A HISTORY ACTIVITY
GETTING TO KNOW MAITLAND PAST AND PRESENT

Rationale:
This short unit of work is written to assist ESL speakers new to the Hunter Valley region. Its aim is to assist them in the process of familiarisation with the area, where they will be living while they complete a portion of their education. The activities are written with a functional view of language use in mind.

Outcomes:
Through reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing, students will achieve the following outcomes:

- Become familiar with some of the names of local places of importance both past and present.
- Understand some of the forces that have shaped Maitland’s history.
- Understand some of the entertainment services the Hunter Region provides for youth today.
- Become familiar with the role and importance of aspects of written Standard English such as: articles; pronouns; prepositions and tenses.
- Learn to use language to relate to Maitland’s past and utilise some of the modern day facilities available to them.
Introducing Maitland’s Past

Australia’s first people, known as aboriginals, have lived in the Maitland area in their tribes for thousands of years. The Hunter River, that still flows through Maitland today, provided the aboriginal people with their food. The riverbank was covered with forests, where many types of Australian animals lived. Aboriginals caught animals from these forests for food and fish from the Hunter River.

European people came to live at Maitland in the year 1818. The Governor in Sydney, named Lachlan Macquarie, gave eleven (11) well-behaved convicts permission to move from Newcastle. They came to settle and farm small portions of land in the area today known as East Maitland and Maitland.

Living and working in Maitland was very hard work for settlers who had come from Britain in the early days. The weather was much hotter in Maitland, than it had been in Britain. Sometimes the rainfall stopped and settlers had to live through a drought. There were some doctors here in the early days, but the standard of medicine was very poor compared with what is available today.

Some settlers liked the adventure of leaving the town and building a small house in the outback. Sometimes this led to fights between aboriginal tribes and local European settlers. If someone got sick living out of the town, it might take a doctor one week before he could visit them. If a snake bit someone on the leg, a doctor sometimes cut the injured person’s leg off with a bush saw.

As Maitland developed more, shops were built along High Street. The street was not straight. Its shape followed a track made by bullocks carrying farm crops to boats to take from farms to Sydney to sell. The bullocks had followed a track by the side of the Hunter River. Today the main street of Maitland still has this winding shape.

Early life in Maitland was also very hard because the Hunter River has flooded more than 200 times since the year 1800. Many shop owners in Maitland once lived in High Street above their shops. When a very bad flood came, like in 1955, many people lost their belongings and a lot of money. In a very destructive flood, the water level reached above the roof of the homes people lived in. The river is not as deep as it once was, so the river basin cannot hold as much water in times of heavy rainfall.

Even though many homes were destroyed by floods in Maitland in the last 180 years, some fine heritage buildings have survived the floodwaters. This is one reason Maitland is called a heritage city.
Introducing Maitland’s Past

1. Identify the glossary terms connected with Maitland’s past. Match the correct definition provided in the list below, using the passage read to help.

Important Words and their Meanings – Match the word and its correct meaning.

The Outback (1) A criminal rewarded for good behaviour with a small farm in Maitland.

Aboriginals (2) When the river spilled over its banks and destroyed many houses and shops

Drought (3) The land beyond the town where only a few people lived

Convicts (4) Buildings that are very old and have survived many floods

Hunter River (5) Australia’s first people

Maitland Floods (6) The pathway made by strong animals carrying crops to place on boats

Bullock Tracks (7) A period of time when no rain falls and living is hard

Heritage Buildings (8) The main river in the area of Maitland

2. Improving Standard English - Reading

Read the above passage “Introducing Maitland’s Past”, aloud to another student in the class. Notice each sloping word as you read the passage aloud. The sloping words do important jobs in communicating information clearly in Standard English. They have special names as follows:

a) Prepositions Words that join two phrases together and show the relationship between the two phrases: (in, by, through, over, from, as, with)

b) Articles Words like (the, a) that show if we are writing about a particular noun or a general example of the noun. (the student; a student).

c) Pronouns A word used in place of a noun (he, she, it, they, his, her, their, its).

d) Tenses The form of the verb, telling us the time the action occurs (the floods have destroyed homes; the floods are destroying homes; the floods will destroy homes)

Highlight the sloping words in a different colour to show what job they are doing in the passage.
3. **Improving Standard English - Writing**

Below are a list of present day words to do with Maitland and the Hunter Region. After finding out about each of the items on this list, write a paragraph about each one. In your paragraphs, use what you have discovered about prepositions, articles, pronouns and tenses, to communicate your ideas more clearly.

**Maitland Cinema 4** – Where is it? What types of movies are shown there? When do people usually go to the cinema? What else can people do there apart from watching a movie?

**Newcastle Beaches** – How can you get to the Newcastle beaches by train? What are some of the popular beaches and why? What do people do there apart from swimming?

**Morpeth Jazz Festival** – Where is Morpeth? What happens at the Jazz festival? What other activities can be done at Morpeth apart from the Jazz festival?

**Hunter Valley Vineyards** - What do people do when they visit the Hunter Valley Vineyards? Why are they known about overseas?

**Rugby League and the Newcastle Knights Team** – How is this sport played and why is the Newcastle Knights team so popular?

4. **Representing and Speaking Task**

Students will attend the Maitland Visitors Information Centre to obtain information via interpretation on the Maitland Floods, using the Totem Pole depiction of the Maitland floods located there, created by the Department of Architecture at the University of Newcastle. Students sketch their five (5) favourite totem poles, then take notes in their first language, on what they think the totem means.

Students purchase their own morning/afternoon tea from the coffee shop. Upon return to school, students explain their sketches to peers. Students then compile a one (1) page written report in English, on the Maitland floods, based upon the information gleaned from the Visitors Centre.