



State Connection

By The Hon Thomas George MP, Nationals Member for Lismore
May 2012

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Events around the electorate & in Sydney

Some events I have attended in the electorate during the past couple of months include -

- Friends of St Vincent's Masked Ball
- Induction Service for Rev John Thornton
- Mediterranean Dinner Dance
- Year of the Farmer Dinner at Casino
- Launch of the RDA - Northern Rivers Green Industries Launch Project Report
- Lismore Council Sod Turning for Southern Main Trunk Line
- Official Opening of Interrelate
- World Day of Prayer Service
- Mallanganee Campdraft Open Day
- Opening of Bonalbo Central School CBP Project
- Lismore Levee Opening
- Seniors Week activities
- Retirement dinner for Malcolm Marshall
- Opened new premises for Summerland Tool Supplies
- Ian Kirkland's book launch "Blanchie"
- Anzac Day Services at Goonellabah Public School, Trinity Catholic College, Lismore Cenotaph & Caroon Kalina
- Unveiling of WWII Memorial at Wyrallah
- Retirement dinner for Mike Rayner
- Lismore Relay for Life opening ceremony
- Bonalbo Show

Sydney

- AHA Hospitality & Tourism Industry Luncheon
- Rural Women's Award Gala Dinner
- Official Opening of Community Youth & Pastoral Centre
- Commonwealth Day Luncheon
- Official Opening NSW Parliament Art Collection Exhibition
- Young Auctioneers Dinner & Easter Show Competition
- Royal Easter Show
- State Dinner for the President of Lebanon
- Insurance Council of Australia Annual Dinner

Government Reviews & Inquiries

Livestock Health & Pest Authority

The review of the NSW Livestock Health and Pest Authority model has been released for public comment.

The Ryan Review recommends landmark and far-reaching changes to the delivery of these services to rural landholders across NSW.

These include:

- a new regional framework to deliver frontline biosecurity functions and a broader range of services,
- the development of a new risk-based funding model that takes into account the need for appropriate contributions from industry, landholders and Government, and
- the implementation of a new management system to improve service delivery, reduce operating costs and improve transparency and accountability

The Government is committed to delivering relevant and cost-effective services and the independent review into the State's LHPAs plays a vital role in this plan.

Submissions are due by 23 May 2012. The review can be viewed at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/about/legislation-acts/review/lhpa.

Aboriginal Health Plan

The Government has released *Towards an Aboriginal Health Plan for NSW*, a discussion and consultation paper to support the development of a new 10-year plan to improve Aboriginal health.

The NSW Government is committed to closing the gap in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

There is a large disparity in life expectancy and the burden of disease is higher in Aboriginal people particularly in preventable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, mental health conditions, chronic respiratory disease and cancer.

The discussion paper proposes new strategic directions, actions and underpins principles to improve health service delivery and outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Submissions close 22 June and can be made at: www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/aboriginal/plan/index.asp.

Inter-Regional Public Transport

The State & Regional Development Committee is holding an inquiry into how inter-regional public transport can better serve the needs of regional New South Wales.

The terms of reference are:

- (a) how CountryLink services can be improved;
- (b) how network linkages between CountryLink train and coach services can be improved;
- (c) the potential for CountryLink services to carry light freight;
- (d) how CountryLink can be better utilised to increase tourism in New South Wales;
- (e) how the amount of inter-regional travel undertaken by public transport can be increased;
- (f) the extent to which regional public transport networks are integrated and how they can be better integrated;
- (g) the role local councils can play in improving inter-regional public transportation networks; and
- (h) the type of buses and trains that will be required for the provision of regional passenger services in the future.

For the purposes of this inquiry, the Committee uses the term inter-regional travel to refer to travel between regional areas or between a regional area and a metropolitan area.

The Committee does not intend to consider the privatisation of existing government owned public transport, including CountryLink, as part of its inquiry.

Submissions close 18 May 2012. Further details can be obtained at

www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/197720BA4C004A25CA2579BA001533D5?open&refnavid=CO3_1

WorkCover Improvement Begin

The Government recently released an issues paper and announced a parliamentary committee as the next steps in the vital reform of WorkCover.

The Issues paper outlined the scheme's failings when compared to its key aims - supporting injured workers through rehabilitation, getting them back to work, and remaining financially sustainable while still being price competitive with other States.

The Issues Paper can be found at www.workcover.nsw.gov.au.

The Committee will be tasked with inquiring and reporting on:

- The performance of the scheme in the key objectives of promoting better health and return-to-work outcomes;
- The financial sustainability of the scheme; and
- The functions and operations of the WorkCover Authority

Closing date for submissions is 17 May and can be made a

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/0B8EBC0D61BE16E9CA2579F2002C2F74?open&refnavid=CO4_1

New Council Code of Conduct

A final period of public consultation is now open for the amended Model Code of Conduct for NSW Councils, which will improve the standards of ethics and behavior that communities can expect from their councilors and council staff.

Comments from the public will be accepted until 26 June at www.dlq.nsw.gov.au.

Reform To Benefit Motor Vehicle Dealers, Repairers And Consumers

The Government has announced a comprehensive review of the laws governing motor vehicle dealers and repairers.

It is time to enhance consumer protection, bring about consistent regulation for dealers and repairers and to reduce red tape which has held the industry back.

An issues paper has been released which examines the option of simplifying legislation and implementing a single licensing system and dispute resolution process.

By consolidating the *Motor Dealers Act 1974* and the *Motor Vehicle Repairs Act 1980* it would be possible to regulate the industries efficiently whilst streamlining and reducing compliance and administrative costs.

Submissions will close on 13 July 2012. A copy of the Issues Paper can be accessed by going to www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au.

New Co-operatives Laws

In a national first, New South Wales has passed legislation to empower co-operatives, slash red tape and reduce costs. 2012 is the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives so it is only fitting that we recognise this by making practical changes to benefit the 680 co-operatives with more than 1.5 million members in NSW.

Co-operatives provide important services to local communities, particularly in rural and regional areas.

The *Co-operatives (Adoption of National Laws) Bill 2012* and the Co-operatives National Law would strengthen the sector by removing restrictions on co-operatives doing business in other states and territories. The legislation also streamlines financial reporting requirements for smaller co-operatives while removing confusing and inconsistent provisions contained in the old laws.

Fair Trading Money Stuff Challenge

This consumer education competition challenges young people to develop creative messages on consumer issues including scams, how to manage money and how to avoid debt traps.

Money Stuff focuses on areas where young people are most at risk of making bad choices such as when buying a car, choosing a mobile phone, shopping online or renting accommodation.

Entries must be lodged electronically either on CD, DVD or USB at www.moneystuff.net.au. Entries close Sunday 5 August.

Petrol Advertising Crackdown

A Fair Trading hotline has been established (1800 055 555) and an online complaint service is available (www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au) which allows motorists to report instances where they consider they have been misled by petrol advertising at service stations.

The hotline is open from 8.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday. Online complaints can be lodged 24/7. It was set up after Fair Trading inspectors discovered a high rate of non-compliance during an inspection of 302 NSW services stations.

In NSW all petrol stations operators are required to display the price of regular unleaded petrol and this price should be readily seen by motorists approaching the station when it is open.

Residential Parks Register

A new residential parks register has been launched to make it easy for members of the public to find and contact any residential park in NSW.

The register includes the name, location and contact details of 465 residential parks across NSW.

Public access to the names, locations and contact details of all residential parks will help residents when they are looking to move into a residential park. The register can be searched by the name of a park, or by the suburb, postcode or local government area. This will enable prospective residents to create a shortlist of possible parks.

The register is at www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au.

Simplified Retirement Village Contracts

A draft set of standard terms for retirement village contracts has been released for public consultation.

The draft standard terms had been developed with the help of a committee with specialist expertise in contracts and other retirement village matters.

“Moving into a retirement village is a major life decision and prospective residents need contracts that clearly set out their rights and obligations in an easily understood, plain-English format.

Development of a set of standard terms will help reduce confusion and complexity around retirement village contracts. It will also help would-be residents understand and compare different offerings between villages, before they sign on the dotted line.

The consultation draft is available from www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au or by calling 13 32 20.

Cross Border Commissioner

The Government has appointed Steve Toms as the first NSW Cross Border Commissioner. The position will -

- Provide an advocate for the concerns of cross border communities
- Review existing cross border governance & management arrangement
- Develop strategies to optimise the delivery of services to these communities

Mr Toms visited the electorate last month and met with stakeholders in Lismore before travelling to Legume to hold a public meeting to hear firsthand the problems locals have living on the border.

One Stop Shops

The rollout of 'One-Stop Shops' for the delivery of government services has commenced including in Lismore & Tweed Heads.

Known as 'One Gov', a range of government services from Seniors Card applications and fishing licences through to the purchase of national park passes and birth, deaths and marriage applications, can now be accessed through Fair Trading offices.

Following a successful pilot last year, it has now been rolled out at 24 locations across the state.

The additional services now available include:

- Births, Deaths and Marriages - lodgement of applications;
- Seniors Cards - lodgement of applications;
- National Parks - purchase of passes;
- NSW Housing - lodgement of applications;
- Fishing Licences - application and renewal;
- Office of State Revenue - payment of fines;
- Retail Tenancy Bonds - lodgement; and,
- Fair Trading offices will now offer a JP service

Justice of the Peace (JP) Changes

From 30 April 2012 New laws mean that when witnessing a NSW statutory declaration or affidavit, a JP must:

- see the face of the person making the NSW statutory declaration or affidavit,
- confirm the person's identity, and
- certify in writing on the document that those two things have been done.

It is very important that every JP in NSW is aware of these new requirements. This is because a JP who does not comply with them is guilty of a criminal offence and can be fined \$220.

Should you require more information, do not hesitate to contact my office or look on the JP website - www.jp.nsw.gov.au.

Graffiti Hotline

A statewide hotline for reporting graffiti has been launched in NSW. The hotline (1800 707 125) will operate from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and will make it easier to report graffiti in NSW, which will result in faster clean ups. Until now there has been no single number to notify authorities about graffiti, which has caused confusion and delays in the past.

East local government area in NSW has established an email address to receive referrals from the hotline and police will also be given the data.

Project “eyewatch”

Project eyewatch represents the NSW Police Force’s response, on behalf of the Government, to reinvigorate the concept of Neighbourhood Watch in the 21st century.

Active Neighbourhood Watch Groups mobilised through project eyewatch, using the social network tool Facebook, will be given opportunity to participate with their local Police in active crime prevention.

Police rely on community support and through this project people will be able to use their smartphones, computers and tablets to keep police informed. This is an additional way the community can be involved in fighting crime. It is quick, effective and far reaching and has a 24/7 capability.

Small Biz Connect

The Government will expand small business support services across the State through the redevelopment of the existing Business Advisory Service (which expires on 30 June 2012) into the Small Biz Connect program.

Small Biz Connect will directly engage with small business operators through a range of innovative services tailored to meet the particular small business needs of each region in NSW while providing linkages to further pathways and business improvement programs.

All current contract holders for Business Advisory Services will have the opportunity and be encouraged to participate in the Expressions of Interest for this new program.

Ability Links NSW

Ability Links NSW is an expanded model of local area coordination for people with disabilities. It is designed to work with people under the age of 65 years to build resilience, maintain support networks and access mainstream services enabling them to live a life of their choosing. It is also designed to build the capacity of local services and community groups to involve people with disabilities in their services & activities on an ongoing basis.

The Northern Region will be supported by 38 coordinator positions.

With the establishment of Ability Links NSW this service will be progressively transferred to the non-government sector.

Social Housing Waiting Lists Revealed

New reforms to the way that social housing waiting list information is released will deliver greater transparency and will better inform people in my electorate.

Housing NSW will publish detailed, location-based information on expected waiting times by bedroom category for the first time.

This information will give housing applicants a realistic idea of how long they may need to wait for a social housing property, and will help people to decide where to apply for social housing, so that they can be housed in the shortest time.

Further information for current or prospective applicants can be obtained by contacting their local Housing NSW office, Aboriginal Housing Office or Housing Pathways community housing provider, or by visiting the Housing Pathways website, www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au.

Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce

The *Aboriginal Careers in Mental Health Initiative* will increase the number of Aboriginal people accessing mental health services and promote the value and importance of employing Aboriginal people in the mental health sector.

The initiative, led by the Mental Health Coordinating Council and the Department of Education and Communities, will see greater engagement with community mental health organisations to support 50 Aboriginal trainees and cadets in the next 18 months.

The aim of the program is to develop the ability of the community mental health sector to effectively support and increase Aboriginal participation in the workforce, as well as increase the level of culturally appropriate services available to Aboriginal people in community managed services located throughout NSW.

Organisations interested in developing an Aboriginal mental health workforce can submit expressions of interest via www.mhcc.org.au/home. Applications close on 27 April 2012 with submissions to close on 22 June 2012.

NSW Organic Pioneers Award

The NSW organic industry in conjunction with NSW Department of Primary Industries presents the NSW Organic Pioneers Award.

The Award highlights the achievements of those in the organic industry that have shown innovation and who are actively practicing and promoting the principles and benefits of organic food and farming systems.

Applications close on 1 June and further information can be found at www.organicpioneers.com.au.

2012 Green Globe Awards

Nominations are open for the NSW Government's 13th annual Green Globe Awards - the State's premier environmental awards - recognising environmental excellence, leadership and innovation in NSW.

The awards are open to all businesses, individuals, state and local government and not-for-profit organisations that can demonstrate significant environmental achievements.

Twelve categories are open for public nomination covering a range of energy efficiency, waste and environmental sustainability initiatives.

Nominations are open until 5pm on Thursday 7 June 2012. Visit www.environment.nsw.gov.au/greenglobes for more information and to make a nomination.

WilderQuest

"WilderQuest" - a program developed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) - incorporates an online environment, an app available on iPad and a range of in-nature experiences to encourage children and their families to spend more time in nature.

WilderQuest enables children to explore different environments online through interactive games and challenges, with incentives to go outdoors. The website taps into children's interest in screen time and gives them the inspiration and opportunities to spend time in nature.

It builds enthusiasm for nature through play, earning rewards that include opportunities to participate in *WilderQuest*-themed family activities and other experiences in national parks.

The site has a strong educational value and encourages children to explore their natural environment. Visit www.wilderquest.nsw.gov.au

Lismore Electorate Woman of the Year



This year the NSW Woman of the Year Awards have been coordinated differently from in the past. Unfortunately time did not permit this year for me to seek nominations from the public, however I was still able to collate names of wonderful women in our electorate and present these to a panel to select the winner.

I am pleased to announce the 2012 Lismore Electorate Woman of the Year is Ann Spillane from Lismore Heights.

Ann has been the President of Friends of St Vincent's Hospital for the past 25 years, working 5 day/week for the organisation, raising funds for the Hospital & St Joseph's Nursing Home and helping patients & staff.

Ann has also been instrumental on many committees to raise funds for St Carthage's Cathedral.

In January Ann was presented with a Papal Honour (Benemerenti Medal) for long and exceptional service to the Catholic Church.

Anzac Brochure

Last month I sent to each household in the electorate a copy of my latest brochure "The Spirit of Anzac".

The eight-page booklet titled "The Spirit of ANZAC" gives an interesting insight into Australia's military history and the role personnel from within the Electorate played in various wars and conflicts.

The brochure also carries a handy reference guide to many of the ANZAC Day dawn services and marches across the Electorate.

If you did not receive a copy of the brochure, contact my office or download it from my website at www.thomasgeorge.com.au/publications.php.



Accessible Transport

Northern Rivers Social Development Council (NRSDC) has produced a number of information resources for people with a mobility impairment wanting to know how to get around (and beyond) the Northern Rivers. A new 35 page booklet outlines what means of accessible transport are available and how to go about using them.

Copies of the booklet are "Accessible Transport in the Northern Rivers" is available from my office or contacting the NRSDC on 66201820.

North Coast Shuttle

A 12 month pilot project funded by Transport NSW, the North Coast Shuttle, commenced on 2 April. The service is a 17 seater wheelchair accessible bus that departs from Ballina (with one stop in Byron shire & one in Tweed shire) travelling to Brisbane three times a week for medical appointments at PA, Mater & Royal Brisbane Hospitals.

Bookings & assessments for the shuttle will be taken at Northern Rivers Community Transport, Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport and Clarence Valley Community Transport.

The cost is \$50. Transport to and from the client's home to the nearest shuttle stop will be provided with no additional charge. This includes anyone from Lismore, Casino, Maclean & other outlying areas.

Until fully supported, this service is limited to appointments on Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 10am & 1pm.

Free Photo Card for Seniors & Carers

The Government will remove NSW photo Card fees for Seniors Card holders and carers. The Card is a voluntary card for people who do not hold a current NSW drivers licence to help them with their proof of identity. Under existing regulations only eligible pensioners are exempted from the fees, however now Carers who receive only the Carer Allowance and retirees with a Seniors Card will be able to save \$46 for a new card and \$22 for a replacement.

Congratulations

- Luke Allen, Woodenbong Central School and Alice Fleetwood, Richmond River High School on being selected to attend the National Schools' Constitutional Convention in Canberra.
- Lismore City Council was awarded the Plan the State Planning Award for its 10 year Sport & Recreation Plan at the state awards ceremony.
- 561 Alphadale restaurant for receiving a chef's hat by the Australia Good Food Guide.
- John Henley, Murwillumbah for 36 years of service to the Murwillumbah Rowing Club.
- Alice Fleetwood & Zoe Galea, both from Richmond River High School, are finalists in the Young Women in Public Affairs competition.
- Giselle Newton, Goonellabah, won the regional final of the Lions Youth of the Year.
- Russell & Patricia Small, Woodenbong for service to Northern Rivers Community Transport for a combined time of 33 years.
- Kevin Plummer, NSW Public Works won the NSW Division Project Director of the Year and received highly commended at the National awards for the construction of the Lismore Integrated Cancer Care Centre.
- Ellie Stephens, Tregeagle representing the zone at the Royal Easter Show Showgirl competition.
- 22 local projects shared in \$400,000 funding under the Community Building Partnership program in the Lismore electorate.
- Numerous Rural Fire Service volunteers recently received life memberships for tireless service.
- Bangalow Cheese won the Excellence in Agriculture Award at the Royal Easter Show.
- Lismore City Council won the Excellence in Road Safety Category at the 2012 National Awards for Local Government and 2012 IPWEA Engineering Excellence Awards for its road safety project "Drive to Conditions".
- Ron Murray, Murwillumbah for winning Swimming Australia's Volunteer of the Year.
- Lucy Gooley, Murwillumbah was named NSW Apprentice of the Year for the Skilled Group.
- Bianca Phillips & Jaydha Wilmoth both attended the 2012 Oceania Judo Championships held in Cairns. Bianca is now the Oceania Champion in her division and Jaydha came second.



Media releases

Locals invited to have their say on Aboriginal Affairs policy

Lismore Community Transport Boost

George announces boost for Lismore sport

Hotline to help war on graffiti vandals

Lismore Electorate residents invited to have their say at forum for NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan

Funding for Youth Events in Lismore Electorate

Murwillumbah residents to benefit from new investment in health infrastructure

George announces delivery of Interactive White Boards

Making Life Easier: One-Stop Shops for Govt Services Delivered

\$7,490 for arts projects in Lismore Electorate

Anzac legend strong in Lismore Electorate

Lismore gets its share of the \$35 Million Community Building Partnerships Program

Strategic Lands Policy Public Meeting

Lismore Electorate schools to receive flashing lights as part of extended regional school rollout

Lismore to host briefing on arts funding

Local hospitals to get energy makeovers to boost efficiency and save money

Still time to 'Have Your Say' on action in the Northern Rivers region

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THE NATIONALS
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