

THE LISMORE ELECTORATE

with Thomas George

A community newsletter from your local State Member of Parliament.

June 2004



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STOP PRESS

"Lantern
Parade 2004...
most successful
Lismore
Community
Event" - TG

New CT Scanner, expanded Emergency Dept for Lismore

Thomas George has welcomed two significant improvements to Lismore Base Hospital. A \$1.5 million CT scanner was recently launched by Mr George and Parliamentary Secretary for Health Cherie Burton.

"This state of the art machine is better and much faster than many of the scanners in larger Australian hospitals. It can take a shoulder to hip body image in just 17 seconds, whereas older machines take up to eight minutes to do the same job," Mr George said. "When you consider that around 3,500 CT scans are performed at Lismore Base Hospital each year, you get a measure of the efficiency gains this new machine is delivering."

Mr George also welcomed Health Minister Morris Iemma to Lismore Hospital to inspect progress on the \$450,000 expansion to the Emergency Department.

"These improvements will create an additional five emergency beds at Lismore - taking the total to 19. The development involves a 140 square metre extension at the western end of the existing emergency department," Mr George said.



FIGHTING FIT: (above) Thomas George helps Parliamentary Secretary for Health Cherie Burton try out Lismore Hospital's new \$1.5m CT Scanner and (right) shows NSW Health Minister Morris Iemma, next to Mr George inspecting rebuilding works at the Emergency Department of Lismore Base Hospital.



Region wins \$25m Mental Health Unit

Nationals Member for Lismore Thomas George today thanked local residents and health professionals who had helped ensure the first steps towards a new mental health clinic in Lismore were taken.

Mr George said it was one of a number of urgent hospital and health infrastructure improvements he was working for in the Lismore electorate.

"The Government has allocated \$25.8 million to complete the planning phase and then build a new Psychiatric Admission Unit at Lismore Base Hospital, although just \$1.1 million will be spent in the coming financial year," Mr George said.

The mental health inpatient facility, Richmond Clinic will be expanded from the present 25 adult beds to 40 adult beds and an 8-bed Child and Adolescent Unit. The new purpose-built Richmond Clinic will be located eastwards from where it currently stands. Its present site will be redeveloped as a multi-treatment Cancer Centre.

Coalition to reverse property tax hikes

The NSW National/Liberal Opposition has committed a future Coalition Government to reverse the Carr Labor Party Government's recent hikes in property taxes in a move welcomed by Lismore MP Thomas George.

"Northern Rivers small businesses, mum and dad investors, retirees and tenants will bear the brunt of the NSW Government's latest tax hikes announced in its now infamous April 2004 Mini Budget," Mr George said.

Every local small business which owns property will now have to pay land tax. "Because of our comparatively low property values, many local businesses were previously exempt as they fell below the now abolished \$317,000 threshold," Mr George explained.

"Mum and Dad investors in Lismore, Casino and Kyogle will be hit hard by the new land tax on investment properties with a land value under \$317,000 and the new 2.25% exit stamp duty on

sales." "The owners of these properties are often senior citizens who have scrimped and saved to buy these homes to fund their retirement without relying on the public purse."

"With no other income to rely on they will either have to increase their tenants' rents or sell up but if they sell up they will be hit with the Government's new tax on sales."

Mr George said NSW was now the only State in Australia in which you are taxed for buying, owning, and selling an investment property.



Thomas George discusses the Government's property tax hikes with concerned local real estate agents.

In Brief

Clunes Boy's UN Dream

Sixteen-year old Clunes boy Zachi Darab flew to New York this month for a United Nations Youth Conference thanks in part to a \$2,100 State Government grant secured by Thomas George from the NSW Premier. Mr George presented a submission, following approaches by Zachi, a Trinity College student and his mother, outlining the difficulties being encountered in raising the funds needed for him to participate in this once in a lifetime opportunity. Donations were also gratefully received from Lismore Mayor Merv King, Page MP Ian Causley, Trinity Catholic College, and Rotary West.



Young Zachi Darab with Thomas -
Photo courtesy of Jacklyn Wagner, The Northern Star

Isolated Parents Travel And Accommodation Assistance Scheme

Thomas George has joined other NSW country MPs in presenting a petition to Parliament to relax stringent conditions attached to the Isolated Parents Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. NSW patients are only eligible for help for trips over 200 km whereas in Queensland help starts at 50 km.

Thomas George reinforces health needs

Thomas George, Page MP Ian Causley and NRAHS Chairperson Liz Rummery together welcomed Federal Minister, Tony Abbott to Lismore, and during the inspection of the MRI machine at St Vincent's Hospital he indicated he was hopeful the Minister would soon make a decision to provide Medicare rebates for the MRI machine at St Vincent's Hospital.



Thomas, Ian Causley and Liz Rummery discuss Lismore Hospital's need for a radiotherapy unit with Federal Health Minister Tony Abbott.

Rural Hospital rebuilds on track...

The Kyogle Rural Hospital & Health Service Project, being developed at a cost of \$10 million on the site of Kyogle Memorial Hospital, is proceeding well, according to Lismore MP Thomas George who recently inspected the works.

Mr George, who lobbied hard for the project, said he was pleased it was on track.

"The new building will house the hospital's main facilities and residential care. Residents will be reassured to know that even during construction the emergency department continues to function 24/7, and five acute care beds and 12 residential care beds are open. It is very important that we get the same quality hospital services here on the rural North Coast that Sydney residents take for granted," Mr George said.

He said works were due to be completed as early as this August.

The massive \$4 million redevelopment of Nimbin Hospital is also proceeding well and will be completed this year. The project will double the size of the hospital, with a brand new emergency department and acute care beds and 11 residential care places for the aged.

The \$500,000 redevelopment of Casino Hospital included the construction of a single entrance to the hospital and associated security measures, and the refurbishment of the day therapy and community aged day care areas. Casino is a busy and highly regarded country hospital with a proud history of service to its local community.



Working for your health: Thomas George has been working for at (above) Kyogle with Hospital Executive Officer Sue Ellis and Tom Fitzgerald, (below left) Casino for a \$500,000 opening with Parliamentary Secretary for Health Cherie Burton, and (below right) Nimbin which is undergoing a \$4 million upgrade.



Government's new Club Tax to cost jobs...

Lismore Clubs will be forced to shed 16 jobs and a further 20 jobs from associated businesses will disappear when the NSW Labor Party Government introduces its tax increases on local clubs later this year.

An independent report shows 36 local jobs will go. The job losses are likely to affect the region's larger clubs including the Lismore Workers Club and the Lismore RSL.

The report by the Allen Consulting Group, titled Impact of New Gaming Machine Taxes on Clubs in NSW, also reveals the Club movement is facing a tax rise of up to 50% by the end of the phase-in period, and the NSW Government will collect up to an extra \$1,800 million in taxes from NSW Clubs.

"That," says Lismore MP Thomas George, "works out at more than \$250 for every man, woman and child in the state. It's excessive to say the least."

"I am concerned that such an impost may even force some local clubs to close."

The Report concludes that NSW Clubs will have to cut spending on community support and sport by \$266 million over the next six years and

increase charges to members, mainly of food and drink, by a total of \$420 million over the same period.

Mr George said local Clubs would have to make some very tough decisions.

"Are they going to cut investment in sporting fields, increase the cost of meals, drinks and membership, or cut donations to charities and sponsorship of sports fields?" Mr George asked.



TAXING TIMES: Upper House MP Melinda Pavey, Nationals Leader Andrew Stoner, Club Manager Stephen Bortolin, Lismore MP Thomas George and Ballina MP Don Page meet at the Lismore Workers Club to oppose the Government's proposed Club tax hike.

We need safer roads...

The Carr Labor Government must do much more to cut the road toll in country areas like the Lismore electorate, Lismore MP Thomas George said following the recent Country Roads Safety Summit.

"Over the past three years, an average of 550 people were killed each year on NSW roads. Twice as many road deaths occur on country roads as in the city," Mr George said.

"Given that 30 per cent of the State's population lives in country areas, we are in fact 2½ times more likely to die in a road crash compared to Sydney residents."

"The NRMA says that the road quality is a factor in 30 per cent of fatalities yet under the current

Government the proportion of the total State Budget allocated to roads had fallen by 13 per cent."

Mr George said his priorities for local road upgrades included:

The Summerland Way
The Woodenbong-Legume Road;
Passing lanes on the Bruxner Highway;
The Alstonville Bypass; and
Lions Road.

Mr George said crumbling edges, rough surfaces, potholes and unsealed sections of road had become a regular and dangerous part of motoring life in non-metropolitan NSW.



Thomas George is working with all levels of Government to deliver safer roads for residents of the Lismore Electorate.

He is pictured above at the opening of the Kellas Street underpass with NSW Parliamentary Secretary for Roads Tony Stewart and the local school principal and captains, left presenting Jack Hurley a cheque for the Lions Road from Carl Scully, Minister for Roads, far left with Tony Stewart, and below with Page MP Ian Causley and Federal Transport Minister John Anderson.



Thomas continues fight to reinstate rail service

In a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Closure of the Casino to Murwillumbah branch line, Lismore MP Thomas George made an impassioned plea to the Government to reverse the axing of our local train service.

Mr George highlighted the Government had cancelled the service just five months after promising it a twelve month reprieve.

"The train service has been catering to not only the needs of students, elderly citizens and disabled people but also tourists and the general public," Mr George said.

"Political representatives of all persuasions joined in the campaign to keep the rail line open including the mayors of the local government areas in my electorate Merv King, Charlie Cox, together with Warren Polglase, Jan Barham, Phil Silver; and Ernie Bennett."

"Irrespective of the side of the political fence the Mayors represent they have led the community in attempts to retain the rail service."

"The community feeling about the loss of this service is unprecedented during my term in Parliament - Everyone has been firmly behind the campaign to retain the branch line."

"The rail service will never be fully replicated

by a replacement bus service. There are significant environmental benefits associated with retention of the rail service at a time when the region's population continues to grow rapidly"

Mr George said the axing of the train had brought an extra 3,600 buses on local roads.

He noted that Countrylink rail services returned 32 cents in the dollar compared to 28 cents for CityRail, yet far from cutting CityRail services, the Government was actually borrowing money to improve them.

"Public transport is virtually non-existent in this area with very little choice and people with specific health needs or disabilities rely on this service being available to them," Mr George said.

He said the only reason the Government could claim savings of \$5 million a year from the closure was because the line had been neglected for years and it was not fair that the North Coast now had to pay for that Government neglect.

"The community has contributed to a wonderful effort to retain the line. The fight is not over yet. Mr Carr you have taken away our train, not your train," Mr George concluded.

Calling all JPs...

Thomas George has called on local JPs to contact his office to enable the latest requirements and information, following legislation which came into force on 8 December 2003 under the new Justice of the Peace Act 2002, to be sent to them.

"The main change affecting current JP's is that they will have to reapply every five years," Mr George said.

"Existing Justices of the Peace have three years to lodge their first reappointment application and to re-establish either an employment or community based need for the appointment"

"Forms are available from my office and I encourage all JP's to contact my staff on 6621 3624."

Around the Electorate of Lismore...

The State Electorate of Lismore includes Lismore, Casino, Kyogle and surrounding rural communities. Thomas George was elected Member for Lismore in 1999, and re-elected with an increased majority last year. Thomas believes that to stand up for local residents in

Parliament he has to get out there and listen to what you, the people, want. That is why he spends much of the time he is not in Parliament travelling around the Lismore electorate listening to the views and concerns of local residents like you.



Congratulating Casino Beef Week Queen Karen Trustum



Discussing meat industry issues



Opening of Primex 2004



Launching the Kidney Rally with Lismore Mayor Merv King



Attending Woodenbong Urbenville Senior Day Care 21st Celebrations



With locals for the launch of Youth Week at the House with no Steps



Receiving debutantes at Bonalbo Deb Ball
Photo courtesy Fletchers Flographics



At the Tenterfield Show



With Prime Minister John Howard in Ballina



With cadets on Anzac Day at Lismore



Participating in the World's Greatest Shave for a Cure with Dan Madden



Supporting the Westpac Helicopter Lifesaver service



With Mummulgum Rural Fire Service building a Make a Wish cubby house for Nathan Bell



With locals at the Nimbin Anglican Church inspecting the new disabled ramp

We're here to help you!

THE TEAM WORKING FOR YOU:

Thomas George's staff Julie, Christine, Bronwyn, and Karen are always keen to help.



Thomas and his electorate officers are dedicated to making your business with state government easier and faster.

Get in touch with them for help in dealing with issues of State Government responsibility including:

- Contact details for State Government Ministers, Shadow Ministers, MPs and guidance on where to go for further information.
- Applications for Seniors Cards.
- Congratulatory messages for special birthdays and wedding anniversaries.
- Copies of speeches in the NSW Parliament.
- Information for school projects.
- Preparing and tabling petitions.
- Grants and funding opportunities.
- Electoral enrolment for first time voters and people who have changed their address or name.
- Voting enquiries.
- Certification by Justices of the Peace (JPs)
- State flags for approved community groups and organisations.