

# Lake Macquarie Matters

Sunset over Pulbah Island

## Sell-out fears grow

**The privatisation of public assets is something people are raising with me almost every day, in surveys, emails, letters and in the street, and none of those people are supportive.**

Regardless of where you stand on the issue, there's a reasonably strong argument that the State Government had a mandate to sell the poles and wires from the power network because it went to the election with that policy. But despite what many people think, this sort of privatisation isn't something pursued solely by the

Liberal-National Coalition. The previous Labor government sold off NSW Lotteries, although Labor's record of sell-offs stands in small contrast to that of conservative governments.

More recently in our area we've seen the privatisation of State assets including Eraring and Vales Point power stations, Newcastle port, some health services and bus services. On top of that there's the privatisation of prisons, the ports at Port Botany and Port



Kembla, Sydney Ferries and more recently, the land and property registry.

The government is now looking at privatising the operations of Wyong Hospital and Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre.

An overwhelming number of people have rallied against these sell-offs and I wholeheartedly support them. I share their concerns about this broader program of cashing in public assets because I'm not convinced that the private sector can always provide a better level of service or better value for taxpayers.

The people of Lake Macquarie have spoken to me very clearly. They did not want their poles and wires sold off, they do not want their health services privatised, they don't want to see profitable and very popular recreation centres sold out.

They simply don't want any further erosion of public assets, and neither do I.

## Welcome

This year's news might have been largely dominated by controversial government decisions, but locally we've remained focused



on making the year a productive one. We saw the opening of our long-needed police station at Morisset while work on the new Toronto station is well under way and on schedule for completion early in the New Year. It's an excellent outcome after years of hard work and lobbying. We've seen the RMS complete the widening of Cary Street. The outcome has been very pleasing but of course there is more to do including the much-needed upgrades of the remaining single lane sections of the main road between Morisset and Glendale. While we lost the fight to save the RTA at Toronto, we got a Services NSW kiosk to replace many of the lost services. After decades of neglect, we've also seen progress on the Wyee sewer project which will be completed by 2020. It remains a great privilege to represent the people of Lake Macquarie. I wish to thank those who support and help me in seeking better infrastructure and services for our area.

In the meantime, let me take this opportunity to wish you, your family and friends a very merry Christmas, and a safe, healthy and prosperous 2017. Best wishes to you all,  
Greg

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## Cash for cans

It's been a long time coming but both houses of Parliament have finally passed legislation for a container deposit scheme in NSW, meaning people will get a 10c refund when they return eligible empty drink containers from July 1 next year. I've backed such a scheme for many years and I am hopeful that the approved scheme can be further expanded down the track. I believe this will make a huge difference to litter in our environment and will hopefully lead to more people taking greater care of the environment in even more ways.

## Medicinal cannabis

I'd grown a bit concerned about delays to the start of medicinal cannabis trials at Newcastle's Calvary Mater Hospital but I'm pleased the trials are going ahead. I'm very supportive of these trials because of the potential benefits they may bring to people suffering a range of terminal or debilitating illness. Among those already involved in the local trials are 12 children who are receiving an experimental drug called Epidiolex which contains cannabidiol to treat severe epilepsy. Cannabidiol does not contain THC and is therefore non-psychoactive.

## Cenotaph upgrade



I'm really pleased that the Speers Point Cenotaph will be upgraded after a successful funding application by Boolaroo-Speers Point RSL Sub-branch. Funding of \$16,550 was secured through the State Government's Community Development Fund.

## Arts funding

In other funding news, Lake Macquarie council has secured a \$47,000 grant to run the gallery's Art(ful) Futures project. The project is a regional strategic partnership aimed at mentoring mental health service users with art skills. The support was secured through the government's Arts and Cultural Development Program.

## Wider M1 will ease congestion

**We're finally going to see a widening of the M1 to alleviate congestion between Morisset and Tuggerah.**

State and Federal funds are now committed and tenders were called in October.

If you've tried to travel to Sydney from the Toronto or Morisset exits during holiday periods, you'll know how congested this section of motorway has become. This project will see an additional southbound and northbound lane added between Tuggerah and the Doyalson Link Road intersection. Also, the abysmal surface of the existing road will be repaired.

## Car dump creates concern

**Like a lot of the residents and workers in the Mandalong area, I've been angered by the RMS's actions in towing abandoned cars off the M1 and dumping them on Mandalong Road near the freeway exit.**

In doing so, the problem becomes the council's. Remarkably, the RMS is doing this legally under a section of the Transport Act. The bigger problem with dumping them on a council road is that the council has to give the owners two weeks to remove them, giving vandals and thieves plenty of time to strip parts and generally damage the vehicles, including often incinerating them.

In some cases, those fires have set nearby bush alight causing understandable concern for people living on nearby properties as well as requiring our emergency services to attend the resultant fires.

I've spoken to both the RMS and the council and both are in talks to find a solution. Hopefully a satisfactory solution is found soon.



## Morisset station opens, Toronto on the way

**Police Minister Troy Grant and NSW Police Assistant Commissioner Catherine Burn were recently on hand to officially open the new Morisset Police Station.**

Last month, we saw the benefits of having a high police presence at Morisset when Transit Police were able to race down the road to attend an armed hold-up at the pharmacy and detain the alleged offender.

Meanwhile, work on the new police station at Toronto is on schedule and will be completed early in the new year.

I take the opportunity to remind people in the Toronto area that police are operating out of Boolaroo police station which is manned around the clock.

It's fantastic that our local police are finally getting the modern facilities they deserve.



With Toronto artist Saretta Fielding and her artwork in Parliament House



Raising money for palliative care on Daffodil Day at Toronto



With Marilyn Mills being inducted into the Royal Society for the Blind's Sporting Hall of Fame

# A fresh wind in their sails

**He's 87, so Alby Roberts doesn't waste time using too many words.**

"Lake Macquarie is the best waterway on Australia's eastern seaboard," he says. "Some take it for granted, but I don't."

Alby has sailed every inch of the lake and is well known to just about everyone else who's tried.

He was just 17 when he joined Teralba Amateur Sailing Club on the day it was formed, although he'd been sailing on the lake for years prior. He's still there, usually wearing his trademark black hat, teaching old dogs new tricks and showing the young kids where to find the wind.

The 1995 fire which destroyed the clubhouse is the only blot on an otherwise happy and remarkable history.

"The clubhouse could always be rebuilt," he said. "What broke my heart was that so many people had put so much into it. The ladies from the area raise all the money from raffles and housie.



"It's the people who make a good club, and we have some excellent people. The current committee is really good."

The Teralba sailing club celebrated its 70th anniversary last month in a new clubhouse which was built through successful grant applications. I've been really proud to have helped them secure those grants through the Community Building Partnership and State sports grant programs.

Successful applicants for this year's round of CBP grants are listed below.

## Community groups share 2017 grants

**Fifteen community groups in the Lake Macquarie electorate have been awarded grants to improve or construct facilities under the States Community Building Partnership Scheme.**

Sporting clubs, environmental groups and child care centres are among this year's recipients, sharing in \$300,000 worth of grants. Among the successful sporting groups are Wangi RSL Amateur Sailing Club which will receive funds for a new rescue boat, and Westlakes Wildcats Football Club for ground drainage works. Morisset Showground Trust will receive \$40,000 for a long-overdue upgrade of power, water and drainage systems at the showground. Cardiff Scouts will be able to upgrade their hall while Woodrising Natural Learning Centre will receive funding for the partial refurbishment of their building. There were 28 strong applications worth almost \$950,000 this year which means competition for the grants is tough. The full list of this year's recipients is on my website. If you'd like to know more about the application process for next year's round of

grants, please contact my office. Each year I also run workshops dealing with fundraising and the writing of grant applications. Please contact my office if you or your organisation would be interested in attending.



## Concern for future of Myuna Bay

**I remain concerned for the future of Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centre with the State Government continuing to consider a privatisation of services there.**

Myuna Bay is one of the few sport and recreation centres that makes a profit, but debate about its future should not only be about money. The most important issue is the need to maintain high quality services with trained professionals delivering programs to a wide range of groups in our community.

The current staff do a fantastic job and the centre caters for many groups of disabled children and people with special needs. I do not want to see those operations diminished in any way.

I have held meetings with Sports Minister Stuart Ayres and the executive director of Sport and Recreation Phil Hamdorf and they have assured me that the centre itself will not be sold, but its operations are being reviewed.

Myuna Bay has served generations of young children in the region and it is a highly valued community asset which should be retained.

We'll know more in the new year when State Cabinet decides if it will pursue the privatisation agenda.

## Build them here

**Like many others I was disappointed when the State Government chose a South Korean consortium to build the state's new trains. The outcomes for Australian jobs will be chiefly through a maintenance facility to be built on the Central Coast.**

South Korea can undoubtedly build the trains cheaper and there is no reason to doubt that they will be anything other than high quality. The lack of a local build, however, will hurt the area not just in terms of the jobs we don't gain now, but also with the skills we lose. This will diminish our opportunities to bid for such projects in the future because we no longer have the skilled workforce.

I feel that a fantastic opportunity to build in the development of specialist trades and apprenticeships through this contract has been squandered.

Hopefully more opportunities for local manufacturing through this contract or others will be on the horizon, but they don't just happen on their own, we need to make them happen.



With environmental campaigner Katherine Bronte and Glinda the squirrel glider



Catching up with the Morisset Macca's crew and other minions on McHappy Day



Taking Southlakes U3A group on a tour of Parliament House

## Double blow to our environment

Despite overwhelming evidence that our natural environment is in decline, State Parliament approved two controversial bills last month which I fear will only add to that problem.

Both bills – one relating to biodiversity conservation and the other to crown lands – are complex which is probably why they failed to get much media attention.

In my opinion, both bills fall well short of what is needed to protect our environment.

The new Crown Lands Act could see vast tracts of crown land sold off or vested to government departments, including UrbanGrowth for example.

It could also result in a lot of crown land being transferred to local councils to manage. Lake Macquarie council does an excellent job of managing such land, but some councils don't. Those which are strapped for cash, for example, could use the new laws to reclassify community land as operational land much more easily and potentially sell it off.



The other bill – the Biodiversity Conservation Bill – is a radical change to existing laws such as the Native Vegetation Act and biodiversity offset laws and I fear it will lead to higher levels of land clearing. Peak environmental groups, scientists and even many farmers opposed this legislation. We already have 999 species and 108 ecological communities on the State's threatened species list. We need to be reversing that figure, not adding to it.

### 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

## Unlocking the potential of Cardiff and Glendale

**New road and public transport links are crucial to the future of the Glendale-Cardiff area which is why I've been working with Lake Macquarie council and others to find funding to get the work done.**

That area is expected to house 4000 new homes by 2031 while the industrial area will generate about 6000 new jobs.

Newcastle might grab all the media headlines, but there is no argument that the

Lake Macquarie Transport

Interchange at Glendale will do much more for public transport services in the Hunter region than a few hundred metres of light rail in Newcastle.

But the interchange remains largely unfunded despite being backed by all Hunter councils and identified as a top priority by every key business group in the region.

The other key to opening up that strategic gateway and employment hub is extending Munibung Road from the existing Cardiff industrial estate through to the new roundabout near Bunnings at Boolaroo.



That 700-metre extension would cut the travel time from Cardiff industrial estate to Speers Point from 11 minutes to one minute, and it would alleviate a lot of the congestion at Glendale and Warners Bay.

Lake Macquarie council has an application in for \$4.46m in Restart NSW funding for Munibung Road but there's been no decision yet. The interchange and Pennant Street Bridge projects need significantly more than that, but with everyone working together, hopefully we'll see some money in next year's State budget.

### At your service

**The number of people visiting the Service NSW digital kiosk at Toronto Library shows just how warranted the service is.**

Between 30 and 40 people are using the service every day in the short period it's open on weekday mornings.

There are about 200 government-related services offered there now, up from the 170 when it opened six months ago. You can renew car and boat registrations there, apply for seniors cards, apply for eTags and the like. I'd really like to see more people using the kiosk so we can not only retain it but have the opening hours extended and better payment systems introduced.



### Milestone festivals

**Big crowds gathered to mark some notable recent events.**

More than 5000 people attended this year's Rathmines Catalina Festival. The festival, now in its 10th year, has gone from strength to strength and this year's featured one of the best air displays of historic aircraft I've seen for quite a while. The Wangi Wangi community also celebrated during October to mark their town's 100th birthday.

It's always great to see this fantastic community come together, celebrating their history and some of their well-known and famous former residents.

It was also great to see Morisset Public School mark its 125th anniversary.

The school's oldest surviving former student Phyllis Trimble was on hand to ring the school's historic bell with the youngest current student.

Renowned local historian Doug Saxon also released a great book on the school's long and proud history.