

Lake Macquarie Matters

Sunrise over the lake from Royal Motor Yacht Club Toronto. Photo: Ron Bonham, www.photoaction.net.au

Back on the beat

The new Morisset Police Station has opened and construction of the new one at Toronto is well under way as police services in the area receive their biggest boost in decades.

The \$5.5m Morisset station has been well received by local police and the broader community. I'm pleased to see these stations coming to fruition after long battles to convince the State government they were needed. Toronto in particular was in a dreadful state but will be a state-of-the-art station when it's completed early next year.

In addition to the general duties police, Morisset station is forming the home base for about 19 transit police as well as those attached to the dog squad. That means we're seeing a lot more police around the streets. While some people have expressed concern that the station isn't open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Superintendent Brett



Greentree said 21st-century policing just doesn't require it. It is far better to have police in cars or 'mobile police stations' than sitting behind a desk, he said.

Police work is very different these days and I applaud Supt Greentree and his crews who have actually managed to reduce crime rates almost across the board in the Lake Macquarie electorate.

Most of the people and business owners I have spoken to report a clear increase in police presence, and I have certainly seen the same since Morisset station opened.

When it's completed, the new Toronto Police Station will be operating 24/7. In the meantime, police are operating out of the old Boolaroo station. The new Morisset station can be contacted on 4973 9999 while the Boolaroo station is on 4950 3699.



Welcome

It's really pleasing to move around the electorate and see so much State infrastructure being renewed. Of course, there is still much more to come, but we're finally seeing the covers come off some key projects while work on others is well under way.

As you know, the new Morisset Police Station has opened and work is forging ahead on the new station at Toronto. The widening of Cary Street at Toronto is on schedule to be completed by the end of the year.

My focus now is on getting more funds to expand other sections of the main link between Morisset and Glendale, as well as continuing to push for the long-awaited upgrade of Hillsborough Road. With the federal election now behind us, attention will turn to upcoming council elections. I'm really pleased that we were able to convince the State government that merging Lake Macquarie and Newcastle councils was the wrong move. While I hope you enjoy this update, don't forget that you can also keep in touch with local issues by following me on the social media channels listed below or by signing up to my monthly eNewsletter. If you haven't signed up for it, just send your name and email address to lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au and we'll add you to the list. Best wishes, Greg



■ New Rathmines hall

Rathmines Public School will get a new hall after the original was engulfed by fire in February last year. Damage from the fire was severe and the hall had to be demolished, but funds for a new \$3-million hall are now locked in. A replacement was finally confirmed in May with a construction tender awarded in June. All going well, the new hall should be completed by the end of this year.

■ Sewer for Wyee

The \$26-million plan to connect 400 homes at Wyee to Hunter Water's reticulated sewerage system is advancing behind the scenes. Detailed planning is being finalised and I'm hoping to hold a meeting with Wyee residents in September to outline the next phases of the process. The project is still on target to be completed before the end of 2020 at the latest. After decades on inaction by a number of governments, I'm happy to have finally got things moving. I firmly believe this work will unlock Wyee's potential.

■ Community grants

Applications for this year's Community Building Partnership grants have opened with a total pool of \$300,000 available to not-for-profit groups in the electorate again this year. The CBP grants are available for infrastructure projects undertaken by charities, social, sporting or environmental groups. Applications close on July 22. All the assessment criteria is available at www.communitybuildingpartnership.nsw.gov.au. For further information phone 13 77 88 or my office on 4959 3200. Cardiff-Boolaroo cricket club was successful in getting a \$30,000 grant in last years allocation to buy a new pitch roller (pictured).



Stay in touch



gregpiper1.com



New calls to upgrade station

I took the campaign to upgrade Wyee and Dora Creek railway stations to parliament again last month.

There are serious accessibility issues with both stations. Wyee needs lifts to allow people with disabilities or mobility problems to access the centre platform.

If the Government is serious about getting

people to use public transport, it must start with making these stations properly accessible. Populations in these areas are growing as well as aging, and the stairs act as a barrier for many people wanting to catch the train to work or to Sydney and Newcastle.

I'll be keeping pressure on the government, but I've supported a suggestion from the public that the installation of more platform seating and 'rest seats' on the overhead bridge would make life a bit easier for those who struggle with the climb.

Illegal dumpers targeted



Illegal dumping is on the rise again, particularly in the Awaba area.

This level of disrespect to the environment and community saddens me. There's no excuse for dumping the likes of asbestos in local bushland. This problem is not limited to Awaba and occurs throughout the whole region. There is a strong push for this part of Awaba to be declared a State conservation area. I support that push, but it's a complicated process because so much of the land is tied

up in private ownership and leases. I am pleased that the EPA, in partnership with Lake Macquarie City Council, is investigating the illegal dumping and are in the process of cleaning it up, but clearly there is a long way to go.

If you spot any illegal dumping activity anywhere, phone the RID hotline on 131 555 immediately.

Plans to widen Hillsborough Road

The RMS will soon finish a draft plan to widen and improve Hillsborough Road at Warners Bay.

The \$4 million planning phase is looking at the entire corridor between Warners Bay and the inner-city bypass. I've been particularly vocal about improving the Macquarie Road intersection near McDonald's, and the Crockett Street intersection.

The road's problems were no more evident than when promising young swimmer Jade Frith was tragically killed while trying to cross Hillsborough Road back in April. A petition bearing more than 15,000 signatures from people wanting traffic lights to replace the Hillsborough and Macquarie road

roundabout was presented to parliament in June. The roundabout certainly isn't the only problem along this corridor. Another concern to me is the Crockett Street intersection where cars turning right out of Cardiff South are often at a higher risk than they are at other spots along Hillsborough Road.

The RMS has assured me that a draft plan will be put on public exhibition later this year. Meanwhile, some interim measures including fences on the median strip and the relocation of the bus stop will hopefully be made at the spot where Jade's accident occurred.



With the guys at Wangi Men's Shed after they secured a grant to solar power their fantastic facility.



Opening the wonderful photographic exhibition at Teralba by Ron Bonham



Had a great time meeting some of the senior students at Lake Macquarie High

Bottleneck almost beat

Work on the \$5.5 million widening of Cary Street at Toronto is over the half-way mark and remains on schedule to be completed before the end of the year.

That will come as a huge relief to the many people who get caught in this bottleneck every day. When completed, there will be two northbound and southbound lanes between The Boulevard and Victory Parade with right-turn bays at the Donnelly Avenue and James Street intersection.

The northbound bus stop will also be relocated. It all means there will be a much smoother flow of traffic through the busy centre, with dedicated lanes for those turning off.

The road will of course come into one lane near Bay Street, however with the road traffic complexity reduced and driver



behaviour improved, this will allow for safer merging along this section. In the long term the new works will fit in with any decision taken to further widen the corridor. I believe the next stage of widening should be at the Argenton end where the bottleneck is worsening.

Leading the way



Smelterville and Kellogg in Idaho have some lessons for us in managing lead.

These towns sit either side of what was once the world's largest lead smelter which left extraordinarily high levels of contamination. The Bunker Hill Smelter closed nearly 20 years before Pasmenco at Cockle Creek. With 20 years more experience I believe there are lessons we can take from their experience that will ensure our community is safe from, and not unduly burdened by, the legacy of Pasmenco. I was therefore pleased to visit with Lake Macquarie council's sustainability manager Alice Howe and the EPA's acting manager of contaminated sites Matt James. We met with a range of experts and saw first-hand ways they are managing an even more complex issue than ours.

Budget blues

Another State budget, another year with no funding for Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange and Pennant Street bridge.

Everyone except the State Government appears to be on the same page with these projects which will create thousands of jobs, open up new business zones, create better road links and create the central public transport hub which Lake Macquarie desperately needs.

I've made numerous requests and submissions for funding, but we're still left waiting.

On a positive note, the Budget contained more than \$6.3 million for local roads, including \$650,000 for repairs to Dora Creek bridge, money to resurface TC Frith Avenue at Booragul and Mandalong Road at Morisset, among others, and \$1.8 million to complete the widening of Cary Street at Toronto.

It was also good to see the government pouring \$14 million into the planned Fassifern-Hexham freight rail bypass.

Social housing projects will also get a financial boost while further planning for the Wyee sewer connection has also been funded.

Going batty at Blackalls Park

While the colony of flying foxes may have left their Blackalls Park roost for the winter, work is still being undertaken on a plan which might encourage them to find a new home away from some long-suffering human neighbours.

At its peak, the colony at Blackalls Park numbered about 40,000 in some estimates, and the impact on the health and sanity of neighbouring residents was just too severe.

I've made representations to the State Environment Minister, saying that while the flying foxes are good, they have to be managed in a way which minimises their impact on humans trying to co-exist in the same area.

Lake Macquarie council is preparing a management plan, and I've encouraged them to seek funding through the State's \$1m flying fox management scheme in an effort to have it implemented before the flying foxes return next summer.



Roads and health top survey

A big thanks to the many people who took the time to answer my recent survey on Lake Macquarie issues.

Overwhelmingly, State roads, police numbers, public transport, health and environmental issues topped your list of concerns.

On a broader level, aged care, cuts to TAFE and the privatisation of public assets also rated highly on your statewide radar.

Your responses help guide my representations to the State Government and help me to prioritise issues that will shape our region in the future.

Of course if you have any State-related issue or concern, you should feel free to contact me through my Toronto office any time.



Lyn and I enjoyed the Memory Walk staged by Alzheimer's Australia at Speers Point Park



Raising the flag at this year's Heritage Festival



Always inspiring to catch up with Lake Macquarie's Woman of the Year, Grace McLean

TAFE cuts are biting hard

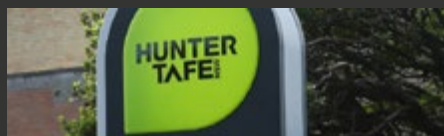
Cutbacks within TAFE continue to be a major concern with new figures showing a significant reduction in enrolments and teaching staff in the Hunter region.

Data secured by the Newcastle Herald via a 'freedom of information' application in May revealed just how dire the situation has become as the government continues to rip funding out of the system.

In 2012 Hunter TAFE had 64,403 enrolments. In the first four months of this year there were only 24,405 enrolled in courses for all of 2016.

That figure alone is cause for concern because it means many young people in Lake Macquarie are missing out on vital vocational education and training.

The drop in numbers is due mainly to the State Government's introduction of the Smart and Skilled program which offers government subsidies to all registered training providers (including TAFE) for qualifications listed on its skills list.



This has resulted in fee increases for courses not on the list. It's also resulted in the loss of about 120 permanent and support staff within Hunter TAFE and a drop in the number of courses offered by TAFE.

Glendale TAFE campus has been valuable in delivering high-quality vocational education and trades training to thousands of local people year after year.

We need a strong public-sector organisation that will continue to offer that education to all, regardless of their background or their ability to pay.

I don't believe competition always delivers better outcomes. Yes, TAFE needs to grow and adapt to a changing world, but as I have told the government, it has always done that and can continue to do so if it's properly supported by the government.

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

Bill's still tuned in at 103



I'm fortunate to meet many extraordinary people in my travels around the electorate, but few amaze me more than Coal Point's Bill Hall.

Bill will turn 104 in November, still keeps a spotlessly clean home and has no trouble getting up and down his steep driveway which runs between his home and his sheds. He's also amassed an amazing collection of historic radios, paraphernalia and associated spare parts. What Bill doesn't know about ham radio maybe isn't worth knowing. It's an extraordinary collection which is intricately catalogued.

Born in Abermain in 1912, Bill spent only a day working in the coal pits with his father before deciding "a life in darkness wasn't for me". So he went to work at the Kurri Co-op and later bought his first radio for 25 shillings. Instead of listening to it, Bill spent five weeks pulling it apart and rebuilding it. Thus began

the life-long love affair which continues today. Through his carefully arranged 'radio room', he still chats daily with friends around the country, and some overseas. Each day he chats to "at least eight or nine" mates over the ham radio channels. One of those mates, in Osaka Japan, had his first conversation with Bill in 1958 and they still chat regularly. The mateship took Bill to Japan for 21 visits! "I don't wanna part with any of it," Bill tells me. "I like helping mates out with bits and pieces when they need them but that's it. I get really tired of blokes just coming around wanting stuff. I find that a bit rude. "I've just enjoyed it all my life," he said. "And I met so many people all around the world because of it. Never gets lonely."

Use it or lose it

While it's no replacement for the motor registry we lost at Toronto, the Service NSW kiosk inside Toronto library is being reasonably well utilised.

As I've said before, we have to use this kiosk or risk losing it and so far results are good. The government will be reviewing the operation later in the year but I understand there are moves to expand its capacity to take cash and credit card payments. That means you'll be able to pay for car registrations and the like over the counter. Remember, services offered at the kiosk aren't restricted to car and boat registrations. You can get information on most government services there and apply for everything from a Seniors Card to a fishing license as well as research births, deaths and marriages information. You can even enrol to vote there.

Sporting club grants

Ten sporting groups from throughout western Lake Macquarie were successful in securing State funding for capital equipment, events and development of their facilities.

Morisset Basketball was successful in getting \$11,795 for the purchase and installation of new basketball hoops at Morisset PCYC, while Sailability at Toronto secured \$8000 to buy a yacht for disabled sailors. Among other groups to secure funding were Lake Macquarie Crocs Masters Swimming Club (\$6600), Macquarie Football Club (\$2000), Macquarie Shores Swimming Club (\$2877), Morisset United Football Club (\$4800), South Lake Macquarie Amateur Sailing Club (\$5500), Teralba Amateur Sailing Club (\$4428), Toronto Baseball Club (\$2000) and Wangi Bowling Club (\$2000).