

Lake Macquarie Matters

Toronto Station. Photograph by Greg Piper

Movement at the station

Work on the new Morisset Police Station is under way, with officers due to move into their state-of-the-art premises by the end of the year.

The \$2 million station will bring a flood of uniformed personnel to the area, as it will house officers from the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command, Police Transport Command and the State Protection Group Dog Unit. This will be a welcome boost to police presence in the peninsula area and is a good win for the community, which has advocated strongly for more police.

I am pleased the Government has honoured its promise to build a new station at Morisset, after talk in 2013 the project may have been downscaled to an upgrade of existing premises. A major rebuild of Toronto Station is also on the agenda. The tender was close to being finalised at the time of writing, with work expected to begin next year, once Morisset Station is finished.



Greg and Lake Macquarie Local Area Commander Brett Greentree take a last look at the old Morisset Station before demolition.

Toronto Police Station is currently the closest operating station for people living in the Southlakes area, and can be contacted on 4950 3699.

Welcome

This newsletter is my first for the 56th NSW Parliament – my third term – and for some it will be the first you have received from



me, following the redistribution that brought Cardiff South and Argenton into the Lake Macquarie electorate.

Having served in two challenging parliaments – one led by a Labor government crippled by dysfunction and the other hopelessly lopsided towards the Coalition – I look forward to this one being more balanced and productive. Although the Government has a clear-cut majority in the Lower House, I believe there are now enough strong voices on the crossbench and in Opposition to hold them to account.

I am humbled and grateful the people of Lake Macquarie have again put their faith in me to be their representative in Parliament. I will continue to advocate forcefully for our community and work with all parties for the best legislative outcomes.

My electorate office door is always open to constituents and I encourage you to use my social media channels (see links below) to stay in touch with State issues or to engage with me and others in the community on matters of local interest.

Building grants open

Applications for grants under the State Government's Community Building Partnership (CBP) program are open until August 7.

The scheme is a great way for clubs and organisations to secure funds for building projects – more than \$2.3 million has been handed out to Lake Macquarie community and sporting groups since the program began in 2009.

This year, \$300,000 is available to groups in this electorate to build or improve community facilities. Applications must be made online. To find out more go to www.communitybuildingpartnership.nsw.gov.au.



Lake Macquarie Landcare was the recipient of a CBP grant in 2014.



Work to begin on Cary St

Relief for drivers who regularly endure the Cary Street bottleneck at Toronto is a step closer. The recent NSW Budget allocated \$5.5 million towards the upgrade of the stretch between The Boulevard and Bay Street and preparatory work on the relocation of utilities to allow road widening has begun.

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) held a second round of public information sessions in April and May after incorporating many suggestions from last year's first community consultation into its revised design for the road.

The road carries more than 25,000 vehicles a day and the section to be upgraded has been the site of about 30 accidents over the past five years.

The work involves road widening, and the installation of lights and turning bays to alleviate traffic congestion and improve safety. You can view a diagram of the design on the RMS website: go to www.rms.nsw.gov.au, click on the 'Projects' tab, then click on 'Hunter', then 'Toronto – Cary St safety improvements'.

Premier occasion for Wyee

It is not often a small town has the opportunity to host the Premier of NSW but the announcement of a long-awaited \$26 million sewerage scheme is reason enough to warrant a visit from the State's most senior politician.

Premier Mike Baird dropped into Wyee for afternoon tea in December to mark the Government's commitment to extending Hunter Water's reticulated sewer system to Wyee – something the community has sought for more than 25 years.

The Premier was a gracious guest, mingling with locals for about an hour at the Wyee RFS premises.

He even promised to look into a new Cat 9 tanker for the brigade, on the polite urging of town stalwart and RFS life member

Gwen Deaves, who did not let the rare opportunity to bend the ear of the Premier pass her by.



Interchange funding idea

Work on the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange at Glendale has finally begun, but funding is yet to be secured for the all-important second stage, the Pennant Street bridge linking Glendale and Cardiff, and the new train station.

In Parliament recently I asked the Premier, Mike Baird, whether he would consider changing the route of the planned Newcastle light rail to run along the existing corridor and use the \$100 million in savings to fully fund the Glendale interchange.

While the Premier was non-committal, I believe the idea is a win-win proposition. Newcastle would get a faster light rail service delivered sooner, Lake Macquarie would get the interchange, and it would be a better use of the port sale proceeds.



Electorate information night, with speaker Joanne McCarthy and guest Peter Fox



100th birthday for Wyee resident Allan Pryor



visit to Wyee



School leaders visit to Parliament



Launch of Myuna Bay field upgrade, with Rick Stone

Action to address lead contamination

There have been a number of developments on the issue of lead contamination in northern Lake Macquarie over the past six months.

Late last year, the Newcastle Herald published details of Macquarie University research which found elevated lead levels in the soil in some private and public properties around the former Pasmenco smelter. Since then, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has convened an expert panel to investigate the findings, as well as a community reference group, chaired by me, to liaise with the panel.

In addition, Hunter Health has begun a new round of voluntary testing of blood lead levels in children, using new a new fingerprick test that is faster and more accurate than previous methods.

The National Health and Medical Research Council recently halved the threshold at which it recommends action be taken to investigate lead in blood – reducing the



Members of the Lake Macquarie Lead Community Reference Group.

guideline figure from 10 micrograms per decilitre to five. This new benchmark reflects the average blood lead level for Australians.

I welcome this change and the moves taken so far to address lead contamination in the affected suburbs. I will keep the community updated on further developments through my website, social media and newsletters.

You can contact the community reference group via the EPA website (www.epa.nsw.gov.au). Use the site's search function to find the relevant page.

Companion animal breeding inquiry

I am pleased to have been appointed to a parliamentary committee to inquire into and report on companion animal breeding practices in NSW. The committee is looking into matters such as the prevalence of puppy farms, the implications of banning the sale of cats and dogs from pet stores and the case for a licensing system for breeders.

This is a very emotive issue that prompts a lot of emails and representations to my office. The inquiry is due to report at the end of August.

Wild weather brings out best

The east coast low that cut a devastating path through Lake Macquarie in April caused unprecedented damage in some parts of our area, and left thousands of homes without power.

The Lake Macquarie City and Cooranbong SES units responded to about 3,000 calls for assistance, ably supported by SES volunteers. I paid tribute in Parliament to the wonderful efforts of our emergency services workers and volunteers, many of whom worked for days on end to help restore order.

Charity and not-for-profit groups also showed great community spirit by opening their facilities to those who needed them and offering free food and refreshments. The Southlakes Neighbourhood Centre did a great job assisting people in the Morisset area, and I know other groups helped out in their own communities.

Thank you to everyone who assisted with the storm response.



Lake Macquarie SES headquarters with a cabinet full of pink slips representing thousands of calls for assistance.

Anchors aweigh for boatshed

The Lake Macquarie Classic Boatshed is the perfect group for people who like nothing half so much as simply messing about with boats.

Sort of like a 'men's shed' for boating enthusiasts (but not restricted to men), the boatshed is an offshoot of the Lake Macquarie Classic Boat Association, which also runs the annual Classic Boatfest. The group's mission is to restore and build boats in the old style – and to preserve and pass on traditional boatbuilding skills.

They have taken up residence in two sheds on Catalina Bay: one a former ablutions block for air base personnel, the other an old sub-station across the road. The group meets every Thursday morning, if you are interested in joining them or popping in to have a cuppa and view their handiwork.

You can find out more about the boatshed at www.classicboatfest.com.au. Boatshed members welcome donations of boats, tools and timber.



Greg and Lake Macquarie Mayor Jodie Harrison at the recent shed opening with Noel Heslop and Graeme Knott from the Classic Boatshed.

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

A parliamentary privilege

An enjoyable aspect of my job is meeting local school students when they tour Parliament House.

The group in the photo below even gained access to the hallowed chamber of the Legislative Assembly (that's the Lower House – the one I'm in), where we procured the use of the Speaker's Chair for this fantastic shot.

School tours of Parliament are free and can be taken on sitting or non-sitting days. To find out more, visit the NSW Parliament website (www.parliament.nsw.gov.au). To book a tour, call 9230 3444 or email schooltours@parliament.nsw.gov.au.



Shared voyage comes to an end

A longstanding association between crew of the HMAS Tobruk and Morisset and Toronto Meals on Wheels will come to an end this month when the Navy vessel is decommissioned.

The Tobruk was granted Freedom of Entry to the City of Lake Macquarie in 1991. I put the crew in contact with Meals on Wheels while mayor of the city, after they expressed an interest in being involved with a local charity.

Morisset and Toronto Meals on Wheels has hosted Tobruk sailors on many occasions since, with the servicemen and women joining local volunteers on meal runs. Their final visit was last month, after which a lunch was held to celebrate their special relationship over the years.



Greg with SWO Daniel McCowen, from Tobruk, and Meals on Wheels client Doug Hay.

Visit my mobile office

I will be conducting mobile offices in the following locations. Please come along if you have an issue you would like to discuss – or simply to say hello.

▶ **Morisset Square, Yambo Street, Morisset**
Thursday 20 August, 10am–1pm

▶ **Cardiff Senior Citizens Centre, 59 Harrison Street, Cardiff**
Thursday 24 September, 10am–1pm

Further mobile office dates around the electorate will be advertised through my e-newsletter and social media. Follow me to stay in touch.



sign up
for my
e-news

gregpiper1.com

Greg Piper Independent Member for the
State Electorate of Lake Macquarie

Authorised by Greg Piper MP. Printed by MSS Media 161 Lake Albert Road Koorringal NSW 2650.
Printed on recycled paper using parliamentary entitlements.

gregpiper1.com