

Lake Macquarie Matters

Energising our Future



The Eraring Power Station is one of the largest employers in the electorate and a frequent topic in the news, with 2025 proving to be no exception.

Earlier this year, I joined NSW Energy Minister, Penny Sharpe, Emily Suvaal MLC, and Origin executives to inspect progress on the Eraring battery. Construction is well advanced, and once completed in early 2027, the battery will be one of the largest in the world. This project marks an important first step in Origin's plan to transform the site and will play a crucial role in maintaining grid stability.

In late March, Origin confirmed it would not opt-in to the agreement struck with the NSW Government to delay Eraring's closure. Notably, this decision means NSW taxpayers

won't foot the bill, saving millions in the current financial year.

The Net Zero Economy Authority have begun consultation to consider whether an Energy Industry Jobs Plan framework should be applied to businesses impacted by the scheduled August 2027 closure of the Station.

The consultation will help determine how workers and businesses will be impacted by the Eraring closure and what supports are needed for workers to prepare for new employment. It is estimated that the closure will impact around 216 workers, along with others from dependent businesses. It is important to safeguard local employees against job losses, particularly when so many have relied on the Station to support their families.

Welcome

Hello, and welcome to the mid-year edition of Lake Macquarie Matters.

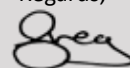
2025 continues to highlight the need for Government

investment in Lake Macquarie, and in Macquarie Street, Parliamentarians worked through amendments and legislation to address the need for key areas of reform in NSW. Importantly, legislation was passed to address waste and pollution, and to protect the community against racial and religious vilification.

Our community faces challenges, especially around housing and food insecurity, the current cost of living and housing crisis means more struggling families need support. However, we are incredibly lucky to have some exceptional community leaders providing frontline support in Lake Macquarie. Locals also remain concerned about the progress of road upgrades and continue to seek investment in our schools, healthcare services and public infrastructure.

I have been working closely with the relevant Ministers to lobby for projects to proceed on behalf of the community. This edition of Lake Macquarie Matters will look at the progress on these local issues.

Regards,



■ Makaylah Fenwick

At 17, this Awaba resident recently won the Off the Track Cup at the Magic Millions Showjumping and Polo event in Queensland for the second year in a row. She won riding her gelding, Rainbow Man, a retired racehorse she singlehandedly trained to become a show jumping horse. Makaylah is on her way to her dream of becoming a professional jockey.



■ Action for Agape Riders

Nate Fullerton (16), Samuel Terry (15) and Hamish Chalmers (15) recently pushed their bodies and minds to the limit riding 250km over 5 days from Canberra to Kosciuszko to raise funds for Majimoto Secondary School in Kenya. They raised just shy of \$5000, going toward valuable resources.

■ Alan Robinson

Alan recently retired from an exemplary career of almost 60 years with the NSW Rural Fire Service. He has been involved in many significant fire seasons during this time and received multiple prestigious awards including the 'Australian Fire Service Medal' for his dedication. Alan ends his distinguished career as a Deputy Captain at Peninsula Rural Fire Brigade.

NSW Parliament Tours

Did you know you can book a private tour of NSW Parliament House?

Learn about the history of Australia's oldest public building and how the NSW Parliament operates on a day-to-day basis. Go behind the scenes with access to areas normally off limits to the public.

Schools, Clubs, Sporting Teams, Community Groups or even just a rag tag group of friends interested in the history of NSW Parliament.

Groups are limited to a maximum of 10 people and run on Tuesday and Wednesdays of sitting weeks. To enquire about a tour of NSW Parliament, contact my office:

lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Future of Morisset Hospital

With the Morisset Hospital site announced as the new home for the Morisset Sports Facility in December 2024, the obvious question now is "how long until construction begins?"...

Morisset Hospital is still operating as a mental health facility, expected to wind up in 2027,

coinciding with the completion of the new Maitland Mental Health Facility. For the safety and wellbeing of current patients, construction of the Sports Facility can't begin until operations have ceased, and the site decommissioned.

I've requested the Government move

forward with the land transfer as soon as possible to allow for planning while awaiting the Hospital's closure.

Projects like this take years to plan and locals know how hard we've fought to secure a prime site for the new Sports Facility. Although the delay is not ideal, we are well on our way to seeing the Morisset Hospital site being transformed into a fantastic asset for Lake Macquarie.



Two-Wheeled Menaces

My office receives numerous reports of unregistered trail bikes being ridden on local roads in a manner dangerous to themselves and the community.

Due to the age of riders, lack of safety gear and risk of serious injury or death, in most cases Police cannot give chase. It is often futile to respond to calls about trail bike sightings, as the riders will have likely left the area.

You can help Police by passing on valuable information:

- Identity of rider if known
- Location of the sighting
- Times and days of the week where it is repetitive
- The address of homes where riders live or visit
- Description of the bike/rider including any distinctive features



Providing these details will allow NSW Police to target problem areas.

Make reports to CrimeStoppers on **1800 333 000** or online at

<https://nsw.crimestoppers.com.au/>

Community Recognition Statements

Do you know a local legend? Someone who is worthy of public recognition through volunteering, or dedicating their time to help others, or with a notable sporting achievement or prestigious award?

I love to celebrate these efforts with a short speech to the NSW Parliament called a Community Recognition Statement.

These are recorded in Hansard, the State Parliamentary record, to forever acknowledge those who represent the best of us.

To submit a nomination for a Community Recognition Statement you can email my staff:

lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Astrid Sees Orange

2025 Lake Macquarie Local Woman of the Year, Astrid Hocking, has dedicated much of her life to the care and protection of children.

As a board member of Hearts and Hands Community Development, founded in 2011, her signature orange attire demonstrates her devotion and commitment to this cause. But Astrid's amazing achievements didn't start there. Besides being a teacher, Astrid provided emergency care and fostered some 96 children over 24 years, ensuring children were safe in a loving environment.

A tireless advocate for foster care, Astrid lobbied the State government, and in 2008 Connecting Carers NSW was launched, where she worked for many years and provided firsthand assistance to carers.

Astrid also spends time in the Philippines, where Hearts and Hands partners with local organisations, an orphanage and several



communities. This work focuses on rescuing children from trafficking and abuse and empowering disadvantaged communities to become self-sufficient. Her dedication and passion for child protection is second to none.

Many accolades have been bestowed on Astrid over the years. She has been an Australia Day Ambassador and fulfils many guest speaking roles and I'm honoured to acknowledge Astrid's incredible generosity and inspirational contribution to our community.

Explosive Threat of Lithium-Ion Batteries

In May there was another Lithium-Ion battery fire in Teralba. I was pleased to hear everyone was safe and the fire was successfully managed by local crews. This follows the tragic February 2024 house fire which sadly claimed the lives of two women.

Lithium-Ion batteries pose a significant risk when not stored, maintained and charged appropriately, potentially causing runaway fires in homes or garbage trucks if not correctly disposed of.

It is vital you understand the dangers of these batteries and have fire safety plans in place to protect your family and property. Fire and Rescue NSW and Lake Macquarie City Council have helpful information on their websites.

NSW Parliament recently passed Australia's



first legislation to create a comprehensive whole-of-life stewardship framework to manage these products, from their design and production to their use, re-use, collection, recycling, reprocessing and eventual end-of-life management.

Parliament Recap

In the last 6 months the Government's reform agenda has been on full display, with changes to criminal, waste management, strata, work health and safety, and industrial relations law.

But the prevailing concern in Parliament boils down to one issue – housing, and the fact we simply do not have enough in NSW to ensure everyone has access to stable accommodation. At just over halfway through this Government's term, there is significant pressure to deliver on housing promises. Focus must also be placed on areas outside of Sydney and meeting the specific needs of regional communities.

I've met with Ministers regarding the local projects I believe should be prioritised in the upcoming State Budget. Key priorities include the Mandalong Road and Speers Point roundabout upgrades, policing and public health services in southern Lake Macquarie and the long overdue remediation of LT Creek. I've also had discussions with the Minister for Regional NSW about how the energy transition is set to impact Lake Macquarie, the framework and funding associated with managing this transition, and opportunities for post mining land use.

The Budget is being handed down at the end of this month. Keep an eye on Lake Macquarie Matters E-News and social media to see how Lake Macquarie fares.



Do you want to keep up to date with Lake Macquarie's latest news and community notices?

Did you know I release a monthly digital version of this newsletter?

If you would like to receive the Lake Macquarie Matters E-Newsletter, you can contact my friendly staff and ask to be added to the mailing list for regular updates and information direct to your inbox.

LAKE MACQUARIE AT A GLANCE

2. Mandalong Road Upgrades

- Scoping and investigation
- Display preferred design
- Prepare concept design and environmental assessment
- Approve environmental assessment
- We are here
- Publish environmental assessment
- Detailed design
- Construction*

(*) Pending release of funding

3. Origin Eraring Power Station

In March I spoke at the 40th anniversary of the power station's full commissioning. It was a pleasure to connect with current and former employees, including some involved in Eraring's construction in the late 70s, and to acknowledge their invaluable contribution to powering NSW.



4. Co-located preschools

Two new Government funded co-located preschools at Booragul and Teralba Public Schools to open by 2027.

5. Speers Point Roundabout

Full story page 7

6. Cockle Creek Train Station

Full story page 6



7. LT Creek

Full story page 6



8. Lake Macquarie Classic Boat Shed Rathmines

I recently visited the Boatshed, to catch up with its' crew and chat with Bill Coote.

What a fantastic organisation! I'm a big fan of woodwork and was amazed to see heritage boats being brought back to life (and in some cases building heritage-style boats from scratch).

They are doing more than just boat building and restoration. They're having fun, forging friendships and looking after each other's physical and mental health.

9. Muddy Lake

Full story page 7.



10. Morisset Hospital

Full story page 2.

1. Mandalong RFS

After a decade of effort, the NSW RFS - Mandalong Brigade upgraded from a tin shed to one of the best RFS facilities in NSW. The \$2.1 million upgrade was funded through NSW government grants, private donations and fundraising efforts.

The crew have long served the community and now have a station worthy of their efforts. They are often called to fires throughout the Hunter, working hard to keep everyone safe.

I thank everyone involved, particularly the volunteers, without whom the RFS would not operate.



A Place to Call Home

With more and more people struggling to achieve the dream of owning their own home, and being trapped in a rental cycle, we are seeing added pressure on social and affordable housing. Efficient delivery of diverse housing will be the key to a future where housing is accessible to all.

Lake Macquarie has already been identified as an area of significant growth. Our population will increase, and it is imperative housing availability is addressed. This means removing key roadblocks for development, identifying ways to streamline and fast track approval processes and innovating new solutions for housing density and diversity.

In April I attended the Lake Macquarie City Council Housing Forum. This important event brought together affordable housing providers, community organisations,

industry experts and government to discuss local housing affordability and supply. While we can't solve this decades old crisis in a day, everyone's willingness to contribute and listen to the insights of others is promising.

The Government seeks to increase housing supply with sweeping changes to planning laws, cutting down the approval timeframe for State Significant Development housing projects. But time will tell whether



roadblocks between councils and developers can be overcome to deliver enough high-density and diverse housing to meet the State's needs.

On Track for Change

It is no surprise the secret of Lake Macquarie's idyllic lifestyle was bound to get out.

Overall, growth and development are good for our community, particularly when it comes to investment in public transport services and infrastructure. A booming population, however, can also draw attention to its shortcomings.

I asked the Government when we can expect local train station upgrades to address parking, accessibility, and platform length to accommodate Intercity Trains. I also asked how persistent flooding at Cockle Creek train station is being addressed.

With the Government announcing many planning and zoning changes, expected to increase development in Lake Macquarie, they now have the responsibility to deliver the infrastructure necessary to support the current and expected growth. I look forward to their response addressing the failings of our local Train Stations.



LT Creek – Cleaning Up the Past



Many of you will have never heard of LT Creek, which meets Lake Macquarie at Fennel Bay. The catchment suffers from high levels of suspended sedimentation, a legacy of mining operations at Newstan Colliery, which was owned by the State for most of its operating life.

I recently delivered my third Private Members' Statement in Parliament about the need for the NSW Government to fund remediation of LT Creek. I asserted the Government should exercise responsible stewardship, promoting sustainability, as they would expect from mining corporations. This is a request I've made repeatedly in Budget discussions.

Weevils at War

This small body of water near Dora Creek, has a big problem with a tiny solution.

In late 2022, Crown Lands with UNSW Water Research Laboratory undertook an assessment of Muddy Lake to understand the hydrology and water quality. Muddy Lake was previously impacted by saltwater tidal influence from Lake Macquarie, but with time and mangrove growth, it has become blocked off from the Lake's salt water. The new freshwater conditions are perfect for the invasive weed, *Salvinia*, to flourish. It quickly took over approximately 20ha and Muddy Lake looked like a vast green field. "Well ... Let's go and rip it out!?" ... If only it were so easy.

A host of native flora and fauna are now also thriving with the new conditions and this ecosystem must be protected while also taking drastic steps to remove the weed. In 2020, biosecurity staff at Lake Macquarie City Council and NSW Department of Primary

Industries acted in a coordinated response utilising a tiny little warrior, provided by the Grafton Biocontrol Centre. Introducing the *Cyrtobagous salviniae*.

These tiny weevils are a bio-assassin to *Salvinia*, their numbers multiply when their favourite food is in abundance, and they decimate new growth. You may have noticed the weevil's handiwork over the past couple of years as the water's surface began to see sunlight. The weevil has kept the infestation at relatively low levels in the open water but *Salvinia* still persists in the shallow backwater areas of the wetland system.

Warm weather and fresh rainfall created perfect conditions during the growth season and gave the weed an opportunity to gain some ground on the battlefield. As the weed grows, so will the weevil population, and over the coming months we will see them taking up the good fight again.

While Crown Lands and Council Officers agree restoration of saltwater influence would kill the weed, the endangered Green and Gold Bell Frog is now flourishing in the area. Efforts are now focussed on the balance of eradicating the *Salvinia*, while protecting endangered wildlife.



Road to Answers

With Lake Macquarie residents waiting long enough, I submitted written questions in March seeking timeframes for works to commence essential road upgrades.

The Minister responded in April advising construction on Mandalong Road is expected to start in 2026. Transport for NSW began necessary property surveys to prepare for the upgrade with the Review of Environmental Factors published in May. This progress is promising for the community.

Unfortunately, there was no luck with a start date for construction of the Speers Point upgrade. Traffic modelling and design is ongoing and planning approvals will be needed. A business case is expected to be completed mid-2025, so hopefully this will bring some good news.

It was important to go on the record to



get this information from the Minister as commuters continue to suffer and they deserve answers.

I share the community's frustration with the slow progress on these critical infrastructure works. Mandalong Road and Speers Point roundabout are two of Lake Macquarie's road network lynch pins, and the sooner we see workers on the ground, the better. I will continue lobbying Ministers and seek funding to see these projects prioritised.

Grants Updates

Are you a member of a local sporting club, community, or environmental group? Maybe a volunteer or charitable organisation? Do you have a community project you need funding for?

After so many enquiries seeking support from local organisations, I have begun distributing an email bulletin for available grants and funding opportunities. If you would like to receive this E-Bulletin, please contact my office, and ask to be added to the mailing list.



Heaven Can Wait

The 19th annual Heaven Can Wait - Charity Sailing Regatta successfully raised an incredible \$85,000 for two lifesaving organisations.

\$80,000 was donated to The Cancer Council NSW, to support people living with cancer manage the cost of household chores and transport to and from appointments.

A \$5,000 donation was made to Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie, who last year alone responded to 620 incidents. Crews have been on the water since 1950, originally known as Coastal Patrol, with the Coast Guard also operating from 1976. In 2010 they became Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie as we know them today.

I was pleased to also make my own donation toward these invaluable services, and I congratulate everyone involved in another successful Regatta.



Contact

Need Help? My staff and I can assist with issues related to any NSW Government portfolio.

We also offer:

- ▶ JP services
- ▶ Congratulatory messages for significant birthdays and anniversaries
- ▶ Friendly advice to assist you in finding a resolution to your issue

If you would like to subscribe to my monthly E-Newsletter, please email your contact details to my office lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Address: 126A Cary St, Toronto, NSW 2283

Hours: Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm

Phone: 4959 3200

Website: www.gregpiper1.com



Celebrating a Century

The Month of May saw two Kilpatrick Court residents celebrate their 100th Birthdays!

I met with Lyla Richards and Ron Hansard and enjoyed a laugh and a chat.

Lyla's secret to a long and happy life? "Think about your memories and they will comfort you in times of need. Living your life and enjoying what you've got right in front of you, that's my advice. Enjoy the people and not material things. Live



with no regrets."

Ron is a proud descendant of Thomas Curson Hansard, born in 1776 and for whom Hansard, the report of proceedings of the Westminster Parliament and its committees, was named. Thomas Hansard was involved in the early printing and publication of the parliamentary debates which later bore his name in Australian Parliament. Nearly 250 years after Thomas Hansard's birth I sat with Ron to chat as he celebrates his century of life.

Happy 100th Birthday Lyla and Ron.



New Lease on Life for Rental Tenants

As a tenant, your rental property may not be your "house", but it should feel like your "home". Without the added pressure of struggling to afford unexpected rent increases and fees for rent payments, tenants and their pets will hopefully feel more secure.

Tenants renting privately are better protected following changes to the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2024, effective 19 May 2025. The Act:

- Ends "no grounds" evictions
- Makes keeping pets easier in most rentals
- Caps rent increases at once yearly in most cases
- Ensures fee-free rent payment options



With a housing crisis impacting NSW state-wide, it will take a lot of work to ensure the return of an affordable property market and to correct the housing shortfall. These changes create a fairer landscape for rental tenants.

Thank You to our Emergency Services

Being situated between the East Coast and the Watagan mountains, our region regularly gets hit by big storms, but recently we have seen some extreme weather systems move across Lake Macquarie causing widespread property damage, fallen trees, localised flooding and road closures.

Our local SES and first responders are always there to help and protect our community. They put their lives on the line during bushfire seasons and make themselves available to be deployed to other regions when disasters strike. We are extremely lucky to have these brave emergency personnel and volunteers.

