



News from the

Member for Lake Macquarie Greg Piper, MP



A REPORT TO RESIDENTS OF THE ELECTORATE

June 2007

HELLO FROM GREG PIPER

This is the first opportunity to report back to the Lake Macquarie electorate since my induction as your MP. I've been busy recruiting staff and getting under way with the many-faceted job of representing you in the NSW Parliament and assisting you with Government services. After the last redistribution, the electorate now extends from Killingworth in the north to Palmdale in the south.

My home is near the centre of the electorate and I will keep the electorate office at Toronto, the largest centre of population.

At the moment I am still based at the premises of the previous Member, but I am hopeful I will be moving to new premises with wheelchair access shortly.

MY PRIORITIES

In my first speech to parliament I identified some priorities under the three headings of infrastructure, services and conservation. Lake Macquarie contributes more to the State's economy than many areas, yet it is lagging in government provision. This electorate will accommodate a significant portion of the region's growth over the next 25 years so we can't be left to suffer a widening gap between population and services. We need major infrastructure items such as a hospital and improvements to Main Road 217, our electorate's major artery. We need significant improvements in services such as policing, where currently our provision of officers is below half the state average. We need better guarantees about protection of the lake and our bushland. I will be using this term of office to work on the detail of our needs for government spending and the results we expect.

WYEE SEWERAGE

Wye is ideally located close to the lake, adjacent to the F3 and has a railway station on the main northern rail line. For these reasons it was chosen by the government as an urban release area for 2,000 dwellings under the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy. Disappointingly, the Hunter Water Corporation has not included Wye and Wye West in its list of new sewerage works for the next 2^{1/2} years. Hunter Water pays millions in surplus funds annually to the State government, but there's still no money to provide sewerage for Wye.

The cost of providing sewerage is about \$30,000 per lot and the government contributes approximately \$3,000. I've raised the issue in Parliament and I hope that it will be addressed in the near future.



Did You Know ?

The lake itself is part of the Lake Macquarie electorate. The boundary is the mean low water mark of the eastern shore.

Black Friday - 8 June

With the horrific storm blowing in from the southeast, there was extensive damage to properties and foreshores in the westlakes area. This was one of the worst natural disasters our region has suffered. There has been a huge clean-up effort by council crews and state government departments. Particular thanks go to the State Emergency Services and the many other volunteers who helped the community cope. Restoration will cost many millions of dollars and take months.

During and after the storms the State Emergency Services received over 13,000 requests for assistance. The majority of these requests have been centred on the Hunter and Central Coast, about 60% for fallen trees, 25% for roof damage and leaks and 15% for flooding. Volunteers came from across NSW and interstate. About 70 % of requests were acted on within a few days.

LAKE MACQUARIE COUNCIL

Council staff worked around the clock to prioritise and act on repairs. Green waste was accepted free of charge at Awaba tip. There were also additional kerbside green waste and bulk waste collections.

There have been a few indefinite road closures, including Weir Road at Barnsley and Newcastle Road at Cardiff.

Indefinite road restrictions occurred at Watagan Road, Martinsville (one lane of light traffic), Main Road, Cardiff (one lane in each direction) and Lake Road, Glendale (one lane each way over the bridge).

Kilaben Bay and Lakelands halls have been closed until further notice.

To report damage or for further information phone **4921 0333**.

WYONG COUNCIL

Field staff, customer service staff, rangers and others worked round the clock over the long weekend to clear trees and other debris from public areas and respond to public enquiries.

Council assessed the damage and response requirements on an hourly basis to gain a full picture of what was needed. The initial focus was on providing urgent community assistance and services. The clean-up will continue over coming weeks. Council had to inform residents under Level 4 water restrictions that it is permissible to use town water to hose away outdoor storm debris because of the health and safety risks.

To report damage or for further information phone **4350 5555**.



Brightwaters

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

People who have been affected by the severe weather and are seeking information about evacuation centres and assistance in flood recovery can contact the DoCS Disaster Recovery Line on **1800 018 444**.

ONE STOP CENTRES

Government agencies were quick to set up Disaster Recovery Centres for those in need.

The nearest centres are:

- Newcastle, 615 Hunter St 8am to 6pm.
- Wyong Council, Hely St 8am to 6 pm.
- A range of government departments, welfare organisations and insurance companies are represented.
- The Cessnock Docs office, open 9am-5pm at 3 Edward St, will also make referrals to other agencies.

For more information ph **1800 018 444**.

I congratulate all involved, and especially those who gave up their time over the long weekend.

We can all hope that we never again experience storms like Black Friday, but the following information can help you be prepared should the need arise.

Did You Know

Of the electorate's 58,000 people aged 5 or more years, nearly 25,000 lived at a different address five years ago.



Toronto

WHEN YOU HEAR A FLOOD WARNING OR IF FLOODING APPEARS LIKELY

- Tune to your local radio for warnings and advice.
- Prepare to move vehicles, outdoor equipment, garbage, chemicals, and poisons to higher locations.
- Plan which indoor items you will raise or empty if water threatens to enter your home.
- Check your emergency kit and remember your pets.

IF YOU NEED TO EVACUATE

- If you leave of your own accord, tell police or State/Territory Emergency Service, and your neighbours.
- Firstly, pack warm clothing, essential medication, valuables, personal papers, photos and mementos in waterproof bags, to be taken with your emergency kit.
- Raise furniture, clothing and valuables onto beds, tables and into roof space (electrical items highest).
- Empty freezers and refrigerators, leaving doors open (to avoid damage or loss if they float about). Turn off power, water and gas and take your mobile phone.
- Whether you leave or stay, put sandbags in the toilet bowl and over all laundry/bathroom drain-holes to prevent sewage back-flow.
- Lock your home and take recommended evacuation routes for your area.
- Don't drive into water of unknown depth and current.

IF YOU STAY, OR ON YOUR RETURN

- Stay tuned to local radio for updated advice.
- Don't allow children to play in, or near, flood waters.
- Avoid entering flood waters. If you must, wear solid shoes and check depth and current with a stick.
- Stay away from drains, culverts and water over knee-deep.
- Don't use gas or electrical appliances which have been in flood water until checked for safety.
- Don't eat food which has been in flood waters.
- Boil tap water until supplies have been declared safe.



Photographer: Luke Arms (Photograph courtesy of 1233 ABC Newcastle)

THE "NEW" LAKE MACQUARIE ELECTORATE

Some areas were recently "moved" from Wyong into Lake Macquarie as a result of the last electoral redistribution. For elections to be fair, electorates should all be similar in size - so as the population changes, so do the boundaries.

The revised electorates were defined starting from the Victorian and Queensland borders. It was near the centre of the NSW coast that it became difficult to maintain "community of interest" across electorates.

In my view the result was less than perfect, with parts of the Lake Macquarie community being lost from the north of the electorate and sections of the Central Coast being added to the south. This only illustrates my belief that the NSW Government and its various agencies can do a better job for the Lake Macquarie and Central Coast areas.

STEM CELL RESEARCH BILL

I recently had to make a weighty decision on my support legislation which could potentially lead to cures for spinal injuries and diseases such as motor neurone disease, Parkinson's disease and diabetes, for future generations. The Bill involved many complex technical, legal, moral and ethical issues and was subject to a conscience vote for both Government and Opposition members. I acknowledge the serious religious objections by many in the electorate, but I felt a greater need to offer hope to those who may benefit from a possible medical breakthrough.



Photographer: Kay Burgess (Photograph courtesy of 1233 ABC Newcastle)



Photographer: Sandra Evans (Photograph courtesy of 1233 ABC Newcastle)

Did You Know

The Lake Macquarie Electorate has residents from 32 different countries.



Wallarah 2 Coal Project

On 7 June I addressed Parliament about a planned coal mine largely owned by the Korean Government. The proposal includes longwall mining under a significant portion of the catchment that collects 68% of the water for Wyong and Gosford.

This proposed longwall mine only has to deliver the same result as those before it and it will be an unnatural disaster. Experience shows that longwall coalmining has serious effects on our land, water and air. The current proposal offers the same assurances as its predecessors and therefore, threatens the same failures and impacts.

On 18 June I met with the Australian Coal Alliance and they confirmed their view that ... "We do have substantive and compelling evidence that the mine will impact on the integrity of the water catchment. Throughout Australia, longwall coalmining has had a destructive impact on water systems."

The surface facilities of the proposed mine would also have harmful health impacts over an area planned by the Government as the largest new growth centre on the Central Coast.

The huge financial benefits would not go to the people of New South Wales, but to the Korean Government, without it sharing the risk. The benefits to New South Wales would be questionable and have a very high risk to our environment and surrounding communities.

The application mentions 300 jobs for the 28-year project. In the face of global warming and climate change, I believe the community would rather see the development of clean-energy jobs with a longer life.

Our local communities are telling the Government that they believe the risk is not worthwhile and this type of development isn't compatible with our heavily populated and ecologically fragile coastal strip.

BOORAGUL JETTY PROJECT

In the company of the Minister for Ports and Waterways, the Honourable Joe Tripodi, I recently inspected the project. The jetty will be a long-lasting concrete structure that will serve for decades. It will also act as a reminder of what can be achieved by a cooperative approach between state and local governments.

POLICE NUMBERS

I recently met with the Police Association of NSW to discuss difficulties faced by police in the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command, which covers most residents of this electorate. I've spoken on this issue in Parliament to draw attention to the staffing deficiency and the poor working conditions of police. In Parliament I have since asked Police Minister David Campbell a series of specific questions on the problems being faced by detectives in our area.

WASTE LEVY

In parliament I've already raised some issues important to all Lake Macquarie residents. I hope to reverse the 54% increase in the government levy on landfill waste disposal. This levy would penalise Council by approximately \$10m over four years - just for bringing in soil to cover garbage at the Awaba dump. Putting a cost on landfill is a good reminder that we all need to be mindful of how much rubbish we produce, but we shouldn't be penalised for having a safe dump.



Meeting with Alan Hayes, representative of ACA and Electorate Research Assistant, Peter Morris

If you need help with any State Government matter, please contact me.

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