

CLAYTON BARR'S State News

Winter 2017



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

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New captain but the ship hasn't changed its course

In January Mike Baird resigned as Premier, and his Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian took his place, promising a Government that would govern for all. But four months in, Gladys has failed to show any difference from Mike and his unpopular policies.



The Berejiklian Government are continuing to make cuts to TAFE, turning public hospitals private, forcing some councils to merge and attacking the environment.

When the Liberal-National Government decided to lease the lands title registry, the poles and wires and the Port of Newcastle, our community was promised the proceeds would be spent building infrastructure. The Government says they have done this, but mostly in Sydney. The rest of the State misses out again.

To make matters worse, the Government has not explained how they will replace the income these assets created for NSW. Millions of dollars of income that once went towards our schools, health system and Police is now gone.

The Berejiklian Government keeps talking about NSW being debt free. Why then does our State pay \$2.2 billion per annum in interest? Surely, interest is only payable when there is money owing?

You see, just like the budget at home, if you get rid of everything that earns you dollars, then eventually you go broke. In the State Government's position they will be forced to come to your hip-pocket to make ends meet, once this fire-sale of everything is done.

Local Woman of the Year - Kylie Gray



In March I was pleased to announce Kylie Gray of Weston as our Electorate's 2017 Local Woman of the Year.

Kylie is currently the District Manager of Cessnock Girl Guides where she has mentored many young ladies in our community.

Since the age of 7, Kylie has been actively involved in Girl Guides, first as a Brownie and for the past 28 years as a Leader, receiving many special achievement awards for her efforts.

Kylie has shown tremendous leadership during her time with the Girl Guides, including organising a number of fundraisers to raise much needed funds for our community.

For many decades, Kylie has been a tireless contributor to our community and this award is a fitting way to celebrate and recognise her efforts.

Kylie dedicates countless hours a week offering guidance, assistance and support in our community. Her work has contributed to our social cohesion.

I was privileged to host Kylie at the official 2017 Local Woman of the Year awards ceremony at the International Convention Centre, Sydney in March.

Local community groups share in \$300,000 to improve facilities and services

I was pleased to announce the Electorate of Cessnock had secured grant funding of \$300,000 for a total of 19 projects as part of the NSW Government's 2016 Community Building Partnership (CBP) program.

The CBP program supports the improvement of community infrastructure. Since the CBP began, during Nathan Rees time as Premier in 2009, the Electorate of Cessnock has received more than \$3 million in funding.

I always welcome any investment into the Electorate of Cessnock that will help community organisations and groups make a positive difference in the local area.



Officially opening the Youth Centre Hub with Cessnock Mayor Bob Pynsent

ORGANISATION	PROJECT	AMOUNT FUNDED
Abermain Weston Hawks Rugby League	Installation of seating	\$2,500
Kurri Kurri Rugby League Football Club	Installation of lighting pole on training field	\$12,000
Branxton Preschool	Let's Go Outside project	\$3,100
Kurri Kurri Little Athletics Centre	Defibrillator and First Aid kit	\$2,500
Playgroup Association of NSW	Play trailer for Cessnock	\$4,590
Cessnock City Council	Multi purpose court renewal - Ayrfield Memorial Miner's Park	\$12,000
Cessnock City Council	Creation of Youth Centre Hub	\$38,000
Lake Macquarie City Council	Automatic irrigation system - Edgeworth No. 2 Oval	\$23,200
Kurri Kurri Minor Rugby League	Storage building and BBQ area	\$35,000
Sugarvalley Neighbourhood Centre Advancement Group	Facility upgrade	\$15,951
Abermain Bowling & Recreation Club	Safety handrails	\$11,000
Valley Artists	LED stage lighting	\$4,142
Finding Yellow Limited	To provide transport	\$43,000
Edgeworth Junior Soccer Club	Canteen upgrade	\$5,000
Branxton Greta Business Chamber	Picnic table and benches at Branxton Oval	\$11,175
Cessnock & District Agricultural Association	Replacement power boxes	\$37,000
The Canopy	Solar panels at Cameron Park Community Centre	\$23,443
Richmond Vale Preservation Co-operative Society	Installation of solar panels	\$8,899
Cessnock District Aeromodellers Club	Sport field maintenance equipment	\$7,500

NSW Police launch online community portal to report crime

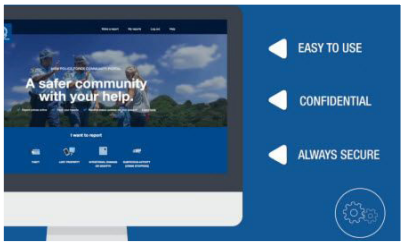
The popularity of smartphones means many of us access the internet on a daily basis. The NSW Police recognise this and have launched the NSW Police Force Community Portal to allow people to report non-emergency situations using the internet.

The Portal is easy to use, confidential and always secure. By logging into the Portal, community members can report lost property, intentional damage or graffiti and theft, in their own time anywhere an internet connection is present.

This is a great tool to ensure people can report non-emergency situations using a forum that frees up local Police officers and allows them to continue to be on patrols preventing and investigating crime in our community.

I recently asked the Minister for Police for statistics on the use of the Portal in our community. The Minister advised me that since it began only 89 local reports had been made. I would urge all community members who are victims of lost property, intentional damage or graffiti and theft to consider using the Portal to report the crime. For more information please visit

www.police.nsw.gov.au/community_portal



From July the Fire and Emergency Services Levy will be included in your Council rates

From 1 July 2017, all landowners not insured in NSW will pay on average an extra \$185 a year as a result of the Berejiklian Government's changes to the collection of the fire and emergency services levy.

The change is designed to make all landowners share the burden of funding fire and emergency services and reduce the cost of insurance policies for homeowners.

Despite the spin the Government has provided on this issue the changes are essentially a \$1 billion tax to the people of NSW. The Government has gone to great lengths over the past six years to call all the new fees and charges it has introduced anything but taxes. It has imposed "levies", "surcharges" and "duties". It almost seems as though it is allergic to the term "tax".

Under the previous model, the fire and emergency services levy was included in a person's property insurance premiums. If you insured your property, you paid the levy.

The changes made by the Government means the levy will be paid alongside Council rates. The new levy will now apply to every single rateable property. People therefore no longer have a choice whether they pay the levy. It will be compulsory.

Councils will pass on all money collected to the NSW Government.

Should you have any concerns or difficulties with the payment of the levy please contact your local Council - Cessnock (4993 4100), Lake Macquarie (4921 0333) or Singleton (6578 7290).

Lands title registry leased to pay for Sydney stadiums

In April the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government made the most significant change to the NSW property system in more than 150 years when they leased the lands title registry to a collection of privately-owned companies for 35 years.

The registry is part of the Land and Property Information (LPI) office which is responsible for collecting and keeping information about property records.

How important is the lands title registry? Every block of land, every unit, every piece of infrastructure is on a piece of land with a title. All homeowners details are held by the lands title registry.

The decision by the Government to sell-off the lands title registry completely takes apart the privacy of each homeowners' details. These details are now in the hands of the private companies who may benefit from using people's information. They could sell on people's details to make money.

Over the last 12 months I have worked closely with everyone from the real estate industry, the legal profession and past and present LPI employees to convince the Government not to sell off the registry. The decision is not economically sensible. It does not respect the privacy of homeowners.

All the questions, speeches, emails and letters I delivered to the Premier and Treasurer on this issue received little more than acknowledgement. They were intent on selling off the registry in the aid of quick dollars.

As the Shadow Minister for Finance, Services and Property I launched a last ditch effort to prevent the Government from selling off the registry. Unfortunately, the Government used their numbers to block any further debate on the Bill. This all but confirmed they do not want to understand the concerns of the people of NSW.

The registry delivered annual profits of at least \$130 million to the State. Before its sale, the Government made massive price rises to increase the profitability of the registry. Simply, they wanted to "fatten the pig before its slaughter". That means that during the life of the 35-year lease over \$10-\$15 billion of revenue that would help pay for essential services such as hospitals and schools will disappear. This sale is a long-term loss to NSW.

From the \$2.6 billion the Government received from the sale, they will spend \$1 billion to revamp Sydney's Parramatta and ANZ stadiums. As of yet, this Sydney-centric Government has not released any plans on how they will spend the remaining money in rural and regional NSW.



People travelled from across NSW to rally against the Government's sale.

Maintenance backlog in our local schools is affecting student engagement and learning

In the Electorate of Cessnock we are privileged to have access to many great schools, with dedicated teachers and enthusiastic school communities. There is an incredible sense of pride among our teachers, students and parents.

However, due to neglect from the NSW Government, our schools are suffering from serious maintenance issues. It was \$156 million in 2011 when they came to power and is now more than \$900 million.

We all know that local schools need to be properly maintained to provide the best possible learning environment for our children.

Across the Electorate of Cessnock the maintenance backlog now totals close to \$10 million.

TOP TEN SCHOOLS IN THE ELECTORATE OF CESSNOCK		
SCHOOLS		MAINTENANCE BACKLOG
1	Cessnock High School	\$1,682,840
2	Kurri Kurri High School	\$1,582,344
3	Kurri Kurri Public School	\$994,664
4	West Wallsend High School	\$887,002
5	Cessnock Public School	\$813,529
6	Edgeworth Heights Public School	\$634,552
7	Weston Public School	\$485,005
8	Edgeworth Public School	\$473,932
9	Greta Public School	\$467,280
10	Cessnock West Public School	\$452,895

The backlog includes basic maintenance issues. This includes window and door repairs, toilet and bathroom upgrades, and the re-painting of classrooms. These are essential for the health and safety of the whole school community.

Students and teachers cannot be expected to work and learn in classrooms with serious maintenance issues.

I welcome the Berejiklian Government's decision in May to provide \$1 million to Cessnock High School to clear some of their maintenance backlogs. The Government still needs to provide funds to other schools in the Electorate to address their maintenance issues.

Dirt bikes on our streets

In recent months I have been contacted by residents from across the Electorate who are concerned with the number of unregistered dirt bikes that are threatening the safety of residents and children in local suburbs.

I have contacted the Minister for Police and the Local Area Commander conveying the concerns of residents and have been informed the best form of action is for residents to **contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000** when they witness unregistered dirt bikes or alleged criminal behaviour in our streets. This will ensure all instances are recorded by the Police and assist them in their investigations.

Butterfly Cave fight



The fight to save the Butterfly Cave at West Wallsend is continuing. Despite the many letters, emails and phone calls I have directed to Minister's offices' the Berejiklian Government has failed to promise to protect the sacred Aboriginal site.

For over 40,000 years local Aboriginal women have used the Butterfly Cave as a sacred place to birth their children, for spiritual and special celebrations, and to teach their young girls about women's business.

The surrounding housing development is putting the site at danger with the Butterfly Cave only being offered a 20 metre protection buffer.

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, 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
- Providing assistance with processing of your Justice of the Peace applications
- Arranging milestone anniversary and birthday congratulatory messages

Connect with me

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