



State Connection

By The Hon Thomas George MP, Nationals Member for Lismore
December 2011

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Events around the electorate

Some events I have attended in the electorate during the past month include -

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- Open new Westpac Business Centre
- Presentation of AR Bluett Award to Tweed Council
- Men & A River book launch
- Glenn Roff Retirement Dinner
- St Carthage's Mass & Blessing of Stained Glass Window
- Trinity Jubilee Cup Day
- Official Opening RM Williams store
- Launch of Care Circle Program
- St John's Speech & Prize Giving Ceremony
- Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Christmas Lunch
- Rising Star Scholarship Function
- Opening of St Vincent's Hospital Education Centre
- Little Athletics Zone Championships
- 216 ACU March Out Parade
- Lismore High School Presentation Assembly
- Murwillumbah High School Presentation Night
- Lismore Chamber of Commerce Christmas Party
- Bonalbo Central School Presentation Evening
- Woodenbong Central School Presentation Day
- Community meeting at Tyalgum

JP Register

I have many enquiries to my office regarding finding a JP in the local area. My staff are JP's and generally available Monday-Friday 9am-4pm, however you can also search the public register to find one nearby.

<http://jp.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/public/>

Parliamentary Inquiries

Provisions of the Election Funding, Expenditure & Disclosures Bill 2011

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on the provisions of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment Bill 2011, and in particular:

- a. the constraints imposed by the bill on community and not-for-profit organisations, including unions, community groups, clubs and environment and social justice organisations and their ability to engage in the political process,
- b. the impact of the bill on peak organisations, whose constituent entities are themselves membership-based,
- c. the impact on community organisations, whose members are voters registered to vote,
- d. the impact of the prohibition on the payment of affiliation fees for organisations affiliated to political parties,
- e. the impact of donation caps on donations of registered voters and their organisations,
- f. the impact of the aggregation of the electoral spending of affiliated organisations under the expenditure cap of the party to which they are affiliated,
- g. any amendments necessary to address any adverse impact identified, and
- h. the risks of a successful constitutional challenge.

Closing date for submissions is 15 February 2012.

Further information can be obtained from

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/401F472F5EF271BDCA257952001DB134?open&refnavid=CO4_1

Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011

That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 inquire into and report on the Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011, and in particular:

- a. the stated objectives, curriculum, implementation, effectiveness and other related matters pertaining to the current operation of 'special education in ethics' being conducted in State schools, and
- b. whether the Education Amendment (Ethics) Act 2010 should be repealed.

Closing date for submissions is 24 February 2012.

Further information can be obtained from

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/3312B8C2F2E89AD2CA2579480000E930?open&refnavid=CO4_1

Administration of the 2011 NSW election and related matters

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters is to inquire into and report upon the conduct of the 2011 NSW State Election with respect to the following electoral laws, their administration and related practices:

- *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912* (other than Part 2);
- *Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981*; and
- The provisions of the *Constitution Act 1902* that relate to the procedures for, and conduct of, elections for members of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council (other than sections 27, 28 and 28a, that is, the provisions relating to the distribution of electorates).

Closing date for submissions is 17 February 2012.

Further information can be obtained from

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/67F2055C4D085409CA25795A0017CF2C?open&refnavid=CO4_1

The Utilisation of Rail Corridors

That the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure inquire into and report on the utilisation of air space above, and the land adjacent to, the rail corridor in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Sydney, including the Hunter and the Illawarra.

Matters may include, but are not limited to, how rail corridors might contribute to:

- providing opportunities for mixed use property development;
- generating income for funding future infrastructure projects;
- facilitating sustainable urban renewal and development;
- facilitation of transit oriented development schemes around railway stations;
- connectivity of communities either side of railway lines.

Other areas of inquiry will include:

- the current planning and policy framework;
- regulatory and policy barriers to implementing rail corridor projects;
- issues relating to the financing and funding of such projects;
- methods of assessing the compatibility of projects with the local community;
- examples of best practice from other jurisdictions.

Closing date for submissions is 29 February 2012.

Further information can be obtained from

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/7C4449DECCDEDBBDCA257952001F3EDA?open&refnavid=CO4_1

Road Access Pricing

That the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure inquire into and report on the development and implementation of a road access pricing strategy for New South Wales.

Matters may include, but are not limited to, how a road access pricing strategy could contribute to:

- equitable charging for road access based on actual costs, time of day and road wear;
- encouraging the use of different modes of transport, including public transport;
- generating sustainable levels of income for maintenance of, and investment in, the transport network.

The inquiry will examine:

- current road access pricing in New South Wales;
- road access pricing policy and initiatives in other jurisdictions;
- the applicability of road access pricing in non-metropolitan areas;
- the capabilities of road access pricing technologies;
- the linkage and the contribution of road access pricing toward the Transport Master Plan.

Further information can be obtained from

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/09337D38CB1C3FEFCA25795200205545?open&refnavid=CO4_1

Health Care Complaints & Complaints Handling in NSW

That, pursuant to the functions of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Health Care Complaint Commission under s 65(1)(b) and s 65(1)(d) of the *Health Care Complaints Act 1993* to report to both Houses of Parliament, with such comments as the Committee thinks fit, on any matter appertaining to the Commission or connected with the exercise of the Commission's functions to which, in the opinion of the Committee, the attention of Parliament should be directed, and to report on any change that the Committee considers desirable to the functions, structures and procedures of the Commission the Committee examine the operation of the *Health Care Complaints Act 1993*, with particular reference to:

- a. A comparative analysis of complaints lodged with the Health Care Complaints Commission by regional and metropolitan consumers including the quantity and nature of complaints and consumer satisfaction; and
- b. Consumer awareness and understanding of the complaint handling systems and processes available to them both within the hospital system and in relation to external systems.

Closing date for submissions is 3 February 2012.

Further information can be obtained from

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/30220C3C68D45565CA25794900075562?open&refnavid=CO4_1

Government Reviews

Whole of Government Ageing Strategy

A series of consultation sessions will be held in January to help the NSW government develop a new Whole of Government Ageing Strategy to enhance the lives of older residents.

A Summary Paper outlining the key findings from the recent Ageing Roundtable has been released. The Paper highlights a number of priority areas including social inclusion, health and well-being, housing, transport, mature workers, volunteers, attitudes to ageing and planning for later life.

A consultation session will be held in Ballina on 9 January 2012 at the Ramada Hotel & Suites, 2 Martin St from 11.00am.

To register for the session, download a copy of the Paper or make a submission, go to http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/about/strategies/ageing_strategy_consultations

Dual Roles: Councillors as Members of Parliament in NSW

Public discussion is invited on whether NSW MP's should be serving concurrently as local councillors or mayors.

A Discussion Paper on the issues looks into whether it is a conflict of interests, it is appropriate for one person to service in two political roles, and that dual roles are not permitted in other States. In Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia, State & Federal Members of Parliament are not permitted to service concurrently.

Public submissions are open until 31 January. A copy of the Paper can be found at - <http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/documents/information/Dual%20Roles%20-%20Councillors%20as%20Members%20of%20Parliament%20in%20NSW%20-%20Discussion%20Paper.pdf>

Regional Pest Strategies

14 Draft Regional Pest Strategies outlining how the National Parks and Wildlife Service would tackle feral animals and weeds in local national parks is now on public exhibition.

Submissions can be sent to pest.forum@environment.nsw.gov.au by 29 February 2012.

The Strategies are available at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pestsweeds/regionPestManagement.htm>

Aboriginal Community Discussion Papers

Community Discussion Papers on service delivery, education and employment have been released to help develop a new Aboriginal affairs strategy for NSW.

Copies of the Papers are available from <http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/taskforce/yoursay.html> . The service delivery and employment papers close for public comment on 29 February and the education paper on 30 March. Submissions can be sent to taskforce@dhs.nsw.gov.au.

Planning System Review

An Issues Paper has been released as part of the review into the NSW Planning System.

Following community forums, stakeholder meetings and public submissions, the Paper outlines the key themes and questions raised along the way and seeks further feedback in areas including development assessment, plan-making, appeals, reviews and compliance.

Comments and submission are invited until 17 February 2012 and copies can be obtained at <http://www.planningreview.nsw.gov.au/Home/IssuesPaper/tabid/117/Default.aspx>

Strata & Community Laws

NSW introduced the world's first strata law in 1961 and again in 1989 enabling the development of community schemes, however the laws have not kept pace with the issues facing strata and community scheme residents, so a three month online consultation project has begun.

The laws are outdated and no longer effectively support owners in the day to day management of their scheme or address the issues associated with ageing buildings, changing demographics and accountability for annual budgets that can amount to millions of dollars.

Consultation is open until 29 February 2012 and comments can be made directly online at <http://openforum.com.au/content/strata-laws-online-consultation>

Increasing Organ Donation in NSW

Organ donation is potentially lifesaving for people with end stage organ failure.

Current rates of organ donation in NSW are insufficient to meet the need for transplantation.

The views of the community are sought on strategies which could be implemented in NSW to increase organ donation rates, through a Discussion Paper.

Comments can be submitted to organ@doh.health.nsw.gov.au by 31 January 2012. The Paper is available at http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2011/increasing_organ_donation.html.

Council Reviews

Tweed Shire Council has revised the water restrictions it would implement in the event of a drought and is seeking community feedback on those provisions. The Plan can be viewed at <http://tweed.nsw.gov.au/onexhibition/OnExhibitionDetail.aspx?ExhibitionID=137&Status=Current> and comments made until 31 January 2012.

Lismore City Council has on exhibition its Draft Local Environment Plan (LEP) 2011 and Draft Koala Plan of Management (KPoM). Copies can be found at the following links. Submissions for the LEP close on 30 January 2012 and the KPoM on 3 February 2012.

LEP - http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-MLP-53-23-28
KPoM - http://www.lismore.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-KMA-62-56-37

Churchill Fellowship

Applications are now open for a 2012 Churchill Fellowship. To be eligible to apply you must -

- be an Australian Citizen over the age of 18
- not be enrolled in tertiary studies directly related to the topic of your proposed project
- have experience in and commitment to the field of your project
- have a project of between 4 weeks and approximately 6 weeks length that requires overseas investigation
- be willing to disseminate the results of your research to the broader Australian community; AND
- not have been awarded a Churchill Fellowship in the past.

Further information is available at <http://apply.churchilltrust.com.au/>

Healthy Kids

The Healthy Kids website www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au will assist parents and carers with healthy options for children over the Christmas and school holiday period.

It is a valuable resource for mums and dads wanting to plan activities and make sure their kids are provided with healthy food options over the summer holiday period.

The website is part of a \$53 million program to tackle childhood obesity and has five key messages for the prevention of childhood overweight and obesity, including:

1. Get active each day
2. Choose water as a drink
3. Eat more fruit and vegetables
4. Eat fewer snacks and select healthier alternatives
5. Turn off the TV or computer and get active

Healthy Kids is a one-stop destination for all NSW Government initiatives relating to nutrition and physical activity advice for children and young people.

CTP Cheaper for Motorbikes

The average Compulsory Third Party (CTP) or Green Slip price for motorbikes will fall by up to 19 per cent on 1 January 2012 after the NSW Government conducted an audit of prices.

This is a great win for motorcyclists who for too long have been paying Green Slip premiums out of step with the risks associated with riding a motorbike.

The NSW Government has listened to the community and worked with insurers to reach an outcome that better reflects the activity.

Of the five motorbike classes all but one will see substantial decreases. But good riders in the 1126 to 1325CC class can still save almost \$350 simply by shopping around for the best price among the insurers.

New Skills: Quality Care

The Government has announced a new Training Strategy for Early Childhood Education and Care workers, *New Skills: Quality*.

Over 250,000 children are being taught and cared for by over 23,120 workers in the NSW Early Childhood Education and Care sector. It is essential that parents and the community can be confident that children are receiving the best education and care.

From January 2014 all workers in licensed Early Childhood Education and Care services will need to hold, or be working towards a Certificate III Children's Services. In addition, all family day care coordinators will need to hold a Diploma in Children's Services and 50 per cent or more of educators in centre based services will need to hold, or be working towards a Diploma.

New Skills: Quality Care has been developed in conjunction with the Community Services and Health Industry Training Advisory Body that will assist the estimated 8,500 NSW workers who will need to gain a qualification.

The Government will subsidise the education and training costs for workers who need to undertake training to gain their formal qualification. Subsidised training is available at NSW TAFE Institutes or with specifically approved registered training organisations.

New Skills: Quality Care can be downloaded from the Department of Education and Communities website at www.det.nsw.edu.au.

Grants for New Workplace Safety Laws

\$550,000 in grants is available to assist small businesses in understanding the new work health and safety laws.

With the new laws starting on 1 January, the Government is taking steps to educate businesses through workshops, seminars and other means and the grants will ensure this continues.

The grants will be available to organisations that can develop and implement training programs that help small businesses understand the new laws and how they impact their workplace.

Visit www.workcover.nsw.gov.au and download the Small Business Assistance Grants application form and guidelines. Applications close 30 January 2012.

Improved Mobility for Disabled Cyclists

Abby Turner, a hearing-impaired cyclist, recently wrote to me requesting permission to ride her tricycle on the footpath.

The end result has been the NSW Government granting an exemption for all disabled cyclists to ride on the footpath.

Abby explained she has trouble with her balance on a two-wheel bike and hence rides a tricycle. Where possible she uses bike paths, however there are instances when she has to ride on the road.

Disabilities, such as deafness, can place the rider at risk on the road, as not being able to hear vehicles in the road environment can be distressing and unsafe.

I contacted the Minister for Roads and Ports Duncan Gay detailing Abby's situation and he has used his Ministerial power to grant this exemption to the relevant Road Rule.

This decision, which comes into effect in February 2012, will make it easier and safer for Abby and other disabled cyclists to get around.

Congratulations

- Tom Maxwell, Lismore was awarded the third clasp to the Volunteer National Medal.
- Tweed Shire Council received the AR Bluett Memorial Award, for community leadership while delivering major infrastructure projects and implementing a broad range of economic and environmental initiatives. This is the highest accolade for a Council.
- Tweed Byron Bush Futures Project for the Natural Environment Protection and Enhancement: On-ground Works Award at the 2010/11 Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards.
- Tait Jenkins, Modanville placed third at the Bocce Junior Titles in Sydney.
- Cheryl Cochran, Dorrroughby won the NRMA Conservation Volunteer Helping People Award.
- Digby Moran & Kathleen Richardson, both from Lismore were finalists in the Parliament of NSW Aboriginal Art Prize 2011.
- Katie Cook from Nimbin Central School was awarded the NSW Premier's Student volunteer Gold Award.
- Clarence River Wilderness Lodge at Tabulam was a finalist at the 2011 NSW Tourism Awards.
- Lismore Vinnies Youth Volunteer Team on receiving the Northern Rivers Volunteer Team of the Year award.
- Amelia Telford & James Lea from Trinity Catholic College were winners of the Sustainable Futures Australia 2011 Environmental Excellence Award.
- Deanna Larkin, Murwillumbah achieved the Grey Wolf Award

Media Releases

Following is a list of media releases I have issued during the past month. Follow the link to my website to view in full.

Don't Dis My Ability

Successful Seniors Celebrate

Local Schools benefit from first round of \$40M upgrade program

Lismore Local Helps Improve Mobility for all Disabled Cyclists

Christmas Concert DVD

I have received a limited number of copies of the 2011 Premier's Christmas Gala Concert Limited Edition DVD. If you are interested, contact my office to secure a copy.

Christmas Wishes

Thomas & Deborah together with staff Bronwyn, Annie & Natalie would like to wish you a happy, safe and joyous festive season. Best wishes for a prosperous 2012.

Our office will be closed from 12pm Friday 23 December 2011 & will reopen 9am Monday 9 January 2012.

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THE NATIONALS
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