

Lake Macquarie Matters



A Catalina flying boat comes in for landing at Rathmines.

People power gets Service NSW back to Toronto

Return Service

Providing proof that persistence pays off, our campaign to bring a full-scale Service NSW office back to Toronto has secured a great win.

When Toronto's RTA office was controversially closed three years ago, we took up the fight, stuck with it and won, with the State Government announcing last week that it will build and open a new Service NSW office in Toronto this year.

That means we'll have more government services available here - such as Births, Deaths and Marriages, Housing and property, Education and Training, Legal Information and Services - including all the RMS (formerly RTA) services we lost back in 2015.

It will also be a great boost to local businesses in Toronto because the Service NSW office



will bring more people into town to do business and pay their bills.

The community's support on this campaign has been incredible. More than 12,000 people signed the petition back in 2015 when the RTA was closed.

I'm very grateful to State Finance Minister Victor Dominello who listened to our community, read our submissions and found the money needed to return our services. The Minister joined me at an official announcement on June 1, saying that

Service NSW will now draw up a shortlist of potential sites in Toronto. Personally, I think the former newsagency site in Toronto Town Square and the former Millers store would be good locations.

It's a fantastic win for our community and I thank everyone who supported the campaign. Funding for the new office will be contained in this week's State Budget with plans to have the office opened by the end of 2018.



Welcome

Hello and welcome to my June newsletter. One of the great strengths of our community is its willingness to work together for a better deal, and by doing so we've achieved some good results over the past few months.

This newsletter provides you with a brief update on things happening locally. I encourage you to keep up to date by following my Facebook page and website, or subscribing to my eNews which can be emailed to you monthly.

I hope it finds you and your family well.

Best wishes to you all,



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■ Morisset Lions



I have to acknowledge Morisset Lions Club for the extraordinary job they did in establishing and manning the Driver Reviver stop on the M1 at Beresfield for 23 years. The station closed in January because work on the new intersection has begun. The volunteer group began its work there in 1994 in an effort to reduce driver fatigue and save lives on the road. I'm certain they've done that more often than we will ever know.

■ Dora Creek centenary

It was fantastic to join with residents and friends at Dora Creek to celebrate the centenary of the town's wonderful hall. The organising committee should be applauded for the way in which they marked the centenary and the booklet they produced to ensure the hall's history is preserved. I'm pictured here with my good friend Chris Gavenlock who helped put on a great day.



■ Disability advocacy



The State Government's decision to continue funding disability advocacy services was a great victory for common sense. I was really pleased that the government listened to the community and agreed to put in place much of the plan I'd been pushing for. Under the deal, \$26 million will be made available for disability advocacy services statewide over the next two years. As I said at the Stand By Me rally at Parliament House, we must continue to work to ensure that disability services do not become the unintended victims of the NDIS when State responsibilities are transferred at the end of this month.

Creek dredging in spotlight

I've had a number of meetings with the Government about the need to dredge LT Creek which flows into Fennell Bay. With my support, Lake Macquarie City Council has formally applied for a \$1.5m grant from the government's Resources for Regions Scheme.

The Minister has been very receptive and we should know soon if the application has been successful. LT Creek has been impacted by coal mining since 1887 and was for the most part owned and operated by the State Government.

As a legacy of those historic mining operations, sediment deposits in the upper reaches have resulted in poor aquatic health. The dredging will significantly improve other areas downstream.

Managing our lead legacy

In November last year, the State Government announced it would provide \$23.5m to the EPA to assist with the management of contaminated sites throughout NSW, such as the old Pasmenco smelter at Boolaroo.

While the former smelter site is now essentially decontaminated of lead, there are still legacy issues in the broader area which need to be managed in perpetuity.

I had sought for such a fund to be established, and was pleased when the Government came good, but I'm still asking for more money to be allocated into the program and for Lake Macquarie's share to be increased. I've made a number of submissions to the Government and have had several meetings with Environment Minister Gabrielle Upton



requesting that the Statewide pool be increased to \$25m, and Lake Macquarie's share be increased to \$500,000 a year, which is not unreasonable given the awful mess left behind by Pasmenco.

Lifts for Wyee Station in major upgrade

Wyee Station will be transformed after a plan to install lifts was approved by the State Government earlier this month.

After many years of campaigning for improvements to the access issues at Wyee, I was pleased to see the plan finally approved.

Transport Minister Andrew Constance said three lifts will be installed as well as new lighting and security.

This is a fantastic win, not just for the Wyee community but for all those people who live in the northern suburbs of the Central Coast who use Wyee station.

Accessibility has always been a deterrent for people wanting to use the station because a lot of people, especially the aged or mobility impaired, just can't climb all the stairs.



At the Biggest Morning Tea with Hannah and Leon Goltzman from Cancer Council.



With our future leaders from St Paul's, Lake Macquarie and Morisset high schools.



With solo sailor Wendy Evans and her remarkable support crew from Sailability Toronto.

Kangaroo tourism

I know there are different opinions on the tourists now clambering for a close-up selfie with the Morisset Hospital kangaroos, but I'm pleased that we're now moving towards a formal management plan.

To be quite honest, I didn't expect the international attention when I first made the video on the kangaroo issue and posted it on my website and social media, but I'm glad the media spotlight finally jolted the right people into action.

We know the locals have enjoyed the roos for decades without much fuss, but this age of social media let the tourist genie out of the bottle and I'm not sure we'll be able to put it back.

The number of domestic and international tourists now visiting the site has become a significant problem and



we need to find a solution which protects the kangaroos and visitors as well as respects the needs of residents and staff.

I'm pleased that the Health Minister Brad Hazzard has agreed to bring all the stakeholders together to find a solution. Those stakeholders include animal welfare groups, NSW Health which owns the site, NPWS and other groups.

Already, new signs in eight different languages warning people against feeding the animals and to keep a safe distance have been installed. I will keep you updated.



\$2m for new art and cultural facilities

Lake Macquarie's arts scene received a tremendous boost last month when more than \$2 million was committed to two significant local arts projects.

State Minister for the Arts Don Harwin joined me in announcing that Lake Macquarie council had secured almost \$750,000 for the expansion of Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery.

We were also able to announce that the council will receive a further \$1.35m for construction of the new Speers Point Multi Arts Space.

The space will provide a site for cultural and social events and act as a hub for other events such as outdoor cinema, theatre, markets and concerts in the popular Speers Point Park. It's hoped that the new building will be completed in 2020.

Both projects form part of a broader strategy to increase 'arts tourism' in Lake Macquarie.



Showing Arts Minister Don Harwin around the gallery with mayor Kay Fraser. Picture courtesy of Simone De Peak, Newcastle Herald.

In February, we were also able to secure almost \$300,000 in grants for the planned 'art trail' which will feature a number of permanent art installations at various locations around the lake.

Bus timetables

The new bus timetables left plenty of people offside when they were introduced several months ago, but I'm pleased to say that some of the major problems in our area are being ironed out.



Links from Cardiff South and Macquarie Hills to Kotara, Charlestown and Newcastle were a significant problem and left many people disadvantaged, but after a number of meetings with the Minister, transport officials and operator Keolis Downer, we've got some of those problems rectified. We'll keep working and keep talking as the new timetable is bedded in, but I want to thank all those residents – particularly Dennis and Ursula Duncan from Cardiff South – who worked pro-actively with me towards getting a better deal.

Pokies reform



I have supported the State Government's reforms to liquor and gaming laws which I hope will reduce the impacts of problem gambling and alcohol abuse. Clearly, the local pubs and clubs do an enormous amount of good, but there is a significant downside to their poker machines and the damage they cause to many vulnerable people as well as those around them. If anything, I don't think the new laws go far enough, and poker machines are not the only area in need of attention. Something has to be done about the advertisements for sports betting agencies, as well as online casinos. It's a tricky area but we simply cannot ignore the damage the gambling industry is doing.



Showing some Toronto U3A members around Parliament House.



Introducing Lake Macquarie's Women of the Year to the Premier and Minister.



Opening Wangi Wangi's new fitness trail with Wangi Lions Club members.

Rathmines Hall

We should see work starting on the Rathmines Hall refurbishment soon. Lake Macquarie council is in the final stages of assessing tenders for the design and construction and work should start soon after. The State Government has provided \$800,000 for the project with the council providing a similar amount.



Heaven Can Wait

This year's Heaven Can Wait Sailing Regatta again raised a significant sum for two very worthy local organisations. Staged by Royal Motor Yacht Club Toronto, this year's 24-hour regatta raised more than \$40,000 for the Cancer Council and more than \$5000 for Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie. My congratulations go to Mel Steiner and everyone else at the club.



Volunteer recognised

It was an absolute pleasure to present Robyn Charlton with a NSW Government Community Service Award last month. Robyn has worked voluntarily in the area for many years on countless environmental and community projects. She's a tireless volunteer and a wonderful advocate for our local environment.



Contact

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

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Greg Piper

Independent Member for the
State Electorate of Lake Macquarie

New Return and Earn vending machine installed at Rathmines

The rollout of the State Government's Return and Earn scheme hasn't been without its problems.

As I've maintained from the start though, the scheme is essentially a good one and will eventually achieve what needs to be achieved.

I'm pleased that the availability of Reverse Vending Machines and over-the-counter recycling locations is steadily improving, reducing some of the frustration people have had with travelling long distances to claim a refund, and often finding the machines full or inoperable when they got there.

We now have a new Reverse Vending Machine at Club Catalina in Rathmines which will take some of the pressure off the other



one at Bonnells Bay. It's great news but I'm still lobbying for more of these machines to be placed around the electorate.

If you want to check the status of a machine before you leave home with a car full of empty drink containers, phone Tomra on 1800 290 691 before you leave.

Hillsborough Rd plan still missing in action

Like everyone who regularly uses Hillsborough Road, I've grown increasingly concerned about delays to improvement plans.

The RMS has been working on a corridor study that would improve safety and congestion on Hillsborough Road and adjoining roads such as Crockett Street, but we're still yet to see it.

I've made numerous requests to the Minister and to the RMS over the past few years. When I used Question Time in May last year to inquire about the study, the Roads Minister said it would be released by the end of 2017. We're still waiting and still none the wiser.

To its credit, the RMS made some immediate safety improvements following the tragic death of Jade Frith who was hit by a car two years ago. RMS is also spending \$1m on installing pedestrian lights near the service station, 100 metres east of the Macquarie Road roundabout, but as we all know, there are bigger issues with congestion and safety and they need to be fixed.

Keep an eye on my website and Facebook page for news on when this study is released as you'll be able to provide feedback on the plans.

Fourteen clubs secure State sporting grants



We were able to secure 14 grants this year from the Office of Sport's annual funding scheme. These grants help to provide clubs with new equipment, professional development and facilities which are always needed and welcomed in the Lake Macquarie area. Among the recipients this year were Toronto Tigers Baseball Club, Macquarie Shores Swimming Club, Toronto Croquet Club, Westlakes Wildcats Football Club, South Cardiff Football Club, Toronto Pony Club, Hunter Valley Paddlesports Club, Hunter Mountainbike Association, Cardiff Bowling Club, Southern Lakes United Football Club, Lake Macquarie BMX Club and Rathmines Bowling Club.