



# *State Connection*

*September 2010*

*A monthly bulletin from*

*Nationals Member for Lismore*

*Thomas George MP*

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## ***Federal Election***

I must firstly begin this month by thanking and extending commiserations to my Nationals colleague Kevin Hogan for his efforts in running for the seat of Page in the recent Federal election. I'd also like to recognise his wife Karen and their children for the way they supported Kevin as a family unit.

Kevin ran a strong campaign based on a solid plan of action for our region.

Congratulations however to Janelle Saffin for retaining her seat as the Member for Page. I wish her well for her new term in office.

Politically speaking, we are certainly living in interesting times. With the Federal Election now finally behind us stability of government and strong management is of the utmost importance.

Let's hope Prime Minister Gillard and her team can deliver just that.

## ***Plantation Forestry Forum***

More than 200 people attended Monday night's Plantation Forestry Forum I convened at Woodenbong Golf Club.

I called the forum in response to concerns expressed to me regarding the collapse of Forest Enterprises Australia (FEA) and its local plantations.

There were certainly grave concerns expressed by those attending from the local community, including business owners, land owners, neighbours of FEA leased properties and investors.

Many were frustrated having been left in limbo after losing an income source and because they could not move forward. The loss of income has made it very difficult for a number of families and enterprises.

On hand to answer questions from the community were representatives from Southern Cross University including Professor of Sustainable Forestry and Head of the School of Environmental Science and Management Jerry Vanclay, Social Researcher in Forestry Andrea Leas, Forest Silviculturalist Kevin Glencross and Wood Scientist Graeme Palmer as well as Chris Barnes of FEA.

The meeting itself wasn't about finding solutions on the night but rather provided an opportunity to listen to and have community concerns aired.

As a result of the meeting, I will now lead a deputation representing contractors, growers, investors and the progress association to meet with the receivers and administrators as soon as possible.

## ***Sandakan Memorial Services***

Last month I had the privilege of attending two memorial services honouring the victims of the Sandakan death marches.

Both Lismore and Murwillumbah held services to remember those who died in what is regarded as the greatest atrocity committed against Australians during war.

Towards the end of the World War II, the Japanese marched close to 2,500 Australian and British prisoners of war, including more than 50 Servicemen from the Northern Rivers region, across the island of Borneo.

The gruelling trek took its toll and those who did not die in the jungles were later killed. Only six Australians managed to escape and survive.

The Lismore service, held on 27 August, was organised by the Rotary Club of Lismore and led by the Club's Sandakan Committee of Dr Lionel Phelps, son of one of the servicemen, and Secretary Brian J Wheatley.

Her Excellency the Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce AC was present and unveiled a memorial, constructed by the Rotary Club of Lismore, which was dedicated to those who lost their lives – some 47 names on the roll of honour, from the Richmond Valley.

The Murwillumbah service, held on 15 August, commemorated the fallen Serviceman from the Tweed District, and was organised by the local Murwillumbah RSL Sub Branch. Thanks must go to President Derek Simms, Secretary Kevin Cheetham, who conducted the dedication and Professor Braithwaite, son of one of the survivors, who conducted the official opening.

It was an honour to attend both services. They were very important events because none of the families of these servicemen had ever been to a commemorative service to acknowledge the sacrifice of their loved ones.

Well over 700 people attended the two services, which hopefully will bring closure to the soldier's families.

## ***Four new police recruits***

Last month Richmond Local Area Command was allocated with four new police recruits. While these recruits are a welcome boost to the daily policing of our community, the number assigned was not nearly enough.

This is the fastest growing region in NSW. It's not truly recognising the growth in this area.

Part of my electorate takes in Murwillumbah, which is part of the Tweed-Byron LAC, and they received three. That's a total of just seven new recruits for the northern part of the state.

I am very concerned when I see the area from Gosford to Tweeds Heads received a total of 40, when one Metropolitan command alone received up to 18.

Being allocated four police to the Richmond Local Area Command is small recognition of the needs of this busy command.

The Keneally-Labor Government has again ignored the community needs of the North Coast area. I urgently call on the Premier to have these needs addressed and allocate the additional police required.

## ***Starting a small business?***

A workshop specifically for new and intending small business owners will be held at the Ballina RSL Club, on Thursday 21 October and at the Lismore Workers Club, on Tuesday 26 October.

The workshops entitled, 'Starting Your Small Business', are being run by The Northern Rivers Business Enterprise Centre (NORBEC) and offers new and intending small business operators 'the right first move into business'.

According to NORBEC's CEO Tony Zillig, 'business owners that attend relevant management skills training can increase survival rates after three years by up to three times those that don't'.

The 2.5hour workshops will run from 5.30pm to 8pm and will explain about business structures, legal and tax obligations, types of insurance, what you have to do if employing people, what is a business plan and why do I need one? Cost is \$27.50 including GST.

For enquiries call Melissa Mac Court on 6622 1933 or email [info@norbec.com.au](mailto:info@norbec.com.au)

## ***Heart Foundation Doorknock Appeal underway***

The annual Heart Foundation Doorknock Appeal kicked off in our electorate on the first of this month.

Money raised from this very worthwhile appeal will help the Heart Foundation fund critical research and community projects to improve awareness, prevention and treatment of heart disease. So please, give generously.

If you're not home when a Doorknock volunteer visits, you can make a credit card donation directly with the Heart Foundation Doorknock Hotline **1800 55 22 55** or by visiting [www.heartfoundation.org.au/doorknock](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/doorknock).

## ***Congratulations*** to high achievers from our electorate including: -

- **Bill Meuffels**, of Lismore, for having received the prestigious David Quinlivan Mobile Library Operator Award for outstanding contribution to the mobile library service of the Richmond Upper Clarence Regional Library.
- **Robert Ware**, of Kyogle, for being awarded with a Commendation for Brave Conduct in this year's Australian Bravery Awards.
- Former Lismore boy **Fr Peter Wood** on his recent Ordination as a Priest.
- **Andrew Wilson**, of Woodlawn, on being awarded the KCDF Winston Sweeney Memorial Dairy Farmer Travel Scholarship.
- **GunnaWannaBe Café and Learning Centre**, Lismore, for their victory at the 2010 CountryLink North Coast Tourism Awards.
- A belated congratulations to **John Henderson Pty Ltd**, of Dunoon, for taking out a total of five awards in the 2010 Regional Master Builders Association Awards including Domestic Builder of the Year. Apologies this information was not included in our last issue.