

Lake Macquarie Matters

Munibung Hill from Booragul. Picture: Danny Morris

Community rallies against COVID **THANK YOU**



What a surreal few months it's been.

We started the year with drought, then bushfires, then floods and then the global Covid-19 pandemic which has brought great change to our communities and somewhat disastrous economic conditions for many.

From the outset, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts and sacrifices that so many local people have made over the past few months.

Our nurses, doctors, medical and aged care staff, along with our teachers, police, retail staff and other essential workers have stepped up in this very difficult time.

Then there's our local charities who have been working tirelessly to catch those falling through the cracks.

In our local communities, people have been checking in on their elderly neighbours, looking out for each other. We even managed to commemorate Anzac Day in the most wonderful and unique way.

I want to say 'thank you' to every single person who, even in a very small way, has done their bit to help navigate us through this health crisis. You have been the difference between what we're seeing overseas, and what is happening here at home.

The response to the Covid crisis by the State and Federal governments has not been perfect, but it was never going to be and, in my opinion, never could be.

The road going into and out of this crisis is extremely complex, difficult and uncharted.

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Welcome

Hello and welcome to my mid-year update. I don't need to tell you how busy, frustrating and daunting the past few months have been. I hope you and your family are all healthy and holding up well.



Despite the chaos of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the changes and adjustments we've had to make, there's still been a fair bit happening locally.

We are still living in very strange and uncertain times, but we're in a far better place than we looked like being in only a few months ago. It's not been easy, but we're getting there.

I hope you enjoy this update, and I hope you, your family and friends continue to stay safe and healthy.

As always, call or email me if you need assistance with any State-related matter.

Best regards,

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Covid response saves thousands of local lives

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We saw holes emerge in the State's defences with the diabolical Ruby Princess issue and with the Newmarch House aged care facility, and there were inconsistencies and confusion in how each Government responded to social restrictions, business shutdowns and with the closure and staged reopening of schools. A lot of it seemed, and was, chaotic, but I don't believe we can lose sight of the bigger picture.

Australia has fared extraordinarily well throughout this crisis, and that has been steered by every level of government, by every health agency, and every community.

At a local level (and at the time of printing), the Hunter Region had so far contained the Covid-19 outbreak to 278 cases, and the very sad loss of four lives. Health agencies estimate that 32,000 lives would be lost in our region alone if nothing was done to stop the spread of this highly-infectious and deadly disease.

The economic cost of that response is enormous and we'll be rebuilding for some time, but that can't be our only focus because, while ever we live without a vaccine or treatment for Covid-19, we remain at risk and our normal lives will have to adjust.

As much as we would wish that Covid-19 was a thing of the past, it's not, and we have to understand that we're going to be adjusting our lives for some time yet.

Social distancing and heightened awareness of basic hygiene including hand washing and sanitising, coughing and sneezing into your elbow, avoiding large crowds, working differently and keeping things clean remain extremely important.

Our community has done a great job dealing with the pandemic so far and we've certainly earned the easing of restrictions, but please continue to stay safe.

I've included a few numbers and websites below which continue to carry the very latest information and health advice.

Thank you again to everyone doing their bit to save lives in our community.

Covid help

24hr National Coronavirus helpline:
1800 020 080

Updated 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 4959 3200

Mobile cameras now in operation

Local police say the use of mobile phones while driving is still a major problem on Lake Macquarie roads. Mobile cameras designed to catch those drivers are now in operation

and can be located anywhere at any time, without the roadside warning signs that are normally seen around speed cameras. The fine for using or having a mobile phone in your hand while driving is \$344 (\$457 if caught in a school zone) plus five demerit points.

Please, don't do it. We've seen the results. We need to stop people dying unnecessarily on our roads.

Team effort drops Cardiff crime rates



The rates of street crime in the Cardiff shopping precinct have dropped significantly following a collaborative effort from local businesses, police and CALM (Community Activities Lake Macquarie).

With the assistance of a \$185,000 State grant, CALM launched the program in June 2018. It brought local businesses together with the police, as well as 830 young people who were identified as being at risk of finding themselves on the wrong path. The results were fantastic.

Over the 18-month period, street offences fell by 81 per cent, stealing offences by 63 per cent, malicious damage by 10 per cent and police callouts fell from 503 to 368. Furthermore, shop patronage rose by 54.7 per cent while 52.8 per cent of the local community said they now felt safer around the shopping precinct.

It was a fantastic effort from everyone involved, in particular Sheena Harvey from CALM and Lake Macquarie Police chief Supt Danny Sullivan. Awesome job!

Air quality to be monitored

After a decade-long community campaign, the State Government has promised us an independent air quality monitor to provide us with real-time data on local air quality.

Air pollution has been a significant concern in Lake Macquarie where residents have had to contend with dust from coal-fired power station emissions, dust from coal haulage and pollution from other industry sources, as well as adverse weather events.

Emissions are currently measured by about 20 industry monitors but there is no independent monitor operated by the EPA. The closest are at Wyong and Wallsend.

I don't seek to criticise those industry monitors, but it's understandable that people living in this area have genuine concerns about the emissions, ash Adams and other



industries, and they deserve to know that it's being properly monitored and managed.

Data collected from the industry monitors in addition to this independent monitor (like that pictured) will give us the best possible picture on local air quality.

The EPA is currently in negotiations with Lake Macquarie City Council about available sites. Community consultation will be held as things progress, so I'll keep you updated.

Munibung link opened



While the 'missing link' in Munibung Road between Cardiff and Boolaroo is now open, I've been focussed on getting improvements to several other major intersections on the radar of the State Government and RMS.

The new link is fantastic and provides a much quicker route from the Cardiff industrial area to the Bunnings roundabout at Boolaroo. Funded by Lake Macquarie council and the Federal Government, it's taken a lot of traffic off Main Road at Glendale and The Esplanade at Speers Point.

While it's great news, it's obvious that the new road has pushed more traffic into the Macquarie Road intersection at Cardiff. I've already had discussions with the RMS which has made some changes to that intersection, but I believe a longer-term solution needs to be found and funded.

It's a similar story at the Five Islands roundabout at Speers Point which is already a problem in peak times.

The RMS has told me they're looking at design options for that intersection but funding for anything beyond that doesn't exist.

Both projects featured prominently in my Pre-Budget submission to the Premier and Regional Roads Minister. Will keep you posted.



Turning plastic into roads

If current trends continue, there will be more plastic by weight in the ocean than fish by 2050.

Of all litter picked up in NSW, 60 per cent of it is discarded plastic. It's a major problem, and one you know I've been vocal about for 20 years.

There are quite a few local businesses doing great things with recycled plastics. Among them is Samantha Cross and Circular Hub which runs a number of initiatives from Warners Bay under the 'Plastics Police' banner.

They've partnered with University of Newcastle to collect soft plastics and turn them into bench seats, decking and bollards which have been installed around the campus. They also have several major projects where soft plastics, toner, glass and reclaimed pavement are turned into asphalt, or 'Reconophalt' as it's known.

In another project, Plastic Police partnered with Lendlease and took 30,000 seats from



the old Parramatta Stadium and turned them into Reconophalt which was used in the construction of Cessnock Correctional Centre's expansion.

These things are happening now! We have some great minds at the university working in this field, and we have some great people like Samantha turning the recovery of plastics into an industry that is profitable and fantastic for our environment.

The State Government's Plastics Plan is due for final release late this year.

Greg Piper MP

In the shade



It's great to see better facilities being provided at our local pools. I joined Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser at Speers Point Pool recently to check out the new shade structures, seating and turfing which was jointly funded by the council and State Government. We were able to secure \$700,000 from the State's Stronger Country Communities Fund for the work.

Seniors Travel Card

There's been a fair bit of confusing coverage in the media about the \$250 Regional Seniors Travel Card. The card entitles you to \$250 worth of fuel for your private car, or taxi hire or pre-booked rail travel. Simply, if you hold a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, or receive an age pension, a service, disability or war widow pension, and you live in my State electorate of Lake Macquarie, you are eligible to receive the card. To get yours, phone 13 77 88, check out the Service NSW website, or call in to one of the Service NSW centres at Warners Bay or Toronto.

Woman of the Year



It was wonderful to be in Sydney in March to see Justine Lorenz from Brightwaters win a Community Hero Award at the NSW Women of the Year Awards. Justine does tremendous work with disabled people in our local community, predominantly with the deafblind who she tutors in communications. If you know of someone worthy of such recognition, why not contact my office and nominate them for next year's awards?

Local projects funded



More than two dozen local projects secured a combined total of \$300,000 in funding as part of this year's round of Community Building Partnership grants. CBP grants allow local organisations to build or improve facilities. Included in this year's list are upgrades to local halls, playground upgrades, solar power installations and sports ground facilities. A full list of recipients is available on my website. Applications for the next round of grants has just closed, but if you or your local group are interested in applying for the next round, contact my office.

Hillsborough Rd update

Delays to the release of the long-awaited Hillsborough Road masterplan have become somewhat ridiculous. We were promised this masterplan would be completed more than a year ago.

The intersections on Hillsborough Road at Crockett Street and Chadwick Street near the dog showgrounds are becoming more and more dangerous as traffic loads increase. The masterplan got a further \$2.7m in last year's State budget, so it's about time we got to see where our money's been going.

Sport grants



I'm also happy to report that eight local sporting clubs were able to secure small grants to improve their facilities and equipment through the Local Sport Grant Program. This year's recipients include Boolaroo Bowling and Recreation Club, Macquarie Shores Swimming Club, Lake Mac Crocs Masters Swimming Club, Rathmines Bowling Club, Toronto-Awaba Junior Soccer Club, Lake Macquarie Baseball Club, Toronto Croquet Club and Southern Lakes United Football Club. More details on the next round of grants here: sport.nsw.gov.au/localsport.

New schools get the thumbs up



Absolutely thrilled to see the brand new learning spaces opened up at Speers Point and Wangi Wangi schools earlier this month. These state-of-the-art facilities were finished ahead of schedule and were opened up to



classes when students were phased back to school after the Covid break.

There are other schools in our district in great need of upgrades, in particular our three high schools at Morisset, Toronto and Booragul (Lake Macquarie High), and I'm continuing to press the Minister and Premier on those, but we should take a minute to enjoy what we've achieved at Wangi and Speers Point.

While I've thanked the State Government for this investment, I also thank the P&Cs, the local communities, principals Chris Payne (Speers Point) and Tim Lewis (Wangi) for the awesome work and contributions.

New jetty opened

The bigger, better and far more boat-friendly jetty at Wangi is now open and proving to be a hit with the locals and all those who use the lake for fishing and recreation.

Co-funded by Transport for NSW and Lake Macquarie City Council, the new jetty is bigger than the old one and provides more space for watercraft to be secured.

As most would know, the original jetty was owned by the RSL club but had to be closed when the club couldn't afford the very expensive repairs and maintenance. A transfer of

ownership to the council had to be organised first while funding was secured, and that took more time than expected. Eventually we secured \$717,057 from the State Government's Boating Now program, while the council chipped in \$668,779 to get the construction and required dredging completed.

There's a few other jetties in the southern and western parts of the lake in need of attention so I'm continuing to pursue more State funds which would allow the council to consider those new projects.



Save money on petrol



It was an unexpected bonus to see petrol prices hit historic lows last month, but we all know that won't last.

The best way to find the cheapest fuel in your area is to check in with the NSW Government's Fuel Check app or website when you need to fill up. Simply enter your suburb (the one you're in or the one you're travelling to) and it will display all 'real time' prices in that area.

You can download the FuelCheck app to your smartphone, or simply visit www.fuelcheck.nsw.gov.au.

Contact

Need help with a State Government matter, contact my office.

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