

# CLAYTON BARR'S State News

Summer 2021 - 22



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

Office: 118 Vincent Street (PO Box 242), Cessnock NSW 2325 Phone: 4991 1466 Email: [cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au)  
Facebook: ClaytonBarrMP Website: [www.claytonbarr.com.au](http://www.claytonbarr.com.au)

## Cessnock Police official opening

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, David Elliott officially opened the new \$17 million purpose-built Cessnock Police Station on 28 October. Police have been operating out of the new building since March however the official opening had been delayed due to Covid-19.



The official opening of the new police station is a great victory for our local community after a 10 year campaign.

We have needed more police in Cessnock for years. 10 years ago when I first became an MP I started to ask for more police for the area and was kindly told that to get more police we needed somewhere for them to work, as the station was not big enough to house them. My focus turned to the bigger goal of a new police station.

It took 10 years and 3 Police Ministers but finally \$13.5 million was set aside in the 2018/2019 budget.

The new station faces Cumberland Street and will house approximately 100 staff including general duties, detectives, the proactive crime team, highway patrol, traffic services, events and licensing, domestic violence liaison officers and crime prevention officers - with room to grow.

The new state-of-the-art station allows for connection with the neighbouring court house for prisoner transfer, crime prevention and investigative spaces, traffic and highway command resources and new custody facilities such as a van and charge docks.

The extra space will allow our local police force to grow and keep up with our growing population and needs.



Demolition started in November 2019 and construction commenced in early 2020. The heritage listed 140 year old weatherboard building will remain and be used for storage. The size of the original station compared to the current one is staggering.

Memorial stones for Cessnock Police officers Alan Thompson and Ray Scorer (who died in a car accident in 1977) have been installed at the front of the new police station surrounded by bricks from the old police station.

The long overdue replacement station will be at the centre of the police work that feeds out to our many local towns and villages.

The new police station means more police, faster response times and a safer community. So many people did their bit to make it happen and I am proud to see their work pay off.

**INSIDE** Seahampton RFS secure funding (P2) Community Building Partnership Funding (P7)  
Skills shortage in NSW (P4) Local sporting clubs score big (P8)

# Seahampton RFS secure funding



**In October the fantastic volunteers at Seahampton Rural Fire Station were presented with a \$7,000 grant for the replacement of equipment and office furniture to be used in the station's office and training room.**

A key part of my role as an MP is to work with various ministers and develop relationships so that when funding becomes available our electorate can take advantage.

Sometimes it helps to talk to the other side. A few months ago I met with the Police and Emergency Services Minister and asked him for funding for the Seahampton Rural Fire Station. The fire station had a white ant problem and were in desperate need of new office furniture, carpet and other equipment which needed upgrading and replacing.

This grant fixed several problems. The new equipment was a welcome addition to the station, as much of the station's previous office furniture was second hand. Some of the old desks had been salvaged from BHP when it closed!

Like many of the local services in our community the story of how the station came about is quite extraordinary. After the 1993 and 1994 summer fires that went through the area, community members got together to establish a bushfire station to serve the community.

As luck would have it, the group were able to secure a shed which had been part of a parcel of land the RTA had purchased as a result of the building of the freeway from Palmers Road to Black Hill. The newly formed members were able to purchase the shed from the RTA for just \$2. The only catch? They had to remove it from its location.

As a result of donations from locals and organisations and wonderful volunteers the station was able to be set up. The outfitting of the station was done through an employment scheme at the time between a training group and TAFE. A plaque honouring those who helped establish the station still takes pride of place within the current station.

The establishment and ongoing operation of this station shows the very nature of our local communities when, in times of adversity our community comes together and supports each other. Thank you to all the volunteers past and present for all their hard work.

## \$3.1 million secured Bushfire Recovery Funding

**In July the electorate was able to secure \$3.1 million in funding from NSW Government's Stage Two of the bushfire local economic recovery funding.**



The successful projects include \$1 million for the upgrade of Rural Fire Service sheds, \$382,075 for Upper Yango fire and ecology restoration project, \$861,476 A2E-Accelerating Event Economies and \$900,000 for the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association: Recovery and Resilience Program.

It was great to see funding across a variety of areas, including an ecology restoration project, tourism projects and much needed upgrades to several Rural Fire Sheds within the Cessnock Local Government Area (LGA).

The funding is a great way to thank our wonderful rural fire service volunteers and help ecology restoration and tourism projects. The funding was to support NSW communities impacted by 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires.

Eleven Rural Fire Service (RFS) sheds in the Cessnock LGA will benefit from the \$1 million in funding which will be used to upgrade facilities and provide a safer facility to better support volunteers and the work they do in protecting our communities. Bucketty and Laguna have attracted the most funding and will undertake major upgrades worth more than \$500,000. North Rothbury, Central Cessnock, Benwerrin, Greta, Kearsley, Mulbring, Neath, Pokolbin and Quorrobolong RFS Sheds will also benefit from the funding.



# A win for students as Abermain roadworks begin

Over the past couple of months work has begun on the upgrade to Orange Street and Charles Street, Abermain intersections after 10 years of campaigning. A \$3.7 million upgrade was announced in early September under the Road Safety Program, jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments. The upgrade will improve safety, particularly for motorists turning right out of Orange Street and for pedestrians crossing Cessnock Road.

When I became the State Member 10 years ago I was made aware of the dangers at the pedestrian crossing on the corner of Orange Street and Cessnock Road. There were countless car crashes and near-misses for pedestrians.

I had only been an MP for 6 months when I received a call from the year 5/6 class at Abermain Public School to discuss this issue. At my meeting with the students I was handed a poster with photos explaining the distractions and dangers that made the intersection unsafe.

With the students hard work in mind for the last 10 years I have continued to raise the issue with RMS (now Transport for NSW) 3 or 4 times a year. I wasn't going to be silent on a problem that had existed for a long time and continued to exist. I also wanted to honour those students from Abermain Public School for their efforts.

Once the Hunter Expressway opened in 2014 that corner became so much busier and so much more dangerous. A solution was needed more than ever.



The upgrade includes:

- installing traffic lights at Orange Street, which includes pedestrian crossings
- road widening along the southern side of Cessnock Road
- providing right turn lanes into Orange Street and Charles Street
- extending the left turn lane from Charles Street onto Cessnock Road
- building a concrete island to separate the left turn lane into Charles Street, which will improve sight lines for motorists onto Cessnock Road
- road resurfacing and installing new line marking, including KEEP CLEAR markings
- minor relocation of the bus stop on the southern side of the road
- re-building sections of concrete kerb and footpath.

Those 11 and 12 year olds from Abermain Public School are now in their 20s. In the coming months and years I hope they can drive through the intersection knowing that they did their bit to make their town safer. I also want to thank their inspirational teacher who empowered those young students to have their voices heard by a local politician.

I would love to be able to get in contact with any of the previous students involved in the project. If you are still in the area please get in touch with my office on 4991 1466 or email [cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

# Skills shortage in NSW

NSW is in the middle of a skills crisis, with many industries feeling the pinch of there not being enough skilled workers. Analysis by the National Skills Commission revealed that 1 in 5 jobs in Australia are suffering from skills shortages. In a time when we should be investing in education opportunities to fix the skills gap, the NSW Government is selling off TAFE campuses and reducing the availability of hands-on learning.



Under the National/Liberal Government 13 TAFE sites have been sold since 2011.

Now new documents show another 19 sites have been flagged for either full or partial sale, including Singleton TAFE campus. Of course we know they have only just finished selling Scone TAFE campus for less than it cost to build.

NSW Labor have asked Minister for Skills, Dr Geoff Lee to rule out selling off more campuses and to rule out shutting down in-person TAFE services. He has refused, and now we are all left wondering which TAFE is next for the chop.

Industries across the Hunter are being put in jeopardy by cuts to education and TAFE. During this extraordinarily challenging time we need to be investing in people, their futures and in TAFE services, not implementing cut after cut of our most needed resources.

We know that regional areas are suffering particularly severe skills shortages. A skills priority list published by the National Skills Commission in June 2021 identified current and future shortages of skilled workers in areas such as accounting, IT, agricultural, metal and fabricating, electrical, engineering, hospitality and childcare.

Many of these career paths require a balance of practical hands-on training and book work, and this combination has been fundamental to TAFE learning for the past 180 plus years.

The selling of TAFE campus sites and the NSW Government's agenda of placing emphasis on online learning rather than face to face is seriously affecting the practical experience and skill level across many industries. Meanwhile, course fees continue to soar, with some courses going from a few hundred dollars to several thousand.

The State Government have continued to cut TAFE courses, sell off campuses and cut TAFE jobs. With the gap in skilled workers getting larger, the questions remain: where are people going to get the training they need for essential roles in our community? And why would anyone want to make it harder for them?

## Dine & Discover additional vouchers

Dine and Discover vouchers have been expanded to include an additional 2 vouchers taking the total number of vouchers to 6. The Dine and Discover Vouchers were introduced to encourage people to get out in the community and support dining, arts and recreation businesses.

The expiring date of the vouchers has been extended til June 2022.

The 2 additional vouchers are expected to be available in December and will include:

- 1 x \$25 voucher to be used for dining
- 1 x \$25 voucher to be used for entertainment and recreation.

If you have an existing Service NSW app you do not need to reapply to receive the additional vouchers. If you don't, then contact Service NSW in December on 13 77 88, or visit your local Service NSW Centre.



For more information visit [www.service.nsw.gov.au/campaign/dine-discover-nsw](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/campaign/dine-discover-nsw)



# Teacher shortages in NSW schools

**NSW schools are at risk of massive teacher shortages within the next five years due to chronic shortages, plummeting graduate numbers, rising student enrolments and an ageing workforce.**

Confidential State Government documents released to Parliament warn that the shortage of teachers will affect the quality of students' education, particularly in subjects that are facing the more severe shortages, including maths and science.

With not enough teachers coming through the system, and with many teachers reaching the end of their teaching careers, we will not have enough teachers to meet the demand of students in classrooms.

The government have known about this crisis for many years but have continually played it down.

"These documents show the government has been fully aware of the worsening staffing crisis and have betrayed teachers, parents, principals and students by repeatedly denying the seriousness of the problems instead of addressing them" President of the NSW Teachers Federation, Angelo Gavrielatos has said.

The documents say the shortage of teachers is due to growing enrolment numbers, a sharp drop in the number of students signing up to study teaching, an ageing workforce (28% of teachers are due to reach retirement age by 2024) and teachers leaving to do other things each year.

The shortage will be felt hardest in regional and rural areas which already have recruitment issues.

A 2021 independent report from Dr Geoff Gallop found workloads, uncompetitive salaries and significant teacher shortages have combined to create this crisis.

As many of us have found out during the pandemic, teaching our children is hard work and our teachers have an exceptionally hard task of providing our young people with skills and knowledge.

Our teachers are amazing and we need to encourage as many potential teachers as possible to take on the role. We also need to hold on to existing teachers (personal irony noted :-)) by addressing the problems of heavy and unrealistic long term workloads and uncompetitive salaries.



## Barr-beques

**Due to Covid-19 restrictions I have been unable to hold my Barr-beques across the Electorate.**

I am looking at dates over the summer for when restrictions ease further and can't wait to catch up over a snag.

Look out for dates in my newspaper columns and on my social media and website pages.





# Lake Macquarie Police

In recent months I have been contacted by residents who are concerned about the incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the Edgeworth and Cameron Park areas, particularly at sporting and community facilities.

I have contacted both Lake Macquarie Police and Lake Macquarie City Council conveying residents' concerns.

The best thing we can do is keep reporting incidents to Police, so they are fully aware of what's going on.

**PLEASE REPORT ALL  
NON-EMERGENCIES  
AS FOLLOWS:**  
{FOR EMERGENCIES CALL 000}

**YOU CAN REPORT TO POLICE ONLINE**  
through their portal, search for  
<https://portal.police.nsw.gov.au>

**IF YOU'VE GOT INFORMATION  
ABOUT A CRIME**  
call Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000**.  
You can make a report anonymously  
if you wish.

**IF YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM**  
such as your property has been damaged,  
call the Police Assistance Line on **131 444**.

**IF YOU SEE PEOPLE DAMAGING  
PUBLIC PROPERTY**  
contact the Police first and  
then contact Council on **4921 0333**.

**IF YOU ARE CONCERNED**  
about ongoing anti-social behaviour in your  
area, first report it to the Police and then  
email [council@lakemac.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@lakemac.nsw.gov.au)  
or call Council on **4921 0333**.



# New Electoral Boundaries



**The NSW Electoral Commission announced in late August that there will be changes to the electoral boundaries. The changes will come into effect for the State Election in 2023. Until then the Cessnock Electorate stays the same.**

Every 8 years, the Electoral Districts Redistribution Panel reviews NSW electoral districts. This is done to ensure all the 93 electorates have roughly a similar number of voters.

A number of factors go into the review including the current number of votes, people movements and new enrolments.

The new boundaries will include removing the localities of Broke, Howes Valley, Milbrodale, Mount Thorley and surrounds, and the suburbs of East Branxton and part of Branxton (north of the railway line) from the Cessnock Electorate and into the Upper Hunter Electorate.

For now and until the change becomes official in 2023, I will continue to be your local representative and here to help all the localities and towns in the Cessnock Electorate on state matters.

## Are you a senior?

### Seniors Card

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

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

### Senior Saver Card

**If you are over 60 but still working 20+ hours a week and a resident of NSW you are entitled to a Senior Saver Card.**

**The new card will provide access to discounts and deals offered by participating businesses.**

**For more information or to apply for a Senior Saver or Seniors Card visit [www.seniorscard.nsw.gov.au](http://www.seniorscard.nsw.gov.au) or call Service NSW on 13 77 88.**

# Cessnock Electorate receives \$400,000 in Community Building Program funding

In early November I was privileged to announce the successful recipients of the 2021 Community Building Partnership (CBP) Program. A total of 22 projects were funded across the Cessnock Electorate including a covered walkway at Bellbird Public School, bathroom refurbishment at Weston Masonic Hall, rebuilding of the Number 1 bridge at Richmond Vale Railway Museum, shade sail at Brunner Park, Branxton, purchase and installation of removable soccer goals at West Wallsend Amateur Soccer Club, and office and community space fit-out at Early Links Inclusion Support Service.

Earlier in the year prior to lock down I was able to visit Country Women's Association (CWA) Cessnock Branch to check out the renovations to their bathroom and entry way.

Cessnock CWA received \$6,500 as part of the 2019 Community Building Partnership funding to complete the building upgrade.

The renovations have made a terrific improvement to their building.

The CBP program, was first introduced by the Labor Government in 2009. It has provided funding to thousands of community groups, sporting clubs and councils across NSW to build or upgrade local facilities.

The funding has previously been used for multiple projects across the electorate including outdoor shade sails, flood lighting, bathroom refurbishments, mowers, fencing, PA systems, scoreboards, air conditioning, water fountains, solar panels, grandstand seating and more.

Its great to see funding being used in the local community. I know this funding will help make a positive difference across our area.

## SUCCESSFUL RECIPIENTS:

- **Mount View High School P&C Association** secured **\$46,831** for outdoor fitness pods.
- **Cessnock City Council** secured **\$10,000** for Brunner Park Branxton shade sail.
- **Nulkaba P&C Association** secured **\$10,000** for new playground for Nulkaba Public School.
- **West Wallsend Amateur Soccer Club** secured **\$5,000** for the purchase & installation of removable soccer goals.
- **Cessnock City Council** secured **\$5,000** for Branxton Community Awning Project.
- **Kearsley Community Sporting Association Inc** secured **\$17,600** for Stage 2 floodlighting at George Jeffrey Park, Kearsley.
- **Cessnock District Hockey Association Inc** secured **\$5,000** for the purchase of a ride-on lawn mower.
- **Cessnock Athletics Centre Inc** secured **\$9,341** for security fencing at Turner Park.
- **Country Women's Association of NSW - Cessnock Branch** secured **\$5,071** for the purchase and installation of security doors and inbuilt storage for bridge tables.
- **Sunnyfield** secured **\$16,000** for "Cooking up a Storm" in Kurri Kurri.
- **Mt Sugarloaf Croquet Club Inc** secured **\$9,600** for an undercover area for members to mix and socialise.
- **Edgeworth Community Preschool Inc** secured **\$11,800** for "Come and Have a Yarn with Us."
- **Richmond Vale Railway Museum** secured **\$20,460** for rebuilding the Number 1 bridge.
- **Cardiff District Men's Shed Inc** secured **\$30,000** for shed refurbishment mezzanine floor.
- **Bellbird Public School P&C Association** secured **\$30,000** for covered walkways.
- **The Canopy Inc** secured **\$5,810** for shade for children's play at Cameron Park Community Centre.
- **Girl Guides Association (NSW) - Kurri Kurri Girl Guides** secured **\$10,000** for Kurri Kurri Guide Hall for electrical re-wiring.
- **Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)** secured **\$10,000** for classroom repairs for Aspect Hunter School for Autistic Students (Abermain).
- **Masonic Holdings Limited** secured **\$38,500** for Weston Masonic Hall bathroom refurbishment.
- **Early Links Inclusion Support Service** secured **\$50,000** for office and community space fit out.
- **Cessnock Woodturners Inc** secured **\$28,987** for the purchase of a mobile sawmill.
- **Cessnock West Public School P&C Association** secured **\$25,000** for Cessnock West Public School's electronic billboard.





# Local sporting clubs score big

**Sporting facilities in Branxton and Weston will get much needed upgrades after local groups scored over a million dollars in State Government sports grants.**

The Regional Sport Facility Fund helps to create spaces and facilities that enable communities to enjoy and take part in sport.

In great news Cessnock City Council were successful in receiving \$517,116 for the Miller Park Netball and Tennis Facility upgrade. This venue is a sports hub for the Greta/Branxton community and a worthy recipient of the funding.

In further good news the Weston Workers Bears were also successful in securing \$498,892 to upgrade the lighting at Weston Football Park.

Weston Bears Football Club have been part of the Northern NSW football landscape for 114 years.



The upgrades are in line with the Weston Bears 2020 Masterplan.

Congratulations to the successful groups. I was proud to support both applications and I know this funding will go a long way to upgrading the facilities for the enjoyment of many in our community.

The second round of funding will be announced in December 2021.

## Kurri Kurri Hospital update



**In June prior to the statewide lockdown I, together with members of the Citizens for Kurri Kurri Hospital Committee, met with Minister Brad Hazzard, MP to receive assurances from the Minister that Kurri Kurri Hospital will continue to be fully operational in the Kurri Kurri community.**

At the meeting Minister Hazzard gave the group assurances that there would be no changes to services at Kurri Kurri Hospital. I will continue to work with our local community to ensure that the hospital stays operational.

Apart from offering a wide variety of health services, some that are considered best in the state, Kurri Kurri hospital is also one of the areas major employers.

## 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 public housing, police, education, public health, state roads, transport, youth 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

## Connect with me

**ADDRESS:** 118 Vincent Street, Cessnock NSW 2325

**POSTAL ADDRESS:** PO Box 242, Cessnock NSW 2325

**PHONE:** 4991 1466 or 1300 550 114

**FAX:** 4991 1103

**EMAIL:** [cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

**WEBSITE:** [www.claytonbarr.com.au](http://www.claytonbarr.com.au)

**FACEBOOK:** ClaytonBarrMP

**TWITTER:** @ClaytonBarrMP