



Maitland Matters

Jenny Aitchison MP

A news update from Jenny Aitchison MP, Member for Maitland - Christmas 2022

NEW SCHOOL FOR GILLIESTON

After 8 years, we have a commitment for a new 21st century public school at Gillieston Heights. Congratulations to all the parents, community and others who have worked with me to get this fantastic win!

After petitions, speeches in Parliament, media stories a public meeting and many submissions to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Schools Infrastructure, we got an announcement in June that \$1.73 million had been committed in the budget for the redevelopment of Gillieston Public School.

We wanted an airtight commitment that the school would indeed be fully upgraded, and I am so pleased to announce that in the recently released "School Infrastructure NSW 2022-23 Delivery Strategy", Gillieston Public School is one of just 23 major capital works projects across the state, with a funding estimate of between \$25M and \$75M.

While I am pleased we have finally got the redevelopment of Gillieston Public School (and the completion of redevelopments at Bolwarra, Rutherford Technology High School, Rutherford Public and Ashtonfield, we know that there is more to do.

The Government has admitted they are one primary school and half a high school short for our growing populations and areas such as Thornton and Chisholm, and Lochinvar need urgent investment in new permanent school infrastructure which I will continue to fight for.



Parents of Gillieston Public School and Ms Jenny Aitchison MP

Happy Christmas!

As another year draws to a close and many of us are reflecting on the past 12 months, I want to say thank you to everyone in our community who has stepped up this year.

The July 2022 floods caused significant damage to properties, isolated communities and caused chaos on our local roads.

Many first responders and volunteer organisations came from all across the state and gave so tirelessly to our local community, and we all THANK YOU!

So many wonderful individuals and local organisations also went above and beyond, and while there are too many to list here, I was pleased that many were acknowledged at the recent Maitland Flood Civic Reception. I was pleased to award the 2022 Community Hero Awards to 200 of our local heroes.

Thank you all for the honour of being your voice in the NSW Parliament and for supporting me in my fight to ensure everyone in Maitland gets their fair share. In this newsletter you can read about some of the many achievements we have all made for our community by working together.

I wish you and your loved ones a happy and safe holiday season. Please continue to reach out to me if you have any issues.

Jenny

MAITLAND ELECTORATE ACHIEVEMENTS

In Parliament recently I spoke of just some of the major achievements we have made since I was elected as the Member for Maitland in 2015. Some are still to be completed, and a couple were started before I got here, but I am proud of all of them. Thanks to my Federal and Local Government colleagues for their support on many of these, and thanks to the community for your support!



Speaking up to ensure our electorate is represented in Macquarie Street.

- ✓ Fully Public New Maitland Hospital
- ✓ Updated Flood Plan
- ✓ New community/allied health building at Maitland Hospital
- ✓ \$8m Raymond Terrace Road upgrades, Millers Forest to Thornton
- ✓ Upgrades at Gillieston, Ashtonfield, Rutherford and Bolwarra Public Schools
- ✓ Traffic lights at the Maitland Station Railway Overpass
- ✓ Metford Road Upgrade
- ✓ Victoria Street Station Upgrade
- ✓ Testers Hollow Road Raising
- ✓ 103 Community Building Partnership Grants totalling \$2.5 million
- ✓ Repairs to Walka Waterworks
- ✓ Traffic lights at the Maitland Station Railway Overpass
- ✓ Repairs to Oakhampton Road
- ✓ 103 Community Building Partnership Grants totalling \$2.5 million
- ✓ Repairs to Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme (levee banks)
- ✓ 71 Local Sport Grants totalling \$350,000
- ✓ New Rutherford Ambulance Station and new Pod (staff & vehicle)
- ✓ Stronger Country Communities - Round one to four totalling \$5,545,198
- ✓ Walka Walking Trail from Morpeth
- ✓ Fixing Country Roads - Total Road Improvement \$1.2 million
- ✓ Maitland Police Station Upgrade
- ✓ Boating Now Program - \$351,780 - upgrade Queens Wharf Morpeth
- ✓ MRI Licence for Maitland Hospital
- ✓ Resources for Regions - totalling \$2,499,555
- ✓ Upgrades to Maitland Showground
- ✓ Regional Tourism Activation Fund - \$5,481,670
- ✓ New England Highway Duplication at Rutherford
- ✓ Regional Sports Infrastructure Fund - \$5,216,269
- ✓ New \$2.4 million Rutherford Zone Fire Station

Do you need a JP or want to become one?

My office can assist you with Justice of the Peace (JP) services Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10am - 12 noon. If you have large volumes of documents, please make an appointment within the above time slots.

JPs provide a valuable and important service. If you want to become a Justice of the Peace, you can scan the QR code (right) or visit www.service.nsw.gov.au.



HEALTH EMERGENCY

Health care in NSW is in a state of crisis. We face a chronic shortage of health workers, with experienced workers cutting their work hours or leaving the system altogether because they aren't getting enough support.

We have fewer ambulance paramedics per person than every other state except WA, and the worst ambulance response times compared to every other state bar one.

People in NSW are now waiting longer than ever to get an ambulance, to be treated in an emergency department and for elective surgeries. In the last 3 months 76,000 patients left emergency without completing treatment, and one in 10 patients spent over 21 hours in 16 minutes in an emergency department waiting room.

Alarming, at Maitland Hospital almost 1 in 4 patients left emergency without completing treatment. These figures show the dire state of our health system.

HSU Members and NSW Nurses recently visited Parliament and shared stories of significant understaffing and the sacrifices and conditions they are enduring, including double shifts, cancelled leave, burnout and exhaustion!



It's not fair on our hardworking healthcare professionals to have to manage a system that is stretched to its limits.

Our brand new and shiny hospital cost half a billion dollars, but we don't have enough staff to open all the wards.

We need new rural and regional paramedics and safe staffing levels across our hospitals to ensure our health system can function properly.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS

We have an affordable housing crisis in Maitland and in fact, all across the state. It is the worst that I have ever seen. Rental vacancies are at an all time low and families are struggling to find a property to call home.

I know how important it is for renters to have certainty and dignity in the homes they make with their families.

Constituents have told countless stories of their struggles to obtain private rentals and social housing in Maitland.

I successfully advocated for new social housing apartments in East Maitland to replace old cottages which had fallen into disrepair. The \$6.14 million project consists of 18 new units, seven two-bedroom and 11 one-bedroom units. But this does very little to place over 700 applicants listed on the social housing waitlist.

The Government recently announced eight new core and cluster refuge units for Maitland, which has the highest domestic violence rates in NSW but they won't come online until 2024.

For the past decade under this Government people have been denied their basic human right for affordable, safe shelter. This must change!

For those looking to buy a first home, the NSW Liberals have forced a new land-tax policy through Parliament which will saddle buyers with a lifelong tax on the family home that will increase every year by up to 4%.

Instead of cooking up new taxes for first-home buyers, the NSW Liberal Government should be looking at ways to make housing more affordable for all residents, including public and affordable housing tenants, renters and first home buyers.



The completion of 18 new homes at East Maitland will provide permanent housing for more than 20 people in need.

RURAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS AFTER THE FLOODS

A number of rural property owners have found it difficult to access financial assistance through the NSW Government because they are unable to show that they derive a majority of their income from their small business.

I raised this issue as former Shadow Minister for Primary Industries and advocated strongly to ensure there was an alternative solution.

After going from one catastrophic event to another and diversifying their farms to survive, it's hard to show 50 percent on farm income. Finally my feedback and advocacy has been listened to and actioned.

The Rural Assistance Authority now has a Rural Landholders Grant (RLG) available which provides grants of up to \$25,000 for eligible landholders and oyster farmers in declared Local Government Areas (LGAs) like Maitland,



who have holdings of at least 10ha of rural land or a Class A aquaculture permit authorising at least 1ha; and receive at least \$20,000 in income from primary production per annum.

Applications for the March and July events are now open until 9 February 2023 (the deadline has been brought forward).

All activities and expenditure funded under this program must be complete, and all invoices to claim payment must be submitted to the RAA by 9 August 2023.

Once approved, eligible primary producers can access \$5,000 in assistance up-front, with a further \$20,000 in financial assistance available thereafter upon submission of valid tax invoices. Landholders are encouraged not to self-assess and to apply for the scheme so the RAA can determine eligibility.

For information on this and other flood assistance go to <https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/disaster-assistance/storm-and-flood-programs/RLG-feb-2022>

MAITLAND HOSPITAL'S MRI LICENCE - DELIVERED!

Congratulations to everyone involved in securing the new MRI machine licence at Maitland hospital which was announced in the recent Federal Budget.

Congratulations and thank you to Meryl Swanson MP, our Federal Member for Paterson for securing the licence and ensuring that everyone across the region can access and afford this life saving imaging.

Thanks also to Trevor Lynch and Gordon Gorton and the Maitland Health Committee for their advocacy and all the people who have written to Meryl and I over the last few years - we did it!

Without the support of our community it is much harder to achieve these wins!



Ms Jenny Aitchison MP, State Member for Maitland and Ms Meryl Swanson MP, Federal Member for Paterson.

REMEDIATION WORKS AT TRUEGAIN

At last! I have been fighting for the former Truegain site to be cleaned up and stopped from emitting toxic pollution since 2014!

Thank you to everyone in the community who continued to complain despite over a decade of failures from the Government and the EPA, particularly resident Ramona Cocco and Newcastle Herald Journalist Donna Page.

After years of inaction, it should never have taken this long (since 2016) for the Government to start remediating the site.

As a result of collective advocacy, the dirty deeds have been exposed, laws have changed, and the site will finally be remediated.



EPA Staff on-site inspecting the toxic dump.

EDUCATION CRISIS - TEACHER SHORTAGES

Sadly, over more than a decade the Liberals and Nationals have failed to invest in public education across the state. So many Teachers have approached me to tell me they are fed up, exhausted, and feel undervalued and undermined by staffing shortages.

There is no quick fix for the sector, but as a start we must see a restoration of respect for our remarkable educators. They deserve to be valued and given a seat at the table whenever there is a decision being made about the profession they understand so intimately.

We are facing a chronic shortage of 11,000 teachers over the next decade, while the number of temporary teachers working in our schools has almost doubled.

Teachers shortages mean students don't know if they will have the same teacher next week, many are missing out on vital lessons and classes are regularly cancelled.

NSW is falling behind in national international rankings on literacy, numeracy and science. Education is a powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty, for supporting children's development and for closing the gap in social inequality.

There are too many casual teachers, and not enough permanent ones, administrative loads must be reduced and we must keep mobile phones out of our classrooms. Our students' future is too important to not invest in our teachers and other education staff!

300 Years Service for Maitland JP's

Six Maitland Justices of the Peace (JP) who have each given 50 years of service to the community were honoured with certificates acknowledging their contribution recently.

I was so pleased that Frank Garment of East Maitland and Des Cross of Metford were able to be presented with their commemorative certificates by Attorney General the Hon Mark Speakman MP at Parliament house.

Kevin Allen, Bruce Agland, Neale Savertsen and Walter Scott also achieved this significant milestone however were unable to attend the event. I look forward to catching up with them soon.

Congratulations Frank, Des, Kevin, Bruce, Neale and Walter and thank you for your dedication and countless hours helping our community!



Attorney General, the Hon. Mark Sepakman SC MP, Mr Des Cross, Mr Frank Garment & Ms Jenny Aitchison MP

IPC TO DETERMINE MARTINS CREEK QUARRY

The Independent Planning Commission (IPC) has been holding hearings and taking submissions into the proposal on the Martins Creek Quarry. Many people are concerned about the impact of truck movements along the route through Maitland and I have met with a number of constituents and encouraged them to make submissions. I recently wrote to residents in Lorn and Bolwarra (those mainly impacted by the route) to tell them about the opportunities to have their say on the development.

After advocacy from myself and Councillor Loretta Baker in 2104-15, Maitland City Council was successful in getting a grant of \$1.2 million from the State Government to undertake road widening and repairs on Tocal Road to improve safety and reduce noise.

This funding came from the \$543 million Fixing Country Roads budget, which the NSW Government defunded by \$80 million in 2019. It is only through my advocacy as Shadow Minister for Regional Transport and Roads that the NSW

Government was shamed into returning the funds.

If the development is approved by the IPC, Maitland (and those areas to the north of us) must get our fair share of the Fixing Country Roads budget and I will work hard to achieve this. I know this is also an issue for Thornton and Woodberry residents.

I want to thank the Martins Creek Quarry Action Group, who briefed me extensively, and advised me of a number of other quarries in southern NSW where surrounding communities have had significant infrastructure built to ensure the liveability and safety of their communities are maintained.

At the time of writing there had been 1,361 public submissions on the project, of which 838 were objections, 517 were support and 6 were neutral. To read the submissions or for more information on the project go to: <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2022/09/martins-creek-quarry>.

NEW BOUNDARY CHANGES

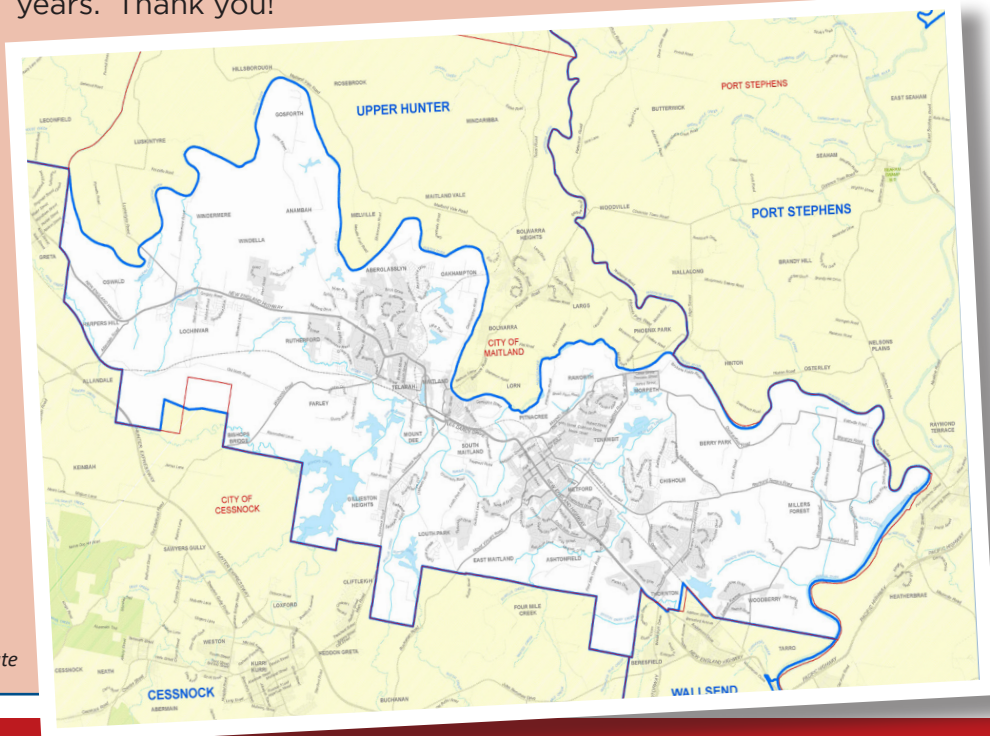
To ensure the number of electors within each district remains approximately the same over time, the *Constitution Act 1902* requires that electoral district boundaries are adjusted.

This process is called a redistribution, and takes place after every second State general election in NSW.

Sadly due to the significant growth of Maitland, from the next election, I will no longer be the representative for constituents living in Bolwarra, Bolwarra Heights, Largs, Lorn, Phoenix Park, Maitland Vale, Melville, Mindaribba, Lambs Valley, Luskintyre, Hillsborough, Rosebrook, and Tocal.

After the 25 March 2023 State Election, these people will be represented by the Member for Upper Hunter.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in the NSW Parliament. It has been an absolute honour, and I have made many friends in the area over the last nearly 8 years. Thank you!



2021 Redistribution of Maitland Electorate

A FAIRER GO FOR THE TAXI INDUSTRY

It is now seven years since the NSW Government legalised rideshare and deregulated booked point to point transport services, creating a massive drop in value of taxi plates, leaving those who purchased or borrowed against what were once secure government back investments with heavy financial losses.

Taxi owners have waited too many years for the NSW Government to put an acceptable compensation package on the table, and the Government still has no plan for ensuring the retention of taxi services in rural, regional and remote areas, or ensuring the availability of wheelchair accessible taxis.

As Shadow Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, I have spent many hours advocating on

behalf of taxi plate owners with the Government, and listening to taxi owners, the NSW Taxi Council and the Taxi Owners Small Business Association of New South Wales (TOSBA) about what needs to happen to ensure continuity of services in the regions and for people with mobility issues, and that taxi plate owners received the best deal.

It was only through the advocacy of NSW Labor that taxi operators ended up with the final package of \$905 million, which provided a significant increase for regional taxi plate holders, as well as removing the caps on the number of plates that can receive compensation. Labor has fought hard to ensure the payments are treated as a capital event to ensure income tax is not inadvertently applied (as has happened in the past).



Taxi Licence Owners Ashley & Sharla Clark-Smith from Ballina with CEO of Taxis NSW - Martin Rodgers, Jenny Aitchison MP & Liesl Tesch MP.

MOBILE OFFICES

As your local Member, I work to make sure your voice is heard in the NSW Parliament. To ensure everyone has an opportunity to raise their concerns with me directly I regularly take my office to the suburbs of Maitland.

I am here to assist you with any queries you may have relating to the State Government or its departments. Some of the most common matters people contact me about include Housing, Service NSW, Police, Transport, Education, Fair Trading and Health.

SAVE THE DATES and keep an eye out in your letterboxes for further information on the following mobile offices;

Saturday 17 December 2022 - Thornton

Saturday 14 January 2023 - Green Hills

Sunday 18 December 2022 - Maitland Markets

Monday 16 January 2023 - Louth Park

Monday 9 January 2023 - Lochinvar

Wednesday 18 January 2023 - Woodberry

Wednesday 11 January 2023 - Farley

Thursday 19 January 2023 - Millers Forest

Thursday 12 January 2023 - Rutherford

Saturday 21 January 2023 - Morpeth

MAITLAND FLOOD RESPONSE

I am grateful to emergency service volunteers and staff, Maitland City Council staff and the various State Government agencies and members of community who all worked so hard together to ensure that our community has been safe through a very wet period over the last two years.

Consecutive significant weather events have taken a toll on the Levee Banks in and around Maitland, notably at Pitnacree, Horseshoe Bend and Cultivation Road at South Maitland.

When the Premier visited the Emergency Operations Centre during the floods he was provided a briefing from emergency personnel, and learnt of the \$50 million backlog of flood works required from the March 2021 event - 15 months previously.

But it's not just the the \$50 million from the March event; there was significant damage from the November 2021 floods, which was not recognised by the Government which did not even have an up-to-date flood plan a that time. We did get funding announced in the

budget after the March event, however then we had the July event.

Repairs have been completed at the Maitland Ring levee, at Maitland Showground and works are continuing at Maitland levee, at Horseshoe Bend and at Pitnacree levee, but there is still more to do to ensure the levee banks provide protection for our people, property and infrastructure.

I urge the NSW Government to escalate these events. Whilst wet weather slows it down, the delayed responses by the Ministers have not helped.



Jenny Aitchison MP

Member for Maitland
Shadow Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

“I’m always here to help you”

If I can help with any State Government matters please call my office on 4933 1617 or send an email to maitland@parliament.nsw.gov.au

