

Lake Macquarie Matters

Chasing our share

The recent State Budget shows that the finances of NSW are in very good shape, due in no small part to the privatisation of public assets and massive stamp duty receipts.

But it also shows that the government is continuing to spend those windfalls in Sydney at the expense of regional areas.

Treasurer Dominic Perrottet delivered a responsible Budget overall, but his assurances that it will “turbo charge the regions” will understandably be doubted by many in the Hunter. If the Government was

serious about driving the economy in the Lower Hunter we would have seen significant capital works funding for projects such as the planned Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange and Pennant Street Bridge. The Budget does contain a \$1.7m commitment to prepare new costings for the interchange and associated roadworks including the Pennant Street Bridge. That commitment is welcome and a step in the right direction, but it clearly doesn't go far enough.



An artist's impression of the planned Pennant Street bridge at Glendale.
Artwork courtesy of Lake Macquarie City Council.

Lake Macquarie is an important part of the broader Hunter Region adding greatly to the prosperity of NSW so it's not unreasonable to expect a more equitable return to the communities from which that wealth has been derived.

There were some welcome allocations in the Budget, including \$1.8m for repairs to Fennell Bay Bridge and \$1.1m for the upgrade of recreational boating facilities around the lake. It also contains grants and funding for a number of road upgrade projects at Warners Bay, Speers Point, Morisset and Toronto. Ongoing funding for the Wyee sewer project, money for additional bus services and palliative care projects in particular were greatly welcomed. More Budget details are available on my website.

Welcome

While it's difficult to believe that half of 2017 is already behind us, the past six months have been busy ones in the NSW Parliament. I hope this mid-year update finds you and your family well. I've been pushing the State Government hard on a number of fronts so far this year and I'm pleased to say that we're getting some good traction in key areas. The campaign for the next stage of work on Lake Macquarie transport interchange at Glendale has really ramped up. This is a really important project that will solve a lot of road and public transport issues not just in Lake Macquarie, but in the broader Hunter Region. The campaign for better health and palliative care services in our area is also starting to bear fruit. We've also seen a couple of milestone projects completed, including the new police station at Toronto. Speaking of Toronto, it's great to see the main street revitalisation project in full swing and, like everyone else, I'm looking forward to it being completed. While I hope you enjoy this newsletter, I encourage you to keep up to date with everything happening in our community by following my Facebook page or signing up for my free monthly eNews. They're great ways of staying informed.

Best wishes
Greg



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■ A great initiative

If you haven't already discovered the Chars 58 cafe at Toronto, then you need to. It's a great addition to Toronto's café scene and provides opportunities for people with disabilities to develop job skills. It's a fantastic place located on Victory Parade. I highly recommend the coffee! I'm pictured here having a chat with Matthew and Brianna who do an awesome job taking orders and serving customers.



■ History preserved

Dobell House at Wangi has been placed on the State Heritage Register. It's a fantastic result for John Sheehan and his committee who have worked hard to preserve and protect this great piece of history. Dobell loved Wangi and lived there for almost three decades. It was there that he produced some of his most acclaimed work. If you haven't visited Dobell House before, you can book a weekend tour.

Visit their website for further details.
www.dobellhouse.org.au.



■ Time really flies

I was reminded recently that April marked 10 years since I was first elected to represent Lake Macquarie in State Parliament. It all started with a successful community-led campaign against the proposed open cut coal mine between Awaba and Cooranbong back in 2007. I know it's almost clichéd these days but it's a privilege to represent the people of Lake Macquarie in the NSW Parliament. I could not do this job successfully without your support, and of course the valuable support from all of my staff, my wife Lyn and my family. Thanks again and I look forward to continuing to work hard for the residents of Lake Macquarie.

New incentive for first homebuyers

While I applaud the State Government's decision to waive stamp duty on new and existing homes for first homebuyers, more can be done to ease the State's growing housing affordability crisis.

Stamp duty will now be waived for first homebuyers on homes worth up to \$650,000, with discounts applying to home purchases worth up to \$850,000. Things such as negative gearing and capital gains tax also need to be reviewed but they are largely in the federal government's hands. Better use of existing land supply is also important, as are appropriate improvements to approval processes which don't impede land supply unnecessarily.

It's code for history

Given all the complicated technology in the world today, I had fun catching up with Harold Franks and his old Morse code machine.

Harold is now 87 and living at Speers Point with his wonderful wife. He popped into the Toronto office recently and challenged me to a duel to see if I could send a message on the iPhone quicker than he could on the Morse code machine.

If not for my "fat" fingers I think it could have been a dead heat.

Harold started using Morse code in 1949 when he worked at Newcastle Post Office. He was later employed at Sydney GPO where he continued to work with the machine until 1962 when the last telegram in NSW was sent. These days he spends a bit of time showing



people how the Morse Code machine works. It's certainly a fantastic link to a bygone era. If any school or group is interested in checking out the historic machine, call my office on 4959-3200 and we'll put you in touch with Harold.

Rural fire service volunteers honoured

I recently had the pleasure of attending the NSW Rural Fire Service Volunteer Appreciation Service at Doyalson where a number of local volunteers were honoured.

Among them was Gwen Deaves who has been part of the Wyee brigade for 59 years. Neville Koch from the Mandalong brigade was recognised for 39 years of service while Graham King was recognised for his 20 years with Wyee Point brigade. It's an honour to have these people living in our community and serving the people around them. They devote a huge part of their lives to helping others, as do all members of the RFS. On behalf of the whole community I thank all those in the RFS.



New police station at Toronto officially open

I joined Police Minister Troy Grant and Lake Macquarie police chief Superintendent Brett Greentree at the official opening of the new Toronto station on June 7, signalling the last milestone in a \$30m project which delivered new stations at Toronto and Morisset, and a new headquarters at Belmont.

Our local police were previously hampered by dreadful buildings and conditions. Be assured, this area now has the best police units and resources outside of Sydney. Most crime rates are down, police numbers are good despite us always wanting more, and Supt Greentree and his officers should be applauded for that.



Our woman of the year is an inspiration

It was an honour to announce Vivienne Bruce as Lake Macquarie's Woman of the Year.

Viv is currently the manager of Southlakes Carers, a group dedicated to providing services to the aged, but she boasts a long record of community service. Having raised four children of her own, Viv and husband Steve became the full-time carers of four young grandchildren in 2015. She began life as a volunteer with Horizons Disability Services before being employed by the group. She later co-ordinated neighbourhood centres and ran early education groups. She has worked as a volunteer for the Salvation Army for more than 20 years and has been the driving force behind after-school care programs, programs for young women and programs for people facing life's challenges. Vivienne is an extraordinary woman, so I'm glad her work and dedication has been publicly recognised in this way.



Fitting tribute for a top cop lost

It's 40 years since Senior Constable Doug Eaton was gunned down in the line of duty while attending a robbery at Toronto Country Club.

Doug left behind his wife Judy and two children, Sharon and Mike. I attended a memorial service at the club in April where a plaque was unveiled to commemorate this 40 years. It was wonderful to see so many senior police in attendance along with the Police Minister, Troy Grant. I was a relatively new starter at Morisset Hospital when this occurred. It shocked our community and is not forgotten. We should never forget that police face these and other risks every day, and we should thank them for their service and wish them safety as they go about their job of protecting our community.



Be a part of my new website

My new website will be up and running soon, providing easier access to local information and events.

It will also house a couple of new features which I'd love you to be involved in. The first is a series of photo galleries where I'd like to show off the best of Lake Macquarie. If you've got a favourite spot or a favourite photograph of our beautiful part of the world, send it in and I'll add it to the gallery. The second is a section where I'd like to recognise our high achievers and those who work behind the scenes doing community work. If you know of a local legend, send me their name and some details so I can acknowledge their efforts. The new site will also house a community events calendar. All contributions can be emailed to lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au, or mailed to 92 Victory Parade, Toronto, 2283.



With the Cancer Council's Shayne Connell and Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie's Chris Parkinson.



Showing Abbey Williams and Lachlan Haddow from Lake Macquarie High School around Parliament.



After years of campaigning, the residents around Brighton Ave at Toronto celebrate their new footpaths.

Why I support medicinal cannabis

The NSW Parliament will soon debate moves to legalise the use of cannabis oil for medicinal purposes, so I thought I'd share with you some of the reasons why I'll be supporting those moves.

While our western medical model has delivered amazing health benefits, there are some conditions that are little understood and difficult to treat. It's clear in some cases that cannabis used for medicinal purposes can make a difference to control such things as pain or neurological conditions including seizures. I have long been a supporter of the use of cannabis oil in medically supervised situations where it can bring relief to those suffering from such serious conditions and who often have a terminal illness. The issue of medicinal cannabis should not be obstructed by arguments over recreational drug use.



There is now a significant body of evidence that cannabis oil can deliver dramatic positive effects for people with high medical needs. I don't believe we should deny people the chance to use a drug we now know is relatively safe and delivers true medical benefit.

The use of medicinal cannabis is currently being trialled at the Calvary Mater Hospital in Newcastle. The State Government has said it will not introduce new legislation to the Parliament until the results are in. In my opinion, it's time to stop treating some terminally ill people and those who wish to help them as criminals. It's time we embraced the medicinal benefits of this drug and recognise the relief it will bring to many.

Contact

If you need help with any State Government matter, contact my office.

Address: 92 Victory Parade, Toronto 2283

Hours: Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 2pm-5pm

Phone: 4959 3200 Fax: 4950 4076

Email: lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au

The war on waste starts with plastic

There is no doubt we're waking up to what may be one of the most significant environmental issues of our time.

Plastics in all their forms, specifically micro beads, micro fibres and micro particles are having an enormous impact on our aquatic environment.

There has been a lot of debate about banning plastic bags, and I support those moves, but they are only part of a bigger problem. Plastics don't break down and are left in our environment forever, killing birds, reptiles mammals and fish.

Of course, we're not only killing aquatic life, we're also killing ourselves because most of us are eating fish that almost certainly contain levels of the micro plastics they have ingested. Plastics are incredibly important to our modern life but while our generation has



been living the dream, we have been creating a nightmare for future generations by unnecessary use and then failing to properly manage these materials from cradle to grave. Toronto Sustainable Neighbourhood Group is among 17 of its type working in the Lake Macquarie area which are stepping up the war on waste and plastics. We need to help them by banning plastic bags and then working from the tip of the iceberg down into micro plastics and micro fibres, and we need to do it soon.

Applications to open

Applications for this year's Community Building Partnership grants will open on June 26 with a total of \$300,000 available to groups in the Lake Macquarie electorate.

The CBP grants are available for infrastructure projects undertaken by not-for-profit groups and councils. They can be used for things such as building new community infrastructure or refurbishing old facilities.

Last year, 15 groups were awarded grants for things like new rescue boats, building repairs and upgrades and sporting equipment. All the assessment criteria is available at www.communitybuildingpartnership.nsw.gov.au. If you need further information, phone 13 77 88 or my electorate office on 4959-3200.

This year's applications close on August 9.



Care service needed

The State Government's announcement that it would inject another \$100m into palliative care services throughout NSW should be applauded.

While we're yet to get a commitment of specific funding, I'm pushing for existing services in Newcastle to be extended throughout the entire Lake Macquarie area. As I've noted before, a very good 24/7 home care service operates out of Newcastle's Calvary Mater Hospital, but it only extends as far south as Macquarie Road at Fennell Bay. It means that people living north of Macquarie Road get access to a 24/7 outreach service to their homes, but those living south in places like Toronto and Morisset only get that service during business hours, and a telephone service after hours.

I've been fighting against that inequity. It's a good service that operates out of the Mater, and a vital one, but access to it shouldn't be determined by a line on a map midway through an area like Lake Macquarie.

I'll keep you posted on the recent results of my representations to Health Minister Brad Hazzard and Premier Gladys Berejiklian.

Greg Piper Independent Member for the State Electorate of Lake Macquarie