



# State Connection

By Nationals Member for Lismore Thomas George MP

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## Flood Assistance

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Hello and Happy New Year to you all.

Well, what a dramatic start to 2011 it has been.

Even if you've managed to stay high and dry from the deluge of rain that has fallen relentlessly across our region and south east Queensland recently, it is impossible to ignore the destruction and devastation the flood waters have had on so many.

To those poor people affected north of the border, we send our blessings.

Whilst we on this side of the range were spared from a major flood, sadly I can't say the same for towns and communities west of the range including Kyogle, Woodenbong, Urbenville, Bonalbo, Tabulam and the Tenterfield Shire and Clarence Valley regions.

On a visit to Kyogle I witnessed some of the damage caused by the flooding. On a positive and uplifting note however, I also witnessed the strong and united community spirit displayed not only by the invaluable local volunteer SES crews, but also by ordinary folk, so keen to help others in need.

Now, as the waters start to subside and the big clean up begins, home and business owners are beginning to take stock of their losses and tally up the estimated damage bills. There is no doubt the financial cost of these floods will run into millions.

My office has been inundated with queries relating to how to go about applying and receiving financial flood assistance.

One point of contact for flood affected residents, businesses and primary producers in the Tweed, Byron, Kyogle, Ballina, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tenterfield Local Governments looking for financial assistance is to call the **NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593.**

## *Continued from page 1...*

In addition, the Federal Government announced on 10 January that it would provide additional support for employees, small businesses and farmers who have lost income as a direct result of the floods crisis.

**The Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy** is a fortnightly payment of up to the maximum rate of existing Newstart Allowance for a period of 13 weeks. The subsidy will be available to those who have experienced a loss of income as a direct result of the flooding and are not currently receiving, or eligible for, any other income support payment.

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*"The subsidy will be available to those who have experienced a loss of income..."*

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Employees, small businesses and farmers who reside or derive an income from disaster declared areas will be eligible to claim the Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy should they fulfill the criteria.

Centrelink will start processing claims for the Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy immediately and first payments are expected to begin rolling out early next week.

For more information or to claim the **Disaster Income Recovery Subsidy** call **180 22 66** to register your details.

## Premier's Christmas Gala Concert DVD

I have 20 copies of the 2010 Premier's Christmas Gala Concert Limited Edition DVD available to give interested senior citizens.

The concerts, which were held on the 7 and 8 December 2010, at the Sydney Entertainment Centre and attended by 30,000 seniors, showcased the very best of popular music from the 50s to the present day.

Due to their popularity, a DVD has been made for those seniors who may have missed out on attending and wish to watch the concert at home or with their friends.

Interested senior citizens should call into or phone my office to ask for a copy.

Distribution of the DVDs will be on a 'first in - first served' basis!

## Kids' Adventure Passports

Are you and your family planning a trip to Sydney or to any of the regional art galleries around the state in the remainder of these or the next school holidays?

If so, phone or call into my office to pick up one of 50 Kids' Adventure Passports. The passports aim to encourage school children in years K-6 to visit the State's cultural venues through an incentive scheme based on a passport.

Entry fees to participating venues are free for all passport holders. If children collect three or more stamps in their passport they'll be sent a certificate for completing the Premier's Adventure Challenge. Collect just one or more stamps and they'll be in the running to win some fantastic prizes.

The program is running from 1 January to 26 April 2011 and is in its second year.

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## Upcoming State Election

Whilst the State Election is looming, with D-day set for March 26, my office is still very busy and I continue to carry out duties on behalf of my Lismore electorate.

## Congratulations to our high achievers this month:-

- Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter crew members **Mark Sewell and Steve Von Bratt**, on being awarded with National Medals for dedicated service.
- **Arthur and Alice Thompson**, of Nobbys Creek, on being awarded with 40 years of service badges for contribution to the Murwillumbah Meals on Wheels charity.
- Congratulations and welcome to our region to our two new Police Commanders **Supt Greg Martin** at Richmond Local Area Command & **Supt Stuart Wilkins** at Tweed Byron Local Area Command.
- A special thanks to all those volunteers and emergency workers who work tirelessly during the floods.