

# THE SHEDDER

*Shoulder to shoulder for every man, and his Men's Shed.*

MEN'S HEALTH WEEK

*When was your last service?*

*Cockburn Community Men's Shed*

2026 AMSA SHED OF THE YEAR



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

*Alex Turner's ride for Men's Sheds inspired by Grumpy Pop*



**AUSTRALIAN  
MEN'S SHED  
ASSOCIATION**

Shoulder to Shoulder

**WINTER 2026**

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## FROM THE EO'S DESK Looking after what matters

Dear Shedders,

We are already almost halfway through 2026, and what a year it has been so far.

As you work your way through this Winter edition of *The Shedder*, you'll notice a common theme running through many of the stories. Whether it's a grandson crossing the Simpson Desert to honour his grandfather, a Shed of the Year building stronger communities, or a simple reminder to book a health check, each story speaks to the positive influence we can have on the people around us.

In March, we hosted the 11th National Men's Shed Gathering at the Royal on the Park in Brisbane in partnership with the Queensland Men's Shed Association. Having attended every AMSA conference since the very first Gathering in Manly in 2007, I can confidently say that the Brisbane event was one of – if not the best – Gatherings to date.

With the event completely sold out, it was a packed house filled with members enjoying the camaraderie, sharing experiences and learning from one another. Delegates attended from right across Australia, as well as from the United States, New Zealand, Canada and Japan, all contributing their unique Men's Shed stories and experiences.

The highlight was undoubtedly the Gala Dinner on the final evening, where the 2026 AMSA Shed Awards were presented. Entertainment was provided by our podcast host and Australian music legend John Paul Young, who delighted the audience by performing his hit songs and sharing stories that were mostly true!

Our major partner, Fair Dinkum Builds, had a large presence at our Gathering – and for good reason. This year marks 15 years of their support for AMSA and the Men's Shed movement. We are incredibly humbled and grateful for the ongoing support and

The Australian Men's Shed Association acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

friendship of the Fair Dinkum Builds team – they have enabled us to do a great deal over 15 years, and we look forward to taking that to new heights well into the future.

In May, I travelled to Whittlesea (VIC) to meet with Rob Mitchell MP, Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Bipartisan Friendship Group for Men's Sheds and Member for McEwen.

Following our meeting, we made our way to the Whittlesea Men's Shed for a visit. On the way, I remarked to Rob on an ironic coincidence – it was 16 years to the day since I had last visited the Whittlesea Men's Shed, and that visit was also with Rob and several others.

The date, 6 May 2010, was a significant one in the history of both AMSA and Men's Sheds. It marked the launch of the National Male Health Policy and the commencement of our first funding agreement with the Federal Government.

Of all those who attended that historic event, Rob is the only Member of Parliament still serving, and there was only one member at the Whittlesea Men's Shed who was also there back then. Perhaps a reminder that we're all getting a little older!

This week is Men's Health Week, and together with our men's health partners, we encourage all Sheds to get behind this important initiative. Many Sheds use the week to host *Spanner in the Works?* events, but on a personal level, I encourage every one of you to book a visit with your GP. After all, when was your last service?

Dan Repacholi, the Australian Government's Special Envoy for Men's Health, has been a tremendous supporter of both men's health and Men's Sheds. Over the past 12 months, Dan has visited well over 100 Men's Sheds, giving him a genuine understanding of the incredible work being done across our movement.

This week, Dan has again been actively promoting Men's Health Week and visiting Sheds around the country. I cannot overstate the importance of his role. It demonstrates the Government's ongoing commitment to men's health and Men's Sheds, but more importantly it reinforces a message we know to be true: when men are connected to their

communities and to each other, better health outcomes follow.

We are finally seeing positive change, and the broader men's health sector recognises the role that every Shed and Shed member has played in making that happen. After all, Men's Sheds are the tangible, visible example of community-based health and wellbeing support making a difference every day.

Speaking of change, AMSA itself is also undergoing significant growth and development. With our new funding arrangements now in place, we have begun expanding our team and recruiting new faces to the organisation. We are pleased to welcome Mark Tyrrell as our new Shed & Community Liaison. Mark will be travelling extensively, visiting Sheds around the country and providing direct support and assistance to members. Last week, Mark and Tim visited several Northern Territory Sheds, including one in the remote community of Wadeye.

This expansion, combined with our ongoing work on the ground, will allow AMSA to provide more direct support and deliver services to a greater number of Men's Sheds on a regular basis.

Men's Shed Week will be held later this year (7-13 September) and will once again be celebrated at Parliament House, where our Parliamentary Bipartisan Friendship Group will host its annual barbecue – a popular event that is always well attended.

Looking ahead, we will soon be announcing some exciting news for next year. In 2027, AMSA celebrates its 20th birthday, and we want all of you to be part of the celebrations.

This Men's Health Week, I encourage you to think about the example you're setting for the people around you. The next generation of men is watching how we look after ourselves, support our mates and contribute to our communities. As the stories in this edition show, those actions matter more than we sometimes realise.

Thank you for everything you do for your Shed, your community and each other.

Keep safe, stay connected, and keep shedding.

*David*

**David Helmers**  
Executive Officer

# WHEN WAS YOUR LAST SERVICE?



SPOT IT.



CHECK IT.



SORT IT.



DON'T WAIT FOR A WARNING LIGHT.  
BOOK THE SERVICE.



**SPOT IT.**

Notice the signs early.



**CHECK IT.**

Simple checks that matter.



**SORT IT.**

Get it sorted and keep moving.



THIS MEN'S HEALTH WEEK,  
MAKE TIME FOR YOUR OWN MAINTENANCE.

STAY CAPABLE. STAY AROUND.

SET THE EXAMPLE.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR HEALTH ISN'T SELFISH.  
IT'S HOW YOU SHOW THE NEXT GENERATION HOW IT'S DONE.



BE THERE.



LEAD BY EXAMPLE.



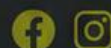
KEEP LIFE RUNNING.



**SPANNER**  
IN THE **WORKS?**

PRACTICAL HEALTH CHECKS FOR MEN.  
MAINTAIN TODAY. STAY IN THE GAME.

[malehealth.org.au](http://malehealth.org.au)



Most blokes know exactly when the ute was last serviced. We know when the tyres were rotated, when the oil was changed and when that funny noise started coming from somewhere under the bonnet. We know because experience has taught us that small problems have a habit of becoming bigger ones if they're left alone for long enough. Yet when it comes to our own health, many of us seem to work to a very different maintenance schedule.

We'll put up with sore knees, ignore a skin spot that wasn't there six months ago, or convince ourselves we'll book that appointment next week. Then next month. Then when things quieten down. Before long, twelve months have somehow become five years.

The funny thing is that none of this is new information. If you've spent any time around a Men's Shed over the years, you've probably heard the *Spanner in the Works?* message before. Get regular checks. Don't ignore the warning signs. Look after yourself like you'd look after the things that matter to you.

The challenge isn't that men don't know the message. The challenge is that life gets in the way.

There's always another job to finish, another responsibility to take care of, or someone else who needs your time first. Looking after yourself has a habit of sliding quietly down the priority list, especially when nothing seems obviously wrong. But that's the thing about maintenance. You don't wait until something breaks before you pay attention to it.

The reality is that many of the health issues affecting Australian men are far easier to deal with when they're picked up early. Heart disease, diabetes, some cancers and mental health challenges often give us warning signs long before they become major problems. That's not about fear or worst-case scenarios. It's simply how maintenance works.

You don't service something because it's broken. You service it because you want to keep it running properly.

Maybe that's the question worth asking this Men's Health Week. Not whether you've heard the message before, but whether you've acted on it... When was your last blood pressure check? When was your last skin check? When was the last time you sat down with your GP and talked honestly about your health?

Because staying healthy isn't really about becoming a fitness fanatic or worrying about every ache and pain that comes along.



It's about staying capable. It's about keeping your independence, having the energy to do the things you enjoy and continuing to show up for the people who matter most.

And perhaps that's where this conversation becomes about more than just us. The younger blokes in our lives are watching.

Our sons, grandsons, nephews and the young fellas who wander into a shed for the first time are all learning what being a man looks like. Not from what we say, but from what we do.

If they see us ignoring warning signs and putting things off until something goes wrong, chances are they'll do the same. But if they see us taking our health seriously, getting things checked and dealing with issues early, that becomes normal too.

One of the greatest achievements of the Men's Shed movement has been helping change the conversation around men's health. We've shown that looking after yourself and looking after your mates isn't weakness. It's responsibility. It's part of being there for the people who rely on you.

Every health check, every conversation and every appointment you finally get around to booking helps reinforce that message.

So this Men's Health Week, don't wait for the warning light to come on. Book the service.

Not because you're broken. Not because someone told you to. But because staying healthy gives you the best chance of continuing to do the things you enjoy, spend time with the people you love and set a positive example for the men coming after you.

**After all, the next generation is learning what maintenance looks like from us.**

# The ride that started in a Men's Shed

How a Men's Shed and 'Grumpy Pop' inspired an extreme fundraising adventure across Australia's Simpson Desert.



**Filled with memories of his late grandfather's renewed sense of purpose after getting involved at his local Men's Shed, Alex Turner decided to say thank you in his own unique way. It prompted a grand adventure in a stunning setting. However, within hours of starting his ride for Men's Sheds, even Alex was worried he may have bitten off more than he could chew.**

It's true that one person's idea of a grand adventure can be someone else's definition of craziness. Enter 33-year-old Sydneysider Alex Turner who decided he wanted to do something meaningful to support Men's Sheds because of their "life-changing" effect on his grandfather during his retirement years.

The story of Alex's fundraising ride adventure for Men's Sheds by motorbike across the unforgiving Simpson Desert starts with nostalgia. A boy and his granddad are spending time together at the workbench in pop's shed, shoulder to shoulder.

"Some of my fondest memories as a young fella were going to my pop's house in Engadine. We would get the Jaycar kits and he would teach me the basics of electronics when I was 8 or 9 years old," reflects Alex.

"I learnt to solder and I used to love it. My pop and I would play around with Ham radios and (were) always building stuff in the shed and I absolutely idolised him in that way."

Alex speaks of his grandfather Geoffrey Turner with pride, revealing he worked on communications for a time in the Vietnam War. Like so many veterans, he never spoke about it.

Geoffrey also contributed to the rollout of the first CT scanners in Australia and enjoyed a successful career as a technician for a medical equipment company until around age 70.

His eyesight was declining and he could no longer drive. He didn't feel ready to retire but had no choice.

Alex remembers a distinct change in his pop's demeanour.

"It took him so long to let go of work... because he loved what he did and he got so much purpose.

"I think that's something that I definitely see in a lot of blokes."

While he can't remember exactly how his pop found out about his local men's shed at Menai, Alex says he'll never forget the resulting lift in his spirits.

**"He started going down to men's shed and it ended up being his sanctuary... and that just gave him so much purpose."**

"He was affectionately known in his shed as Grumpy," laughs Alex.

"He did a lot of electrical stuff.

Always fixing something for someone whether it was an old radio or rebuilding valves or these tube wireless units or polishing and getting them back to just right."

To Alex's surprise, Grumpy Pop was learning new skills too. He learned leadlighting and proudly replaced the front windows and doors at home with his creations.

"He ended up building his own mobility scooter so he could get to the shed, which he named 'Indie' because that was his independence. It was just bits of different mobility scooters put together.

"To him it was his community. They were people he could go and brag about his grandkids to."

Fast forward to mid 2025 and Alex had decided to do something positive to celebrate Men's Sheds because they had such an impact on Grumpy Pop's life.

To cross the Simpson Desert on his 2017 KTM 690 Enduro R motorbike should take around three days. Starting from Birdsville in Queensland, Alex would take the route known as the French Line. That meant navigating more than a thousand



"If that's what I can take away from this trip and give back to the community... and get my Pop's story out then this has been a roaring success."



sand dunes before reaching Dalhousie Springs in South Australia.

"I just had this idea of this grand adventure and going across and doing it solo," he says.

He organised a small film crew with plans to take advantage of the incredible desert scenery.

Alex set off from Birdsville, giving strict instructions to his crew. They were to film – but never help.

Before too long, he sorely regretted those words.

### "I'm not sure I can do this"

*Alex Turner on day one of his ride for Men's Sheds*

Like so many projects at the shed – and in life – his plan had seemed relatively simple. After all, motorcyclists and 4WD vehicles cross the Simpson Desert all the time.

The reality check was humbling. Alex missed a detour and found his gear-laden, fully-fuelled motorbike stuck in mud.

Weighing around 200 kilograms, it took all his angry determination to get it upright.

His ride for Men's Sheds had become a mental test as much as a physical one. It had been a shocker of a start and a punishing day.

It was only day one and he hadn't even made it halfway to his planned stopover.

That night at camp, he wrote in his journal and questioned what he was doing in the desert – and what he was doing wrong.

"I realised I wasn't prepared for the type of sand... I'm not riding fast enough.

"Common sense tells me to go harder. You still have crashes... but less frequently."

Despite the challenges, Alex pushed on. Over the following days he conquered the dunes, crossed the desert and completed the journey he had set out to achieve. Along the way he raised more than \$10,000 for the Australian Men's Shed Association and, perhaps more importantly, shared his grandfather's story with a much wider audience.

Looking back on the experience, Alex says the ride reinforced just how important purpose, connection and community can be in a man's life – lessons he first learned from watching Grumpy Pop find a new lease on life at his local Men's Shed.

"If that's what I can take away from this trip and give back to the community... and get my Pop's story out then this has been a roaring success."

# Coffee, conversation and looking out for your mates

*What happens when you combine coffee, conversation and a genuine interest in how your mates are doing?*

*According to David Croft, some of the best wellbeing outcomes you'll see in a Men's Shed.*

As Secretary and self-appointed Wellbeing Officer at Menshed Wagga Wagga, David Croft believes supporting wellbeing doesn't need to be complicated. For him, it's about being present, checking in with mates and creating opportunities for connection.

"Just being present and casually checking in with your members and mates," David says. "Noticing if something is off with someone and saying, 'Do you need a hand with that?'"

One of the most successful wellbeing initiatives at the Shed is also one of the simplest: morning tea.

Every morning at 8:45am, members gather for coffee, a snack and a chat. Around 50 members regularly attend, catching up on everything from footy scores to family news and, occasionally, health concerns.

"It's something the blokes really look forward to," David says.

The Shed also has a dedicated Welfare Table stocked with brochures and information from local health and community services. Members can browse resources privately and take information home to read in their own time.

"Some men don't like to, or know how to, ask for help," David explains. "The Welfare Table gives them some information to take back, have a think about and look at later."

Another unique initiative is the Shed's partnership with Charles Sturt University, where medical students spend time with members learning about healthy ageing. The program creates valuable connections between generations and gives members an opportunity to share their experiences and insights.

Creating opportunities for conversation is at the heart of the Shed's approach to wellbeing. Regular talks from organisations such as Dementia Australia, Rotary and DonateLife help start discussions about important health topics. One particularly

memorable DonateLife presentation led to 29 Shed members joining the organ donor register.

For David, it's proof that simple conversations can have a powerful impact.

His advice for other Wellbeing Leaders is straightforward: get to know local health services, build connections in your community and never underestimate the value of asking one simple question: "How are things going?" And when someone does decide to open up?

"As a welfare officer, you don't always need to give advice, just listen."

It's a philosophy that reflects the Men's Shed movement itself: shoulder to shoulder, supporting one another through connection, conversation and community.

**Read the full Q&A with David on The Shed Online Blog at [www.mensshed.org/the-shed-online](http://www.mensshed.org/the-shed-online)**

**Sign up to our new monthly *Wellbeing Watch* for more stories, tools and resources to support members at your shed.**



## WELLBEING *Watch*

For Wellbeing  
Leaders in  
Men's Sheds

Practical ideas for stronger connections  
and healthier sheds.



STORIES  
from Sheds



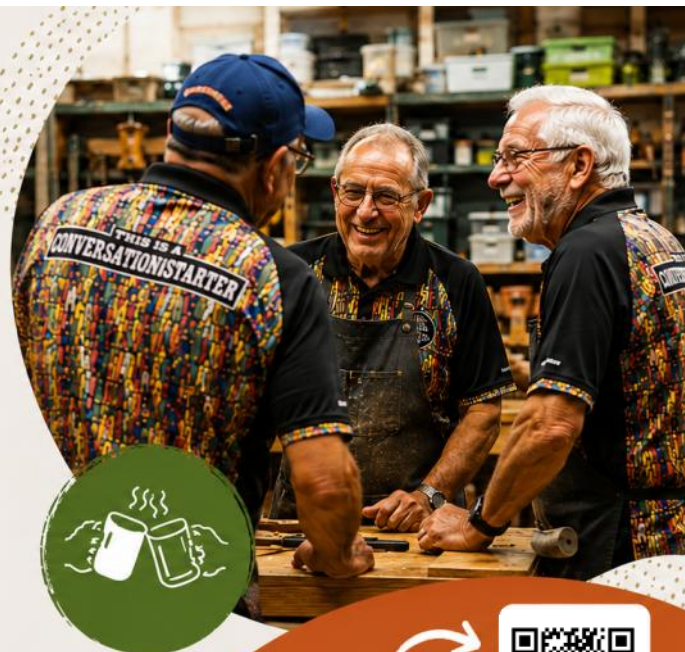
TIPS & TOOLS  
for Wellbeing  
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RESOURCES  
and conversation  
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Q&A  
with fellow  
Shedders



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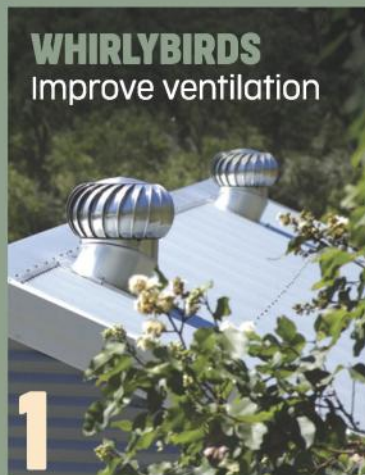


# SHED DESIGN TIPS

## WITH FAIR DINKUM BUILDS



### TOP 4 SHED ADD-ONS TO MAXIMISE SPACE



### MEN'S SHED DESIGN TIPS

- ✓ Consider how you'll divide up your shed for your workshops, tea room, social spaces
- ✓ Make sure your shed is comfortable year-round
- ✓ Consider local regulations, safety requirements, accessibility needs and room for growth

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### FINDING YOUR PERFECT FIT

Fair Dinkum Builds has helped design Men's Sheds around Australia that serve well for decades by cleverly utilising their space.

Get started on yours by simply emailing us on [mens.shed@fairdinkumbuilds.com.au](mailto:mens.shed@fairdinkumbuilds.com.au)

**FAIR  
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Sheds & More

# Celebrating the best of the Shed movement

## 2026 AMSA National Shed Awards

**From innovative projects and environmental initiatives to community impact and men's wellbeing, the 2026 AMSA National Shed Awards showcased the extraordinary work taking place in sheds across Australia.**

Presented at the National Men's Shed Gathering in Brisbane and proudly supported by AMSA Partner Fair Dinkum Builds, the awards recognise sheds and shedders who are making a real difference in the lives of others and strengthening communities through practical action, connection and mateship.

This year's finalists and winners demonstrated the incredible diversity of the Men's Shed movement. Across Australia, sheds are creating opportunities for social connection, supporting men's health, protecting the environment, mentoring young people and delivering projects that benefit thousands of people in their local communities.

### Bright Spark Award

**Winner: Marlin Coast Men's Shed (QLD)**

Innovation and inclusion came together in a remarkable project that saw members design and build a custom bocce ball launching device for a fellow shedder living with the impacts of a stroke. The invention enabled him to participate fully in games once again and perfectly captured the creativity, problem-solving and mateship celebrated by the Bright Spark Award.

### Green Shed Award

**Joint Winners: Dingley Village Men's Shed (VIC) and Nepean Men's Shed (NSW)**

Environmental sustainability was front and centre in this year's Green Shed Award.

Dingley Village Men's Shed developed machinery capable of transforming recycled plastic milk bottles into useful products including benches, planter boxes and garden stakes, diverting more than 20,000 bottles from landfill. Meanwhile, Nepean Men's Shed designed an innovative paint brush cleaning system that safely captures contaminants and prevents them entering the environment.

### Healthy Shed, Healthy Blokes Award

**Winner: Belconnen Community Men's Shed (ACT)**

Belconnen Community Men's Shed was recognised for its innovative Focused Blokes and Shed Nights programs, creating safe and supportive spaces where men can build trust, share experiences and talk openly about life's challenges. Working alongside researchers from the Australian National University, the shed has developed practical, evidence-based approaches to supporting men's mental health and wellbeing.

### Community Impact Award (Shed of the Year)

**Winner: Cockburn Community Men's Shed (WA)**

Through partnerships with schools, universities, disability organisations and community programs, Cockburn Community Men's Shed has become a powerful force for good in its local area. The award recognised years of commitment to community service, inclusion and practical support that has positively impacted thousands of people. Read more about Cockburn's remarkable story on pages 12-13.

### Ted Donnelly Lifetime Contribution Award

**Winner: John Sharples**

One of the most respected figures in the Australian Men's Shed movement, John Sharples was recognised for decades of service and leadership. A founder of Bateau Bay Men's Shed and former board member of both the NSW Men's Shed Association and the Australian Men's Shed Association, John's contribution has helped shape the movement nationally and continues through his involvement with Cessnock Men's Shed & Garden.

As AMSA Executive Officer David Helmers noted, the awards highlight the enormous contribution Men's Sheds make to communities across Australia.

"These award winners and finalists show just how powerful the Shed movement is in supporting men's wellbeing while delivering real benefits to the wider community."

### Hear their stories

Want to learn more about this year's winners?

Special interviews with all award winners are available now on **The Shed Wireless podcast**, where shedders share the stories, ideas and people behind their award-winning initiatives.

Visit [www.mensshed.org/the-shed-wireless](http://www.mensshed.org/the-shed-wireless)





# Building community, one project at a time

## How Cockburn Community Men's Shed became one of Australia's most impactful sheds and was named 2026 AMSA Shed of the Year

**When the Cockburn Community Men's Shed was announced as the winner of AMSA's Community Impact / Shed of the Year Award at the 11th National Men's Shed Gathering in Brisbane, there was plenty of applause from around the room.**

For the members of the Perth-based shed, however, the award wasn't really about recognition. It was about people.

The young bloke who found confidence in a school workshop. The retiree who discovered friendship after years of isolation. The NDIS participant who found purpose through practical projects. And the community groups, schools and charities who picked up the phone looking for help and found a shed full of men willing to lend a hand.

For more than a decade, that has been the philosophy behind Cockburn Community Men's Shed.

Located in Perth's southern suburbs, the shed has built a reputation not simply for what it makes, but for the difference it makes.

Chairman Mike Murphy says the award belongs to every member who has contributed their time,

skills and energy over the years.

"We've tried to be active in our community ever since we started," Mike said.

"We've made things for local schools, aged care homes, and we get involved wherever we can."

That willingness to say "yes" has become one of the shed's defining characteristics.

Whether it's building furniture, repairing community assets, supporting local organisations or helping someone learn new skills, the shed has become a place where practical action and community connection go hand in hand.

### **A place to belong**

Like many Men's Sheds around Australia, Cockburn's greatest contribution isn't always visible in the projects that leave the workshop.

Often, it's the friendships formed around a workbench or over a cup of tea.

For many members, the shed provides routine, purpose and connection. It offers a place where skills are valued, stories are shared and mateship comes naturally.

That sense of belonging extends well beyond the membership itself.

One of the shed's most rewarding initiatives is its work with local schools.

Vice Chairman Jack Bernardi spends time each week helping run a boys' shed program at a local primary school.

"We get kids who might be struggling at school or have a few family problems," Jack said.

"They come into the shed and build toys and small projects. They learn how to use tools properly – and they love it. Some don't even want to go back to class."

What starts as a woodworking project often becomes something much more important.

The students learn practical skills, but they also gain confidence, patience and a sense of achievement that comes from creating something with their own hands.

For the members who volunteer their time, the rewards are just as significant.

"It's one of the most satisfying things we do," Jack said.



### Opening doors

The same philosophy underpins the shed's work with NDIS participants, employment programs and community service referrals.

Rather than seeing barriers, the members see opportunities.

NDIS participants work alongside members on suitable projects, developing skills, confidence and social connections in a supportive environment.

Others arrive through employment programs or community service arrangements.

Mike recalls one young man who had been out of work for more than a year.

"We got him restoring a doll's house that someone had donated," he said.

"He had a great time doing it and really took pride in the job."

For people trying to rebuild confidence, reconnect with others or simply find a sense of purpose, a Men's Shed can be an important first step.

### Community first

The projects that fill the workshop often begin with a simple request.

A school needs something built.

A community group needs something repaired.

A local organisation needs a helping hand.

"If it can be built or fixed in the shed, we'll have a go," Jack said with a smile.

That approach has seen members tackle everything from picnic tables and community furniture to oversized chess boards and custom-built table tennis tables.

Not every project stays in Australia either.

Tools that are no longer needed are collected and sent to villages in the Philippines through a member who regularly travels there. What might be surplus equipment in Perth can become an invaluable resource for a community thousands of kilometres away.

It's another example of a shed that sees possibilities rather than limitations.

### The real measure of success

Today, Cockburn Community Men's Shed has almost 110 members.

It's a thriving workshop, but more importantly, it's a thriving community.

Winning AMSA's Community Impact / Shed of the Year Award is a significant achievement and recognition of years of hard work. Yet talking to Mike and Jack, it's clear the award isn't what motivates them.

Their focus remains firmly on the people who walk through the shed's doors.

"We just want to keep improving and do more for the community," Jack said.

"That's what it's about."

Perhaps that's exactly why Cockburn Community Men's Shed stood out.

Because while the projects are impressive and the partnerships are extensive, the real impact is measured in friendships formed, confidence rebuilt and lives made better.

And that's something no trophy could ever fully capture.



# Rip's Tips *for life*

## The day the driving stops...

You don't really notice it when you're younger, but we absolutely take it for granted.

Keys in the pocket. Bit of fuel in the tank. Off you go. Simple as that.

Shops, shed, servo, footy, mate's place... doesn't matter. The car just fits into your life like a good old flannie. You don't think about it. You just use it.

Then one day, someone says it.

"Mate... we might need to have a chat about your driving."

And you know. Even before they finish the sentence. That's the day things start shifting.

Now everyone thinks it's just about the licence. That bit of plastic. But it's not really. It's everything that comes with it.

It's your freedom. It's your independence. It's deciding at 8:30 in the morning you're going nowhere in particular... and somehow ending up at Bunnings with three things you didn't need and one thing you forgot you were meant to get.

Try doing that on a bus. You'd need a diagram and a packed lunch.

And that's the first bit that stings. Not the driving itself.

It's the going. It's the getting around wherever and whenever you feel like it.

Because when the driving stops, the world quietly gets a bit smaller if you're not careful.

At first, you think, "No worries, I'll just get lifts."

And that works... for a while.

Then you realise you start timing your life around other people's schedules. Which is something blokes our age spent decades

refusing to do in every other part of life.

And suddenly you're asking, "Are you going past the shops?" more often than you'd like to admit.

Bit of a humbling question, that one. Some fellas say, "I'll just catch the bus."

And yeah... technically you can.

But there's a bit of a difference between rolling up in your own ute and trying to work out which stop is yours while someone's loud phone call is explaining their entire life story to the whole vehicle.

It's an adjustment.

And the shed – well, that can get harder too. Not because the shed changes, but because getting there does.

You start noticing which mates still drive, and which ones are waiting for a lift, and which ones have just quietly stopped coming in as often.

That's the bit no one really talks about. Not the driving. The drifting.

And I won't sugar-coat it. There's a bit of pride that takes a knock too.

Because for most of our lives, being able to drive meant being able to sort yourself out. No fuss. No asking. Just go.

Losing that can feel like someone's taken the edge off your independence.

But here's something I've noticed over time.

The blokes who handle it best aren't the ones who pretend it doesn't matter. They're the ones who just... adapt.

One mate of mine said, "Righto,

I'm not driving, but I'm still going."

So now he's got a standing lift roster like he's running a small taxi business without the paperwork.

Another bloke started going to the café near his place every Thursday just so he'd still have somewhere to be. Reckons it's not about the coffee. It's about not sitting in the same chair every day.

Fair call, too. Because that's the real risk. Not losing the licence. It's losing the reasons to go.

And look, I get it. There's a day when you see your car sitting there and think, "That used to be me."

But it wasn't really the car. It was the places it took you. The mates. The jobs. The little routines that stitched your week together. And those don't disappear just because the keys change hands.

You just have to find new ways of stitching things together.

Maybe slower. Maybe with a bit more planning. Maybe with a mate saying, "I'll pick you up at 9," instead of you just rolling out when you feel like it.

Still gets you there though. And in the end, that's what matters.

Because you don't stop going just because you stop driving.

You just start proving, quietly, that you can still get where you need to be.

Even if someone else is doing the steering for a while.

And between you and me... At least you don't have to worry about petrol prices anymore. Small mercies.

# The test most blokes avoid

**"Poking your poo" isn't exactly a topic that comes up around the workbench every day. But according to gastroenterologist Dr Oliver Cronin, it might be one of the most important conversations Australian men can have.**

When Dr Cronin joined AMSA's Stuart Torrance on The Shed Wireless podcast, he didn't waste time dressing it up.

The bowel screening test is simple. It arrives in the mail. It can be completed at home. And yes, it involves taking a small sample from your stool.

For many blokes, that's enough reason to put it in the "I'll get around to it later" pile.

The problem is that bowel cancer often develops without obvious symptoms, and by the time warning signs appear, treatment can be far more difficult.

"The whole point of screening is to find things before they become a problem," Dr Cronin explained.

Australia has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world, but it also has one of the most effective screening programs. The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program sends free home test kits to eligible Australians aged 45 to 74, helping detect early signs of cancer before symptoms develop.

For Dr Cronin, the message is simple: don't wait until something feels wrong.

Many people feel perfectly healthy when they complete the test, and that's exactly the point.

The earlier bowel cancer is detected, the better the chances of successful treatment.

## **A conversation worth having**

Men's Sheds have always been about more than projects and practical skills. They're places where conversations happen.

Sometimes it's about football, fishing or fixing things.

Sometimes it's about health.

Dr Cronin believes those conversations can make a real difference, particularly when it comes to encouraging mates to complete their screening test.

A quick reminder from a friend or a chat around the shed table might be all it takes for someone to finally open the envelope that's been sitting on the kitchen bench for months.

It might not be the most glamorous topic. But it could be one of the most important.

## **Listen to the full conversation**

Dr Oliver Cronin's interview is available now on The Shed Wireless podcast.

**Visit [www.mensshed.org/the-shed-wireless](http://www.mensshed.org/the-shed-wireless)**



# Building Healthy Communities

**More than 250 delegates representing 158 sheds and organisations from across Australia came together in Brisbane this March for the 11th AMSA National Men's Shed Gathering.**

Held under the theme *Building Healthy Communities*, the three-day event brought together shedders, volunteers, community leaders and supporters to share ideas, celebrate achievements and explore the evolving role Men's Sheds play in communities across Australia.

The Gathering opened with a series of shed tours across Brisbane, giving delegates the opportunity to visit local sheds, community organisations and attractions while connecting with fellow shedders from around the country. Whether exploring active community sheds, discovering innovative projects or simply sharing stories over a cuppa, the tours set the tone for a week built on connection and learning.

Over the following two days, delegates took part in a packed program covering leadership, governance, men's health, wellbeing, community development and the future of the Men's Shed movement. Sessions explored topics such as attracting new members, working with young people, building stronger community connections, supporting wellbeing and creating inclusive environments where everyone feels welcome.

A particular focus of this year's Gathering was the

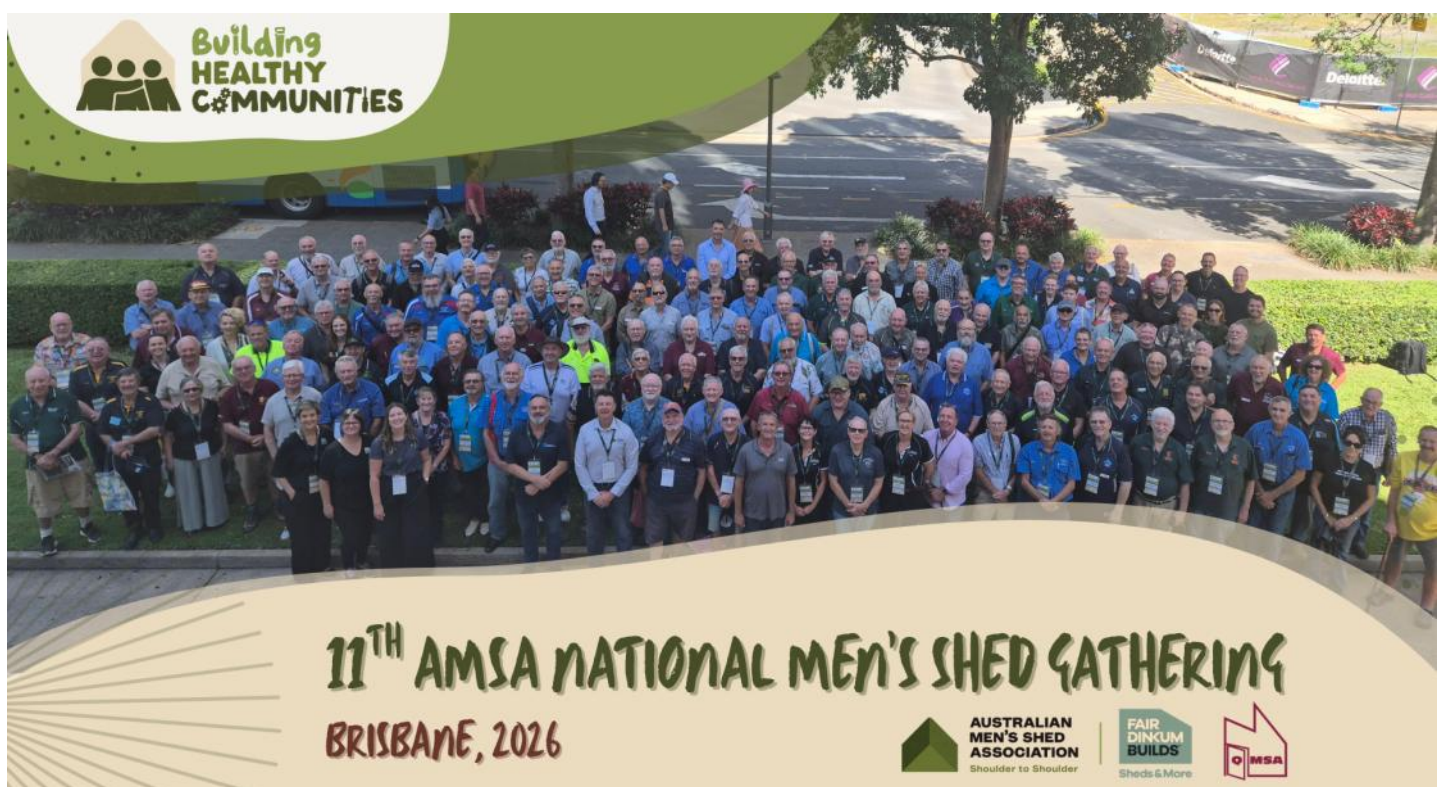
important role everyday blokes play in supporting the health and wellbeing of those around them. Presenters challenged delegates to recognise the influence they have as mentors, role models and community leaders, and to use that influence to support the next generation of men and boys.

The Gathering also provided plenty of opportunities to catch up with old friends and make new ones. From the popular Shedder's Big Breakfast in the Brisbane City Botanic Gardens to the Welcome Reception, Trade Show and National Shed Awards Dinner, there was no shortage of opportunities for conversations, laughter and the sharing of ideas.

As always, some of the most valuable moments happened between sessions. New partnerships were formed, practical solutions were shared and delegates returned home inspired by the work taking place in sheds right across the country.

The Gathering concluded with the presentation of the 2026 National Shed Awards, recognising outstanding achievements in innovation, sustainability, men's health and community impact, and celebrating the remarkable contribution Men's Sheds continue to make to communities across Australia.

For those who attended, Brisbane was a reminder of what makes the Men's Shed movement so powerful: ordinary blokes coming together, sharing skills and experiences, and building healthier, stronger communities one conversation at a time.



# From Alice to the Top End

AMSA's Shed Support SA/NT, Tim, recently hit the road to connect with Men's Sheds across the Northern Territory. The journey provided a fantastic opportunity to visit sheds throughout the NT, spending quality time with shedders and local communities.

Along the way Tim, and AMSA's new recruit Mark, met with shedders to discuss new opportunities to strengthen shed resilience, support member wellbeing, and explore strategies for establishing new sheds in communities where interest is growing.

Wherever they travelled, NT sheds showed incredible

hospitality, proudly sharing their projects, craftsmanship and community contributions. A particular highlight was their visit to the Wadeye Men's Shed, where members from Palmerston Mens Shed and Darwin Men's Shed joined together to build positive relationships and strengthen connections with fellow shedders.

A big thank you to Joe and the members for hosting the visit. Your support, hospitality and commitment to building wellbeing, fostering cross-cultural relationships and supporting one another is a credit to the Men's Shed movement across the Northern Territory.



## Having the hard conversations

**Shedders embrace new skills to support mates doing it tough**

Recently Marty Leist and Beth Gow headed to the Raymond Terrace Men's Shed to run a pilot workshop with Talk2MeBro, and it's safe to say it struck a real chord with our Shed community.

Most of us know a bloke who's doing it tough, or has at some point. This session focused on something many of us have wondered: what do you actually do when someone's not themselves?

With around 30 shedders from sheds in the greater Hunter & Central Coast regions in attendance, the workshop covered practical skills like:

- Spotting when a mate might be struggling
- Knowing what to say (and what not to say)
- Starting a conversation that genuinely helps
- Pointing someone in the right direction for extra support

What stood out most was just how many Shed members are genuinely passionate about looking out for others. There's a real appetite for learning how to better support mates when they need it.

As we all know, Sheds and their committees are often on the front line. Whether it's a quiet word over a cuppa or a more serious conversation, these moments matter – and having the right tools makes all the difference.

The feedback from the pilot was overwhelmingly positive and will help shape even stronger workshops moving forward.

And in true Shed spirit, it wasn't all talk... Marty and Beth even jumped in and tested out the ice bath on the day!

A big thank you to everyone who took part and shared their insights. This is just the beginning, and we're looking forward to building on it to support even more Sheds across the country.



# Point Nepean Men's Shed cannon restoration



Standing once again with pride and presence, the restored naval cannons at Point Nepean carry with them a story that stretches back more than 170 years, across continents, generations, and countless family memories.

These are Naval 3-inch muzzle-loading signal cannons, originally transported from Scotland to Australia in 1853 by James Service, the paternal great-great-grandfather of current custodian Belinda Richardson. Born in Kilwinning, Ayrshire, Service was a successful businessman who later built a substantial family home in East St Kilda, naming it *Kilwinning* in honour of his Scottish heritage.

From there, the cannons began a long journey through family hands. The property, along with its historic fixtures, was later sold to Belinda's maternal great-grandfather, Wallace H Smith, and the cannons remained as part of the estate for many years.

Eventually, they were passed to Belinda's grandfather, Clive Wallace Smith, who brought them to Portsea – where they would overlook the sea for the next 70 years. In that time, they became part of family tradition and local lore. One of the most cherished memories is Clive's annual New

Year's Eve ritual, firing the cannons using firecrackers packed into a tennis ball tin and set off in unison. On another occasion, a cannon was even transported to Sorrento Golf Club and fired to signal the shotgun start of a summer competition – an unmistakable echo of its original signalling purpose.

When Clive passed away, the cannons were gifted to Pam Wallace Fraser. She ensured they remained in place, continuing to guard the property and spark curiosity among visitors. They became more than historical artefacts – they were landmarks, conversation pieces, and part of the family landscape. Generations of children played on them, climbing and imagining stories around their solid iron forms. Today, Belinda's own grandchildren continue that tradition, finding joy in both their history and their presence.

Now, as the fifth-generation custodian, Belinda Richardson carries forward that legacy. And thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the Point Nepean Men's Shed, the cannons have been carefully restored to their former splendour. The restoration represents not just technical skill, but hours of dedication, craftsmanship, and respect for history.

Belinda expresses deep gratitude to Terry and his team, noting that the work honours not only the cannons themselves but the generations of family who have cared for them. She believes her forebears would be delighted to see them returned so faithfully to their grandeur.

Today, the cannons stand not only as restored naval artefacts, but as enduring symbols of heritage, continuity, and community care – linking past and present through the hands that preserved them and the people who continue to value their story.

Belinda and the men at the shed were looking forward to firing the cannons, however, one of the family members is a policeman and pointed out that Belinda didn't have firearms licence!

But overall, everyone was just happy to see them back in the garden looking great.



## Men's Shed tunes



In our last edition of *The Shedder*, the Newcastle Men's Shed song struck a chord with readers.

In fact, it proved so popular that we've had requests from sheds around the country asking for the lyrics, chords and sheet music so they can learn it, perform it and maybe even add their own local flavour.

Music has always had a way of bringing people together, and that's something shedders understand well. Whether it's a singalong at a gathering, a shed band entertaining at a community event or a few mates swapping songs over a cuppa, music creates connection just like a good shed does.

And while every shed is different, music has a remarkable way of creating memories and bringing people together. It's often the soundtrack to community events, fundraising days and the friendships that make sheds such special places.

By popular demand, we're sharing the Newcastle Men's Shed song once again. If you'd like a copy of the lyrics and chords, simply contact AMSA at [amsa@mensshed.net](mailto:amsa@mensshed.net)

We've also got the words and chords to the Men's Shed Jingle, written and performed by Australian music legend John Paul Young.

If your shed has a band, a songwriter or a song that deserves a wider audience, we'd love to hear from you.

## The Shed you won't miss

If you're driving through Frankston North, chances are you'll spot Pines Men's Shed before you know what it is.

A striking new mural has transformed the outside of the shed, turning a plain wall into a colourful community landmark and helping more people discover what's happening behind the shed doors.

The project came about after Frankston City Council approached the shed with the idea of creating a mural. Pines Men's Shed President Brian saw it as an opportunity to raise the shed's profile and make it easier for people to find.

Enter local mural artist Tyson Savannah, also known as Father Marker.

After spending time with the shedders and learning about the shed, Tyson created a design inspired by the tools, skills and characters that make the place unique. The artwork includes a giant pegboard complete with tools and a playful shed mascot that has quickly become a talking point for visitors.

While Tyson brought the artistic expertise, the members were never far away. Throughout the six-day project, shedders stopped by with coffees, encouragement and even practical solutions. One member built a custom stencil jig to help Tyson paint the hundreds of pegboard holes featured in the mural.

It's a perfect example of what happens when creativity and community come together.

For Tyson, the project was also an introduction to the Men's Shed movement. Spending time with members gave him a firsthand look at the skills, knowledge and camaraderie that exist inside sheds across Australia.

For Brian and the Pines Men's Shed members the mural has already achieved its goal. People notice the shed now. They stop, look and ask questions. And that means more opportunities to share what Men's Sheds are all about.



Listen to the full story on  
The Shed Wireless podcast



# SUDOKU

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## Riddle me this

The person who makes it has no need of it; the person who buys it has no use for it. The person who uses it can neither see nor feel it. What is it?

Why did the golfer bring two pairs of pants?  
In case he got a hole in one.  
Why can't your nose be 12 inches long?  
Because then it would be a foot.