

Lake Macquarie Matters

Port deal will bring jobs and growth A win for our future



In a major win for the the region, Newcastle port will be able to diversify into a container terminal without unfair penalties placed on it after I successfully moved new legislation through the Parliament last month.

When the State's three ports were privatised in 2013-14 it delivered a quick windfall of more than \$7 billion to the Government, but it emerged years later that the deals contained some unfair elements which essentially locked Newcastle out of becoming a container port by placing penalties on container trade through Newcastle.

The Bill I took to Parliament removed those penalties and was eventually supported unanimously after I brokered a deal with the Coalition Government.

Despite some incorrect media reports and from some political quarters, this deal will not cost taxpayers a great deal of money, if anything at all. It will, however, require the Port of Newcastle to pay more for a revised lease on the port, which they have agreed to.

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Welcome

Hello and welcome to my final update of 2022.

Wow, what an extraordinary year. From floods to fish kills and from Covid recoveries to canetoad invasions, it's been a busy year, especially in the Parliament.

Despite all of that, we've achieved some really big things over the past year and I've outlined some of those inside this update.

As we continue to emerge from the Covid pandemic, we need to remember that a lot of people are still doing it tough.

We still have challenges ahead, but if we've proved anything over the past few years it's that we live in an extraordinary local community which will pull together when needed and leave no one behind.

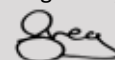
I'm hoping you're now focused on spending time with your loved ones and friends over Christmas.

Thank you for all the support you have given each other, and to me.

Lyn and I would also like to wish you, your families and friends a very merry and safe Christmas.

We're feeling good about 2023, and we hope you are too!

Best regards,
Greg and Lyn



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I took this fight up not simply because it was the right thing to do, but because our region desperately needs the thousands of jobs and the billions in private investment that a container terminal in Newcastle will bring over the next decade. It will also help the Port of Newcastle as it diversifies away from coal over coming decades.

I remain grateful for the tremendous amount of support I got from pretty much everyone in the Hunter Region and from the major exporters and farmers around regional NSW who were left so disadvantaged by the original deal.

We'll take these good wins whenever we can get them!



Coercive control under spotlight

I was very pleased to support new legislation which identifies and outlaws coercive control in intimate relationships.

NSW became the first State to have such dedicated laws when they were passed by the Parliament last month. I believe they will become a major defence in our fight against domestic violence.

This has been an extremely difficult area to legislate in, but I believe the Government has done a great job in getting us to this point.

Some will say that the new law doesn't go far enough and should be extended to other domestic situations such as elder abuse, sibling abuse and the like. That's true, but this law gets us off the starting blocks and, under amendments successfully moved by myself and my fellow independents, things will be reviewed every two years.

All in all, a great step forward in our fight against domestic violence.

1800RESPECT
NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC
FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE

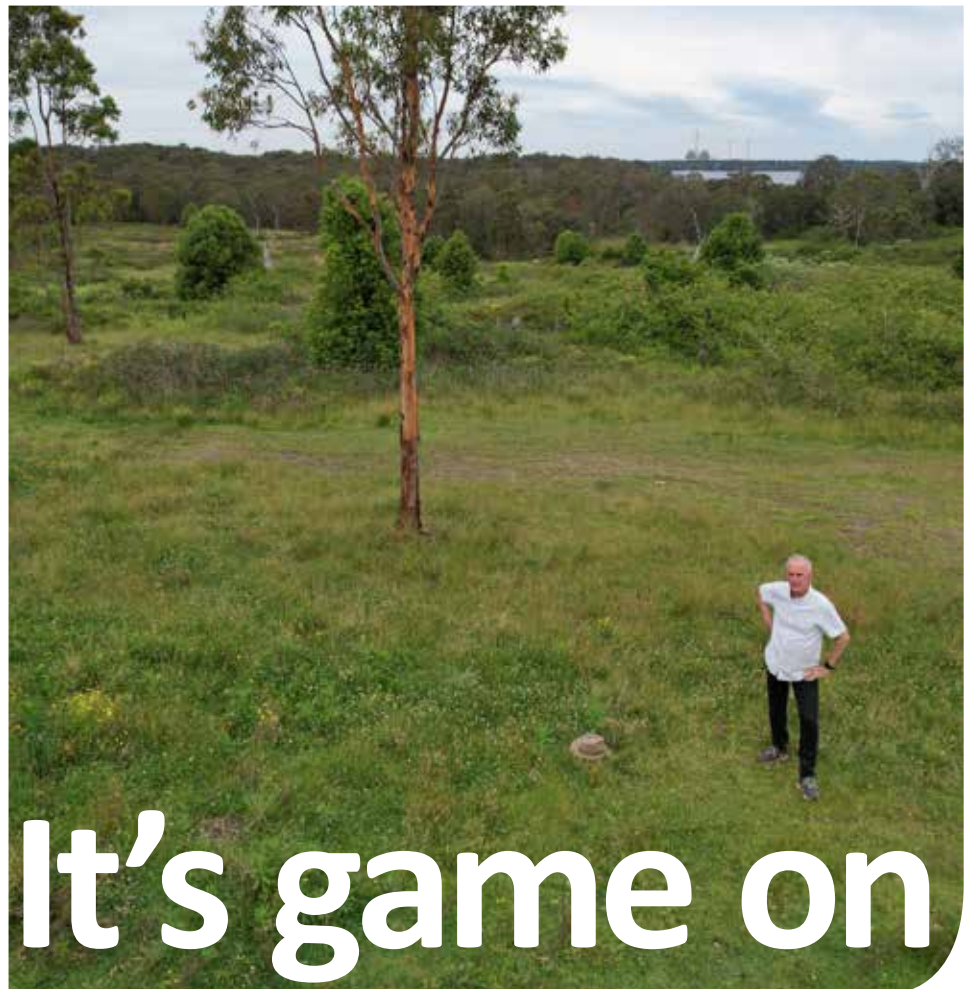
Got up and stood up for NAIDOC Week

Rain and floods may have played havoc with this year's NAIDOC Week celebrations, but we all got there eventually! The family fun day had great crowds in attendance. The theme of this year's celebrations was 'Get up, Stand up, Show up', and that's exactly what we did!

Meanwhile, it was great to be a part of the inaugural raising of the Aboriginal flag at Toronto Police Station a few months ago. We should never underestimate the challenges that our Indigenous community has had over



the years, and small things like this make a huge difference to how we work together in the future.



We finally have movement on the new sport and recreation hub at Morisset as well as the former site at Myuna Bay.

The Office of Sport has opened public consultation on the new centre at Morisset, and this is your chance to have your say on what facilities you'd like to see included.

The consultation includes an easy online survey (you'll find the link on my social media and website, and on Lake Macquarie City Council's website).

I strongly encourage you to be part of this process. I also encourage all local sporting organisations to get involved to help shape what this new precinct will look like.

As I've reported previously, the new centre will be open for use by the community and not closed like traditional centres.

So, if you want to see a cricket oval included, or a swimming pool, or walking and cycling

tracks, or an archery field or public fitness facilities, now's the chance to have your say.

If you can't find the link on those websites I mentioned, call my office and my staff can point you in the right direction.

It's taken way too long to get to this point and my thoughts on the Myuna closure are well known, but I'm glad we're finally seeing some movement on this project which I think will make up for what we lost at Myuna.

Meanwhile, the Office of Sport will soon submit a development application to demolish the former centre and revegetate the Myuna site to its original condition.

The office first had to engage with NSW Public Works which recently undertook an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment on the Myuna site.

That process has now been completed and the report will form part of the application.

Fresh plan to bring life back to Muddy Lake



Environmental assessments on the salvinia infestation on Muddy Lake at Dora Creek are now being finalised and I'm hoping we'll see significant improvement next year.

Muddy Lake is the small freshwater lake you can see from Wangi Road as you head into or out of Dora Creek. Getting rid of the salvinia is a complex process.

Lake Macquarie council, Crown Lands and teams from a number of State agencies and universities have been working on a solution, but all efforts to get the noxious weed under control with low-impact solutions have failed.

Both the council and Crown Lands have now concluded that the only long-term sustainable option is to reintroduce salt water to the

system. In other words, open it up to Lake Macquarie so the salt water will kill the weed.

That of course will have other environmental impacts so it requires a careful balancing act.

The University of NSW was engaged by Crown Lands to undertake a full assessment of how the work will be done and determine the impacts of reopening the area to the saltwater lake.

That assessment is due to be finished before Christmas so if all goes well, I remain hopeful that we'll start to see the recovery of Muddy Lake next year.

Then we cross our fingers and hope that the beautiful birdlife and aquatic species which once lived there all return home!

Centenaries for Wangi and Fassifern schools

Two local schools have celebrated big milestones with Fassifern and Wangi Wangi public schools marking their centenaries.

Fassifern actually has a very long history which many are unaware of. The town was settled in 1844 when a sawmill and mining operations began there. The railway station was opened in 1887 but it wasn't until 1922 that the school we know now first opened.



The school celebrated its centenary in October.

Wangi Wangi Public School marked its centenary last month. A provisional school first opened at Wangi in 1920 but wasn't formalised on the existing site until 1922. It's so great to see a brand new school finally built at Wangi now, with some of the original buildings still nestled around the new ones.

Surprisingly, neither school comes close to being the oldest in the local area.

The history buffs may get me here but I'm pretty certain Cooranbong Public School is the oldest continually-operating school in the area. It was officially opened in 1861.

A lot of wonderful history was written in all of those classrooms.

Greg Piper **MP**

Local Legends

■ Max Bradbury



It's always great to see our home-grown sporting talent hitting the big stage. Max Bradbury, a former Wangi Warrior, is one of our rising rugby league stars. Max was a standout in this year's U19 Blues State of Origin side. Not only was he a Wangi Warrior but he was also a Westlakes Athletics representative and was the club's most recent State gold medallist, winning the U14 200-metres hurdles for boys.

■ Frank Kitcher



I also want to acknowledge Frank Kitcher from Speers Point who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Frank was recognised for his services to rugby league and tennis. He was treasurer of the Country Rugby League Referee's Association for 40 years. He's a life member of the Newcastle-Coalfields Referees Association and a Life Member of the NSW Rugby League Referees Association. Very deserving of the Queen's Birthday honour!

■ Peter McGeoch



Fishing Point's Peter McGeoch was also honoured with a Medal of the Order of Australia this year for his services to sports medicine. Peter worked as a physician for the Newcastle Knights for more than 25 years and is a life member of the club. I should also add that Peter and his wife Fiona are highly regarded in the local area, not just among their patients at Woodrising Medical Centre but throughout the wider community as respected GPs. My congrats and thanks to them both.

Pride comes in all colours, even white!



How stupid of me to turn up to the very first Lake Macquarie Pride event in a white collared shirt and blue jeans!

Thank goodness the DJ lent me this beautiful purple cape so I could officially open the event in a more appropriate fashion.

I really loved seeing our LGBTQI+ community come out for this inaugural event which was filled with all the love and colour you'd expect.

My congratulations to all involved, especially Lake Macquarie Pride president Lee-Anne McDougall. I promise to leave the boring white shirt at home next year!

Our Covid death toll passes 500

I'm very pleased to say that the worst of the Covid pandemic appears well behind us, but it still poses some real health risks for us, especially among those who are immunocompromised or elderly.

The economic recovery from Covid will be long but for many the recovery will be more painful.

Since the start of the pandemic, almost 100,000 cases of Covid-19 have been reported in the Lake Macquarie LGA, and the virus has claimed the lives of 540 people in the Hunter Health district. Statewide, more than 5500 people have died.

While we've fared better than most other parts of the world, Covid-19 is Australia's most common cause of death in 2022.

As imperfect as our health system is, we owe it a great deal, along with the many nurses and health professionals who worked above and beyond their rate of pay for the past two years. I again acknowledge their efforts during this really demanding time.

Inquiry into lake fish kills

As I'm sure you're aware, we saw two mass fish kills in the lake in recent months and the cause of both remain unexplained.

Both occurred in the bay near Mannering Park in the lake's south-eastern corner.

Following the first incident, EPA testing could not pinpoint a cause but they said the most likely cause was a combination of naturally-occurring factors following the July flooding.

Toxicity testing for pesticides and metals found no evidence that the lake had been deliberately or inadvertently poisoned, so that was at least



some good news.

The second incident occurred in September and is still under investigation. That investigation, however, has included the collection of data and the testing of equipment at the nearby Vales Point Power Station which discharges warm water into that part of the lake.

At the time of writing, there was still no clear cause and the EPA's test results were like those collected in July.

The EPA now has a 'smart

buoy' permanently placed in the bay and it's providing real-time data on things such as salinity, turbidity, oxygen levels and temperature at different depths. (If you're interested, all of that live data is available publicly on the EPA's website.

These incidents obviously remain a concern, but hopefully the extensive investigation finds answers. I'll keep you updated on any progress via my website and social media channels.

Financial assistance available for flood victims

This year is shaping to be our wettest on record with official figures showing that almost twice the average rainfall has drenched our district since January 1.

At the time of writing, almost 2000mm of rain had been recorded so far this year at the official Cooranbong weather station, yet the average for us is about 1100.

The worst of the local flooding came in July but we were quickly declared a natural disaster area which opened up financial assistance to those who needed it.



If you had property damaged by the flooding or rain event, you may be eligible for financial assistance via the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This assistance remains open so if you're unaware of it,

head to nsw.gov.au/disaster-recovery or call Service NSW on 13 77 88.

I also want to send a quick shout-out to our local SES and RFS crews which lent a hand during the flooding. All our first responders did an amazing job.

Is your club eligible for CBP grant?



The recipients of this year's Community Building Partnership grants will be announced shortly.

This year's recipients will share in \$400,000 worth of grants in my local electorate.

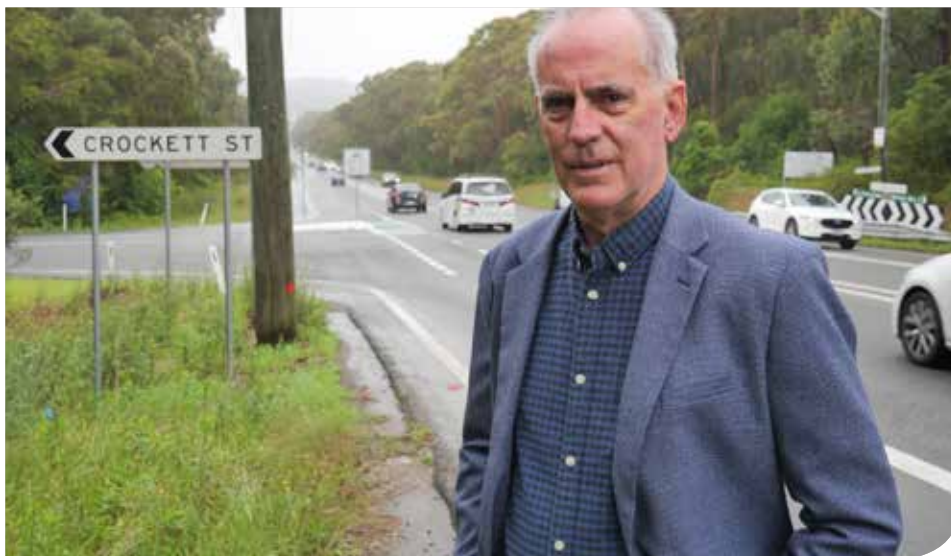
I recently caught up with Robert Campbell at Lake Macquarie Rowing Club (pictured) to see the fantastic work they've done with the grant they were awarded last year. The club was able to

secure \$29,000 towards the installation of fire-retardant insulated roof lining panels in their Booragul clubhouse. The total cost of the work was \$66,000 but the club was able to raise the additional funds.

CBP grants assist local groups with small infrastructure projects, new equipment and even training.

If you'd like more information on the grants, or any other local grant programs, give my office a call on 4959-3200.

Major road projects



Just a quick update on the major road projects we secured funding for, and the painfully slow bureaucracy that unfortunately comes with them.

Firstly, on Speers Point roundabout and the \$5m I secured in the State Budget to upgrade that intersection. Transport for NSW (TfNSW) is currently considering a couple of design options but it's likely we'll see 'traffic metering lights' which control flows in peak times. We'll know more about that in the new year.

Regarding Hillsborough Road and the \$35m I secured for widening the single-lane section at Hillsborough, TfNSW has just released a full concept design for public comment. That project will include the widening but also the installation of traffic lights at the Chadwick St

intersection and the Crockett St intersection. The frustrating part of this project is that while things are moving ahead, delays at TfNSW mean that actual construction won't start until 2025.

In regard to the Mandalong Rd project, \$76m was committed by the State and Federal governments towards widening the road between the M1 and Dora St at Morisset and building signalled intersections at Wyee Rd and Gateway Blvd. A business case which sets out final costs, start dates and final details is expected to be completed early next year.

I know, these things move painfully slow with TfNSW and it's incredibly frustrating, but I've had a number of meetings with the Minister now to discuss ways of speeding things up.

Pesky toads make their way to Mandalong

In somewhat disturbing news, a total of 19 cane toads were found under sheets of tin on a Mandalong property recently.

Finding the odd cane toad in the local area is not something new, but to find 19 in the one location is very worrying.

The Department of Primary Industries urges anyone who spots a cane toad to report it, but we have to be careful that we're not confusing them with local native frogs.

There are a couple of natives which are often mistaken for cane toads, and they include the

banjo frog and Peron's tree frog (pictured in the graphic below). The last thing we need to be doing is killing native frogs!

If you come across something that looks like a cane toad but are unsure, it's best to simply report it to DPI and allow an expert to check it out.

You can call the NSW DPI Biosecurity Hotline on **1800 680 244**, or Lake Macquarie City Council on **4921-0333**, or fill out an online biosecurity concern form at <https://fal.cn/3s4an>.

Protect what we love

Cane toads have different features to native frogs



SEE IT. REPORT IT.

If you see an unusual non-native pest animal, report it to NSW Department of Primary Industries.

1800 680 244

dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/reporting



Greg Piper MP

Single-use plastics now on banned list



The second phase of the State Government's ban on single-use plastics came into force on November 1.

The phase-out of single-use plastic bags began on June 1, but the ban was extended last month to single-use plastic straws, stirrers and cutlery, plastic plates and bowls and expanded polystyrene foodware and cups.

The ban also includes single-use plastic cotton buds and rinse-off personal care products such as face cleansers and exfoliants which contain plastic microbeads. In regards to the latter, about 99% of companies which produce personal care products have already phased out the use of plastic microbeads.

More information:

dpi.nsw.gov.au/plastics-ban

New play spaces at Cooranbong



It was a long time coming but it was great to help officially open the new children's playground at Cooranbong with Mayor Kay Fraser recently.

This playground is in the new Watagan Park Estate but it complements several other adventure spaces built or planned for the Cooranbong area.

All of this follows the opening of the Cooranbong Park Recreation Facility last year which now includes two netball/basketball courts, football and cricket fields and amenities.

In May, plans were announced by Lake Mac council to build an adventure retreat on a 30-hectare site off Freemans Drive which will be great for locals while also putting the area on the adventure tourism map with walking, biking and horse-riding trails, among other things.

Not enough being done to ease our housing crisis



I've spent a large part of this year in the Government's ear about the housing crisis which is crippling much of the Lake Macquarie area, and indeed most of the State.

While skyrocketing house prices and weekly rents have eased in the past few months, it remains almost impossible to find long-term rentals in the local area. Public housing is also a major problem.

In recent times, I was invited to open a new 94-unit social and affordable housing project at Cardiff, and this year's State Budget included an additional \$1.6m for social housing maintenance, a \$3m Aboriginal housing project and a commitment to build 120 new homes for rough sleepers.

That was all good, but we know it doesn't go close to solving the problem.

We simply have to find a way to build more affordable homes and provide the infrastructure that comes with building new neighbourhoods.

My office takes dozens of calls every week from people desperately trying to find an affordable roof to put over their heads. I see people spending 80% of their income on rent. I see people living out of cars with their young kids. The great Australian dream is fast becoming the great Australian failure.

I'll continue to put this issue at the Government's front door. We can do, and must do, so much better.

If you have issues with housing, please call my office and my staff can direct you to the most appropriate people for assistance.

More GPs, but need for hospital grows

We had a good win in our fight for better health services in our district recently, and it should result in more local GPs.

I've been raising this issue with State and Federal health ministers for years but we got a breakthrough in July when the Federal Government agreed to reclassify our region so more doctors would be eligible to work in the area under Medicare.

It will take some time before things improve overall, but I know of one local GP surgery

which has been able to attract two new GPs since the reclassification was announced.

On the broader issue of public health services, the push for a new hospital in the Morisset district continues.

We need health services which people in our area can access, not grand health precincts like John Hunter and Wyong which many people can't get to.

Our push will go up a gear early next year so I'll keep you posted on how things progress.

Dora Creek bridgeworks are more than a headache

Like many of you, I've grown increasingly frustrated by the Dora Creek bridgeworks which created a disaster for local businesses and dangerous traffic conditions.

I've raised the issue in Parliament, had on-site meetings with Sydney Trains, and met with the Minister on numerous occasions yet we still don't know when work will be finished.

The work is essential, but the way it's been managed has been far from ideal.

The one-way flow of traffic under the bridge created lengthy queues which often banked back onto the main road, creating dangerous conditions for anyone coming off the bridge.

This was supposed to be a 16-week project but we're now coming up to

six months with no real end in sight.

The Dora Creek businesses are really feeling the pinch with the loss of trade. One has already closed its doors and I fear more may follow unless there's some sort of compensation provided to them. That's something I'll keep pursuing. I'll keep you posted of any updates on my social media.



Origin moves on dam and battery projects

Origin Energy is proceeding with the planned closure of Eraring Power Station in 2025 but has progressed plans to transform into a renewable energy hub.

As I've previously reported, the closure is going to create some great challenges for us but I'm pleased to say that things are moving in the right direction.

Origin is still pursuing a number of projects in things like hydrogen and hydro, but it recently got the green light for its energy storage battery project which will help keep the lights on during this rapid transition away from coal-fired energy.

I should also add that Transgrid has been given the go-ahead to undertake a \$150m upgrade of existing transmission lines and substations linked to the Waratah Super Battery project at the former Munmorah Power Station.



Meanwhile, Origin has started final planning works for the stabilisation of the ash dam wall (this is the section fronting Wangi Rd which caused the closure of the Myuna Bay sport and rec centre). They inform me that the full stabilisation project is scheduled for completion in late 2024.

Heartbreaking losses as Varroa mite hits our bees



I'm happy to be reporting that the outbreak of Varroa mite in the broader region appears to have been contained, but it's come at a huge and unpleasant cost.

Varroa mites have the capacity to wipe out our population of honeybees and pose a multi-billion-dollar threat to our agricultural industries.

Sadly, every beehive kept privately or commercially

has had to be euthanised in an eradication zone which roughly stretches from Awaba north to Shoal Bay and west to areas around Singleton, as well as isolated areas elsewhere in the State. Wild swarms have also been baited and destroyed in those areas.

It's been a heartbreaking process for all concerned, but essential to contain the outbreak.

I personally keep four hives

but was extremely lucky because they were all located in the Morisset area which remained outside of the eradication zone.

I know the Department of Primary Industries has been contacting most local beekeepers, but if anyone is experiencing any issues related to the varroa outbreak, contact my office and we'll point you in the right direction.

Do you know a local legend?

We have so many wonderful volunteers and high achievers in Lake Macquarie and I really enjoy recognising those people in the NSW Parliament. I can do that through what's known as a Community Recognition Statement and these go into the official records of the NSW Parliament forever. I can formally recognise a hard-working group member or volunteer, a community leader, someone excelling in the sporting or cultural arenas, and some of those quiet achievers who do so much for the local community without any recognition. If you know of someone like that, let me know. You can email me at lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au, or by phoning 4959-3200.

Join me in the House



There's nothing better than seeing local faces around Parliament House in Sydney when Parliament is sitting. Throughout the year, I host local groups who come down for a free tour of the Parliament with Madeleine, one of my staffers. Each tour travels through the halls of the historic building and we usually stop for lunch before getting a seat in the chamber for Question Time. We can't

accommodate large groups, but if you're part of a school or community group and are interested, give my office a call on 4959-3200. Numbers and days are obviously limited and the year books out quickly, so get on to it early if you can. I'm pictured with members of the Indonesian Australian community who visited Parliament House in October.

Greg Piper MP

■ Weir Bridge opens



The new dual-lane bridge over Cockle Creek at Barnsley has been open for a few months now and is proving to be a popular link for motorists. The bridge replaces the old single-lane weir. The bridge better connects Teralba with Barnsley and allows motorists travelling that way to avoid Lake Road through Speers Point and Glendale. It includes a 3m-wide pathway which will be great for cyclists and pedestrians when Lake Mac council builds the connecting paths. The \$8.6m project was jointly funded by the Federal Government and the council.

■ Disability services



It's so pleasing to see credible organisations such as The Disability Trust further investing in our region, and it was great to be on hand when they opened their new office and facilities at Argenton recently. The opening highlighted the need for inclusion within our public spaces, in commercial and business settings and in people's homes. Inclusivity should not be an after-thought. My thanks and congratulations again to all concerned.

■ Queen's Scouts



I really love seeing our young people achieve great things, not just in their chosen sport or educational endeavours, but in cultural settings or simply in their pursuit of becoming better people. I met two such people recently who earned their Queen's Scout award. Boston Smith and Jacinta Gomez belong to 1st Byattunga Scouts at Morisset and they each achieved the feat which very few scouts achieve. The honour is testament to their character and determination. They're great young people and I again congratulate them both.

I've moved to new address



After 15 years in the old house on Victory Parade at Toronto, my electorate office has moved to new premises around the corner.

You'll be pleased to know we now have a working fridge, a new kettle, and most importantly full disability access, a proper meeting room and more car parking!

The new office is hard to miss at 126A Cary Street, known to most as the BP/KFC/Carpet Court intersection. The main entrance is via the car park which is next door to the old office on Victory Parade near Tyrepower.

We've also introduced new opening hours so we're better available to those who work during the day and are now open from 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

The phone number and email addresses remain the same – 4959-3200 and lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au.

The new office will, however, be closed for Christmas. It will be closed from 1pm on Friday December 23 and reopen at 8am on Monday January 9.

JP always on duty

I think they call it Murphy's Law – when you actually need a JP you can't remember where to find one! I have a JP available in my Toronto office pretty much every day during normal business hours. If you need documents witnessed or other JP services, simply call in to my office at 126A Cary Street Toronto. There's generally no need to make an appointment unless you have a mountain of documents which need witnessing.

Contact

Address: 126A Carey St, Toronto 2283

Hours: Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm

Phone: 4959 3200 Fax: 4950 4076

Email: lakemacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Verdun notches 67 years behind Toronto counter



If you've walked The Boulevard at Toronto at any time over the past 67 years you've probably seen Verdun Hiles working tirelessly in his menswear store - something he's done for longer than I've been alive!

You've also probably seen his wife Val next door who has been dressing the local ladies for the past 55 years.

They're indeed a local institution!

Born in 1939, Verdun grew up in his family home at Kilaben Bay where he'd watch his father, a RAAF pilot in WWII, fly in on the wartime Catalinas at Rathmines.

He started working in the clothing store at the age of 16. At the time, his mother sold women's fashion from her store 'Janelle's' (now Service NSW) across the street.

So he's seen a few fashion changes in his time - everything from bellbottom pants to safari suits and Elvis-inspired looks. He's even seen the death of the cravat, once popular with the local RAAF pilots, and now the demise of the once-common men's necktie!

Not intending to work in retail, Verdun left high school in 1955 with a scholarship to attend teachers' college, but never pursued it.

"I was the wrong temperament," he joked. "I would have murdered the kids. I made the right decision to be in clothing all my life."

Despite the large retail shift to online sales, Verdun and Val still run their respective stores and have no intention of retiring.

They're wonderful people and are such a beautiful part of the Toronto community.

Have a milestone birthday or anniversary coming up?

Somewhat sadly, we won't be getting letters from the Queen on our 100th birthdays any more, but I can assure everyone that King Charles has already slipped into that role and is holding up his mother's tradition! If you or someone you know has a

milestone birthday or wedding anniversary coming up, let my office know and my staff can organise congratulatory messages from the likes of King Charles, the Prime Minister and NSW Premier, depending of course on the size of the milestone. You can find the form and general eligibility rules on my website, or phone my office for more details.



As a general rule of thumb we can organise a letter from the King for 100th birthdays and 60th wedding anniversaries (and every fifth year thereafter). Letters from the likes of the PM, Premier and Governor are available for 90th birthdays and upwards, and 50th wedding anniversaries (and every fifth year thereafter).