

Lake Macquarie Matters



HELPING US WIN THE COVID WAR TOGETHER



Our Covid trackers



Our nurses



Our charities



Our transport workers

Covid-19 has brought great challenges to the Lake Macquarie community, but these faces are just some of the many in our local area who have stepped up over the past few months and are making sure the wheels keep turning and no one gets left behind. Full stories, page 4-5.



Our police and emergency services



Our retail workers



Our energy workers



Our child carers

New grandstands



We've got some great new facilities completed at Rathmines which I'm really happy about. The Westlakes Wildcats Football Club has officially unveiled two new grandstands at its Fishburn Reserve home base. It's a wonderful result for this really progressive club which works hard for their juniors and the broader community. The two new stands provide elevated and covered seating for 520 people. The club raised about \$15,000 to get things moving, but they were able to secure a \$190,000 grant through the Office of Responsible Gambling, which is a State agency that redistributes a percentage of gaming taxes. If your club is interested in pursuing such grants, contact my office and my staff and I can assist.

The show goes on



I'm looking forward to the time post-Covid when the Rathmines community can come together properly in the refurbished Rathmines Theatre. The theatre had been closed for some time after a range of problems including asbestos, but it's now been reborn as Rathmines Theatre after a joint \$3.3m refurbishment by the State Government and Lake Macquarie City Council. The original building was built in the 1940s and served as a theatre and gym for the nearby RAAF base, and later became a community hall when the council took it over in the 1960s. It's a fantastic venue now and I'm sure it will be put to good use when it can host theatre, public gatherings and art festivals again post-Covid.



State budget falls short

This year's State Budget was largely a good response to the broad economic challenges facing NSW, but it fell well short of delivering some of the urgently-needed infrastructure we need in Lake Macquarie and the region.

I accept that we're facing challenging times, but seeing the government spend billions more on major projects in Sydney while short-changing regional areas like ours has worn extremely thin.

In summaries issued by the Treasurer, I was dismayed to see funding 'announcements' that have been rolled out

time and time again.

Yet again we saw \$3.47m allocated for 'planning' the Hillsborough Road upgrade. This is the same money we've been seen for four years, yet nothing actually gets done.

The problems on Hillsborough Road are getting worse, as they are at the Speers Point roundabout, the Macquarie-Munibung road intersection, and on Dora Street at Morisset. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lot of planning and very little actual building.

Our budget summary oddly included funding for two significant school upgrades,

but they were both funded in previous years and actually opened last financial year. It even included funding 'announcements' for new jetties on Lake Macquarie, all of which were fully funded in previous years, and are already built.

Having said that, the Government has established a number of funding pools which I'll be targeting over the next few months, particularly for road, transport, jetty and health projects.

Below is a summary of what Lake Macquarie was allocated.

Key highlights for the Lake Macquarie Electorate

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ \$3.47m for the planned upgrade of Hillsborough Road (reannounced) | ✓ \$13.33m for planning of the Fassifern-Hexham freight rail corridor (reannounced) |
| ✓ \$13.5m towards finishing the Wyee Sewer Connection project | ✓ \$2.67m for stormwater works on Munibung Creek |
| ✓ \$1.45m for Aboriginal housing at Toronto | ✓ \$2.13m to upgrade wastewater treatment plants at Toronto and Warners Bay |
| ✓ \$1.88m for upgrades and improvements to social housing | ✓ Aged pensioners in Lake Macquarie eligible for the \$250 Seniors Transport Card |
| ✓ \$300,000 for the ongoing management of the former Pasmenco site at Boolaroo | |

\$1.8m Marine Rescue base opened



I'm a big fan and an honoured patron of Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie so I was thrilled to be part of the opening of the new search and rescue centre at Swansea Heads last month.

These men and women are a dedicated group of volunteers who keep our boaties safe while they're on the lake and when they're heading out to sea via the channel. I have absolutely no doubt they've saved countless lives.

This state-of-the-art centre replaces the outdated radio tower and is now well-equipped to handle any emergency on the lake.

Please, always remember to check in with Marine Rescue if you're heading offshore, and stay safe on the water.

And don't forget that Marine Rescue is always looking for new volunteers and assistance. You can contact them on 4971-3498.

Retail giant Costco is coming



A development application from Costco to build one of its huge retail warehouses at Boolaroo is currently with Lake Macquarie council and I'm hopeful that work will get under way soon if it's approved.

This is a big win for the area and a huge vote of confidence in the future of Boolaroo and Cockle Creek.

Hundreds of jobs and more than \$300m in local economic activity will be created by the Costco development and Green Capital's residential development on another part of the old Pasmenco site.

It's almost 20 years since the Pasmenco smelter was closed, and after years of site remediation, years of stalemate and a lot of perseverance by a number of people and organisations, we're finally seeing this area moving ahead.

Costco will be built on a six-hectare site near Bunnings, while 500 new homes will be built on 55 hectares by Green Capital.

These are very significant developments that could not come at a better time for the Lake Macquarie economy.

As most would know, it's been difficult getting to this point and required a State Government takeover of the Pasmenco site to end long-running issues with the administrators.

But all that is behind us now.

Pending approvals, we should see Costco opening its doors here by Christmas next year, and I know that will be very big news to a lot of local people.



Premier kicks a goal at Speers Point

It was great to have Premier Gladys Berejiklian in town recently to see first-hand some of the local issues we're having.

While here, the Premier opened the upgraded Regional Football Facility at Speers Point.

The State contributed a further \$2.25m towards the expansion, bringing its total commitment to more than \$14m.

This really is a world class football facility and it will likely become the base for a visiting national team during the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.

It's one thing to have a great facility like this to get more young people active, but another to have something that will allow them to train and play at an elite level.

I also had the chance to introduce the Premier to some of our local charity and community

groups who've been doing an amazing job throughout the pandemic.

I also took her up to Boolaroo and Cockle Creek to view the former Pasmenco site and all the things going on around that area.

While development of the decontaminated site is welcome, the Premier is very aware of the ongoing legacy issues we have in the surrounding area and I'll continue to press the Government on those.

Welcome

Hello and welcome to my final update for 2020.

What an incredible year it's been. We started the year with drought and major bushfires.

Then came the drenching rains and floods, and then Covid-19 reached into our local communities and changed our lives in so many ways.

While it's been disastrous for many local families and businesses, we've so far pulled through together, and that says an extraordinary amount about who we are as a local community and what we can achieve.

The pandemic aside, the past six months have been busy and the wheels have still managed to roll on a number of exciting projects and issues locally.

I hope you enjoy this update, and I hope you, your families and friends have a very merry and safe Christmas. And here's hoping we get a better, less-complicated New Year!

Best regards,
Greg and Lyn

Greg



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Contact

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

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Hours: Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 2pm-5pm

Phone: 4959 3200 Fax: 4950 4076

Email: lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Covid-19 testing clinics

John Hunter Hospital: (public)
Lookout Road, New Lambton
8am-4pm Mon-Sun

Wyong Hospital: (public)
Pacific Hwy, Kanwal
9am-5pm Mon-Sun

Belmont Hospital:
(drive thru, public)
16 Croudace Bay Rd, Belmont
open 9am-2pm Mon-Fri,
8-noon Sat-Sun

Argenton: (drive thru, privately run)
458 Lake Rd, Argenton
9am-4pm Mon-Fri

Morisset: (drive thru, privately run)
40 Ourimbah St, Morisset
9am-4pm Mon-Fri

Warners Bay:
(drive thru, privately run)
290 Hillsborough Rd, Warners Bay
8am-4pm Mon-Sat

(No appointment or doctor's referral needed at any testing clinic. For a full list of clinics see the NSW Health website)

Covid-19 help and information

24hr National Coronavirus helpline: 1800 020 080

Updated rules and restrictions:
www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19

Service NSW Covid assistance:
13 77 88

Support for business:
service.nsw.gov.au

Lifeline: 13 11 14

More information:
Call my office on (02) 4959 3200



PULLING TOGETHER TO BEAT PANDEMIC

Back in March when the Covid-19 pandemic began, I could not imagine that I'd be here in December saying we've not had a single death in the Lake Macquarie electorate.

Nor did I think I'd be reporting fewer than 30 cases in the local area.

Part of that comes down to luck, but we all know that it's taken a much bigger effort than that. It's taken a lot of sacrifices, a lot of money, a lot of frustration and a lot of expertise from what I believe is among the best health agencies in the world.

Obviously we have a long way to go before we have a vaccine that can confine Covid-19 to history. We must remain vigilant and we must continue to do the basic things such as maintaining social distancing and good hygiene.

But it's worth stopping for a minute and recognising the extraordinary efforts of many who have got us to this point in relatively good shape.

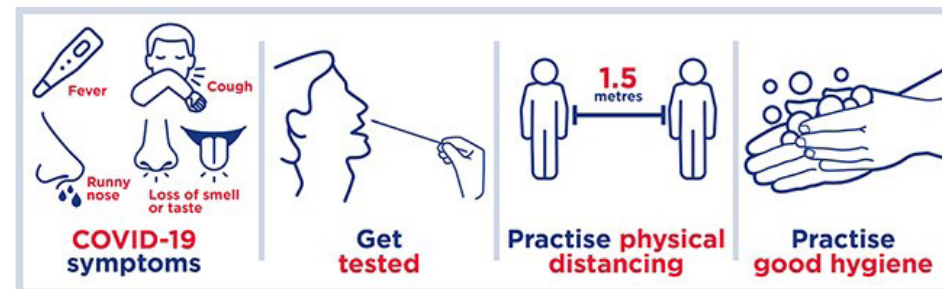
In NSW, the crisis has been contained to less than 4500 cases and 55 deaths. Certainly we all learned a few things at the start of the crisis and there's no doubt that some things



could have been done better. By and large we've had a health system that has responded, strategised and worked very well, and I believe we've also

had good leadership from the Government and health agencies. Above all this, though, has been the remarkable response in our

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local communities. When the lockdowns began and the lives of many local people were turned upside down, we responded. We found new ways to look after our most vulnerable. Our nurses, doctors, our aged care staff, police, our energy and transport workers, even retail staff and other essential workers have stepped up during this difficult time.

We even found a way to mark Anzac Day and other occasions in wonderful and unique ways.

In every local community we've had people checking in on their elderly neighbours, looking out for each other and making sure no one got left behind.

We've had remarkable charities and organisations which provided an extra layer to our defences.

When cafes and restaurants were closed, I started a page on my website which listed all those outlets available for take-away, and people responded by buying dinner locally and keeping many of these businesses afloat.

We all know that the economic cost of the pandemic has been enormous and there is no doubt that we'll have some challenging times ahead.

But I hope we can all stop for a minute as we head into Christmas, acknowledge a job well done and be thankful for how our local communities have responded.

Without that, I have no doubt that not all of us would still be here. I thank you all.



Local legends

Nothing reflects the greatness of our community more than how we rise to a challenge and look after our most vulnerable.

We have many remarkable charities and organisations in the local area which have quietly achieved some incredible things throughout the Covid pandemic. I can't name them all but I want to provide several examples.

Christine Mastello and her wonderful band of volunteers at Southlakes Incorporated delivered more than 7500 food hampers to those in need at the height of the pandemic, not just to our elderly but to families who had lost jobs and income.

Morisset Meals on Wheels performed similar feats despite

the lockdowns and restrictions.

Then there are people like Audrey Koosmen from Blackalls Park and her army of volunteers at Hunter Wildlife Rescue. Audrey is now 73 but managed about 80 volunteers who, while the pandemic raged, were still caring and searching for animals left injured by the bushfires only months earlier.

The work and actions of these people, and many more, have played an extraordinary role in our local communities over the past six months. Their work has been crucial, selfless and inspirational.

I thank them all, and I also thank the many local businesses and individuals which help out with donations to these local charities.

New laws for Airbnb

The short-term rental accommodation (STRA) industry which includes the likes of Airbnb, Stayz and Weekenda will be regulated by new laws from December 13.

My thoughts on this issue are well known and while I think these new laws are a step in the right direction, I don't believe they go far enough in regulating an industry that has had negative impacts on some suburbs.

Having said that, the new industry

code of conduct will go some way towards protecting neighbours and local communities, while also protecting people who 'host' or rent their homes out.

They will also go some way towards weeding out the bad hosts and bad guests. You can read the full details of the new laws on the Fair Trading website, but here's some of the key points:

- All homes, guests and owners must be registered.

• A complaints process is now in place and the sector will be governed by a Commissioner within Fair Trading NSW.

• If there are two strikes recorded against a property, guest or host for breaches of the code in any two-year period, that person or property is banned for five years.

• Breaches of the code include excessive noise or anything that "unreasonably disrupts or interferes with the regular peace and comfort of neighbours".



Wyee gets a lift

The new-look Wyee railway station is now operational after our successful and very long campaign to get lifts installed.

The new lifts began operating in July but were officially opened by the Transport Minister when I hosted him in the local area in August.

The upgraded station now has lifts on both sides and to the central platform, better security and platform facilities and new drop-off zones on both sides of

the station. It certainly makes life a lot easier not just for the disabled, frail and aged, but also for parents with prams and travellers with luggage.

We still have access issues at Dora Creek which I've raised with the Minister, but I've been in his ear at every opportunity about the need to improve parking at Morisset, Fassifern and Cardiff stations. I know they're on his radar, but I'll have to keep chipping away on those.

Covid Numbers in your suburb

2323
(Population 25,735, includes Freemans Waterhole)
10 cases, 8946 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

2259
(Population 59,513, includes Wyee, Wyee Point)
20 cases, 19,546 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

2264
(Population 14,233, includes Morisset, Mandalong, Dora Creek)
5 cases, 4747 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

2265
(Population 5805, includes Cooranbong and Martinsville)
1 case, 2182 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

2267
(Population 2759, Wangi Wangi)
0 cases, 1032 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

2278
(Population 2570, includes Killingworth and Wakefield)
3 cases, 969 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

2282
(Population 14,777, includes Lakelands and Warners Bay)
5 cases, 7127 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

2283
(Population 23,300, includes Rathmines, Toronto, Coal Point, Blackalls Pk, Bolton Point)
15 cases, 9192 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

2285
(Population 30,714, includes Cardiff South and Macquarie Hills)
4 cases, 14,173 tests, 0 deaths, 0 current active cases

Air quality monitor is now operational



The new air quality monitor at Mirrabooka is now complete and operating. The monitor, pictured, is set on a high point near the lake which will be able to get a good read on dust particles in the air, emissions from local industry, including the power stations at Eraring and Vales Point, as well as adverse weather events such as bushfires. The campaign to get this monitor was a long one, but I appreciate the assistance given to us by the current NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean. Air quality in the southlakes area is currently collected by about 20 industry monitors, but this new one will be independently operated by the EPA. All the data collected will give us the best possible picture of local air quality. You can see daily data from the monitor at www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/air-quality

Crossing supervisors for local schools



Teralba and Coal Point public schools are the latest to receive funding for school crossing supervisors. This is part of a statewide plan being rolled out by the State Government, so all local schools will eventually have supervised crossings. Morisset Public School, for example, was approved in the last round. The fantastic scheme isn't limited to crossing supervisors. Also included in the suite of safety measures are things like reduced speed limits in some areas, better road markings and flashing lights.

Plan would put 62,400 coal trucks on Wangi Rd annually



Controversial plans by Centennial Coal to move more than a million tonnes of coal by road between Wangi and Awaba are currently with Planning NSW.

My opposition to this plan is widely known. I have significant concerns about putting more than 62,000 coal trucks on Wangi Road every year, particularly when there are safer ways available to move that coal.

I know this plan has created a lot of concern and some division in the local community but it's important to remember this is not a debate about coal or coal-fired power. It's a debate about keeping 62,400 trucks a year off Wangi Road and using an entry intersection to the Myuna Bay colliery which was closed years ago because it was so dangerous.

It's no secret that the lifespan of Myuna Colliery is approaching its end. I also understand the financial challenges the mine is facing, along the need to protect as many local jobs as possible, but Centennial's plan is, in my mind, significantly misguided and could cost lives on Wangi Road.

I maintain that the best way to move coal out of Myuna is via the conveyor system which already exists between the colliery and the power station, and passes under Wangi Road.

Long-time residents would remember that coal trucks were banned from public roads between Morisset and the power station decades ago because of regular fatal accidents. I simply don't want to see that happening again.

I've had talks with Centennial and with Origin Energy which owns the power station and I'm pleased to say that they're now talking to each other in regard to options.

I'm also pleased that the community has made its thoughts known by making submissions to Planning NSW on the application. More than 1400 people also signed the petition which has been lodged with the NSW Parliament.

Centennial's application is currently being considered by Planning. I don't expect to hear an outcome until the new year, but I'll certainly keep everyone informed via my website and social media.

Wyee pipelines almost completed

After many years of waiting, residential properties at Wyee will soon be able to connect to the new sewer network.

While the massive retrofitting of pipelines will come in on budget, the project will be completed several months later than expected due to a spate of wet weather and Covid-related restrictions over the past year.

While construction is still expected to be completed this month, the new pumping stations will need to be tested, along with the new pipelines, for any defects or leaks before individual properties can be connected to it.

All going well, those connections can begin

in February. I really appreciate the patience shown by the Wyee community on this project. We're almost there!



Plans for new sport and rec centre move forward

Efforts to have a new sport and recreation centre built near Myuna Bay are moving ahead with the NSW Office of Sport reaching an agreement with Origin Energy to build the new centre on a waterfront site at Eraring.

Like the 20,000 people who signed my petition against the closure of the original centre, I remain disappointed that it was closed down and still don't think it was justified, but after two independent inquiries, we have to accept that decision and try to move forward on getting a replacement. A 21-hectare site at Eraring, owned by Origin, is now earmarked as the home for a new centre. That in itself has created some concern from Eraring residents who neighbour the site. I absolutely understand their concerns but I'm hopeful they can be resolved during the design consultation

phase which is under way. In other words, I'm hopeful that the centre can be built in a way that causes little or no impact on them.

Construction of the new centre will be funded by Origin Energy, which will also transfer ownership of the land to the Office of Sport. Because the new site needs to be rezoned, and because the development is a State infrastructure project, the proposal's first hurdle is getting an amendment to what's known as an ISEPP, or infrastructure planning policy. If that passes, the development (once it's designed) will be considered for approval by the State's Independent Planning Commission as a State significant development and further community consultation will be held.

I don't expect to hear much more until well into the New Year, but I'll keep you posted.

More jetty upgrades to come

Lake Macquarie is faring pretty well out of the State Government's 'Boating Now' program which is being used to fund new jetties, pontoons and boating facilities.

You'd remember that we secured about \$700,000 to jointly build the new Wangi jetty with Lake Macquarie council.

About the same amount was secured to significantly upgrade the new jetty at Speers Point. In fact, we've been able to get enough funds to rebuild seven jetties around the lake over the past five years.

Work will soon start on a new pontoon at Balcolyn with the costs being equally met by the council and State Government. The pontoon will be similar to the one at Sunshine.

State funds for these projects are secured through the Boating Now Scheme which



redirects the money collected from boating licence and registration fees towards infrastructure projects like these.

The modern jetties are far more user-friendly than previous designs and improve landing access for a wider range of vessels.

There are plenty more places in need of new jetties so I'll be continuing to work with the Government on securing more funds.

\$25m indoor sport stadium on track



Plans for a new \$25m basketball and indoor sport stadium at Hillsborough are progressing and will likely go on public exhibition soon. We were successful in getting a funding commitment from the Government prior to last year's State election. The first stage of that funding commitment was honoured in last year's State Budget so completed plans are now with the council and should be opened up to public consultation early in the new year. It's a really exciting project for the local area and will be a massive boost for local sport. While the stadium will form the headquarters and home base for Newcastle Basketball, it will also attract major events with seating for 4000 people. It can also host other sports such as volleyball and wheelchair sports.

Boost for frontline emergency services



Really happy to report that our local emergency services have received a significant boost with the expansion of the Public Safety Network (PSN) in the Morisset area. The PSN is a dedicated emergency communications system which provides all our emergency services with a single communications network. It supports the RFS, police, Fire and Rescue, ambulance and the SES. It's a \$217m network being rolled out across the State and I'm pleased to say that work on that rollout is now complete in the Morisset district. In somewhat related news, I've been working with the Government on a strategy to better equip the State's aerial firefighting capacities, which was a recommendation of the inquiry into last year's devastating bushfires. We have a company based locally which has a large fleet of Seahawk and Blackhawk helicopters which are in the process of being converted into aerial firefighting units. I'm hoping to have more news on that plan early in the new year.

New spotlight on coal ash recycling



Coal ash has been the subject of much community debate over the past year.

I recently appeared before the parliamentary inquiry into the remediation of coal ash dams like that at Eraring and I'm pleased the issue is now getting the attention it deserves.

Coal ash is not a new problem. We've had it in our area since Wangi Power Station first operated, and then came the power stations at Eraring and Vales Point which produce millions of tonnes of coal ash a year. In fact, coal ash is the biggest waste product produced in Australia and stockpiles are growing by 3.8 million tonnes a year.

The crazy thing is that almost all of this ash can be recycled. It can be used in cement products and can even be used in new road surfaces.

All that aside, we need to be doing far more to recycle not only what we're producing in coal-fired energy, but recycling the stockpiles that pose a risk to our health, the lake and our environment.

The likes of Origin are recycling higher rates of coal ash than they used to, but a lot more needs to be done because we don't want to be leaving future generations with a toxic legacy after the power stations have gone.

I should add that the vast majority of coal ash stored at Eraring was put there when the State Government ran the power generators, so the Government must be a part of the solution.

Yet, as I told the inquiry, the Government and agencies such as Transport for NSW (formerly RMS) have shown very little interest. That must change.

The inquiry is set to hand down its findings next year so I remain hopeful that it provides a way forward for more coal ash recycling, and the eventual total remediation of existing ash dams.

Contact

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

New playground a hit



The new playground at Morisset's Bernie Goodwin Memorial Park is finally open and is proving a hit with more than just the kids.

We were able to secure a State grant of \$616,024 for the playground. Lake Macquarie council contributed a similar amount and did a great job on its construction.

The project was delayed by contaminated soil on the site, but I'm pleased that's all cleaned up and things have turned out well.

The playground features an upper activity area for younger kids and a lower area for older kids, as well as plenty of shaded areas for families.

It's a vibrant, inclusive play space which caters for unique needs and is the first of its type in the Morisset area.



Get along and check it out if you haven't already. It's down the bottom of Station Street, behind the Coles shopping village.

Projects win funding



Eighteen community projects have secured funding through this year's Community Building Partnership (CBP) scheme.

CBP grants allow local sporting, cultural and community organisations to build or improve facilities. This year's grants ranged from \$2500 to \$40,000 in a pool of \$300,000.

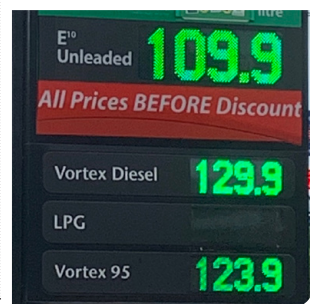
Among the funded projects are new grandstands at a junior footy ground, a new community kitchen, solar panels for several community and child

care centres, cricket net upgrades, change room and toilet upgrades, disability pathways, new scoreboards and even \$40,000 towards the cost of replacing the piers on Wangi Scout Hall.

A full list of recipients is on my website, but I encourage all groups interested in next year's grants to get in touch with my office. Competition for the annual grants is getting tougher, but my office can advise on the best way to put applications together, and the types of projects that are eligible.

How to get the best fuel prices

Petrol prices in the Morisset and Toronto areas continue to baffle most of us. Bowser prices in these areas are often more than 20 cents per litre dearer than in neighbouring areas. The State Government has very little control over fuel prices but has created the Fuel Check app and website which makes it easy to find the best local prices. You simply need to enter your local postcode, or the area you're travelling to, and current prices will be displayed for all fuel types in that area. You can download the Fuel Check app to any smart phone, or simply visit www.fuelcheck.nsw.gov.au.



Greg Piper Independent Member for the State Electorate of Lake Macquarie