

## QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The squabbling and showboating of Question Time isn't the only place Members of Parliament can ask questions of the Government. They can also ask Questions on Notice, which are submitted in writing on Parliament sitting weeks and require an answer within 35 days.

This is a great way to try and get information out of the Government on what they're doing. I make sure that I use my full quota of nine questions every sitting week, so that I'm as informed as possible about the issues affecting the Electorate. Some examples include:

**14** Questions about TAFE   **5** Questions about the closure of the Newcastle Rail Line

**46** Questions about local schools   **21** Questions about trains and train services   **30** Questions about roads

**18** Questions about buses and bus services   **5** Questions about flooding at Testers Hollow

**10** Questions about the 'new' Lower Hunter Hospital   **44** Questions about Hospitals

**20** Questions about Police, Policing and Police Stations.

You can find all my questions and speeches at [www.parliament.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au). Just click 'members' and my name.

## WRITING TO MINISTERS

If you have an issue with the State Government or a State Government department, you can raise it by asking me to make representations on your behalf to a Minister. As your State Member of Parliament, one of my most important jobs is to write away to the Government on behalf of local people, asking their questions and passing on their complaints.

If there's an issue you want to raise, you simply have to send a letter or e-mail to me explaining it and asking me to make a representation to the relevant Minister. I'll send your letter away seeking an answer and if we don't get one after six weeks we send the Minister's office a fax asking where it is up to. From there we follow up with the Minister's office every four weeks until a final response has been received.

## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

As well as my Community Barr-ecues, Mobile Offices in West Wallsend and being available for appointments at the electorate office, I also try to do a bit of doorknocking in the local area to keep in touch with people. I never want anyone to be able to say I haven't been available to hear their concerns. I'm available to help you with any of these State Government issues:

*Transport - Health - Community Services - Education - Law and Order - Water -  
Resources and Energy - Sport and Recreation - Public Housing - Science - Roads -  
Industrial Relations - Environment - Medical Research - Fair Trading -  
Seniors Card Information - JP Applications -*

*Congratulatory Messages for milestone Wedding Anniversaries and Birthdays*

My office is located at 118 Vincent Street, Cessnock and can be contacted by

Phone: 4991 1466 / Toll Free: 1300 550 114 / Fax: 4991 1103

E-mail: [cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Mail: PO Box 242, Cessnock NSW 2325



I'm now on Facebook and Twitter, keeping the Electorate informed on what I'm up to. You can reach me on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/claytonbarrmp](http://www.facebook.com/claytonbarrmp), or on Twitter @ClaytonBarrMP. I now also has a website up and running: [www.claytonbarr.com.au](http://www.claytonbarr.com.au)



# CLAYTON BARR, MP

## ELECTORATE NEWS

### DECEMBER 2014



Here is the latest information about what is happening in the Electorate of Cessnock and the State. Our area is facing a crucial time. What we do over the next few years will decide how we live for the next few decades.

In this newsletter I've tried to update you on some of the most important issues we face. There are articles about the future of our health, education and public transport systems, as well as our economy.

I hope you find this newsletter informative. If you have any State issues I can help you with, don't hesitate to contact my office.

**Clayton Barr MP, State Member for the Electorate of Cessnock**

## RAIL LINE CUT JUST WEEKS AWAY

Despite all of the questions which have come out of the ICAC inquiry, the Liberal/National New South Wales Government have decided to push ahead with the removal of the rail line into Newcastle. On Boxing Day, the trains into Newcastle will stop, and will be replaced by a bus service for which the details are sketchy at best. From there, the Government will begin tearing up the line and preparing the area for light rail - which they say is two years away.

For those who travel to Newcastle by train, whether it be for work or play, you'll now have to get off at Hamilton, and change to a bus. The Government claims that at peak times the trip from Hamilton to Newcastle by bus will take 25 minutes. I'm not convinced that's accurate, and even if it was it'd still be a lot longer than it currently takes by rail.

Personally my greatest concern is that the Newcastle rail line decision might have more to do with the needs of those who hand over the brown paper bags, rather than those of us who use public transport. I could certainly think of other projects worthy of a \$500 million dollar investment.

## NEW HOSPITAL OR REPLACEMENT?

The New Lower Hunter Hospital has been much talked about, not least in my newsletters. In my June edition I expressed my concern that the Liberal/National Government were looking at private ownership for the hospital. It has now been all but confirmed by the Government that this is the case.

Since then even more concerning information has emerged. Rumours suggest that when the new Hospital opens, the current Maitland Hospital may close down. That would mean that, rather than a huge addition to the health services in the Hunter, it would simply be a replacement, with very little net benefit for us.

We in the Lower Hunter must not stand by and watch our health system be Americanised, and we must not let our one big shot at genuinely improving our health services disappear in politics and bureaucracy. The population growth in our area at the moment and into the future demands another hospital, not a replacement for the existing one.



## TAFE CUTS COME AT THE WORST TIME

The local economy is slowing, and people are losing their jobs left, right and centre. You would think that at this time, more than ever, the Government would want to make it easier, not harder, for people to get the skills needed to find a job. Making TAFE more expensive surely won't do this.

You would have heard the stat plenty of times by now - of the 93 Electorates in New South Wales Cessnock has the lowest percentage of people with a University degree, and the highest percentage of people with a trade. That means that cuts to TAFE are especially hard on our local economy.

The jobs market is competitive - our people need to be skilled. With TAFE course fees increasing by as much as \$1,500 per term that is only going to get harder. There's been a lot of talk about 'lifters and leaners' lately, but how can you expect someone to become a 'lifter' when you're making it so much harder to get an education?

I'm going to keep hassling them. I'll keep asking questions, writing letters and circulating petitions. This Government must know exactly what their cuts mean for this area and our people. Ryan Park, Shadow Minister for Education and Training recently came to the local area and visited Cessnock TAFE, one of those under threat.



## LOCAL CONTRACTS HELP LOCAL JOBS

As I have written before in previous newsletters, the Government has a responsibility to do everything in its power to protect local jobs. In this climate where people are having trouble finding work, it is more important than ever.

The Queensland Liberal/National Government recently signed a thirty year, \$4.4 billion deal to have their new fleet of trains made in India by a Canadian company. That's a whole generation of lost skills. We cannot allow the same to happen here.

I have asked the Government to promise to manufacture new trains and buses in New South Wales. They have refused to do so. That does not augur well for the future of our manufacturing industry.

You can't just look at the price alone. While a train made in New South Wales may cost a little more, that money stays in the New South Wales economy and protects local jobs. Do we really want to be a country and a State that doesn't make anything anymore?

That's the way it's heading. With the Hunter alone having dozens of manufacturing companies struggling, there is absolutely no justification for sending lucrative contracts and the jobs they create to an overseas or interstate company.

## KIDS SPORT SHOULD COME FIRST

I recently spoke in Parliament about sports funding in our state. I believe that far too much money is being spent on elite, professional sport, and not enough is being spent on grassroots, children's sport. There are fewer kids than ever playing sport, and fewer facilities than ever available for them to play on. Sport should be about participation and enjoyment, about making friends and keeping fit. It's not just about winning and losing.

I'll continue to fight for more funding for our local sporting clubs and facilities, and less for our already wealthy and well-equipped professional athletes. As much as some politicians love having their photos taken with footballers and cricketers, our job is to do things that will be of real and meaningful benefit to the people of our State. All the gold medals and all the World Cups on Earth will not comfort us if our already worrying levels of obesity, diabetes and heart disease spiral out of control. We need to get our priorities right.

## POLICE STATION NEEDS RENEWAL

I recently had a visit from Steve Whan, Shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, to discuss the future of Cessnock Police Station. I have been saying for a long time that the Station is no longer fit for purpose and needs serious renovation.

Quite simply, the building has outlived its time, and is not suitable for the needs of modern policing or even modern health and safety standards. Our population is growing rapidly, which means the demands on our police are only going to increase.



I brought the Shadow Minister up to see it for himself. For three and a half years I have been writing letters and asking questions on this issue, and I'm not going to stop. Cessnock deserves a modern, quality facility so that our police can do their job properly.

## HUGE LIBRARIES FUNDING PETITION

The New South Wales Public Libraries Association recently brought a petition to Parliament which was so big it needed to be tabled three times! The Association's petition calling for a new funding model for public libraries in New South Wales has so far gained more than 50,000 signatures, showing just how important libraries are to people around the State.

I wholeheartedly support the Association's campaign, and was proud to be asked to table part of the petition and speak in support of it. The funding problem has arisen over many years, as costs have increased while funding has stayed the same. Where the State



Government funded 23% of the cost of running libraries in 1980, it only contributes 7% now.

Libraries expand people's social connections and broaden their imaginations. They are meeting places in local communities and hubs of knowledge and learning. My speech in Parliament was just one step in a process which I hope will lead to a fairer and more sustainable funding system into the future.

## BE WARY OF SCAMMERS

Quite a few people have been contacting my office lately with information about telephone scams. There are a variety of scams which seem to be out and about at the moment. A prominent one claims to be from an airline, asking for your bank account details so they can refund money.

Another involves somebody claiming to be from the Government, seeking your bank account details so they can repay an amount you have been overcharged, for example on a credit card. In this scam the person generally say that before you can claim your refund you'll need to send them some money to cover legal expenses.

Scammers are clever. They may offer you reference numbers, contact details and official titles to try and sound legitimate. The best tip is to end a call immediately if you believe it is a scam, and not provide any personal details. And of course, never send money to somebody you don't know or haven't met. As a general rule, if something sounds too good to be true then it probably is.

If you have received a call which you believe was an attempted scam, contact the Federal Government's SCAMWatch on 1300 795 995 or visit [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au).