



State Connection

November 2010

A monthly bulletin from

Nationals Member for Lismore

Thomas George MP

Historic moment in parliament

As the Temporary Speaker and National Party Whip, I had the honour of opening the NSW Parliament last month after the Deputy Speaker failed to arrive to carry out her duties.

Had I refused or been unavailable, the sitting of NSW Parliament at 10am on 29 October, 2010 would not have been able to commence until a Temporary Speaker was elected, which would have required a quorum of Government Members.

It was an historic occasion as it has been revealed this was the first time that an Opposition Member has had to conduct the opening of Parliament.

I had no hesitation in performing the Opening as the Parliament represents the people of NSW and they could not be held to ransom because of the attitudes of the Keneally Labor Government.

More police needed

In one of my speeches in Parliament last month I raised my concerns over need for additional police officers to the Richmond and Tweed-Byron Local Area Commands (LAC).

It was recently announced the Lismore electorate, which takes in a big part of the Richmond LAC and part of the Tweed-Byron LAC, will only receive nine new officers out of the 1000 graduating police officers.

The allocation of police officers to our two Commands is insufficient for the needs of our fast growing region and is a slap in the face for our community.

More than two million visitors visit the Northern Rivers region each year. We have a ratio of one police officer to 700 residents when the ratio for the rest of the State is one police officer to 500 residents. That is a disgrace.

In addition, long-term sick and stress leave, which is greater here than in other parts of the State, is causing ongoing pressure to both those on leave and those left to cover the workload.

The Keneally Labor Government is treating people on the North Coast with contempt. The Commissioner of Police and the police executive must urgently address these issues.

I will continue to make representations to ensure that this problem is addressed.

Palliative Care Workers thanked

In another of my Parliament speeches last month I highlighted the importance and my appreciation for palliative care workers and the service they provide around the state.

Palliative care affirms life and treats dying as a normal process; it neither hastens nor postpones death; it provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms; it integrates the physical, psychological, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of care with coordinated assessment and management of each person's need; it offers a support to help the family cope during the person's illness and in their bereavement; and it also offers a support system that enables people to stay in their own home for those last crucial days, hours and minutes.

Sadly, funding cutbacks made by the State Labor Government in 2009 has meant the loss of a palliative care social worker position based out of St Vincent's Hospital, Lismore.

The loss of this part-time position, which had serviced 100 patients a month, has left many people in this region stripped of the benefits palliative care offers.

People in our region do not always have access to transport and therefore rely on social workers to visit them.

Despite this lack of funding, everyone involved with palliative care throughout the North Coast Area Health Service, and in particular the team of dedicated staff operating out of Lismore's St Vincent's Hospital coordinated by Joanne Cooper and headed by Dr Joanne Doran, the Palliative Care Physician and Director of Palliative Care for the North Coast Area Health Service, is to be thanked for the wonderful work they do. They truly offer an invaluable service to so many.

Solar rebate scheme under fire

I have been inundated with queries relating to the current Labor Government's solar bonus scheme and the recent changes introduced.

At midnight, Wednesday 27 October 2010, Labor's Solar Bonus Scheme was closed in its initial form. The far too generous offer of 60 cents per kw was replaced with a new tariff rate of 20 cents/kw.

The reason for the change was just as the Coalition had expected, a massive oversubscription leading to a horrific financial blow out.

The flawed scheme was supposed to cost \$202 million over seven years but it will now cost at least \$1.5 billion – eight times the advice given to Parliament last year.

The onus of this costly blow out will be on families who will pay an extra \$100 per year on their electricity bills every year from 1 July 2011 until at least 2017.

The solar industry will also suffer terribly with panel installation companies already stating they will be forced to axe jobs.

The Coalition is now compiling a suitable energy policy to be released prior to the State election.

Funding for Festivals and Cultural Events

Festivals and major cultural events in the Lismore Electorate may be able to benefit financially under the Community Development Grants Program (Sponsorship).

Applications are now open for not-for-profit incorporated organisations to receive up to \$5,000 for special events such as annual festivals and major cultural events that are scheduled no earlier than 1 April 2011.

Examples of projects supported by funding include: -

- The hosting of seminars and conferences
- Multicultural and inter-community forums
- Local festivals and events
- Teaching craft skills to target groups from a culturally diverse background.

Projects can include capital purchases. Applications close on 17 December 2010.

For application forms call into my Electoral office at 55 Carrington Street, Lismore, or go to www.crc.nsw.gov.au/services/grants/sponsorship_grants

Sign up to support Aussie troops

The Hon Charlie Lynn MLC has put forward a petition regarding Australian troops on active duty in Afghanistan which is available to sign in my office.

Mr Lynn, a returned Vietnam Veteran, is rallying residents of NSW to express their full support for our Australian troops on active duty in Afghanistan and is calling on the Australian Government to:-

1. Withdraw the historic charges of manslaughter against our three commandos in regard to a night combat mission in Oruzgan Province on 12 February 2009.
2. Reinstigate the traditional system of Courts Martial;
3. Re-assign the Director of Military Prosecutions within the Australian Defence Force Chain of Command.
4. Establish an Office of Military Defender to provide legal representation to any troops charged by the Director of Military Prosecutions.
5. Include a protective clause for Australian troops on active service in Afghanistan.

If you would like to support our Australian troops in the ways listed above, feel free to call into my electoral office located at 55 Carrington Street, Lismore, and sign this petition or phone 6621 3624 to have one sent out to you to sign.

Shows Over

The agricultural show season on the Northern Rivers is sadly over for another year but what a show stopping season it was.

Celebrating its 125 anniversary in 2010, **The North Coast National Exhibition**, held at Lismore Showgrounds from 21 - 23 October, enjoyed a timely break in the weather and attracted record crowds. Congratulations to show organisers including President John Gibson, Secretary Janelle Hancock and all committee members for their ongoing hard work and commitment into making the 2010 event one of the best yet.

It was an honour to open the 110th **Murwillumbah Agricultural Show** held on November 5 & 6. I also had pleasure of presenting Barry and Jenny Glasby with life memberships. The show proved popular and was a testament to the efforts put in by President Jenny Glasby, Secretary Liz Chauvier and the committee. Well done to all.

Deb and I look forward to the Northern Rivers show circuit resuming in 2011.

Thomas heads up charity walk

My joggers made a re-appearance from the wardrobe on Sunday 7 November for the 2010 Thomas George Charity Walk, which benefits the 900-2LM Children's Christmas Appeal.

It was the 6th year of this event and I was pleased to see many people accepted my challenge to either walk or sponsor me for this very worthy cause.

Despite entrant numbers being down slightly on previous years, we were still able to raise \$6,500. This money will be split between various children's charity organisations including Wilson Park Special School, Biala Special School, Byron Early Intervention Program, Summerland Early Intervention Program, Jumunna Early Intervention Program and North Coast Children's Home.

Hopefully you'll join me on the pavement next year and we can raise even more money for these worthy groups.

Kyogle visit

During a recent visit to Kyogle I had the honour of presenting a number of awards to several of the high achievers who were listed in last month's State Connection issue.

In making presentations to Barkers Vale Public School, Bhaktivedanta Swami Gurukula School and Rainbow Ridge School for Steiner Education on behalf of NSW Environmental Trust, I was able to see first-hand the wonderful environmental projects each had undertaken.

In addition, I was also fortunate enough to present Jennie Richter with her Carers Award.

Congratulations again to all of these worthy recipients.

My Kyogle visit also saw me open the new premises for accounting business WHK on behalf of developers Allan Marsh & Co and the tenants, WHK.

Located at 1 Wyangarie Street, the site is well known in the local community where the Leveretts Cordial Factory once stood. I was interested to see the display inside the WHK building containing relics of the construction site of the historic cordial company - a fitting tribute to the heritage of the site.

Music Festival In Good Company

The Lismore Turf Club was transformed into a vibrant cultural precinct on Saturday 13 November with the hosting of the *In Good Company* open air music festival.

Congratulations to Horace Bevan and his team on organising this fantastic inaugural community and family-fun charity event.

It showcased good food, markets, stalls and talented musicians and artists including former Lismore girl and Australian idol finalist, Ngaiire Joseph, Diana Anaid, Byron Bay country rock n rollers The-Remains' and 20-piece drumming troupe The Samba-Blisstas.

I enjoyed the time I was there, and Horace, you have not lost it!

All proceeds from the day went to two local charities: the Mental Health Support Group and the Lismore Soup Kitchen.

Freedom from Bullying Expo

As a continuation on from the *Stamping Out Bullying* brochure I issued in February 2009, the anti-bullying forum held in conjunction with *The Northern Star* also last year, and ongoing media reports, the Northern Rivers Anti-Bullying Alliance (NRABA) was formed in 2009. Last Friday, 12 November, NRABA held a Freedom from Bullying Expo at the Lismore Workers Club.

The Expo included guest speakers, a panel who responded to community concerns, playback theatre and musical interludes. The TAFE *YouthNet Freedom From Bullying Website Project* was also showcased. The NRABA aims to raise awareness and reduce bullying in schools, the workplace, in the home and in the community; to provide advocacy and support to both targets and bullies through referrals to appropriate counselling services.

For more information on NRABA call Linda Bradbury on 0438 478807.

Congratulations to this month's high achievers from our electorate including: -

- **Tweed Palliative Support Inc** for winning the Community of the Year Award for communities of more than 15,000 people.
- **Bonalbo Hospital Auxiliary** for achieving 40 years of service to the Bonalbo Hospital.
- **Penny Evans**, of Lismore, on her selection as a finalist in the 2010 NSW Parliament Aboriginal Art Exhibition.
- **Regional Air Express (REX)** on being named the Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation's Airline of the Year 2010.
- **Lismore Base Hospital Auxiliary** on receiving recognition for their fundraising efforts, in which they raised in excess of \$72,500.
- **Jack Cooper, Joel Wilson and Darcy Evans**, all of Corndale, and **Luke Egger**, of Numulgi on winning gold in the PP6 relay at the recent State PSSA Athletic Championships in Sydney.
- St John's College Woodlawn students **Rachel Farrington, Georgia Woods, Andrew Herrmann, Emma O'Meally, Gary Collocott, Emily Farrington and Jack Dillon** who led by principal and facilitator **Mr Glenn Roff** took out first place in the Social Sciences at the national championships of the Tournament of the Minds in Darwin. The school's Language Literature team including **Marian Joseph, Jessica Spence, Phoebe Parker, Danny Chatterton, Callum Riordan, Paris Mordecai and Jack Oates**, were also awarded honours in Darwin.
- **Kyogle** on receiving five Awards at the 2011 Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Tidy Towns Sustainable Communities Celebration Weekend held in Lockhart, November 5-7 including: -
 - **The Kyogle Community** taking out first place in the Bush Spirit Award for Kyogle Tidy Town's Sponsorship Program and placing third in the Overall Tidy Towns Award.
 - **Kyogle High School** on receiving a Highly Commended for the Waste Management and Litter Reduction Award for its 'Red, yellow, green, let's keep Kyogle High School clean' project and a second highly commended for the Schools Environment Award, which it also received last year. And;
 - **Kyogle council's Waste Water Wetland Hydroponic Project** for receiving a Water Conservation Award.