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Merry Christmas

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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.....

As the saying goes, It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, and yes, the silly season is on us again. The boys in the project zone have been busy making special picnic tables for a local school to give students with wheelchairs the ability to use the tables. They are slightly larger than usual and look wonderful.

We must congratulate the BBQ team once again for their incredible effort recently. Several members stepped up to be on hand and help out when key personnel were not available due to sudden illness. Well done gents and a big thank you to you all. By all reports, a fabulous effort and a record result.

The Shed has a team of members that went to be trained as Test and Tag exponents, and we now have a Shed full of electrical equipment that is fully Tested and Tagged and up to date. Thanks gents.

Over the past month or so, a team of several members and our electrical contractor have put in a huge amount of effort and work to tidy and sort out the wiring and layout of the Shed's computer system. The network is now wired and terminated through one panel mounted up on the mezzanine floor in the IT section of the Shed. The entire layout has now been documented and drawings have been completed, all showing where each circuit comes from and where it feeds.

A talented member has composed and put down a Shed song and we are looking for another talented person, maybe a relative or grandchild, to video image to this song. Should you know someone that has those skills, please let us know so we can complete the task.

Shed layout plans are now available from Steve so that members can offer their ideas as to how they would envisage a new and more efficient layout of the Shed. We need your thoughts and ideas and here is your chance to have your input as to how you would see a better operating Shed should be. All thoughts and ideas will be considered.

We have purchased a new Metal band saw for the metal work area and we are investigating the purchase of a new spindle drive for CNC machine.

Discipline wasn't abuse, it was how we learned right from wrong, how we built respect, and how we understood that actions have consequences.

Take care and see you at the Shed.

Charlie Sanders - Chairman





John O’Keefe Memorial Euchre Tournament.....



tournament

The annual, much contested, John O’Keefe Memorial Euchre Tournament was held at the Shed on Monday, the 4th of November, with a good rollup of eager players ready for some friendly competition. The atmosphere was lively, filled with fun, laughter, and the occasional bit of good-natured skulduggery that always seems to accompany a game or two of euchre!

Matthew, one of our members, kindly brought in a delicious morning tea of cakes and sweets that kept everyone well-fuelled through the rounds. After a morning of cards and friendship, the eventual winners were John Paul and Wayne Phillips, who took home the honours for 2025.

The festivities didn’t end there, with a tasty BBQ lunch provided by the Shed and expertly cooked by Karen and Zac, who certainly cooked up a storm.

Events like this truly capture the spirit of the Men’s Shed - friendship, laughter, good food, and a healthy dose of competition. A big thank you to everyone who helped make the day such a success!

We are sure that John would be looking down upon us with a huge smile.

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





Eagles Plumbing Plus - Supporting the Community Once Again.....

A heartfelt thank you goes out to Eagles Plumbing Plus at Rutherford for their ongoing and generous support of the Maitland Community Men's Shed. Once again this year, Eagles Plumbing Plus has chosen to donate part of the proceeds from their annual charity golf day to our shed in a gesture that truly makes a difference. They have been keeping this tradition going for a number of years.

Their commitment to giving back to the community shines through at this event, which brings together employees, customers, and suppliers in the spirit of generosity and teamwork. We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone involved for helping make this continued support possible.

For more than 55 years, Eagles Plumbing Plus has proudly served the Central Coast, Newcastle, Hunter, Lake Macquarie, Forster/Tuncurry, Coffs Harbour, and Lismore regions. As the largest independent supplier of plumbing, bathroom, kitch-



en, and laundry products in these areas, they've built a strong reputation for quality and service. Beyond their trade expertise, their Bathroom and Kitchen Display Centre showcase the very latest in Australian and international design, reflecting their commitment to excellence.

We are truly grateful to Eagles Plumbing Plus for their enduring generosity and community spirit. Their ongoing support helps keep our shed a operating and welcoming place for all.

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

Picnic Tables for a Good Cause.....

Our workshop team has recently taken on a rewarding new project of building two sturdy outdoor picnic tables for a local disability hub that has just moved to a larger property here in Maitland.

With their new space boasting a huge backyard, the hub wanted some solid, comfortable tables where their participants can relax, enjoy meals, and socialise during their support sessions.

The Shed's workshop team has already been busy painting and cutting the timber, preparing everything for construction. Once complete, these tables will not only provide a practical addition to the hub's outdoor area but also stand as another fine example of the community spirit and craftsmanship our Shed is known for.

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





Garage Sale Trail Success.....

The Garage Sale Trail has once again proven to be a winning event for our shed!

Garage Sale Trail 2025 is Australia's biggest second-hand treasure hunt that took place over two weekends, November 8-9 and November 15-16. Across the country, hundreds of thousands of Australians joined in the fun, hosting garage sales, second-hand markets, and community stalls. The event is all about finding bargains, decluttering homes and workspaces, and giving pre-loved items a new life instead of sending them to landfill.

Our shed was buzzing with activity throughout the day, as a steady stream of bargain hunters came through the shed in search of hidden gems. Thanks



This event also ties in perfectly with our new initiative to redesign the shed's floor space, making it more practical, organised, and welcoming for members to use. A big thank-you goes out to all those members who rolled up their sleeves over the past few weeks to sort, clean, and prepare items for sale, and to the volunteers who manned the tables on Saturday, November 8.

Any remaining items will first be offered to our shed members, with the leftovers offered to other Men's Sheds in the area, ensuring that nothing useful goes to waste.

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



to everyone's efforts, we successfully rehomed plenty of unused tools, materials, and other items that had been gathering dust, freeing up valuable space in our workshop.

Just a Little Joke.....

Two Irishmen were standing at the base of a flagpole, looking up. A blonde walks by and asked them what they were doing.

Paddy replied, 'We're supposed to be finding the height of this flagpole, but we don't have a ladder.'

The blonde took out an adjustable spanner from her bag, loosened a few bolts and laid the flagpole down. She got a tape measure out of her pocket, took a few measurements, and announced that it was 18 feet 6 inches. Then, she walked off.

Mick said to Paddy, 'Isn't that just like a blonde!'



We need the height, and she gives us the bloody length.





The Great Escape: One Man's Journey from Ashtonfield to Boolaroo.....

Day One: The Spark

It all started innocently enough. My wife casually mentioned, "The local real estate mob are offering free online house evaluations. No obligation. No hassle." Naturally, I was suspicious. "Free" and "no hassle" in the same sentence? That's like saying non-alcoholic wine tastes good. But curiosity got the better of me and like the cat, I was doomed.

The result? A surprisingly generous valuation. Suddenly, the idea of moving closer to the grandkids didn't seem so far-fetched. After all, we'd spent four years chauffeuring them to every activity known to humankind: swimming, football, jazz ballet, aerial acrobatics, cheerleading, and something called "contortion" or contorture as my grandson calls it.

Day Two: The Wedge Appears

The next day, the agent called. Not to hassle, of course, just to "touch base." I could see the thin end of the wedge poking through the toe cap of his RM Williams riding boots. He popped over, admired our house, and gave us a new valuation that was even better than the online one. Suddenly, moving didn't sound so crazy. Just mildly unhinged.

Day Three: Things Escalate

Agent rings again. He's got a family about to sign on a dud house, and ours ticks all their boxes. "Can I bring them around?" he asks. They arrive, fall in love with the place, and I start wondering if I should charge admission.

Day Four: Sold!

Agent calls again, this time with a firm offer. We accept. Boom. We're on a 42-day countdown to vacate the premises. Panic sets in. I start eyeing the shed and whispering apologies to my tools.

Days Five to Twenty-Eight: Chaos, Camping & Contortion

Packing begins. We juggle inspections, house hunting, and pool compliance checks. Apparently, our pool gate posts failed the "330 Newton Force" test, which is roughly the force of a toddler's tantrum. I suspect someone was pulling something with their non-dominant hand, and it wasn't the gate.

We find a new house, then head off camping with the family for 10 days. Because nothing says "relaxation" like sleeping in a tent while your house is being sold. Meanwhile, the shed gets packed last. Forty years of tools, gadgets, and "might-come-in-handies" are loaded into a hire truck and sent off to

Life is...



...moving

my son's place in Murrumbateman. I shed a tear. Possibly two.

Days Twenty-Nine to Forty: Surprise Moves

Removalists were booked for Day 32. On Day 31, they rang at lunchtime and said, "Mind if we swing by early?" My wife, ever the planner, agreed. They packed everything except our bed and vanished into the night. Thankfully, they did return the next day to collect our bed and to complete the move.

Days Forty-Two to Forty-Five: Squatters & Sausages

Our house sale settled on time. Our purchase? Not so much. Thanks to the vendor's legal team, we were technically homeless. With our licence expired, we were squatting, albeit politely.

Eventually, we settled. And on Day 47, I returned to the Shed with a triumphant sausage sizzle at Bunnings.

Epilogue: Shed, Sweet Shed

Moving house is right up there with root canals and assembling flat-pack furniture. It messes with your routine, your sanity, and your back. But we're recovering. We're closer to the grandkids, the kettle's on, and I've got plans for a new shed slab, some wardrobe inserts, and a garden that won't plant itself.

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



Christmas Schedule.....

As Christmas fast approaches, things are getting busy around the Shed! Our members are hard at work finishing up the current list of projects and continuing the ongoing task of reorganising our workspace to make Shed operations run even more efficiently.

Our annual Shed Christmas Party will be held on Monday, 15 December, at the East Maitland Bowling Club. Make sure you put your name on the attendance list and if you're not on the list, you won't be catered for. Yes, that includes you! Please don't assume we already know you're coming.

The Shed will close for the Christmas break at the end of the day on Friday, 19 December 2025, and will reopen at 8:00am on Monday, 5 January 2026.



We'd like to wish all our members and their families a very merry Christmas and a happy, safe New Year.

A Christmas Message from 'Sam the Shedder'.....

G'day Shedders! Well, here we are again, the smell of sawdust mixing with fruitcake and the hum of sanders giving way to the sound of Christmas carols. It's been another busy, bustling, and downright brilliant year at the Maitland Community Men's Shed!

Looking back, I'm amazed at what we've achieved together. The new chisel mortiser has been getting a real workout as members turned out everything from tables and chairs to those sturdy custom dog beds that had tails wagging all over town. The garage sale was a ripper success too, a great way to clear the benches, raise some funds, and make room for more projects (because, let's face it, a Shed is never really "tidy").

We've also been keeping our minds sharp with the IT sessions, especially now with the 75" TV monitor in the computer room, perfect for learning new tricks and exploring this AI stuff everyone's talking about. And let's not forget the Monday morning walking group, stretching our legs and swapping a few tall tales before the kettle boils.

Our members continue to lend a hand to the community, from repairs and restorations to creative projects that make Maitland just that little bit brighter. Every nail hammered, every laugh shared, and every cuppa poured adds up to what makes this

Shed so special.

So, as the year winds down, I want to wish every Shedder and their families a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year. Take some time to relax, recharge, and maybe dream up a few new projects for 2026, because you can bet there'll be plenty to keep us busy when the doors swing open again!

Stay safe, stay cheerful, and as always... keep on sheddin'!

Cheers,
Sam the Shedder



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





Keeping Our Solar Panels Shining.....

Once again this year, we've arranged for our shed's solar panels to be professionally cleaned which is an important job that helps keep our solar system working at its best. A local company carries out the cleaning, removing the build-up of dust, grime, and tree litter that collects over the winter months. They also take the time to blow away debris from the roof, ensuring everything is clear and tidy.

Clean solar panels aren't just nice to look at, they make a big difference to performance. Dirt and leaves can block sunlight from reaching the panels,

reducing their ability to generate power efficiently. Regular cleaning helps boost solar output, which in turn helps us keep our electricity costs down.

The last clean was done around the same time last year, and it's proven to be well worth the effort. By keeping our panels sparkling and efficient, we're making the most of the sun's energy and supporting a more sustainable, cost-effective shed.

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





BBQ News.....



Bunnings Barbecue Bonanza.....

After a recent appeal for help with our Bunnings Barbecue we have had great support from members and our helpers' roster has been full.

For our November BBQ Tom, our new stand-in BBQ Supremo, had an urgent hospital appointment so, Graham Masters made a guest return, at short notice, to lead the BBQ team. Tom will be in hospital for a few days and will then have some recuperation time. We wish Tom a speedy recovery and hope to see him back at the Shed soon.

Our November BBQ was very busy and very successful. It was a record turnover for us, and I think Bunnings had a bumper day too on the back of Black Friday Sales.

The scariest moment occurred when a mum with a trolley load of hardware and a strapped in baby turned away to help sauce sausage sandwiches for her two toddlers. Her trolley rolled with gathering speed towards the carpark and the path of cars. Two shed members showed a superhero turn of speed, launched themselves around the bench and grabbed the trolley. Adrenaline surged, smiles of relief all around, a grateful mum who agreed that she would probably need a drink after the scare, and a baby amused at the fuss and excited about this new way of driving Bunnings trolleys.

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

Membership Drive.....

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

Birthdays This Month.....

Darrin Brennan, Matthew Gough, Garry Handsaker, Marcus Humby, Frank Kristen, John Lindsay, Janice Masters, Tom Norton and Mick Oakes





Is Your Phone Still on 3G? Here's What You Need to Know.....

As technology moves ahead, Australia's mobile networks are also evolving and that means some older phones will soon stop working altogether. If you're still using a handset that runs only on the 3G network, it's time to check whether you need to upgrade.

What's Happening To 3G?

Australia's major mobile providers like Telstra, Optus, and Vodafone, are all in the process of shutting down their 3G networks.

This means any phone that can only use 3G will no longer be able to make or receive calls, send texts, or access mobile data once these networks are turned off.

What About Calling 000?

One of the most important concerns is being able to call 000 in an emergency. Many people assume any mobile can still call 000 even without a SIM card or service, but that's not always true for 3G-only phones. Once the 3G network shuts down, those older devices will not be able to make emergency calls - not even to 000. If you or someone you know relies on an older phone, this could be a serious safety issue.



How Do You Know If Your Phone Is Affected?

Here are a few quick checks:

- If your phone only shows "3G" or "H" near the signal bar, it may be 3G-only.
- If your phone is more than 10 years old, there's a good chance it's affected.
- If your phone cannot connect to 4G or 5G, it will stop working once 3G is gone.
- If you're unsure, visit your service provider or local mobile shop and they can check your



phone's model and tell you if it's compatible with the newer networks.

What Should You Do?

Upgrade to a 4G or 5G phone. Most modern phones already support these networks and will continue to work after the 3G shutdown.

Make sure "VoLTE" (Voice over LTE) is turned on in your phone's settings. This allows calls to go through on the 4G network.

Check older devices such as alarms, medical pendants, and vehicle tracking systems, as some of these also rely on 3G.

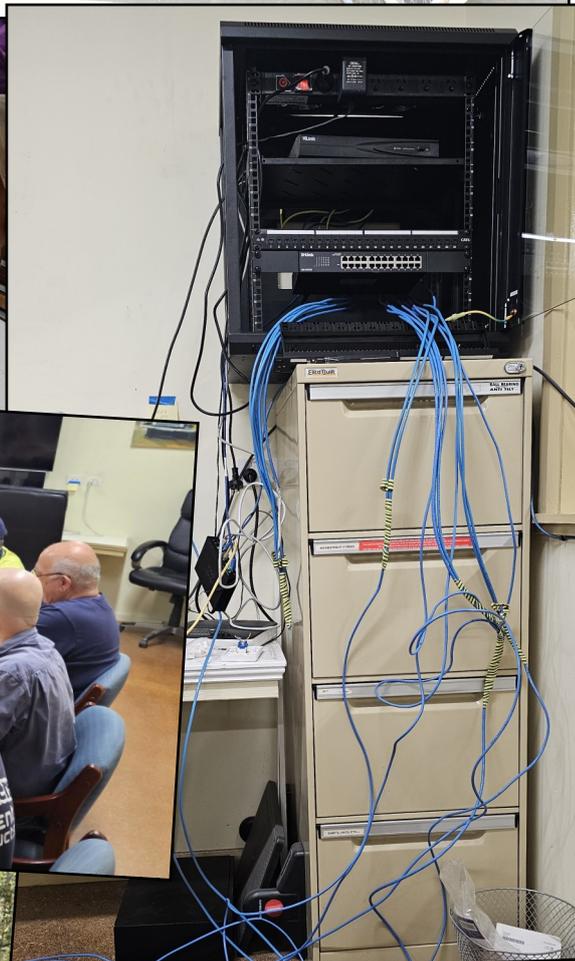
If cost is an issue, talk to your provider as many offers affordable upgrade options, and community programs or recycling schemes can also help replace older phones. Don't wait until it's too late

Even if your 3G phone still works today, it won't for much longer. Taking a few minutes now to check your device could save you from being caught without a working phone and especially in an emergency.

For members of the Maitland Community Men's Shed, if you're unsure about your phone or need a hand checking, feel free to bring it in. There's bound to be someone upstairs who can help you look it up and make sure you stay connected and safe.

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

December Picture Gallery.....



Get Festive This Christmas.....

Have yourself a merry little Christmas. Let your heart be light. The Levee Shared Zone will be full of cheer when A Merry Little Christmas takes place on Saturday 13 December from 10am to 2pm.

A Merry Little Christmas is a village fair with a select range of market stalls from the local region. You'll also find Santa as well as produce, beverages, decorations and gift stalls.

Bring the whole family for a great day at The Levee. Take the chance to get all your Christmas shopping done or visit one your favourite cafes or bars.

Stay up to date by following us on Facebook and Instagram.

Meet Santa at The Levee!

Capture the magic of Christmas 2025 with a festive photo alongside Santa in his cosy living room at The Riverlink. Just look for the giant red present with the green bow and that's where you'll find him spreading Christmas cheer!

Santa will be at The Levee from Thursday the 27th of November to Saturday the 20th of December. Sessions times are Thursdays 3pm to 7.30pm and Fridays and Saturdays 9am to 1.30pm.

When you arrive during session times, simply scan the QR code to join the digital queue. You'll receive a text message when it's nearly your turn, and your

Pet Friendly Santa Photo Session At The Levee.....

Bring your furry friend along to meet Santa and grab your family Christmas photo at The Riverlink with the special pet friendly session on Tuesday 16 December from 3pm - 7.30pm.

To make sure the pet friendly sessions take place safely, there is a booking system to limit the number of furry friends at The Riverlink, at any one time. Bookings of two groups will occur every ten minutes.

For a pleasant day out with your furry best friend, please remain diligent with pets in public places and responsibilities, such as, be on a leash or held by the pet's owner and remove and dispose of faeces.

For more information on dogs in public places visit: <https://www.petregistry.org.nsw.gov.au/owners/get-a-pet/legal-responsibilities-for-dog-owners>

On the day of your booking, arrive at The Riverlink building five minutes before your session time and



Where: The Levee, 396 High Street Maitland
More Info: Ph 02 4931 2800
Email: welcome@thelevee.com.au
Free Entry



photos will be emailed to you within three business days.

This year we are introducing two sessions that will require bookings - a pet friendly session on Tuesday the 16 of December from 3pm - 7.30pm and our final session on Saturday the 20th of December from 9am - 1.30pm. For just \$15, this premium service means no long waits which often occur with our digital queue system.

Come along, meet Santa, and make some magical memories at The Levee this Christmas!

approach one of the helper elves, who will check your details ready for your session with Santa.

Please note there are strictly no pets at any sessions other than the dedicated pet friendly session. All proceeds from the pet friendly session will be donated to Hunter Wildlife Rescue.

Where: The Riverlink, The Levee Central Maitland
More Info: Ph 02 4931 2800
Email: santa@thelevee.com.au
From \$15.00





What's happening?.....

From 1 November 2025, the federal government has expanded the scheme for bulkbilling in general practice. Previously, doctors received extra incentives only when they bulk-billed children under 16 or concession-card holders.

From This Date:

The extra incentive payments will apply when a GP bulkbill any Medicare-eligible patient (not just children or concession card holders).

A new program called the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program (BBPIP) has also been introduced. If a medical practice signs up and bulkbills all its eligible patients for eligible services, it receives an additional incentive payment - about 12.5 % on eligible Medicare payments, shared between the practice and the GPs.

The aim is to make seeing your GP easier (with fewer or no gap fees) by encouraging more clinics to adopt full bulk-billing models.

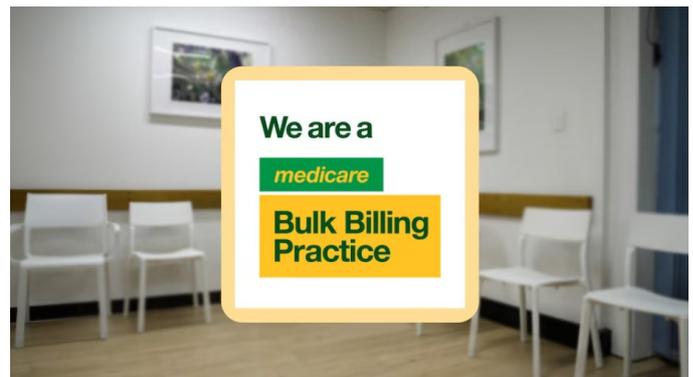
What Does This Mean For You?

If your local doctor or practice signs up to participate, you may no longer need to pay an out-of-pocket gap fee for a standard consultation that is covered by Medicare. That means less money from your pocket when you go to the doctor.

However, not all services are covered by this change. Some procedures, tests, or specialist services may still carry a cost, so you should still check when you make the appointment.

Because the scheme is voluntary, not every clinic will necessarily change over immediately. A practice may stay with "mixed billing" (some bulkbilling, some paying patients) for now.

For us at the Men's Shed, if you're visiting your GP for routine checks, it's a good time to ask: "Are you



registered for the bulk billing incentive scheme?" or "Do you bulkbill all Medicare-eligible patients?" If yes, you may avoid paying a gap fee.

Even though the changes start on the 1st November, full rollout will take time. The government expects it may take a few years before the majority of clinics fully adopt the model.

What To Keep In Mind / Practical Tips

When booking your next GP appointment, ask whether the clinic is participating in the new bulk-billing incentive program, and specifically whether the service you need is an eligible one under that scheme.

Always carry your Medicare card and check what parts of the consultation are being bulk billed. Even under the scheme, some add-on or specialist services may incur costs.

If you have a regular GP you trust, ask them whether they plan to sign up for the scheme. If they do not, you might look around for another local practice that does, especially if you have a limited income or fixed budget.

Remember: this is a positive change for access, but it's not guaranteed for every doctor or every type of service, so vigilance still pays.

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





The Hunter River - The Lifeblood of Maitland.....



The Hunter River winds its way through Maitland like an old friend that's always there, quietly shaping our city and our lives. For most of us, it's something we pass by almost daily without giving much thought. Yet, this broad, slow-moving river has been central to Maitland's story from the very beginning.

Before European settlement, the Wonnarua people lived along the river's banks, relying on it for food, travel, and ceremony. They understood its rhythms and moods far better than we do today. When settlers arrived in the early 1800s, they too quickly saw the value of the river. It became the main high-way linking the fertile Hunter Valley to Newcastle and the sea beyond.

In those early days, before rail and reliable roads, the Hunter was the region's lifeline. Small steamers, barges, and sailboats carried timber, coal, grain, and produce downriver to the port, while returning upstream with supplies, tools, and people. Goods from the farms and growing townships along the riverbanks made their way to Sydney and beyond. The river quite literally put Maitland on the map.

But the Hunter has also shown its power. The great floods of 1893, 1949, and 1955 reshaped the landscape and left lasting memories for those who lived through them. Even now, with levees and flood mitigation systems in place, the river reminds us occasionally who's really in charge.

These days, the Hunter's role has changed. Barges and paddle steamers have been replaced by fishing lines, rowing boats, and riverside walks. Families enjoy picnics at the Levee, and birdwatchers and kayakers appreciate its quieter stretches. Yet its importance hasn't faded yet it still nourishes local farmland, supports wildlife, and gives Maitland much of its natural charm.

It's easy to take the Hunter River for granted and to cross its bridges or stroll its banks without really noticing. But next time you're near it, take a moment to reflect on how deeply this river runs through Maitland's history and identity. It's been a source of life, challenge, and connection for generations and it continues to quietly shape the city we call home.

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

