

CLAYTON BARR'S State News

Winter 2023



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

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Cessnock secures \$3.1 million in funding

Investing in education

The Electorate of Cessnock is set to get a childcare boost as Cessnock Multipurpose Children's Centre has been awarded \$3.1 million under the Major Capital Works Fund 2022-23, Strong Start Capital Works Grants Program.



In exciting news the centre which will be operational from 2025 will deliver 44 new licensed places for preschool aged children. The preschool will be located on the corner of Wollombi Road and Lochinvar Street, Bellbird Heights.

With the growing population in the Cessnock City LGA the news of funding for a new preschool to serve the area is fantastic and very welcome.

For our children to thrive we need to be investing in education, especially for our youngest citizens. The importance of early childhood education cannot be overestimated; it provides a foundation for education as children progress through their school days.

The Cessnock Multipurpose Children's Centre have been operating for over 60 years as a community based, not-for-profit organisation which offers long day care, preschool, occasional care, OOSH and vacation care. It currently employs over 100 people with an additional 6 positions to come when the new centre opens.

Any investment into the education of our children is an investment in their future.

Link Road roundabout Update

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and developers have been having discussions about upgrades to the roundabout at Newcastle Link Road and Minmi Road including the possibility of the installation of traffic lights.

At a recent Hunter Central Coast Regional Planning Panel briefing, minutes refer to an agreement between TfNSW and the property group Winten, who are hoping to move forward with the massive Minmi residential development.

The agreement; whereby the developer is contributing to an upgrade to the intersection which is currently a roundabout to a more suitable arrangement. One option is traffic lights however TfNSW are continuing to work on a preferred option.

The planning panel had previously refused the development proposal due to traffic concerns.

The panel was told that the developer would enter into an agreement to contribute financially to convert the Link Road roundabout to an option that will be fit for future growth.

Transport for NSW have started a study to consider any potential changes to improve traffic flow and safety.

INSIDE Kurri Kurri Hospital Improvements (P3)
Energy Bill Relief (P5)

State Finances in Massive Debt (P5)
Huntlee High School Update (P6)

Greta Bus Crash

On the 12th June our community woke to the devastating news of a bus crash at Greta which took the lives of 10 people, with 25 others injured.

While many of us were asleep and unaware of the tragic event, our emergency services workers were busy doing what they always do - trying to save lives and keeping our community safe.

My thoughts and thanks go out to police, fire and rescue, ambulance, council staff, emergency call centre workers, doctors, nurses, emergency services, hospital staff and support workers and those who were first on the scene who helped those affected by this tragedy.

So many lives were changed in this one instant. It is important now that we take stock and grieve in our own way and to our own timelines. There is help out there for those who need it.

The NSW Government will be guided by the families, friends and those affected in regards to community memorials and/or wider services. I extend my sincere condolences and sympathies to every single person touched by this tragedy.

Support Services

NSW Mental Health Line

1800 011 511

Lifeline 13 11 14

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636



Committees and Hospital visits



Health has been front and centre of the new NSW Government and has been a key focus for myself in the Electorate.

In Parliament I am pleased to report I have been nominated to be a member of the Select Committee for Regional, Rural and Remote Health. The committee is following the implementation of 44 recommendations to improve health outcomes for people in rural, regional and remote NSW.

In early July I had the pleasure to have the NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Dr Michael Holland, MP visit our community to explore both Cessnock and Kurri Kurri Hospitals.

While there are plenty of challenges facing our hospitals, there are also some really exciting things happening as well.



In one of it's first acts as a new Government, the new NSW Labor Government have successfully protected Hunter Water and Sydney Water from privatisation through the passing of the Constitutional Amendment (Sydney Water and Hunter Water) Bill 2023.

The new legislation will protect Hunter Water and Sydney Water from being sold off to private interests.

The amendment to the Constitution Act 1902 safeguards public ownership of the state's most critical public water assets, which includes Hunter Water.

The bill ensured that this critical water infrastructure would continue to be operated with the best interests for the people of NSW, not in the interest of private profits.

Kurri Kurri Hospital improvements

Investing in health



One of the many fights I continually have for our Electorate is to keep services at Kurri Kurri Hospital. While the hospital does not operate as it once did when it opened many decades ago, it still provides many necessary services to our community.

The Kurri Kurri Rehab Unit is going from strength to strength with more staff recently hired and I have received some wonderful feedback about the service provided.

The hospital has an operating theatre which is constantly in use for a large number of surgeries.

The hospital also supports a number of outreach community services which function from some of the hospital's many buildings.

Kurri Kurri Hospital has also received important upgrades with Hunter New England Health recently securing funding for a new roof with solar panels for the hospital.

Air conditioning at the hospital has recently been upgraded as well as increased security measures installed including a dedicated staff parking space within the facility and swipe card access to the buildings.

It is great to see funding being allocated to Kurri Kurri Hospital.

New Ambulance Station



A proposed Ambulance Station for the Branxton, Greta, Huntlee and North Rothbury communities is a step closer as public calls have been made to find suitable land for the new Ambulance Station.

The new station which was announced in March 2023 will feature internal parking for emergency ambulance vehicles, vehicle wash facilities, staff parking, multipurpose spaces to support staff education and rest, logistics and storage areas, and office administration areas as well as staff amenities.

The new ambulance station which was earmarked with several others across the Hunter is being delivered as part of the \$615.5 million NSW Ambulance Infrastructure Program.

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.

With this card you will be eligible for discounts at participating businesses.

For more information visit www.seniorscard.nsw.gov.au or call Service NSW on 13 77 88.

Heddon Greta traffic lights completed



The Heddon Greta traffic lights were completed at the start of May. It has taken some time with multiple delays, however it is fantastic to see the traffic lights at the Heddon Street intersection in operation.

With the upgrade completed it is a win for residents and motorists and provides an important improvement in safety for the community.



The completed upgrade includes the new traffic lights at the Main Road intersection with 2 lanes in each direction through the intersection for better traffic flow and increased safety.

'No stopping' signs have been installed around the intersection, as well as peak period restrictions in front of businesses between Stanford Street and Heddon Street. Transport for NSW have also installed a new roadside safety barrier which will help with preventing motorists from veering off the road and a cycle lane has been added to assist cyclists with travelling safely through the intersection.

This upgrade will assist with reducing the risk of crashes by redirecting motorists entering and leaving Main Road to the new traffic lights at the Heddon Street intersection.

First home buyers save on stamp duty

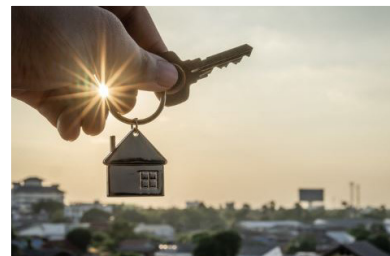
Investing in housing

Thousands of first home buyers will no longer have to pay stamp duty as the new NSW Government has implemented a new First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme. The updated scheme which came into effect on 1 July has moved the threshold for stamp duty exemptions from \$650,000 up to \$800,000 and the threshold for stamp duty concessions from \$800,000 to \$1 million.

What this means is that first home buyers who purchase a home up to \$800,000 will pay no stamp duty at all.

In the Cessnock Electorate, this will lead to an average saving of \$21,190. These changes will help 5 out of 6 first home buyers in NSW to pay no stamp duty, or at a concessional rate, and delivers a key election commitment.

The changes to stamp duty will allow thousands of first home buyers to enter the market sooner and give them a boost when competing with other buyers.



Over 7,000 positions made permanent

Investing in education

The new NSW Labor Government have made changes to fix the education system. As of the end of June 2023 over 7,000 teachers and support staff have been made permanent.

Before the state election in March 2023 nearly 40% of the public school teaching workforce were either temporary or casual employees. That is thousands and thousands of teachers not having stability in their jobs, resulting in teacher shortages and a mass exodus of teachers from the profession.

The Minns Government made the election commitment to transfer 16,000 temporary teaching and support staff roles to permanent positions.

We have been making good on this promise with over 7,000 staff already accepting permanent roles and this number is growing everyday.

A majority of the 7,000 positions have been accepted in rural and regional areas. In Newcastle and the Hunter region 1,800 permanent positions have been accepted.

It is important for the education of our kids that teachers are supported and feel secure in their jobs.

Energy Bill Relief Assistance Scheme

The NSW and Federal Governments have worked together to provide targeted temporary energy bill relief. Eligible households will receive \$500 in energy bill relief and \$650 for small businesses from 1 July.



The Energy Bill Relief Fund will provide support to 1.6 million eligible NSW household and 320,000 eligible NSW small businesses.

This relief includes funding from both governments which include \$485 million from the NSW Government and \$481 million from the Federal Government.

The relief is available to households eligible for the:

- Senior Energy Rebate
- Low-income Household (electricity) Rebate
- Family Energy Rebate
- Medical Energy Rebate
- Life Support Rebate

Most eligible households and small businesses will automatically receive the Energy Bill Relief after 31 July 2023. This will be a household rebate of \$125 quarterly directly off energy bills.

If you are eligible but do not receive the rebate contact Service NSW on 137788 or visit a Service NSW centre.

More information can be found at www.energy.nsw.gov.au/households/rebates-grants-and-schemes/national-energy-bill-relief

State finances in massive debt

With a change in Government at the March 2023 election, concerns I have long held about the state of the budget are now being revealed, for all to see.

When the Liberal/National Government came into power in 2011 they inherited just \$22.5 billion or \$3,100 per person in borrowings. Today that figure has blown out massively to \$129 billion and projected to be \$187 billion or \$22,000 per person by 2026. This is the largest debt ever handed from one government to another in NSW history.

In addition to these massive borrowings a further \$100 billion of our state's assets were sold off - and all of that money has now been spent. Historically assets would generate income for our state ie electricity network, tolls etc. Without these assets, they are no longer bringing in money to pay back the debt of the borrowings.

The cost of interest on the amount borrowed is \$7 billion per year. That equates to \$134 million a week, more than \$19 million per day - just in interest payments. How significant this is cannot be overestimated; \$7 billion is bigger than the total budget for the NSW Police and TAFE combined.

That \$134 million interest per week could have been used for building a new school each week, or a massive hospital upgrade each week, or new major road upgrades each week.

Completely unrelated to the \$7 billion per year in interest payments, after the change in Government, Treasury briefs uncovered a \$7 billion 'black hole'.

This budget 'black hole' includes several programs the previous Government had failed to take into account in the budget - including active kids and creative kids vouchers, \$100 million per year cut from Destinations NSW budget, \$700 million funding shortfall for kids living in out-of-home care and 1,100 nurses who are unfunded from 30 June 2024.

With the damage to the state's finances, \$7 billion budget 'black hole' and a hospital and education system in crisis, we have a very big job to turn things around. The new Minns NSW Government are taking action to control expenses and that means making tough decisions, that won't always be popular, to try to repair the budget.

Cessnock Hospital redevelopment update

Investing in health

The redevelopment of Cessnock Hospital is in full swing with plans being updated prior to further community consultation.

At a recent briefing held with Hunter New England Health I had the opportunity to see the current redevelopment plans for the hospital.

The Cessnock Electorate secured \$111.5 million for a major redevelopment of the current hospital which was announced in 2021.

Round 1 of community consultation has been held to show the plans for the redevelopment and for the community to provide feedback.

At the time of publication Hunter New England Health are scheduling a second round of consultation so the community can view the amended plans.

The redevelopment of the hospital will see a new two storey building built on the current site and more parking at the hospital.

Some buildings which were scheduled for demolition may have to stay due to the cost of tearing them down, however this will not impact the new building.

Huntlee High School update



A new high school to serve the growing communities in the North Rothbury, Greta, Branxton and Huntlee areas is getting closer.

During the 2023 State Election now Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, Prue Car MP announced if Labor were elected to govern we would start immediate planning for a high school in the area.

Since coming into government the Department of Education has been instructed to begin conversations with the LWP Property Group (developer of Huntlee) about the site for the high school.

It is pleasing to see initial steps being taken to secure the site and planning.

Justice of the Peace 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.

You can find a JP several ways including by visiting www.jp.nsw.gov.au for your nearest JP.

If you are looking for a JP in the **Cessnock area**, the Community JP Desk operated by the NSW Justices Association Inc. is available **every Monday between 12:30pm - 3:00pm at Cessnock City Library, 65-67 Vincent Street, Cessnock.**

Any JPs in the Cessnock area who would like to volunteer, please contact the Community JP Desk for more information.

For people who live in the eastern end of the Cessnock Electorate, the Morisset and Lake Macquarie Branch of the NSW Justices Association regularly provide JP services at Cameron Park Shopping Centre (outside the Chemist) and at Edgeworth Town Square Shopping Centre on the following dates between 10am and 12pm:

CAMERON PARK

Saturday

- 2 September 2023
- 7 October 2023
- 4 November 2023
- 2 December 2023

Thursday

- 21 September 2023
- 19 October 2023
- 16 November 2023
- 21 December 2023

EDGEWORTH

Thursday

- 7 September 2023
- 5 October 2023
- 2 November 2023
- 7 December 2023

Saturday

- 16 September 2023
- 21 October 2023
- 18 November 2023
- 16 December 2023

Local Woman of the Year 2023

In March this year I was pleased to announce Kearsley's Pam Snaddon as the 2023 Local Woman of the year for the Electorate. Pam Snaddon was recognised for her decades long involvement in promoting local sport across the community with her volunteering efforts in a number of disciplines including hockey and rugby league.



Pam has dedicated much of her time to Cessnock District Hockey Association through a variety of volunteer positions. She can be regularly found holding fundraisers and running programs that assists players develop their skills. For her efforts Pam was awarded Life Membership of Cessnock District Hockey Association.

In recent years Pam has been instrumental in the establishment and growth of the Kearsley Crushers Rugby League Club. Pam was also named Cessnock City Council's 2023 Senior Citizen of the Year for her dedication to promoting inclusion, acceptance and healthy lifestyle, through involvement in sporting organisations across the community.

Over many years Pam has been synonymous with helping others in the community and there are many community groups who have benefited from her years of experience and kindness.

Her long standing commitment and dedication to promoting local sport in the community is a tribute to a remarkable woman who is always willing to lend a hand.

New App to help Domestic Violence Victims

NSW Police have launched a new app which allows for victims of domestic and family violence in NSW to discreetly document abuse and access support services. The app is part of the Domestic and Family Violence Reform Project which was established to change the way police respond to and prevent domestic violence.

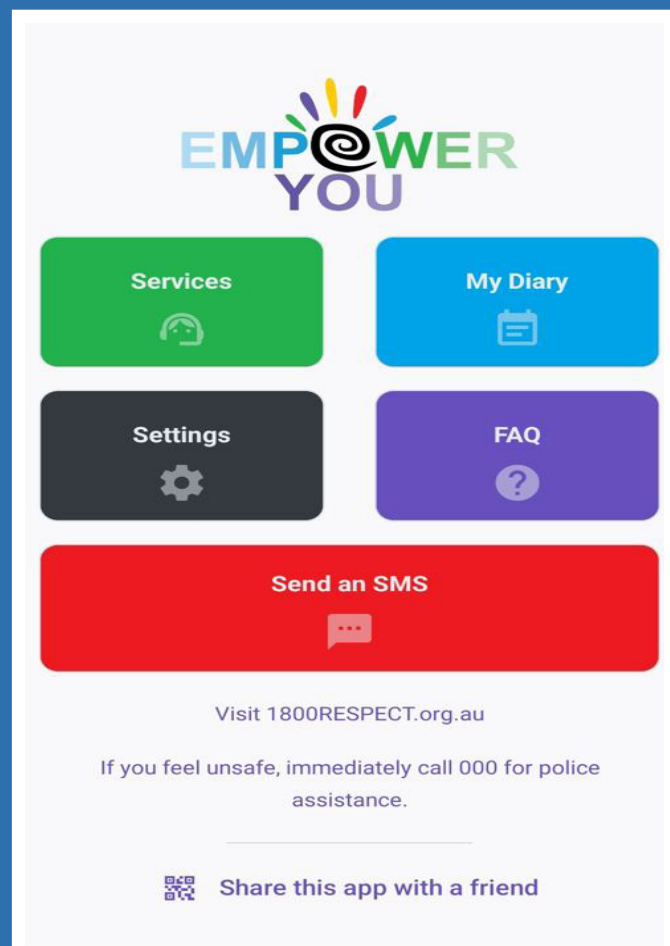
The 'Empower You' app was designed to be user friendly, with privacy features including passcodes and quick lock, along with a diary feature that allows users to document incidents.

The app includes a private diary, a coded emergency signal feature which can also send their GPS location, simple connectivity to Triple Zero (000) for emergencies, and links to local support services.

The diary feature allows a victim to collect their thoughts - including photos of injuries and property damage and screenshots of emails or messages, and document an incident when it happens.

The 'Empower You' app is available in the Google Play Store and the Apple App store. NSW Police officers have QR codes on their MobiPOL devices to link to the app and download information.

Victims of domestic and family violence can also seek advice and services by contacting 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visiting: <https://www.1800respect.org.au>. In an emergency or life-threatening situation, contact 000.



\$50,000 in Local Sport grant funding

In late February I was able to announce 7 projects from across the Electorate that were successful in receiving funding as part of the 2022-23 Local Sport Grant Program. The program aims to increase regular and ongoing participation in sport and recreation in NSW.

The Electorate of Cessnock was successful in receiving \$50,000 under the Local Sport Grant Program to fund a variety of projects including programs, equipment and infrastructure such as privacy partitions, seating and lawn renovation. It was great to see such a variety of local sports receive the funding for much needed infrastructure and resources. Congratulations to all the successful groups.



Above: West Wallsend Junior Rugby League.

Top Left to right: Fernances Creek Riding Club and Cessnock Minor Rugby League.

Bottom left to right: Mt Sugarloaf Croquet Club and Cessnock Amateur Swim Club.



SUCCESSFUL RECIPIENTS:

- **Fernances Creek Riding Club** secured **\$3,200** for Fernances Creek Dressage Arena.
- **Kurri Kurri Minor Rugby League Club** secured **\$10,000** for equipment for the 2023 Women in League Program.
- **Cessnock Amateur Swim Club** secured **\$6,725** towards the CASC Swim Program.
- **Cessnock Rugby League** secured **\$9,397** for ladies uniforms.
- **Mt Sugarloaf Croquet Club Inc** secured **\$6,407** for lawn renovation to provide an improved playing surface for increased participation.
- **Cessnock Minor Rugby League** secured **\$4,271** for seating at Mount View Park.
- **West Wallsend Junior Rugby League Club Incorporated** secured **\$10,000** for partitions to be installed in sheds for privacy.

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.
- Helping you to voice your concerns to Ministers as you seek 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

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