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WHISPER

September 2025

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Whisper Trivia

1. In 2015, which country started thanking people via text message when their donated blood was used?
2. What color are the arches at the McDonald's in Sedona, Arizona?
3. Which planet is closest to the sun?
4. How many seasons of Game of Thrones aired?
5. What is the highest-grossing movie of all time?
6. What is Goofy's son's name?
7. Which fruit did many people in the Western world think was poisonous until 1820?
8. What color is a giraffe's tongue?
9. In The Big Bang Theory, Penny is a waitress at which restaurant?
10. Which classical composer was deaf?



- Answers:
1. Sweden
 2. Turquoise
 3. Mercury
 4. Eight
 5. Avatar
 6. Max
 7. Tomatoes
 8. Black, blue or purple
 9. The Cheesecake Factory
 10. Ludwig van Beethoven

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Happy to hear from you

If you know someone in your community that has an interesting story to tell, who's doing some interesting things - we'd love to hear about it. Chances are if you think it's interesting - others will too - and we're always open to ideas for stories, or features here.

Earle's Column

continued on page 8



Spring is here, the grass is 'ris', I wonder where the birdies is? The bird is on the wing, No, the wing is on the bird!

Perhaps I should dispense with this seasonal flippancy, but it is nice to have passed through a reasonably cold and wet winter to welcome the warmth and growth of Spring. Listening to the long term weather forecaster on ABC Radio this morning, he argued that the average temperatures across winter in the Upper Hunter were pretty much in line with the long term averages.

AN APOLOGY

Recently, it was drawn to my attention that I have been remiss in not communicating about the outcome of a meeting of the Aberdeen Investment Committee.

My apologies for not doing so. The A.I.C. has been established to oversee the use of funds from the Voluntary Planning Agreement, (V.P.A.), entered into by Upper Hunter Shire Council and MACH Energy, the operators of the Mount Pleasant Coal Mine. That VPA forms part of the conditions of consent for the operation of the mine. The AIC consists of representatives of MACH Energy, Upper Hunter Shire Council and a member of the Aberdeen Community Advisory Committee. It has only met once, so far in 2025, and at that meeting the following projects were funded.

- The replacement of the fence between the McKinnon Oval and the Aberdeen Golf Course. The estimated cost for that was \$140,000.
- Funding learn-to-swim lessons for students at Aberdeen Public School in Term 4 at a cost of \$26,000.
- Funding for the survey and design work to rectify the dreadful situation in the northern extremity of Kyuga Street. I think that the funds allocated for this were in the range of \$40,000 to \$50,000. The cost to actually rectify the issues in Kyuga Street will be many times greater than the amount from the VPA. By undertaking this survey and design work it means that UHSC will be 'shovel-ready' if a grant becomes available to commence the necessary works. I am reliably informed that the parlous condition of the street has been an issue for nearly 50 years!

FROM A 'BRICKBAT' TO A BOUQUET!

The Aberdeen Campdraft, which is scheduled for October, was in danger of being cancelled because of damage and debris at St Andrew's Reserve from the recent flooding event. Council was apparently arguing that it did not have the resources to complete the clean-up and repairs needed before the event. In response to this disappointing announcement, I understand a group of volunteers went to St Andrew's Reserve to undertake the necessary work in preparation for the Campdraft. The importance of these events to our township should not be underestimated. Well done to those people who have served their community so well!

A COUPLE OF QUICK UPDATES

The proposal to have a commemoration event for the centenary of the 1926 Aberdeen

Missed the Whisper?

If you live in Aberdeen you should receive a copy of the Whisper but unfortunately, for whatever reason it may not get to your Letterbox. If it does happen you can collect a copy from the Aberdeen Post Office. A digital copy can also be found on the Hunter Valley Printing Website. Thank you for your understanding.



the aberdeen
WHISPER



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UPPER HUNTER BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM PROPOSAL

Community Information Session

Wednesday, 17 September 2025
6.00pm to 7.30pm

Aberdeen Public School Hall, Segenhoe St, Aberdeen

Come along to our Community Information Session to learn more about our proposal for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in Aberdeen.

The evening will include:

- Presentation from the development team
- Opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback
- Light refreshments

Please register to attend:

<https://forms.office.com/r/bw16RDQfb1> or
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State Matters with Dave Layzell MP

DISASTER ASSISTANCE UPDATE

SUPPORT is now available for three local government areas in the Upper Hunter Electorate following the recent severe weather from the end of July onwards. Disaster assistance has been extended to residents, businesses and primary producers in the Dungog, Singleton and Upper Hunter council areas.

Support includes grants for low income, uninsured residents to replace lost essential household items to maintain basic standard of living and to undertake essential structural repairs to homes damaged by the disaster event.

Concessional loans up to \$130,000 and transport subsidies up to \$15,000 are available for primary producers and small businesses. The NSW Government does advise that conditions apply in relation to the support measures.

Landholders impacted by the recent storms can access a wide range of support, services and expert advice from Local Land Services to help them recover with more information available at: www.ils.nsw.gov.au/floods/flood-recovery-resources

RENEWABLES REPORT RELEASED

The NSW Nationals have reignited calls for a pause and stocktake on renewables projects across the state, after the inquiry examining the regional impact of renewable energy zones (REZ) released its first report.

The Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW has tabled the report entitled Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and



industries in New South Wales – First report. NSW Nationals are pleased to see the inquiry essentially supports what we have been saying about the cumulative impact for the past 12-months, and that a proper stocktake be carried out before the state can find a way forward.

That should include a national rating system to ensure only projects that are fit for purpose reach the assessment stage. To view the report: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/reports/pages/reports.aspx

APPLY NOW!

Community groups across the Upper Hunter Electorate are being encouraged to make application for the Yancoal Australia 2026 Community Support Program.

Financial assistance is available for local groups working in the areas of health, community, environment, arts, culture, education and training with applications to close on 26 September.

Upper Hunter community groups apply at: www.yancoal.com.au/our-sites/ashton

Hunter Valley community groups can visit: www.yancoal.com.au/our-sites/mount-thorley-warkworth/

And, community groups in Gloucester, Stroud and district with projects or ideas that make a positive difference to the local community: <https://www.yancoal.com.au/our-sites/stratford/>

REZ OFFSETS

Landowners in the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) project area, which includes the Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook council areas, are being asked to consider their role in delivering biodiversity offsets.

The NSW Government has introduced a new way for major projects to meet biodiversity offset obligations through entering into a 'strategic offset delivery agreement' with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

What this mean for landowners is that project offsets are now intended to be delivered under a strategic delivery offset agreement, with delivery managed by DCCEEW's Planning, Offsets and Threatened Species and Ecosystems team.

If you are a landowner in the REZ project area and would like to be considered for future offset opportunities, email: supplyfund@environment.nsw.gov.au.

To find latest updates, fact sheets and more, visit: energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne

Supplied.

Contact:

upperhunter@parliament.nsw.gov.au;
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A big thank you to the Warrior Disability Service staff, parents and participants for delivering your Whisper. The service offers people with disabilities choices through group activities, one-to-one support, and in-home support. NDIS registered. Sally Pereira is the Director of Participant Services. The office is situated at Shop 12 Brook Street Plaza, Muswellbrook, 0432 680 936.

Street Sweeping Program

Council's annual street sweeping program will run across the Shire this September, with crews scheduled in Scone, Cassilis, Merriwa, Aberdeen and Murrurundi. The program removes leaves, dirt and debris from kerbs and gutters, helping keep streets clean and stormwater drains clear. All work is weather permitting, and residents are asked to keep kerbsides free of vehicles, trailers and other obstructions.

In Scone, sweeping begins east of Kelly Street on 1 September, continues on 4 September, and moves to the north-west on 5 September. Crews will sweep west of Kelly Street on 8 and 9 September, with Satur Road and nearby streets scheduled for 12 September.

Cassilis will be completed in one day on 3 September. Sweeping in Merriwa also starts that day, with remaining streets finished on 10 September. Aberdeen is set for 15 and 18 September, while Murrurundi (via Blandford) is scheduled for 17 and 19 September.

A catch-up week from 22 to 26 September will allow crews to return to any missed streets or areas with heavy debris. Council thanked residents for their cooperation, noting that clear kerbsides help crews finish the job quickly and thoroughly.

Supplied.

Lions Club

DONATIONS

The Lions Club of Aberdeen & Scone have had a busy past 12 months with donations, for the Lions year July 2024 to June 2025, the club has donated to schools, preschools, junior sport, aged care, hay donations to Queensland and the mid North Coast for flood relief, many foundations including childhood cancer, diabetes foundation, lions childhood mobility foundation and many more as per donations sheet.



pictured from L to R: Sue Lewis, Jeanie Sansom, Gia Scoles, Rob Herps, Bob Dixon, Bruce Gardiner, Geoff Kilmurray, Margaret Hood, Paul Quirk, Carolyn Carter

LEHP VISION SCREENING FOR CHILDREN

The Aberdeen & Scones Lions have been busy carrying out the Lions Eye Health Program (LEHP) at Muswellbrook Public School, a total of 283 pupils were screened over 2 days with 39 pupils being referred to

an optometrist for further examination, overall a good result to detect these problems, many thanks to Maitland Lions, Glouchester Lions, Singleton Lions, Singleston Lioness, Cessnock Wine Country Lions and ABerdeen & Scone Lions. Thank you to Muswellbrook Public School for your assistance and hospitality over the 2 days.

LION'S BIGGEST BBQ EVENT

The Lion's biggest BBQ event is on the 20th September at Valley Fair Aberdeen in aid of (Australian Lions Childhood Cancer Research Foundation) ALCCRF. All money raised on the day goes to aid the fight against kid's cancer. On the day there will be a coin line, kids giveaways, so come along with your spare change and put on the line or in the donation bucket. There will be a BBQ and drinks for sale on the day. Please come along and support this day, these kids will need our help.

Supplied.

JULY	LEO Assistance LIONS Eye Health Program (LEHP)	\$250 \$250
AUGUST	LIONS Prostate Cancer Scone Junior League Aberdeen Junior League	\$250 \$500 \$500
SEPTEMBER	WESTPAC Helicopter Aberdeen Public School (Presentation Day) Scone Preschool School	\$3000 \$300 \$250
OCTOBER	Young Endeavour LIONS Biggest BBQ (ALCCRF) LIONS Coin Lion (ALCCRF)	\$1000 \$500 \$500
NOVEMBER	ALCCRF fundraised by Aberdeen Public School Scone Neighbourhood Centre XMAS Cakes St Mary's Scone (Presentation Day) LIONS Diabetes Alert Dogs (LAPTHEMAP) Scone Grammar School Cerebral Palsy Alliance	\$173 \$360 \$250 \$500 \$250 \$3000

UHSC Council Meeting Recap

Upper Hunter Shire Council met on Monday 25 August 2025 to consider a wide range of matters, from recognising long-serving staff to progressing key infrastructure and policy updates.

PAUL SMITH RECOGNISED FOR 20 YEARS' SERVICE

Senior Environmental Planner Paul Smith was acknowledged for two decades of dedicated service. Councillors praised his professionalism, highlighting his long record of providing expert advice on development and environmental matters, and presented him with a certificate of appreciation.

SCONE FLOODPLAIN RISK MANAGEMENT STUDY AND PLAN

Council adopted the Scone Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan following public consultation. The plan provides a clear framework for reducing flood risk and will enable Council to apply for funding to implement key mitigation measures.

LIVERPOOL RANGE WIND FARM – PLANNING AGREEMENT

Council endorsed entering into a planning agreement with Tilt Renewables for the Liverpool Range Wind Farm. The agreement will provide an indexed annual contribution of \$1,050 per megawatt installed, supporting community benefit programs, road maintenance and administration.

CODE OF MEETING PRACTICE

Council resolved to place its current Code of Meeting Practice on public exhibition. This is in line with NSW Government requirements, ahead of the release of a new Model Code under the state's Councillor Conduct Framework reforms.

RURAL HALLS REJUVENATION GRANTS

Council approved funding under the 2025/26 Rural Halls Rejuvenation Grants Program for:

- Timor Sports and Recreation Club – \$6,581.35 for replacement of fencing and installation of air conditioning.
- Abbotsford Park Trust (Wingen Community Hall) – \$4,750.00 for

replacement of guttering and downpipes.

This allocation exhausts the 2025/26 program funding.

FLYING-FOX IMPACTS

Councillors debated a notice of motion regarding the impact of flying-fox camps across the shire. While the animals are protected and play an important environmental role, Council resolved to advocate for stronger assistance from state agencies and to improve communication with affected communities.

COMMUNITY APPRECIATION

Council received a quarterly report of letters and messages from community groups, acknowledging positive feedback for Council staff and services.

SCONE REGIONAL LIVESTOCK SELLING CENTRE

Council considered submissions from the recent expression-of-interest process for the Scone Regional Livestock Selling Centre. The General Manager was authorised to negotiate with existing proponents on operational and financial models while also inviting further proposals from other qualified parties to ensure the centre delivers strong long-term outcomes for the community.

GLENBAWN TUNNEL PIPELINE ENCASEMENT WORKS

Council reviewed a report on storm-related damage to the Glenbawn Tunnel Pipeline concrete encasement project. An additional \$460,000 has been allocated from the Water Reserve to complete rectification works, with authority delegated to the General Manager to approve contract variations up to this amount.

Councillors noted that under current state government guidelines, damage to critical water infrastructure caused by recent storms cannot be claimed for disaster recovery assistance, leaving Council to fund the works from its own reserves. The General Manager has been authorised to raise this matter directly with the responsible Minister.

For more details on other matters discussed, please refer to the meeting agenda, or head to our YouTube channel to watch the meeting.

Supplied.

Rugby League Finals Round 1

Wrap Up *by Jacob Dallah*

What a huge day of finals footy for the Tigers family at Scone Park on Sunday. With four sides in action, there was no shortage of effort, determination and Tiger pride on display.

WOMEN'S TACKLE VS QUIRINDI

The Aberdeen/Singleton women's side came out firing in their finals clash with Quirindi on a warm Sunday morning at Scone Park. From the very first set the girls were on the front foot, forcing an error off the kick-off and striking almost immediately through Paris Ramsey, who scored under the posts. Georgia Smith added the extras for a 6-0 lead after just two minutes.

The momentum continued with Sam Roache charging forward from the restart and offloading to Toryn Upward, who sprinted 50 metres to score. Smith converted again, making it 12-0. From there the floodgates opened. Billie Paine weaved her way through the defence straight from the kick-off to run the length of the field, before Smith set up Lily Cubillo for another four-pointer.

By the ten-minute mark the score was already out to 24-0. The crowd was then treated to a brilliant 90-metre solo effort from Georgia Clydesdale, before Lily Ashpole and Charlotte Daniel added tries of their own. Further points came through Melissa Payne and a second to Upward, while Lyndsay Atkinson-Nicholson capped off the half with a try next to the posts. Smith's boot was near perfect as the girls went into the break leading 56-0. The second half didn't last long. Just five minutes in, Jessica Borge barged her way over to trigger the mercy rule, sealing a dominant 60-0 victory and sending the combined side through to the next stage.

UNDER 18S VS NORTHERN HAWKS

The Under 18s were in for a tough test against the Northern Hawks in the afternoon heat. The Hawks started fast, making an early break before eventually scoring out wide and converting for a 6-0 lead. Aberdeen responded well, building pressure inside the opposition's half and eventually levelling the scores when Casey Milton crossed, with Tyla Fear adding the extras. The rest of the half was a real arm wrestle, with errors and penalties from both sides, and the score remained locked at 6-all at the break.

Aberdeen came out with intent in the second half. Hooker Koby Milton spotted a gap around the ruck and darted over the line to give his side the lead. With Fear's conversion, it was 12-6. Soon after, back-to-back penalties in Aberdeen's favour gave Daniel Mead the chance to crash through for another try, stretching the lead to 16-6.

The Hawks weren't done yet, hitting back with a converted try to close within four points. But the Tigers steadied themselves. Mead crossed

for his second of the afternoon thanks to a sharp cut-out pass from Fear, who then nailed the conversion. A minute later, Casey Milton ducked in behind the markers to score, with Fear adding the extras again. That sealed the deal as Aberdeen finished with a strong 26-12 victory.

RESERVE GRADE VS MERRIWA MAGPIES

This one was personal for the Tigers after their previous meeting with Merriwa, and they came out full of determination. It didn't take long for them to hit the scoreboard when Sean Millwood sent a nice ball to Casey Milton, who crossed in the corner. Soon after, a 70-metre intercept from Kynan Brugnatti swung the momentum right back to Aberdeen, and just two tackles later Josh Emery darted from dummy-half to score next to the posts. Fear converted for a 10-0 lead after ten minutes. Matthew Jones then burst through a gap to extend the margin to 16-0, before Merriwa fought back with two quick tries to close the gap to 16-12 at halftime.

The Magpies kept the pressure on and levelled the scores early in the second half, but from there the Tigers took control. Jack Price pounced on a loose ball to score, before Mitch Everleigh dummied and ducked back infield for another. Jayson Hovi then barged his way over with a trademark hard run to all but seal the result. On the final play of the game, a clever fifth-tackle kick from Millwood was picked up by Price, who toed it ahead for Kaleb Slater to dive on. Fear converted after the siren to round out a 40-16 victory.

FIRST GRADE VS SCONE THOROUGHBREDS

The final match of the day saw Aberdeen take on competition heavyweights Scone. The Thoroughbreds struck early, capitalising on a penalty to score under the posts and then again out wide for a 0-12 lead. The Tigers responded well, forcing an error and building pressure. Veteran Daniel Hoogerwerf produced a sharp short ball to Richard Graham, setting up strong field position before Josh Halliwell dived over. Harry Douglass converted to close the gap to 6-12.

Scone hit back with another converted try, but the Tigers weren't done. Richard Graham's powerful carry put Aberdeen on the front foot and the ball was shifted wide for Tuhere Maraki to score just before halftime, narrowing the margin to 10-18.

The second half started perfectly for Aberdeen when Scone spilled the kick-off. Matty Hay cut back infield and powered his way over, with Douglass adding the extras to bring it back to 16-18. The Tigers had momentum and the crowd came alive, but unfortunately that was as close as they got. Errors and penalties crept in, and Scone took full advantage, piling on late points to run away 16-44 winners. A big thank you to all the players, coaches, volunteers and supporters who made the day what it was. The Tigers family is well and truly alive in finals footy.

Supplied.

Rugby League Finals Round 2

Wrap Up *by Jacob Dallah*

WOMEN'S TACKLE VS MUSWELLBROOK RAMS

After a thumping 60-0 win in Round 1 of the finals, the Aberdeen/Singleton combined side were right up for the contest against the Rams. The Tigers/Greyhounds kicked off the program at Greta Central Oval and found some early luck, regathering the ball off the kick-off. The girls then forced a Rams error in their opening set, but unfortunately followed with one of their own.

Ten minutes in, Aberdeen's Isla Johnston produced an explosive 40-metre run, only for the set to finish with a Rams seven-tackle restart. Muswellbrook capitalised soon after, spreading the ball wide to cross

for the opening points. With the conversion, they led 0-6 after 14 minutes. With five minutes left in the half, the combined side earned repeat possession and the ever-powerful Sam Roache barged her way over the line. Georgia Smith nailed the conversion to level it at 6-6. The Rams weren't done though, forcing an error from the restart and crossing again just before the siren. A missed kick left the halftime score at 6-10.

The second half began with strong intent from Aberdeen/Singleton, but opportunities were limited. The Rams camped deep in Tigers/Greyhounds territory, with the combined side forced to defend repeat sets. Despite a number of errors, the girls held strong in defence, showing incredible resilience. With 20 seconds left, Aberdeen/Singleton earned a penalty and had one last attacking raid, but the Rams defence held firm. Full-time score: 6-10. A huge thank you to all the players, staff, and supporters from Aberdeen and Singleton who made

Aberdeen Advisory Committee Notes



The Aberdeen community has been invited to join the Aberdeen ARDC sub-committee commemorating the Rail Disaster Centenary to be held in June 2026. This was among the recommendations made at the August meeting of the Aberdeen Advisory committee.

Other discussion and recommendations

included:

- That three (3) signs would be ordered to identify the location of the defibrillator.
- The completion of the pavement defects in Mount Street and Graeme Street.
- The completion of the signs at St Andrews Reserve.
- The expansion of the Aberdeen waste management facility was discussed with the Committee advised that Council are still negotiating with Wonnarua Aboriginal Council in relation to land claim.
- Director Infrastructure Services to follow up the balance of the tree planting budget.
- A report is to be prepared regarding a toilet block in Jockey Park opposite Croft's Pie Shop with cost estimates for the work to be done and for it to be presented at the November 2025 CAC meeting
- The Committee discussed the road defects and lack of drains in Kyuga Street. They were advised that MACH energy had provided funding for the

surveying and design, however, grant funding would be required for the works.

- The Committee suggested the idea of a Driver Reviver within Aberdeen. Location ideas included the Jockey Park opposite from Croft's Pie Shop, however this wouldn't capture the travellers from the bypass on the correct side, or within Taylor Park. They were advised this would need to be funded through a Transport NSW grant or be a VPA project.
- A return and earn within Aberdeen was discussed, however they were advised that TOMRA have found that this is not viable due to the close proximity of the already established ones in Scone and Muswellbrook. The Committee would like the Council to have more transparency with the boiled water alerts and to provide information on the turbidity levels so the community are able to make a personal and informed decision whether to drink it or not.

As reported in the UHSC minutes.

Supplied.

this inaugural Group 21 Women's Tackle Competition possible for the girls.



UNDER 18'S VS SCONE THOROUGHBREDS

Scone kicked things off on a windy afternoon at Greta. Both sides opened with early errors, a sign of the tough and scrappy contest to come.

Aberdeen earned a penalty for a late hit on Tyla Fear after his fifth-tackle kick, but a string of mistakes followed. Nine minutes in, a forward pass deep in Aberdeen's half handed Scone prime field position, and they made it count with the first try. The conversion was missed, Scone leading 0-4.

For much of the half, both teams traded errors and penalties. Aberdeen finally capitalised when they forced a mistake in Scone's half. A cut out ball found Joseph Hamlin, who burned down a narrow channel to score just before halftime. The ever-reliable boot of Tyla Fear slotted the conversion from the sideline to give the Tigers a 6-4 lead at the break.

The second half started shaky for Aberdeen with more errors, and once again Scone struck off a scrum play to reclaim the lead, 6-8. Eleven minutes in, Aberdeen earned a penalty on halfway, followed by a one-on-one strip penalty. The platform was set for the elusive Mitch Rousell, who danced through defenders and ducked back into the ruck to score. Fear converted to make it 12-8.

The remainder of the game was an arm wrestle filled with penalties and

errors. With Aberdeen down to 12 men after repeated infringements, the Tigers defence stood tall, shutting down every Scone raid until the final whistle. Full-time score: 12-8. Congratulations to the U18s — Grand Final bound! One more to go boys. The whole of Aberdeen is right behind you.

RESERVE GRADE VS SINGLETON GREYHOUNDS

Singleton started fast and strong, crossing in just the 3rd minute before adding another try soon after a high tackle penalty. Within seven minutes, the Greyhounds led 0-8.

The next 15 minutes were filled with mistakes from both sides, but Singleton kept the pressure on. They added six more points spreading wide in attack. Aberdeen needed a spark, and Jayson Hovi provided it with a barnstorming 40-metre run to put his side on the front foot. A few plays later, Hovi took matters into his own hands, barging over for the Tigers' first points. Fear converted to close the gap to 6-14 at halftime.

Both sides opened the second half with errors. Aberdeen earned a penalty for a late hit on Tyla Fear, and Sam Fitzsimmons crashed over soon after. Fear converted to bring the score to 12-14. But Singleton hit back quickly, capitalising on an Aberdeen error from the kick return to score (12-20), then producing a length-of-the-field effort straight from the next restart (12-24). Aberdeen hit back through Jack Price, who scored after some sharp second-phase play. Fear's conversion narrowed the score to 18-24.

That would be the last of Aberdeen's points for 2025, as Singleton finished strong with two more tries in the final 10 minutes. Full-time score: 18-32. A huge thank you to everyone involved in Reserve Grade this season. A fresh start in Aberdeen Reserve Grade history, with so much young talent stepping up through the ranks and some experience moving on. Only up from here fellas! Lastly, a massive thank you to all the Tigers faithful who made the trip to Greta today. Next week we head to Singleton for the Under 18's Grand Final — the boys take on the Greyhounds on their home turf. Let's turn up in numbers and get behind them!

Supplied.

Environmental DNA Survey Results

by *Doctor Dirt*

Supplied by Steve Eccles.

Doctor Dirt This episode I will present a summary of results from the Upper Hunter River Catchments Environmental DNA Water Sampling Program conducted in December 2025.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Ingrid Garland from Apex Enviro Solutions Pty Ltd the Project Manager for this program for all her efforts in delivering the program. The project was founded by Hunter Waterkeeper Incorporated. I organised the initial parameters and the guidelines of the project. Apart from Hunter Water Keepers members, local landholders and the community, students and teachers from Ellerston and Belltrees Public Schools and Aussie Ark, all were active participants in the survey.

So, what is Environmental DNA (eDNA)? Every living creature leaves traces of DNA in their surrounding environment. This includes skin cells, fur, hair, scales and saliva. Water bodies are a very suitable environment to leave traces of unique individual species and a very good way to detect the presences of individual species. Specially Designed sampling kits were supplied to 36 landholders in the focus area. Two replicate samples were taken by the participants at each location. The samples were sent to a Specialist Accredited Laboratory for analysis. This proven collection method and analysis process has been used in various catchments. Recently this process was used in the Wollombi Creek Catchment by Local Land Service, various NSW Natural Resource State Departments and the Local Landcare Group.

The final project boundary was determined after engaging Hunter Local Land Services to ensure this area was not in a catchment they have targeted or have already undertaken eDNA surveys. Our aim was to share the results and add to knowledge of the health of our Hunter River systems. The project area is shown on the map below. The target of the survey was to determine the numbers and presence of three iconic riparian creatures.

- The platypus "Ornithymchus anaatinus" , have had a dramatic decline in total numbers and a reduction in their range of over 22 percent across Australis and Tasmania, over the past 30 years.,
- Rakali "Hydromys chrysogaster" a native marsupial
- Hunter River Turtle "Emydura macquarii – status is endangered, a unique reptile only found in the Hunter.

We also commissioned the eDNA analysis to cover many animals other than these three species we determined as our target species. The results of all the eDNA species can be found online through Google Sheet Link for the project Any interested people can read this publicly available document.

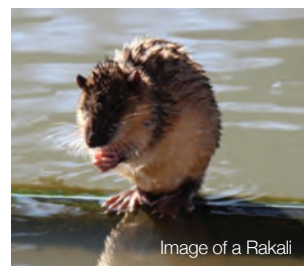


Image of a Rakali

A well-advertised community-based presentation was held at Gundy, the Linga Longer Hotel on the 19 July. The presented results were interesting but concerning. Of the 36 widely spread sampling sites only three site samples identified platypus in the surrounding riparian areas, no sites showed a presence of rakali, and eight sites identified the presence of Hunter River Turtles.

We were expecting and hoping for higher numbers and presence of all three species throughout the catchment. We have had reports of platypus sightings from quite a number of landholders who participated in the survey.

Rakali was voted in National Science Week the most underrated animal in Australia, and we found no presence at all, of this icon in our survey focus area. It was pleasing we did find evidence of the rare Hunter River Turtle. This was a reasonable result.

The expansive eDNA analysis that covered many animal species did pick up the presence of Glandular Tree Frog "Litoria subglandulosa" a threatened amphibian species. The Hunter Local Land Services is interested in further investigations which may lead to enhancing the habitat of this frog in that area.

The eDNA samples also showed the widespread infestation of introduced carp. This species is a major source of damage to aquatic habitats.

A wide range of many feral animal species eDNA were present in the water samples. Feral species destroy habitat and ecosystems. They are also a major factor in native animal deaths, including the three target species.

The eDNA survey, though comprehensive, I would encourage as they have found necessary at Wollombi Creek and other catchments, additional surveys to assist in the scientific findings. Like most scientific surveys, replications will provide more precise information.

Variations in the findings do include, the time of the year, river flow conditions, weather including temperatures can cause variations. I will discuss further aspects of the survey in future articles.

If anyone has any questions or has any trouble accessing the results, please contact me.

Steve Eccles - steveecclesconsulting@gmail.com

Earle's Column

continued from page 2

Rail Disaster has been accepted, firstly, by the Aberdeen CAC and then at the August Ordinary Council Meeting of the UHSC. The committee, (consisting of three people), is in need of some further 'arms and legs' to successfully stage the proposed event, tentatively named "the Heroes of Aberdeen". If assisting with this event appeals to you, please email your interest to ardc1926@gmail.com. Current plans include a market day on Sunday 7th June 2026, along with a photographic/document exhibition at the Aberdeen Community Hall and rides on a vintage railmotor set between Aberdeen and Murrurundi and return.

North Harbour Clean Energy are conducting a community information session on Wednesday 17th September at 6pm at Aberdeen Public School. This will be a great opportunity to hear about the proposed Battery Energy Storage System, BESS, proposed for land at the southern end of Campbell Street adjacent to the Aberdeen Common. I commend this event to you.

Supplied.

Treasures at the Aberdeen Tip Shop

The Aberdeen Tip Shop is full of bargains and surprises, with prices starting from just 50 cents. From furniture and books to quirky décor, shoppers never quite know what they'll find.

It's the perfect spot for thrifty shoppers, upcyclers and anyone who loves a good treasure hunt.

Located at the Aberdeen Waste Management Facility on Wells Gully Road, the shop is a favourite for bargain hunters and the curious. For more details, visit the Upper Hunter Shire Council website.

Supplied.

Hunter Fighter Collection Secures Mural Project Saluting their Service Grant Announced for Scone

Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce, has welcomed funding announcements from the 2024-25 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program for the Hunter Fighter Collection Incorporated based in Scone.

The Program provides funding through the Department of Veterans' Affairs for projects and activities that commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australia's military personnel in wars, conflicts and peace operations. In the New England, Scone will benefit from a \$35,000 grant to deliver the large-scale mural project.

Mr Joyce said that the funds will provide Scone with economic activity and will serve as an opportunity to remember those that have fought for our country.

"The installation of a large-scale mural wall on the historic Bellman Hangar, at the Scone Memorial Airport will serve as a reminder to us all of the everyday men and women from Scone that believed in a country worth fighting for and did exactly that, risking everything to protect and serve our nation", said Mr Joyce.

Mr Ross Pay, Chairman of the Hunter Fighter Collection Inc. said that this mural project has been fully funded by two grants:

1. \$10,000 from the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) Strengthening Rural Communities grant (via a donation from the Raine & Horne Foundation)
2. \$34,000 from the 2024-25 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program (DVA)

The artist, Sam Brooks from South Australia, will be working with the Incorporation to complete the project. Sam has an impressive track record, creating the centenary RAAF mural titled 'Then. Now. Always' on the water tank at RAAF Base Wagga Wagga and painted the 30-metre tall 'Storytime Silos' in Eudunda SA, both acclaimed public artworks.

Supplied by Barnaby Joyce.

Upper Hunter's Annual Bulk Waste Clean Up!

Mark your calendars because it's time for a clean-out! Upper Hunter Shire Council's Bulk Waste Clean Up service is just around the corner.

2025 COLLECTION DATES:

- Scone, Gundy, and Moonan Flat: October 13 - 17
- Murrurundi, Blandford, Wingen, Parkville, and Bunnan: October 20 - 24
- Cassilis, Merriwa, Aberdeen: October 27 - 31

IMPORTANT INFO:

Items should be placed on the kerbside on the Sunday before your week of collection.

- Garden waste will NOT be accepted.
- Mattresses and tyres are also prohibited.
- No liquid waste of any sort.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q: "Can I dispose of my scrap metal?"

A: Scrap metal is included this year!

Q: "What about my old laptop or TV?"

A: Electronics / E-Waste is not accepted in the Bulky Waste Collection but can be dropped off for free at the Community Recycling Centre in Scone.

For more information, head to the Upper Hunter Shire Council Website.

Supplied.

Thank You from the Aberdeen Highland Games Committee!

The First Saturday of July in Aberdeen was a beautiful Upper Hunter winter's day to hold the annual Aberdeen Highland Games at Jefferson Park in Aberdeen. With such good weather the crowd was good and those there were treated to the Celtic events that make up the highland games. The pipe bands, highland dancers, and Kilted Warriors all showed their respective talents, and we were once again very fortunate to have Australia's Federation Guard – Precision Drill Team perform for us. The numerous stalls of retail and food were kept busy throughout the day.



It was wonderful to at last have Carles Cooke, OAM as the Honorary Chieftain this year. He enjoyed undertaking his duties and was extremely well received.

The Committee of the AHG would like to thank our sponsors and supporters, without them the day would not go ahead. There are too many to mention here, however they are in our program and on our website. We would like also to thank all our volunteer and community groups including the Kayuga Rural Fire Service and Olympic Park Tennis Club who helped to make the day run so smoothly. Also, a huge thankyou to the volunteers that were supplied for setup and take down of the event by Blackrock Industries and Bengalla Mining Company.

Supplied by AHG Committee.

CLAIM THE DATE

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Market Stalls:

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Dave Layzell MP
MEMBER FOR UPPER HUNTER



Authorised by Dave Layzell MP,
94 John Street,
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Funded using Parliamentary
entitlements.

The Latest on Vets Golf

TREASURER BOB SHOUTED US LUNCH

There was a good attendance of the Vets for the Col Hunter Shield event played at a rather damp MBK course on Tuesday, August 26. The weather was ideal and the course good. – a touch of the coming dry spring time we hope.

Thank you to Treasurer Bob Minch for the tasty lunch that he shouted us, and to Captain Mick McCormick for the shotgun start draw.

The winner of this prestige event for 2025 is keen golfer Terry Mitchell, with 39 Stableford points. Second on 38 was John Belfield and third was Mick McCormick 34.

Balls went to Robert Colbert and Steve Nowland 33 and on 32 Tony Pearson, Mick Alsleben and Dave Taylor. The Bradman's trophy, kindly donated by Gary Morley was won by President Paul Gorman.

Nearest the Pins: 5th and 8th George Campbell 11th Dave Taylor 14th (2nd shot) Mick Alsleben 17th John Belfield

FIRST GAME OF SPRING

There was a great roll-up of 29 players for the Stb event at Aberdeen Golf Club on Tuesday, Sept 2. All the keen golfers were correct in coming to play because the conditions were ideal.

Captain Mick McCormick organised the shotgun start and Bob Minch generously stretched the prize money out to 7 place - getters.

Mick Alsleben won the event with 35 points from Gary Leake second 35 C/B, Brett Dann third 33 C/B, Reg Davidson fourth 32 C/B, Dave Taylor fifth 32, Dave Kerr sixth 31 C/B and seventh John Belfield 31. Balls went to George Campbell, Bob Lawman, Paul Constable, Dave Bramley and Dave Perfrement.

Nearest the Pins: 4th Dave Taylor 13th Glenn Googe 7th Will Coward

16th Mick Alsleben 9th John Belfield and 18th John Belfield. The Bradman's Trophy, kindly donated by Gary Morley was won by Daryl Dutton.



image: Mick Alsleben won the Vets Stb event at Aberdeen on Tuesday, Sept 2 with 35 points. He is congratulated by Treasurer Bob Minch.

FUTURE GAMES:

Captain Mick will be meeting with the executive to sort out the future games so we can hopefully play at Scone again and be organised for the Championships to be played at Scone later this year.

- Sept 9, Stb at Denman
- Sept 16, stroke at Scone (hopefully)
- Sept 23, S&P at Aberdeen
- Sept 30, Stb at MBK

Supplied.



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BLASTING HOTLINE: 1800 931 872

GENERAL ENQUIRIES: 1800 931 873

**For further information, including BLAST times and location, visit our website:
www.machenergy.com.au or email: info@machenergy.com.au**

Cellarbrations

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CRUISER DBL 4PKS	\$ 25.00 – LOYALTY	\$ 23.00
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