Working on projects, helping others, sharing a laugh, and moving around the space all contribute to better physical and mental health.

Add in social connection, which is just as important as physical activity and the shed becomes one of the best antidotes to a sedentary lifestyle.

A Gentle Reminder

So next time you catch yourself sitting for a long stretch, take it as a cue to stand up, move around, or have a quick walk. Your body will thank you for it. As YourLifeChoices reminds us, moving more and sitting less is one of the simplest ways to improve our health at any age.

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



Walka Water Works: From Hunter Valley Lifeline to Community Treasure.....

Nestled in the Oakhampton Heights bushland, just a short drive from Maitland's town centre, Walka Water Works stands as one of the Hunter Valley's most fascinating historical landmarks, a site that tells a remarkable story of innovation, adaptation, and community connection.

A Pioneering Vision

In the late 1800s, as the populations of Maitland, Newcastle, and the Lower Hunter Valley began to expand, the need for a reliable clean water supply was urgent. Before Walka, settlers and the local Aboriginal people of the Wonnarua Nation made do with creeks, wells and rainwater tanks but these sources were increasingly unable to meet the needs of growing towns, and pollution was a serious public health concern.

Construction of the Walka Water Supply Scheme began in the early 1880s, and by 1887 the magnificent Victorian Italianate brick pump house, soaring chimney and extensive filtration works were complete. For the first time in Australia, a comprehensive water treatment system, from river intake, through settling and filter beds, to clean water storage, was operating at this scale. It supplied permanent, treated water from the Hunter River to communities as far away as Newcastle, a major public health and engineering achievement of its time.

Trials, Change, and Reinvention

Walka's life as a water supply hub continued into the early 20th century, but as populations and industry grew, demand quickly outpaced capacity. By the 1920s the region began to source water from larger dams like Chichester, and Walka's role transitioned to back-up storage until the plant finally ceased its original work.

After World War II, the site found a new purpose. In the early 1950s, Walka became a temporary coal-fired power station, helping to meet post-war electricity shortages, a chapter that lasted until the late 1970s. By the time the power plant was decom-



missioned and dismantled, Walka's industrial life had ended.

Heritage and Recreation

Recognising its cultural and technological significance, Walka was classified by the National Trust in 1976 and added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register in 1999.

Over decades, the site has blossomed into much more than a relic. Now managed by Maitland City Council, the 64-hectare reserve around the old works has become a beloved spot for local families, walkers, birdwatchers and nature lovers. Trails weave around the large lake, home to over 140 bird species and native turtles and picnic areas invite visitors to pause and enjoy the peaceful setting.

Looking to the Future

In recent years, Walka has been undergoing a careful planning and remediation process to ensure it remains safe and accessible for future generations. Parts of the reserve were temporarily closed in 2022 after the discovery of asbestos contamination, but many walking tracks and picnic areas reopened late that year.

Local, state and federal agencies have committed substantial funding for remediation and revitalisation, and ongoing community consultation is shaping Walka's future as a heritage, nature and well-being destination. Plans include restoring historic buildings, enhancing recreational amenities, and exploring new ways to share Walka's rich history with visitors.

Today's Walka Water Works is a place where history and nature meet, a living reminder of the ingenuity that helped shape the Lower Hunter and a treasured space for the community to enjoy, reflect and connect. Whether you're exploring the trails, spotting a rare bird, or simply enjoying a picnic by the lake, Walka continues to be a special part of life in Maitland.

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

