



State Connection

By Nationals Member for Lismore Thomas George MP

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Coles cuts milk price but sours industry

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Coles slashes milk price
- 2 Lismore youth in Parliament
- 3 Nats' Regional bus tour
- 3 iVote – new voting system launched
- 4 2011 Lismore Electorate Woman of the Year
- 5 High Achievers this month

“...in the long run this will cause a price war between brands...”

The decision by Coles supermarket earlier this month to slash the price of its own brand milk to \$1 per litre is irresponsible and detrimental to the sustainability of our dairy industry. As per reported in local media, I call on the giant food chain to reverse this decision.

The move to slash the price of milk was immediately matched by Woolworths, and later followed by Aldi.

Despite Coles saying it would absorb the price cut, in the long run this will cause a price war between brands, which ultimately comes back to the producers.

The dairy industry on the North Coast is still getting over deregulation, together with years of drought and now floods. Many farmers have left the industry and those that remain have had a hard time maintaining viability.

This is a time when we should be supporting dairy farmers, like we are other agricultural and horticultural industries, following natural disasters, to help them get through these hard times.

Currently the cost of feeding dairy cows is increasing because of the flood damage to many crops and in NSW our producers are disadvantaged with natural disaster grants only available for \$15,000, unlike our Queensland counterparts who can receive \$25,000.

I again call on Coles to reverse its decision and return money back to the farmgate by renegotiating its current contracts to increase the price by five cents per litre to the producer.

This action would support the viability of our dairy farmers at this difficult time. Rather than create a price war, create a price support.

Lismore students enter State Parliament

I'm pleased to announce Lismore has two new youth representatives in NSW state politics this year with Richmond River High School student, Lauren Bryant and Kadina High student, Brendan Pearce, selected for the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament 2011.

"...This year will mark the 10th year anniversary of the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament, an apolitical program, and is expected to be the biggest and best yet ..."

Lauren and Brendan were two of only 110 individuals selected state wide to take part in this prestigious program that provides young people between the ages of 15 and 18 with the opportunity to voice their opinions on issues that are important to them and their local communities.

This year will mark the 10th year anniversary of the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament, an apolitical program, and is expected to be the biggest and best yet.

The program received well over 140 applications from all across NSW with 110 young people selected, representing 70 electorates from both metropolitan and regional areas.

I am delighted Lauren and Brendan will be represented in the NSW Parliament later this year and I have no doubt the pair will act with the best interests of Lismore at heart and produce a bill that will be recognised by the current Government.

Both Lismore Youth Representatives are ready to represent Lismore and take on fellow youth MP's in the Bear Pitt of NSW Parliament House.

The youth MPs have been divided into committees to create bills on the important issues within their portfolio. This year there are 10 committees, representing the most important and topical issues facing the state. Lauren is a member of the committee investigating Ethnic Affairs and Citizenship and Brendan is a member of the committee investigating Health & Medical Research.

Once bills have been finalised, the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament will convene for a week in July. Youth Parliamentarians will debate their bills in NSW Parliament House where the bill will be presided by a NSW Member of Parliament. At the end of the week, passed bills are presented to representatives from both the Government and Opposition.

The Youth Parliamentarians encourage local young people to contact them through the YMCA's Youth Parliament Coordinator, Annie Lam, if they have any issues that they believe should be raised in Parliament on (02) 9633 8233.

George joins Nats' bus tour of regional NSW

Earlier this month I joined 11 fellow National Party Members of Parliament on a whistle stop bus tour around regional NSW.

The week-long bus tour, which commenced on 31 January, saw us visit towns and cities including Cessnock, Taree, Port Macquarie, Wauchope, Walcha, Tamworth and Gunnedah.

We were also fortunate enough to meet with business owners and operators within those towns and cities.

The message we heard loud and clear was that *'it is time for change'*.

The main issues people were expressing to us included the electricity sell-off, current and increased costs of electricity, health, water, law and order, and mining.

No doubt we as Members, in talking to the people, will keep these issues in mind when finalising the appropriate policies.

"...The message we heard loud and clear was that 'it is time for change'....."

iVote launched for State election

A new voting system 'iVote' has been launched for casting your decision for the upcoming State Election on March 26.

The iVote system will allow elector's to register for technology assisted voting and will be available to people who are blind or have low vision, have a disability, who are going to be outside NSW on election day or who live in remote locations.

An elector will apply to use iVote, just as they might apply for a postal vote. The elector can apply on the internet or by calling a dedicated iVote call-centre.

To access iVote, electors need access to either a telephone or any computer with internet capability. Procedures have been developed for how iVote will operate, how security will be maintained and how the iVotes will be counted.

It would be available for an elector to cast a vote throughout the same period as is available for electors casting a pre-poll vote. iVote will be a huge benefit to postal voters and those who will be either overseas or interstate on election day.

For more information on iVote, visit the Electoral Commission NSW website www.elections.nsw.gov.au or call my office on 6621 3624.

2011 Lismore Electorate Woman of the Year

On Monday I had the honour of announcing the 2011 Lismore Electorate Woman of the Year at a special morning tea held at the Red Dove Cafe in Lismore.

Murwillumbah's Janine Sigley, a full time working mother, was named the winner of the award, which aims to recognise, congratulate and thank those who have contributed through business or volunteering, to the benefit of our whole community.

Janine is the co-founder of Story Dogs, a charitable program which works with children in Year 2 across the Tweed Valley to improve their literacy skills through specialised reading sessions with trained dogs.

Janine's win is an extraordinary achievement for an extraordinary woman. Not only is she a full time working mother - but she, along with her friend and Story Dogs co-founder Leah Sheldon, deliver this valuable and charitable program to 13 schools and 100 plus students each week.

By reading to a non-judgemental hound, the program increases the children's confidence and inspires in them a lifelong love for reading.

The 13 other nominees are also to be congratulated. All of their successes and achievements encourage and inspire. I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to join with them, their peers, family and friends to celebrate and recognise their huge contribution to our society.

For more information about the Story Dogs program visit www.storydogs.org.au or for information about the Lismore Electorate Woman of the Year Awards call my office on 6621 3624.



Thomas George MP with Lismore Electorate Woman of the Year winner Janine Sigley, of Murwillumbah.

"...Janine's win is an extraordinary achievement for an extraordinary woman..."

Congratulations to this month's high achievers: -

- **Professor Jerry Vanclay**, on recently being appointed head of a newly formed national forest steering committee to co-ordinate celebrations in 2011 around the country.
- **John McAlister**, of Goonellabah, on being awarded with a Commissioner's Commendation for bravery from Fire and Rescue NSW.
- **Ian Kirkland**, on being awarded with life membership to the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society.
- **Professor Barry Conyngham AM** on being appointed as the new Dean of Melbourne University's College of the Arts & Music.
- **Janine Sigley**, of Murwillumbah, on being awarded the 2011 Lismore Electorate Woman of the Year. Other nominees to be congratulated in this year's awards included: -

Colleen Scofield, of Urbenville
Marjorie Norris, of Murwillumbah
Jennifer Press, of Murwillumbah
Jan Clifford, of Goonellabah
Fay Seiffert, of Lismore Heights
Janice Davis, of Lismore Heights
Christine Smith, of Goolmangar
Raema Perkins, of Kyogle
Kerry Turner, of Murwillumbah
Ann Spillane, of Lismore Heights
Sue Lloyd, of Goonellabah
Delma Gillespie, of Goonellabah
and Pat Anderson, of Kyogle. (See page 4 of this newsletter for full story.)

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THE NATIONALS
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