

CLAYTON BARR'S State News

Summer 2019-20



CLAYTON BARR MP | YOUR LOCAL STATE MEMBER FOR THE ELECTORATE OF CESSNOCK

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Statewide drought



The current drought situation in NSW is dire. NSW has entered its fourth year in a row of drought and is one of the most severe droughts on record.

The lack of rain is most obvious as there is no water coming into the rivers. The once mighty Murray-Darling river system has been seriously affected. At the beginning of the year there were horrific pictures of fish kills along the river which showed the devastation caused by the loss of water flow.

While lack of rain is one thing, it is fair to ask where has the water from our rivers gone.

The actions and decisions of individuals at both State and Federal Government levels has also affected the dryness of our rivers. In NSW, the NSW Government is responsible for Water Sharing Plans. Basically these plans decide who gets what water. Water needs to be allocated in a balanced and fair way; this is not always the case.

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Police stations and allocations

Policing and police stations continue to be a major concern for residents across the Electorate.

Residents from the Greta/ Branxton area to residents from the West Wallsend/Cameron Park/Barnsley areas continue to raise their concerns with me about the lack of police in our Electorate.

I continue to talk to the Minister regarding the needs of our community and will always push for more services with adequate staffing.

Depending on the situation, it is important to know who to contact.

Remember:

- **For emergencies or life threatening situations call Triple Zero (000).**

- **For non-emergencies call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444**

- **To provide crime information anonymously, contact 1800 333 000 or www.crimestoppers.com.au**

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Single-use plastic pollution

NSW is the **ONLY** state to not have a ban on single-use plastic bags. South Australia banned the bags 10 years ago and Victoria earlier this year; NSW Labor has been campaigning to ban the bags but have been blocked by the Liberal-National Government.



Many residents in the community have been concerned about the amount of plastic ending up in our waterways and oceans including single-use plastic items such as bags, straws and food packaging.

NSW Labor attempted to pass legislation to ban single-use plastic bags during October but it was voted down by the Government. Even though Environment Minister Kean said "single-use plastic bags are a major contributor to pollution and litter".

The Liberal-National Government have refused to bring NSW in line with every other state and instead have said they would introduce a discussion paper on reducing plastic waste.

At the end of the day people do not care who introduces the legislation to reduce plastic, as long as it is done.

Part of my job is meeting with and listening to the concerns of our local community, from our oldest residents to our youth. This year I was visited by two Year 6 students from Bellbird Public School. The girls wanted to discuss plastic and their thoughts and ideas around single-use plastic in particular. It was very encouraging to meet with these two students to talk about ways to improve our community.

Return and Earn Container Scheme

The Cessnock Electorate reins recycling supreme, claiming top spot across the Hunter under the Return and Earn scheme. Since the scheme kicked off, over \$4,288,816 has been claimed in cash or donations in the Cessnock Electorate.

Since the commencement of the scheme NSW has achieved a 57% reduction in the volume of drink container litter. The Cessnock Electorate has donated over \$500,000 to various charities over this time.

It is great to see residents in the Cessnock Electorate recycle and make use of the Return and Earn return points. I encourage you to get as much of your money back as you can; you've already paid for it.

There are four reverse vending machines in the Electorate of Cessnock: Mitchell Avenue, Weston; North Avenue, Cessnock; Edgeworth Bowling Club, Edgeworth; West Wallsend Workers Club, West Wallsend; and the over-the-counter site at Huntlee Academy, North Rothbury.

And the winner is...

Thank you to all of the Year 3 students who participated in my 2019 Christmas Card Drawing Competition!

It was a difficult job for local senior students to pick a winner out of the hundreds of entries that were received. The theme of this year's competition was 'How does your family spend Christmas?'

This year's winner is Marlee of Kurri Kurri Public School.

Marlee's drawing will be displayed on the front of my 2019 Christmas card.



Level 1 Water Restrictions

As a community we need to make sure we are doing our part by following water restrictions.

The Hunter is currently at level one water restrictions but this looks set to change to level two water restrictions as early as January 2020, with the Hunter's total water storage below 60% capacity.

Everyone is encouraged to follow water restrictions and save water. Simple actions can help save water every day.

Level one water restrictions include:

- No sprinklers are to be used;
- Outdoor watering is permitted before 10am or after 4pm with a trigger nozzle;
- All hoses must have a trigger nozzle;
- No hosing of hard surfaces such as concrete, paths and driveways;
- All vehicles should be washed with a bucket, trigger nozzle or pressure cleaner.

The restrictions are enforceable, with fines of \$220 for individuals and \$550 for businesses who don't follow the restrictions.

Police stations and allocations cont.



Cessnock's new police station is one step closer to completion with construction beginning in mid-November. In the 2019/20 budget just under half of the \$13.5 million needed for the station was allocated towards the construction.

The current outdated station will be replaced with a new state-of-the-art station fit for current and future needs. The new station will ensure front-line officers have the resources to do their jobs and will allow officers to work more proactively than reactively. Our local officers have done an amazing job with limited resources over a long period of time.

In July 2019, Cessnock was allocated six more police officers. The new officers will be 3 constables, 2 sergeants and a child protection officer. This increase in the number of police is a welcome boost to the Electorate.

Statewide drought cont.

Over the past few months, I have travelled to some of the areas within our state that are doing it incredibly tough. Towns are dying. There is simply no water and no money in these communities.



I have spoken with farmers, Councils and locals. One topic that keeps coming up is water sharing plans and the need for them to be fixed, as they are broken.

The Liberal-National Government's Water Ministers, both past and present, need to be held accountable for these decisions which have devastated country communities, towns and farms.

Despite suggestions new dams will fix a system that is broken, the real test is what you do with the water once you catch it in a dam. The problem of fair allocation needs be fixed first or we risk repeating the same problem yet again.

Community Building Partnership

The Electorate has benefited from several projects awarded funding through the Community Building Partnership program.



Over the past months we have seen new lights installed at Jack McLaughlan Oval for the Edgeworth Eagles and a canteen refurbishment for Abermain Public School. There have also been a much needed upgrade to Bellbird Community Hall to make it more accessible to all community members.

The latest round of successful funding recipients will be notified late March 2020.



Local Sport Defibrillator Grant Program



The Local Sport Defibrillator Grant Program provides funding to assist local sporting clubs across NSW in the purchase and maintenance of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs). The program makes sports safer for our local sporting groups and their supporters.

Many of our local sporting groups have benefited from this program including Bellbird Junior Football, Greta Branxton United Cricket Club, Kearsley Community Sporting Association, Kurri Kurri Netball, Pokolbin Rugby Club, Sugar Valley Golf Club and West Wallsend Senior Soccer Club.

Survival rates from sudden cardiac arrest decrease each minute defibrillation is delayed. Early access to CPR and defibrillation will improve the chance of survival.

Applications are currently open and will close at 5pm on Wednesday 8 April 2020 unless funding allocation is exhausted prior.

I encourage all of our local sporting groups and organisations to make an application so that you can have potentially life-saving equipment on hand.

Bridges Hill Park playground

Stage one of Bridges Hill playground, fitness stations, landscaping, bbq facilities, pathways and improved pedestrian access has been completed.

The fantastic community space was jointly funded by the State Government's Stronger Communities Fund; Social Housing Community Improvements Fund; and Resources for Regions program together with the Federal Government's National Stronger Regions Fund; and Cessnock Wine Country Lions Club.

Construction has now begun on the next stage which includes amenities, additional bbq areas, a yarning circle and more play spaces.



Edgeworth Public School bus stop

For the students of Edgeworth Public School, the journey to and from school by bus should hopefully be that much safer from the beginning of next year with the introduction of the new school bus stop at the back of the school. The purpose-built bus bay is progressing and should provide a safer location to access the buses for students.



On what appeared a basic solution to a problem affecting our kids' safety and traffic flow, it has taken more than 12 years to get the job done. Before I started and now alongside me, the community and the school have continuously fought to make this happen and it is great to see some headway.

Principal Todd Osland is very pleased with the progress made, stating "there has been a lot of hard work by the community who want to make sure the kids are safe". "We want a facility that caters for the growing demographic; it really was a great long-term vision to create something like this".

The land the bus stop will be located on previously belonged to the Department of Education, then changed to Crown Lands to establish Hunter Life Education who are a tenant of Crown Lands.

While the solution to move the bus stop away from the high traffic area on Minmi Road was straightforward, the path to this result was anything but. There was much work behind the scenes, including negotiations and hard work to finally get the covered concrete walkway to the bus bay in a safe place.

Kurri Kurri Main Street upgrades



Kurri Kurri main street is set for a facelift thanks to a \$3.65 million grant secured from the state's Restart NSW Resources for Regions Fund. As part of the Kurri Kurri Commercial Centre Masterplan, Cessnock City Council will also contribute to the project.

The upgrades to Lang Street will include, street tree planting, landscaping, footpaths, pedestrian crossings, street furniture, shelters, lighting and signage.

It is a welcome improvement for Kurri Kurri, with the goal to retain the character of the Kurri Kurri commercial centre whilst catering for increased growth in the surrounding areas.

The Kurri Kurri Masterplan was developed in consultation with the community to meet the needs of Kurri Kurri residents as the town grows. Work is set to begin in 2020.

Are you a senior?

Senior Saver Card

If you are over 60 but still working 20+ hours a week you are entitled to a Senior Saver Card.

The new card will provide access to discounts and deals offered by participating businesses but exclude transport concessions.

Seniors Card

Are you aged 60 or older and working 20 hours or less of paid employment a week?

If yes, then the Seniors Card may be for you! With this card, you will be eligible for discounts at local businesses.

For more information or to apply for a Senior Saver or Seniors Card visit www.seniorscard.nsw.gov.au or call Service NSW 13 77 88.

50 Years service

Justices of the Peace (JPs) volunteer their time to assist members of our communities. Helping people at key moments in their lives such as purchasing a new home or applying for a passport.

This year I am honoured to celebrate four community members who have reached the impressive milestone of 50 years service as JPs.

Harold (Sam) Clough OAM and John Marchant of Cessnock, Jack Mawrey of Bellbird and Fay Mohr of West Wallsend were recognised by Attorney General, Mark Speakman MP at a special ceremony at Parliament House in October this year.

All four people have dedicated decades to helping our local residents and have left significant marks upon the community.

Their service to our local communities deserves recognition and congratulations on this amazing achievement.



Bushfires season only just beginning



Fire season has come early and we must be prepared. Fortunately for our Electorate, the catastrophic fire event on Tuesday November 12 while causing damages to several homes and outbuildings was largely contained by preparation and the response by fire services, the community and emergency personnel.

The NSW bushfire season has already burnt through more land than any other in the past 25 years. Rural Fire Service (RFS) Lower Hunter Superintendent Martin Siemsen said "We usually see our most dangerous fire ratings in February, but to see catastrophic and extreme fire danger ratings in November is a message that this is just the beginning and the fuels are only going to get drier".

It is important to be aware and follow warnings issued by RFS. Warnings are not issued lightly. Make preparations as if your life depends on it, because it might.

Information on how to set up your fire plan can be found at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au. You can also keep updated with information from 'fires near me' on the RFS website or download the 'fires near me' app on your phone.

JP services available

Local residents often require the services of Justices of the Peace (JP) but sometimes find it difficult to locate or identify members of the community who serve as a JP.

The **Cessnock** Branch of the NSW Justices of the Peace Association operate a community JP desk every Monday between 12:30pm and 3:00pm at the Cessnock City Library, 65-67 Vincent Street, Cessnock.

For people who live in the eastern end of the Electorate, the Morisset and Lake Macquarie Branch of the NSW Justices of the Peace Association regularly provide free JP services at Edgeworth Town Square Shopping Centre on the first Thursday and third Saturday of each month between 10am and 12pm.

The **Edgeworth** community JP desk will be available on the following dates.

Thursday

- 6 February 2020
- 5 March 2020
- 2 April 2020
- 7 May 2020
- 4 June 2020

Saturday

- 18 January 2020
- 15 February 2020
- 21 March 2020
- 18 April 2020
- 16 May 2020
- 20 June 2020

You can find a list of local JPs by visiting www.jp.nsw.gov.au

Greta Army and Migrant Camp Anniversary Celebrations



An estimated crowd of over 8,000 were on hand on November 9 and 10 at Greta to celebrate two significant anniversaries in our community: the 80th Anniversary of the Greta Army Camp and the 70th Anniversary of the Greta Migrant Camp.

In November 1939, 2,930 acres were acquired to create one of the Australian Army's largest training camps. The outbreak of World War II had been declared only months earlier. Over the course of the next ten years the camp would train over 60,000 service personnel.

With these soldiers going on to be involved in key battles such as Tobruk, Kokoda, Buna-Gona and Aitape-Wewak.

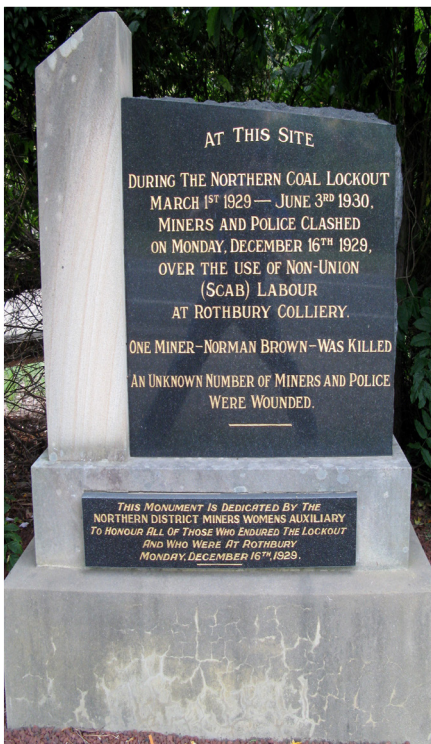
From 1949 until 1960 the Greta Migrant Camp became home to immigrants fleeing Europe after World War II seeking a new life. Over its lifetime the centre would see over 100,000 migrants pass through its doors.

The army and migrant camps are part of not only our community's history but also our nations and should never be forgotten.

The celebration which consisted of live bands, ethnic performances, re-enactments and aerial displays was amazing and a true testament to the organisers of these great events.

Congratulations to the team of organisers who gave their time to ensure that the anniversaries were acknowledged and commemorated. Help was enlisted from far and wide, gaining funding from Cessnock City Council, various organisations and individuals. The event would not have been possible without the support of Branxton-Greta Business Chamber, the returned services men and women of Greta and Branxton RSL sub-Branches and an army of volunteers and local identities.

Rothbury Riots 90th Anniversary



This year marks the 90th Anniversary of the Rothbury Riot. The Riot will go down in our local and national history as an occasion in industrial history. Depicted in movies and part of the labour movement, the incident became known as the Rothbury affair or the Rothbury Lock Out and Riot and is described as the "bloodiest event in national industrial history."

The riot was the result of industrial action between the miners and mine owners between March 1929 and June 1930, causing an economic strain and widespread community hardship.

At the time coal prices had fallen dramatically, and the decline in demand was used as an opportunity for mine owners and the NSW Conservative Government to severely cut workers' wages, remove their workplace rights and introduce non-unionised labour.

The riot started out peacefully but turned violent at the gates of the mine resulting in the death of miner Norman Brown and injuries to an unknown number of miners and police.

To mark this milestone in our community's history North Rothbury Tidy Towns and the CFMMEU Mining & Energy hosted a re-enactment on Sunday December 15 2019, on the original site at North Rothbury.

My Community Project Program

Our Electorate was successful in securing \$249,429 in funding for two projects through the NSW Government's 2019 My Community Project Program. Successful projects included a significant upgrade to the facility at Miller Park, Branxton and the Above and Beyond Community Play Space for play facilities and community barbecues in Cessnock.



The Electorate had 27 projects which went to the public vote, with many organisations and community groups submitting applications. The two successful projects received the most points in the public vote, held during August and September.

The Miller Park upgrade will include an extension to the roof lines to provide shelter from the weather for spectators and participants at Greta Branxton Little A's and Greta Branxton Wildcats.

The community play space at Beyond Church will be inclusive for all community members and provide a safe and fenced facilities for the Cessnock community.

Heddon Greta traffic problems



With the increase in housing developments and the construction of the Hunter Expressway many residents have called for new traffic measures to be put in place at Heddon Greta.

After numerous representations were made to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads I was advised that traffic lights will be installed at the intersection of Main Road and Heddon Street.

I have been told that traffic lights will be provided by the developers of Avery's Village Development as part of a deal with Cessnock City Council. Installation of the lights is scheduled to have started as this newsletter goes print but only time will tell.

Transport NSW will also be putting together a plan for Main Road, Heddon Greta. The plan is to find short term and long term ways to improve road safety, maintenance of the road and to keep the traffic moving.

Here to help

As your local State Member for the Electorate of Cessnock I can help by:

- Advocating on your behalf with issues such as housing, police, education, roads, transport, health and community services
- Writing to Ministers on your behalf seeking their assistance in resolving issues you may have with the NSW Government or its departments
- Arranging milestone anniversary and birthday congratulatory messages

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