

Lake Macquarie Matters

Train over Cockle Creek. Photograph by Greg Piper

People power in action

The campaign to save Toronto Motor Registry drew an outstanding response from our community. Residents pulled together to let the Government know how strongly they opposed the decision to transfer its operations to the Warners Bay Service NSW centre.

With almost 11,000 signatures signed to a petition circulated by more than 50 local businesses and individuals, the issue was debated in Parliament on October 22.

In the debate, I pointed out that residents from some Morisset Peninsula suburbs would need up to six hours and 10 interchanges for a round trip to the Warners Bay Service NSW centre by public transport.

While the closure went ahead, the Government has noted the community concern and at the time of writing, my request for a Service NSW outlet for western Lake Macquarie was being considered by the Finance Minister.



With Annie Li, from Michel's Toronto, one of the businesses that circulated the petition.

Welcome

It has been an interesting year in NSW politics as Premier Mike Baird settles into his first full term. His agenda of privatising assets to recycle money for big infrastructure

projects has played out as expected: the poles and wires have been largely sold off, following on from last year's sale of the Port of Newcastle, and the Government is pushing ahead with major transport, road and urban renewal projects.

Policies that have hit closer to home are local government amalgamations and motor registry closures, including our registry at Toronto (see story on this page). I have strongly opposed the Government's preferred merger of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle councils as I believe it will strip our city of its hard-won identity, lead to a decline in service delivery and ultimately hit ratepayers in the hip pocket.

The privatisation of Newcastle bus, ferry and light rail services is another issue with local implications, especially for constituents who live in areas served by the government buses. We are yet to see the outcome of the 'market sounding' process, but I believe the community should have been consulted on this major change.

You can keep in touch with local issues by following me on the social media channels listed below. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all.



Special Christmas delivery

My Christmas correspondence has a unique look this year, courtesy of three 'little helpers' from Toronto Public School who designed my cards.

Congratulations to Noah Williams, Casey Hill-McCartin and Teah McAlpine, pictured left to right, whose festive drawings were chosen to deck my card collection. A big thanks, too, to all Toronto Public School students who submitted designs. They were all delightful.



Presenting Meals on Wheels Volunteer Awards to Brian and Sylvia Byles



Morisset High Year 12 graduation with captains Dana Patterson and Ben Steel



Meeting constituents at the Electorate Information Evening



Presentation to Cancer Council from the Heaven Can Wait regatta



Footy Nations tournament at the Lake Macquarie Regional Football Facility



With Endeavour client Danny Mitchell at the Fennell Bay centre opening



Opening the Endeavour centre at Fennell Bay with Don MacAskill, Adam Willis and Andrew Hughes



Wishing the Diamonds good luck before the Netball World Cup



Chatting with the ABC Open crew on The Boulevard, Toronto



At the NSW Justice Awards with nominee Jeanette Suttie



NAIDOC Week celebrations with Selina Archibald



At the Boolaroo Open Day



At the RFS cadet championships at Myuna Bay sports centre



With Meals on Wheels Volunteer Award recipients Peter Gambrill and Meryl Rickett

Interchange project begins

After nearly two decades in planning, the first sod was finally turned on the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange in July. I was among MPs and council representatives who marked the occasion at Glendale.

I have always had great belief in the potential of the interchange to transform Glendale and surrounding suburbs into a regional hub for commercial and residential growth.

Stage one, which will provide a new access to the shopping and sports centres from Main Road, Cardiff, will be finished by the end of 2016. An estimated \$100 million more is needed to complete the project, but hopefully the momentum created by the first stage getting under way will help



Local MPs mark the turning of the first sod on the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange project.

our community secure the funding needed to complete this vital infrastructure.

Dora Creek safety

The RMS is looking into safety issues around the Dora Creek bridge, in response to community concerns. It has erected temporary fencing and mesh barricades to prevent dangerous crossings of Wangi Road.

The temporary barriers will be in place until a permanent fence is erected. RMS is also reviewing heavy vehicle traffic on the bridge and undertaking repairs of the walkway. For information, go to www.rms.nsw.gov.au.

Cary St works under way

The \$5.5 million Cary Street upgrade at Toronto has begun, with crews working on the relocation of utilities. This is a big job, which will carry through into the new year.

The second stage will involve widening the western side of Cary St and installation of lights at the Donnelly Ave and James St intersection. The project will improve safety and congestion through the addition of extra lanes and turning bays.

\$300,000 for community projects

Eighteen community organisations in the Lake Macquarie electorate will share in \$300,000 worth of grants for facilities and building projects under the Community Building Partnership (CBP) program.

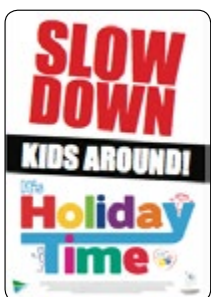
Among the successful 2015 recipients announced this month were Wangi Men's Shed, Cardiff-Boolaroo District Cricket Club, Lake Macquarie Classic Boat Association, Morisset Children's Centre, Coal Point Progress Association, Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance, Lake Macquarie and District Historical Society, Toronto Tigers Baseball Club, the Teralba Sea

Scouts and Southern Lakes cricket. For a full list of grants and projects, visit my website: www.greggipier1.com.

CBP is a great source of funds to build or improve community facilities. More than \$2.5 million in grants have been presented to local clubs and organisations in the Lake Macquarie electorate since the program began in 2009.

Keeping kids safe on our roads

You may see this sign around Lake Macquarie over the holiday period.



It is part of a road safety campaign launched by Michelle and David McLaughlin, who lost their four-year-old son Tom in January, 2014 when he was struck by a car while holidaying with his family on the Central Coast.

Holiday Time signs are erected in tourist areas to remind drivers to slow down and keep an eye out for kids. I urge all drivers to take extra care this holiday season to help protect our children from accidents. Visit www.littlebluedinosaur.org.

Taking shape

The pre-fab sections are in place on the site of the new \$2 million Morisset Police Station, with the building on track to be completed in the new year.

The new station will be much larger than its predecessor, accommodating general duties police as well as officers from the Police Transport Command and State Protection Group's Dog Unit. Toronto Station is next in line for a major upgrade.

Airing the issues

My campaign for an EPA air quality monitor in Lake Macquarie to measure industrial pollution was the subject of a parliamentary debate on October 15.

While the State Government did not immediately support my call for an independent air quality monitor for the area, it has committed to a review of the EPA air monitoring system that covers the Hunter Region.

There are a number of independent air quality monitors in Newcastle suburbs but the next closest is in Wyong. EPA monitors give real-time readings that residents can access at any time on the agency website.

Dashing Dakota

Remember the name Dakota Thomas. The young Kilaben Bay speedster continues to blaze a blistering trail through the junior athletics ranks and seems destined for big things in the sport.

After winning four golds and a bronze at the junior national titles early this year, she won the NSW All Schools 100 metres, 200 metres and long jump titles in October. As this newsletter was being prepared, she was headed to Melbourne for the national All Schools event. Keep up the good work, Dakota.

Stay in touch



greggipier1.com



Meals on Wheels Volunteer Award winners

Champions of our community

It is always wonderful to have the opportunity to present awards in recognition of outstanding achievement and community service by Lake Macquarie residents.

Vehicle painter **Blair Watters** is one such person. The Speers Point apprentice was among a select group of young Australians who competed at the International Worldskills competition in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in September. I caught up with Blair



With Worldskills representative Blair Watters

at Glendale TAFE before the event to present him with a Future Leaders industry award.

In August, I had the pleasure of presenting Meals on Wheels Volunteer Service Awards to a number of people, including **Ina Goodsir** (40 years), **Ken Woolley** (25 years) and **Linda Cunneen** (25 years). The trio, pictured above, have more than 90 years' service between them.

Another worthy volunteer who received recognition this year was **Jeanette Suttie**, who assists families and individuals in our court system and works closely with the Indigenous community. She was nominated for a NSW Justice Award in October.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise all of those whose achievements and service enrich our community and congratulate you on your contributions.

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

Lead issues in the frame

This aerial photo of Boolaroo, taken from a drone, features in a short documentary I have produced on local lead contamination issues.

In July, I took a self-funded study trip to Bunker Hill, in the USA, the site of a now demolished lead smelter that was once the largest in the world. I wanted to see how other communities like Boolaroo were dealing with the legacy of industrial lead contamination.

The communities around Bunker Hill are about 20 years ahead of us in the post-industrial phase, and the most striking difference in management is the level of community engagement and assistance.

I showed the video during the recent Boolaroo Open Day. If you would like to watch it, you can find it on my website: www.gregpiper1.com



Barroo from the air.

Facelift for Wyee Station

Wyee Station is undergoing renovations under the State Government's Station Refresh program.

They include new lighting, gutters, seats and bins, a toilet upgrade, repainting of handrails and garden improvements.

The station is sorely in need of lifts to allow full access to the central platform, something I have raised with the Government on a number of occasions. Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter



Inspecting Wyee Station with Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter Scot MacDonald.

Scot MacDonald inspected the station with me recently and has offered to help push the case for lifts with the Transport Minister.

Time to get on board with Opal

Do you have an Opal card yet? Most paper tickets, including the Pensioner Excursion ticket, will be phased out at the end of the year.

Bus and train users should be looking to move to the new electronic ticketing system, if they have not done so already. The \$2.50 all-day pensioner fares will still be available but commuters must use an Opal card from January 1.

You can order your card on online at www.opal.com.au or get one from an approved retail outlet. Many local newsagencies now carry the cards. A list of retailers is available on the Opal website.



Season's Greetings

My staff and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Our office will close at 5pm on Friday, December 18 and reopen at 9am on Monday, January 4