



State Connection

By The Hon Thomas George MP, Nationals Member for Lismore
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Events around the electorate

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

- Meet new intern doctors at Lismore Base Hospital
- Public meeting regarding Lismore draft LEP & KPoM
- Australia Day celebrations at Kyogle & Caroonna Goonellabah
- Presented a Protecting our Places Grant - Banyam/Baigham
- Murwillumbah Chamber breakfast

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WorkCover Reforms

The Government is going to fast track urgent reforms needed in WorkCover and the Compensation Authorities.

One of the possible reform options includes merging WorkCover and the four other compensation authorities - the Motor Accidents Authority, Dust & Diseases Tribunal, Sporting Injuries Committee and Lifetime Care & Support Authority to achieve savings.

Canrefer

Cancer patients and general practitioners now have access to a more coordinated approach to cancer treatment despite where you live in NSW.

The Canrefer website (www.canrefer.org.au), an initiative by the Cancer Institute NSW, allows GP's and people diagnosed with cancer and their families to search for healthcare teams specializing in the treatment and care of specific cancers.

The program allows people to search for their closest specialist healthcare teams, and information including the radiation oncology, chemotherapy, palliative care and cancer genetics units closest to where they live.

Next of Kin Register & Safely Home

The NSW Police runs a Next of Kin Register which enables people living alone, whether elderly or not, to record their details at their local police station.

The register holds information of their nominated next of kin, doctors and dentist details and any medical alerts. This information assists ambulance and Police in an emergency situation to contact a relative or other nominated person.

People on the register receive a key ring and a sticker to be placed on their home phone which alerts emergency services to the fact they are registered with the Next of Kin Program.

There is no cost associated with registering with this program.

People also have the option of registering with the Safely Home data base, which is jointly run by Alzheimer's Australia and the NSW Police. When a person is registered they receive a personalized stainless steel bracelet to wear at all times. The bracelet is virtually impossible to remove without assistance.

The bracelet has a toll free telephone number and a personal identification number linked to the NSW Police Safely Home data base. The data base contains a detailed description of the person, contact information, previous residential addresses and other locations the person may visit. It also includes a photograph which can be given to the media in the case of an emergency. When someone finds a lost person they can look at the bracelet, call the Police and quote the ID number.

Further information can be obtained from your local Police Station.

Grandparents' Family Law

The third edition of the Family Law Reform's Grandparents' Family Law Information Guide is now available. The guide is for the use of grandparents who are denied access to their grandchildren. Copies are available for download at www.familylawreform.org.au.

Rebates for Community Groups

Rous Water promotes the efficient use of potable water and provides financial assistance to community not-for-profit groups that undertake water saving and water efficiency projects.

The Community Program is targeting those community groups with club houses, amenities blocks, sporting fields, gardens, etc which use water.

Any project that reduces the demand for water from the Rous Water regional water supply system is eligible for financial assistance.

Up to \$5000 will be available for any single project.

For more information call Rous Water on 6621 8055 or email water@rouswater.nsw.gov.au or visit www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-DVJ-55-32-71.

Free Legal Help for Flood Victims

Free legal help is available for flood-affected residents across NSW to assist with their insurance claims.

People can contact LawAccess NSW on 1300 888 529 or Legal Aid NSW Lismore (6621 2082).

Anyone who needs help to understand their insurance policy or to make an insurance claim should take advantage of free legal information and advice.

Flood victims are advised to take these steps:

- Keep a record of flood damage - take photos and videos where possible.
- Ask neighbours to witness the damage.
- Carefully check the wording of their insurance policy and, if in doubt, obtain legal advice before speaking to claims assessors, who usually visit on site.
- Make sure that premiums have been paid in full, or are up to date, before lodging any claim because premium shortfalls may affect payment.

Even if your policy does exclude flood it would likely cover other water-related damage such as rain and storms. These can be difficult legal issues and I urge residents if they have doubts about their policies to get free legal advice.

Legal Aid NSW lawyers can provide free advice and assistance with:

- insurance claims;
- renegotiating credit commitments due to loss of income from the flood; and
- issues for tenants where the property is seriously damaged from the flood.

A fact sheet *Storms, Floods, Insurance and you - a guide to getting your insurance claim paid* can be downloaded from the Legal Aid NSW website www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/publications

Work Health & Safety Laws

New Work Health & Safety laws came into effect on 1 January 2012. These laws will enhance productivity and reduce compliance costs for businesses working in more than one jurisdiction, making it easier to do business in NSW.

The harmonization of work health & Safety laws will reduce compliance and red tape for employers whilst maintaining a strong work, health & safety framework.

These changes follow the Government's priority action in June removing various unfair procedural requirements and other provisions which were contrary to accepted criminal law procedures, such as reverse onus of proof.

More information can be found on WorkCover's website at www.workcover.nsw.gov.au.

Commercial Tanning Units Banned

The State Government is introducing tough new laws banning commercial ultraviolet (UV) solarium tanning units in NSW.

Solarium use is associated with a range of skin cancers, including melanoma, which is the most life threatening form of skin cancer and the most common form of skin cancer among 15 to 39-year-olds.

The International Agency for research on Cancer has increased the classification for solarium to 'carcinogenic to humans' and this places solarium in the same category of risk of harm to humans as asbestos.

Sadly, Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world and this ban is long overdue.

The new laws totally banning commercial solarium tanning units in NSW will be effective from 31 December 2014.

The introduction period to 31 December 2014 would give the solarium industry time to adjust to the changes, remove the tanning units and transition their business to safer alternatives.

Until then Environment Protection Agency (EPA) will continue to ensure that the solarium industry is meeting its regulatory requirements and will be conducting audits of premises that own commercial tanning units to ensure that they are complying with current regulations.

The Government would look at ways to support the industry by helping with the safe disposal of tanning units and by assisting the industry reposition and diversify their businesses.

For more information about Solarium Regulation in NSW visit www.environment.nsw.gov.au/radiation/solarium.htm

Overhaul of IPTAAS

Patients who access the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS), will benefit from a significant overhaul of the current complex administration process. As part of a raft of new changes, patients will soon be able to complete and claim their travel and accommodation subsidies online.

Last year, the NSW Government announced a significant boost of \$28 million, over four years, to the IPTAAS. The increase in funding means a 30 per cent boost in accommodation subsidies and a 25 per cent boost in petrol subsidies.

Some of the key improvements that will be delivered over coming weeks are:

- a new online claiming system, where patients can complete and claim their subsidy online;
- simpler, shorter application form;
- a 'one-off' recording of claimant details, to avoid unnecessary paperwork;
- the ability for patients to monitor the progress of their claims online; and
- the ability for patients to change their personal details (ie: bank details)

Regional Relocation Grant Expanded

The Regional Relocation Grant which was introduced last year to encourage people to move to regional areas, has now been expanded to include building a new home.

This extension will apply retrospectively so it is in line with the Grant start date of 1 July 2011.

A summary of the eligibility requirements are -

- The purchase of vacant land will be made eligible for the Regional Relocation Grant if the land is intended to be used as the site of a new home.
- It is limited to a purchase price or value of up to \$600,000 for the purchase of a completed home, including off-the-plan purchases.
- The purchase price or value of vacant land will be limited to \$450,000.
- The laying of foundations for the home must commence within 6 months of completion of the land purchase.
- Occupation of the home as the applicant's principal place of residence must commence within 12 months.
- The amendments would apply retrospectively from commencement of the grant scheme on 1 July 2011.
- The existing limitation which requires the applicant to sell his or her existing residence in the Metropolitan area within 12 months before or after the purchase would still apply.

Recreational Fishing Trust Funding

Local organisations and anglers with ideas for projects to help improve recreational fishing are encouraged to apply for funding from the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust.

The grants allow money generated from the sale of NSW recreational fishing licenses to be re-invested back into improving recreational fishing opportunities in the region.

Funds raised in the past year through recreational fishing licence fees is now available to assist recreational fishing groups, community organisations, councils and individuals to improve fishing in their local areas.

Funding that is generated from the sale of NSW recreational fishing licenses is placed into separate saltwater and freshwater fishing trusts, which spend all funds on improving recreational fishing.

Funding from NSW Recreational Fishing Trusts is open to individuals, groups and organisations, including fishing clubs, local councils and universities. Joint applications are also encouraged.

Applications close on 2 March 2012. For more information or assistance with applications contact NSW Department of Primary Industries on recreational.fishingtrust@dpi.nsw.gov.au or visit www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au.

Help for Victims of Crime

Recently the Attorney General launched the Victims of Crime Clearinghouse - Australia's most comprehensive website for information about the needs of victims of crime.

The online database contains summaries of all reports, which are divided into categories such as domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse and victims' rights.

The clearinghouse is a one-stop shop for research into victims of crime, containing more than 250 reports, conference papers and journal articles from Australia and around the world.

It will help guide government policy and be an invaluable point of reference for anyone providing frontline services to victims of crime, including psychologists, GPs, police and legal practitioners.

The NSW Government will also provide up to \$200,000 a year to support further research into the most effective methods of helping victims in their recovery.

The clearinghouse website also has a Media Toolbox, containing resources to assist reporters covering cases involving victims of crime.

For more on the clearinghouse: www.victimsclearinghouse.nsw.gov.au

Government Reviews

New Pool Safety Measures

A discussion paper has been released for a number of options to strengthen the State's laws around backyard swimming pools, to better protect young children from drowning.

The paper gives consideration to -

- Pool owners registering their pools via a free online register;
- Pool owners being responsible for assessing their pool fences and certifying that they meet safety requirements, or have them assessed and certified (information will be available regarding compliance requirements);
- Mandatory inspection of pool barriers at any property with a pool, at the point of lease or sale (certification would last two years);
- Councils developing Pool Barrier Inspection programs;
- Mandatory inspection by councils of pools associated with tourist and visitor accommodation and other multi-occupancy developments at least every three years; and
- Councils reporting annually on details of their pool barrier inspection programs.

Submissions are invited from the public on the proposed changes to the *Swimming Pools Acts* until 24 February 2012. The paper can be viewed at www.dlg.nsw.gov.au.

Waste Levy Review

The Government is seeking input from local councils, waste and recycling industries and the wider community on the impacts and operations of the NSW Waste & Environment Levy imposed on each tonne of waste disposed in landfill.

The waste levy is designed to reduce waste to landfill and increase recycling and there are very strong and diverse opinions among stakeholders about the levy and how it should be spent.

Interested parties are invited to provide written submissions addressing one or more of the terms of reference -

- The impact on the recycling industry
- The impact on households
- Funding arrangements to facilitate greater investment in infrastructure with local councils and industry, and;
- The impact on illegal dumping, including the proper disposal of asbestos.

Submissions close on 13 April 2012. Consultation sessions will be held in Ballina on Monday 20 February at the Ballina RSL Club, 10.00am-12.00pm for Local Government stakeholders, 1.30-3.00pm for industry and the community.

Details about the terms of reference and consultations are available at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/waste/levyreview.htm.

New Wind Farm Guidelines

Draft Planning Guidelines for Wind Farms have been released for public exhibition. The draft strikes a balance between providing opportunities for investment in renewable energy and ensuring local communities are protected from the impacts of wind farm developments.

The draft guidelines can be accessed at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/onexhibition and are open for comment until 14 March 2012.

Kyogle Showground & Public Recreation Trust

Applications are being sought for appointment as Trust Board member of the Kyogle Showground & Public Recreation Trust. Forms can be obtained from the Department of Primary Industries, Level 1, 76 Victoria Street, Grafton and will be need to be lodged with same by Monday 12 March. For further information contact 66403402.

Telstra Australian Business Awards

Nominations and entries are open for the 2012 Awards. For 20 years the Awards have recognized the vital contribution of the sector to the national economy. There are five Award categories, HTC Start Up, News Ltd Micro-Business, MYOB Small Business, Commonwealth Bank Medium Business, Telstra Regional. The NSW Awards will be held in July and the Australian Awards in August. Visit www.telstrabusinesswards.com.au for more information or ring 1800 262323.

Congratulations

- Sincere thanks to all Australia Day winners & nominees for the wonderful contribution you make to our communities.
- Emma Hathaway, who is training to trek to the Everest Base Camp, Nepal in April to raise money for Variety to provide freedom and independence to sick, disadvantaged & special needs children. To find out more about Emma's journey or donate do to www.everydayhero.com.au/EmmaHathaway.
- Mark Robinson, Lismore who won the Australian V8 Dirt Modified Championship.
- Bill & Anne Brodie from Tweed Palliative Support who won the NRMA Senior Volunteer Helping People Award
- Ron Spence, Murwillumbah for recently receiving JP Life Membership
- Nick Currie, Kadina High School, was awarded the Leo Award of Honour for excellent service.
- Brendan Pearce, Kadina High School and Alice Fleetwood, Richmond River High School on being selected to attend Youth Parliament 2012.

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