



State Connection

October 2010

A monthly bulletin from
Nationals Member for Lismore
Thomas George MP

Region Loses as Repco Rally Relocates

Like many others around the region, I am still reeling over the loss of the Repco Rally Championships from the Northern Rivers.

The relocation of this world class event to Coffs Harbour, a decision announced by the president of the Confederation of Australian Motor Sports (CAMS) Andrew Papadopoulos late last month, is a major blow to our local economy and tourism industry.

An independent report estimated the rally was to inject around \$100 million into the regional economy over the 10-year period it was planned to be based here.

The report also found around 20,000 visitors travelled to the Northern Rivers region in September 2009 to attend the rally and the event attracted 2,145 international visitors and 12,388 interstate visitors.

I am personally disappointed with CAMS for not having had the courtesy to meet with myself and representatives from the Tweed and Kyogle Shire Councils, both of which had already invested significantly into the event, to address the perceived issues put forward by a small minority of rally protestors.

A final decision however has been made and we must now look to filling the financial and social void this rally will leave with others types of events in its place.

Labor's ill Health

The NSW Labor Government has back-flipped on Local Health Network policy. Last month it announced that Health Networks around the state would increase from eight to 18, commencing 1 January 2011.

The revised system is similar to the policy the Coalition Government has been advocating for years. Labor's policy didn't work so they've reverted back to ours. This is another example of how out of touch Premier Keneally is with community needs.

It's bad enough that Labor's now defunct health system caused major inefficiencies and cost millions, but what really hurts is the pain and suffering of those people whom the system failed. The State Government appears to have also overlooked including Stage Three of Lismore Base Hospital's redevelopment, including the upgrading of the Emergency Department, in the 2010/11 budget, further highlighting their ignorance to our needs.

Indications are that the system appears to be reverting back to the way the old Northern Rivers Area Health Service was run, with local medical fraternity involved in all decision-making, a move which is certainly in the right direction.

If the Coalition is elected next March, we will continue to commit to community and clinician consultation over the Local Health network boundaries before any maps are finalised. I will also maintain as my highest priority, the need to complete Stage 3 of LBH.

Small Business

The Coalition's Small Business Action Plan has been welcomed by the NSW Business Chamber. It contains a number of initiatives, including a commitment to cut red tape by 20 per cent in four years and create a one-stop shop for business licences.

The plan, designed to attract people running small-to-medium sized enterprises, also calls for the appointment of a Small Business Commissioner to lobby on behalf of the sector. It recognises that the largest employer in NSW is small business, and that for too long small business has not had a voice in the State Government.

The Small Business Commissioner would be based on the system introduced in Victoria in 2003, whereby the Commissioner will report directly to the minister and provide reports to Parliament recommending how to improve the business climate for small businesses.

The Small Business Commissioner will have real power, advocate on behalf of small and medium enterprises and help resolve disputes between small and medium enterprises and government agencies.

Electricity Prices

Electricity customers have been delivered another blow after it has been revealed that the Government is asking taxpayers to pay for the administration of the Government's solar-power scheme. A letter sent from Energy Australia to the Australian Energy Regulator has been acquired, seeking to recover \$75 million in administrative costs over the next five years from its 1.6 million customers.

Customers are already paying again in their bills for the crumbling energy infrastructure the Government failed to reinvest in, now customers are paying for the solar scheme.

The environmental credentials of solar panels are not in doubt, it is who should be paying for them and how it should be paid. This comes on top of the recent revelation that the Government was using \$21 million of taxpayer money to fund advisers for its Gentrader privatisation.

There are more than 138,000 people in NSW that cannot afford to pay their power bills, this is a major concern for small business and will put more stress on struggling pensioners, people with disabilities and families.

Governor's visit

Yesterday I had the pleasure of hosting the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, during her short visit to Lismore.

Professor Bashir was in town for the day to attend the Lismore Ladies Benevolent Society 120th Anniversary dinner at Invercauld House, East Lismore.

It was wonderful to have her back in the Lismore electorate again and, in particular, to have her present for such an historic celebration of this very worthy charitable organisation.

The Lismore Ladies Benevolent Society was formed in 1890 to raise money for people in need. One hundred and twenty years on the Society continues to make a difference to the lives of needy and disadvantaged people in Lismore.

I extend my congratulations on this magnificent achievement and wish this oldest and longest serving charitable institution of Lismore many happy returns.

Girl Guides Celebrate Centenary

I joined Girl Guides from the Northern Rivers Division at the Lismore City Hall on Sunday, 10 October, in a special ceremony to help celebrate the Year of the Girl Guide.

The Girl Guide movement in Australia is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, and Girl Guides from all over Australia held 'Flying the Flag' ceremonies, flying the flag of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts at 10am, on the 10th day, of the 10th month, of the 10th year.

Unfortunately heavy rain interrupted the Sunday morning ceremony in Lismore so proceedings had to be viewed from the Fountain Room whilst guides conducted the flag raising activities outside.

Thank you to Helen Hargreaves, Division Leader of the Northern Rivers Division, Girl Guides Association NSW & ACT, for the kind invitation to attend.

I wish the Girl Guide movement every success for its next 100 years and hope they are as successful as the previous century.

For more information about Girl Guides, go to www.girlguides-nswact.org.au

Show Time

Nimbin Show – Nimbin's annual show, held on the 25 & 26 of September, was a great success, with a good turnout of people despite the wet weather conditions.

Kyogle Show - Deb and I had the pleasure of attending the 2010 Kyogle Show, held last Friday and Saturday, 8 and 9 October. We had a wonderful time on the Saturday attending the official opening of the show.

Congratulations to show president Les O'Reilly, secretary Wendy Piggott and their team of committee members for organising another fine event.

The North Coast National Exhibition will be held at Lismore Showgrounds from 21 - 23 October 2010.

Celebrating its 125 anniversary, the show promises to be one of the biggest and best. A special attraction this year will be the Arena Spectacular as well as the inaugural Bachelor of the Year competition. Tickets are available on the gate. Adults \$18, children \$5 (under 5yrs free), concession \$10 and car entry \$5.

The Murwillumbah Agricultural Show will be held on November 5 & 6 at the Murwillumbah Showgrounds. Entry is free both days. Witness all the show favourites including showjumping, beef cattle judging, bull & bronc ride spectacular, woodchopping plus more. For full programme details go to www.murwillumbahshowground.com.

Charity Walk

It is that time of year again when I undertake a Charity Walk for the 2LM/ZZZ Christmas Appeal, which is being held on Sunday, 7 November.

This is the 6th year of this event and I trust you will accept my challenge to either walk or sponsor me for this very worthy cause.

Your support will enable the walk to reach our target of \$20,000. Minimum sponsorship is \$100 for individuals and \$200 for business. Cheques are to be made payable to '2LM Children's Christmas Appeal' and submitted to 2LM or my office by 27 October.

In Good Company Music Festival

Don't miss the open air music festival *In Good Company* at the Lismore Turf Club on Saturday, 13 November.

The family-fun charity event will boast some of the Northern Rivers region's most talented musicians and artists playing live music and performing art. Secured headline acts include former Lismore girl and Australian idol finalist, Ngaiire Joseph, Diana Anaid, Byron Bay country rock n rollers The-Remains' and 20-piece drumming troupe The Samba-Blisstas.

It promises to be a day of good company, good food, markets, stalls and rockin' music.

All proceeds will go to two local charities: the Mental Health Support Group and the Lismore Soup Kitchen.

HELP! Organisers are calling on community support, particularly financial support from local business houses to help raise funds for this festival. If you, or someone you know, would like to contribute to this worthy event, please call Pippa Swift on 0408 490 572 or Horace Bevan on 0447 038 349.

For more information go to www.ingoodcompany2010.org

Calling Young and Aspiring Politicians

A reminder that nominations are now open for the 2011 YMCA Youth Parliament, an annual forum for young people to learn about participating in the parliamentary process. Youth Parliament is one of the longest-running and most successful YMCA youth programs in Australia, with 2011 marking the 10th anniversary of Youth Parliament.

I encourage any young person who wants to be a Youth Parliamentarian to nominate now. Nominations are open for 15 to 18 year olds (inclusive as of April 2011), currently attending a secondary school in New South Wales and passionate about youth issues, politics and/or social change.

Youth Parliament is also a great opportunity to develop skills in leadership, public speaking, debating and teamwork. Leadership is not about being in charge but about using your ideas and skills in a team environment to make a difference.

The successful applicants will attend a 3-day training camp in April 2011 as well as participating in ongoing activities culminating with a weeklong residential camp in the July school vacation period.

Nominations close on 29 October, 2010. Nomination packages are available by contacting my Electorate Office on 6543 1065. For more information about Youth Parliament and applications contact Joel Clark on telephone 9687 6233 or by email joel.clark@ymca.org.au. Alternatively, the website can be viewed at www.ymcasydney.org/youth-parliament

Freedom from Bullying Expo

The Northern Rivers Anti-Bullying Alliance (NRABA) is holding a Freedom from Bullying Expo on Friday, 12 November, at the Lismore Workers Club Auditorium, Keen Street, Lismore. The Expo will start at 10am and finish at 3pm. All interested community members are invited and encouraged to attend.

The Expo will include guest speakers, a panel to respond to community concerns and questions, playback theatre and musical interludes. The TAFE *YouthNet Freedom From Bullying Website Project* will also be showcased.

The NRABA was formed in 2009 in response to a rise in media reports on workplace bullying and incidents around school bullying, as well as the issue of my brochure, *Stamping Out Bullying*. The group aims to raise awareness and reduce bullying in schools, the workplace, in the home and in the community; to provide advocacy and support to both targets and bullies through referrals to appropriate counselling services.

For more information on the Expo or the NRABA call Linda Bradbury on 0438 478807.

Congratulations to high achievers from our electorate including: -

- **Fiona Kerwin** on being presented with a Student Design Award and a Commendation Award for Best Use of Glass in a Residential Building at the National Building Designers Association Awards in Tasmania last month.
- **Peter Wilcox, Jesse Sharp, Alexis Malcolm and Montanna Miller** from Murwillumbah High School on being presented with a 2010 Public Education Award for outstanding contribution to public education.
- **Cate McQuillen and Hewey Eustace**, creators of children's television program *Dirtgirlworld*, for winning the first ever GRASS Award at the Australian Directors Guild in Sydney last month.
- **Russell Freeburn** for winning the NSW Training Awards 2010 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year and **Alex Jones** for winning the NSW Training Awards 2010 School Based Apprentice of the Year.
- **Emily and Mary Betteridge** for their success in the Lismore Garden Club 2010 Garden Awards. *Ps Go the Dragons!*
- Students from **St John's College** Lismore for winning two categories in the recent State Tournament of Minds Competition. They also received honours in a third in the State finals. Good luck for the Australian Pacific Final in Darwin next week.
- **The Richmond River Express Examiner** on celebrating 140 years of operation this year.
- **Alesco Learning Centre Northern Rivers** in Lismore on winning a Schools First Seed Funding Award and **Kyogle High School** on winning a Schools First Impact Award.
- **Jennie Richter**, of Kyogle, and **Delys Cumming**, of Chilcots Grass, for receiving a NSW Local Carer Award 2010.