

CLAYTON BARR'S State News

Summer 2023-2024



CLAYTON BARR MP | YOUR LOCAL STATE MEMBER FOR THE ELECTORATE OF CESSNOCK

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Budget '23

The Minns Labor Government's long-term plan to fix the NSW Economy



Confront the **housing crisis** facing NSW.



Rebuild **essential services** after 12 years of neglect.



Help with **cost-of-living** pressures.



Pay down the **Liberal-Nationals debt** after wasteful spending and mismanagement of the state's finances.



Ensure we have reliable, **renewable energy** after a decade of inaction and indecision.

Dear Resident,

My Government understands that people in NSW are doing it tough right now and it's becoming increasingly difficult for families to make ends meet.

We hear your concerns and are working hard to find ways to help.

When we were elected in March, we committed to the people of NSW that we would end the previous governments wasteful spending and direct it to where people need it most.

We have a long-term plan to repair, reprioritise and rebuild the NSW economy.

In our first budget, we have laid the foundation for a better, more secure future for NSW in three key ways:

- **Rebuilding our essential health and education services by addressing the recruitment and retention crisis in our hospitals and schools;**
- **Confronting the housing affordability crisis by reducing red tape to build new homes and providing immediate support for renters and first-home buyers; and**
- **Supporting households with energy bill relief and starting the long-term reform of our energy market to put downward pressure on prices into the future.**

We are a government with a clear focus managing our finances responsibly so we can provide support when you need it most and improve the essential services that we rely on, now and into the future.

Chris Minns
Premier of NSW

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Budget
Edition


Budget '23





This budget reinvests in our frontline workers by:

-  UNDERWAY
Addressing the teacher shortage crisis and securing a historic pay rise for our state's 95,000 teachers, which will see them go from being among the worst paid, to the best paid in the country.


-  UNDERWAY
Committing \$2.5 billion to recruit and retain health workers, including the largest pay increase in more than a decade and new salary packaging benefits for more than 50,000 health care workers.


-  UNDERWAY
Saving the positions of 1,112 essential nurses and midwives left unfunded by the previous government and begin the work to introduce Safe Staffing Levels.


-  UNDERWAY
Investing in the future of the state's firefighters NSW firefighters receiving highest pay rise in more than a decade. These pay rises will help attract and retain our essential service personnel.


-  UNDERWAY
 Ended the former government's **unfair wages cap**.


This budget lays out a plan to rebuild a neglected system through immediate support and critical long-term planning by:

- Committing \$2.2 billion to our Housing and Infrastructure Plan** to address the historic neglect of new housing supply and creating \$38.7 million Faster Planning Program to further our long term reform in housing.
  UNDERWAY

- Establishing Homes NSW to deliver better outcomes for public and social housing tenants**, deliver more affordable and social housing and reduce the number of homeless people in NSW.
  UNDERWAY

- Appointing a NSW Rental Commissioner to make renting fairer**, more affordable and more secure and implementing a Portable Rental Bonds Scheme to ease financial pressure.
  UNDERWAY

- Delivering \$72.3 billion to new and improved transport infrastructure state wide.**
 UNDERWAY

- Securing \$1 billion to establish the Energy Security Corporation** to drive investment in stable and affordable renewable energy.
  UNDERWAY

As a new Government our first budget marks a change in direction for the state and a change in priorities.

The budget is the first step in the Minns Labor Government's plan to rebuild essential services and ease pressures on families, without an unfair wages cap or the privatisation of public assets.

As many would know I have had long held concerns about the mismanagement of the state's finances. The basis of my concerns are quite simple - debt was growing rapidly at the same time as assets that had made profit/income for the state were being sold off.

In household terms we need to be careful about racking up debt.

The focus of the new government and the new budget is very much on delivering more housing, helping households with cost-of-living pressures and making sure that we better pay our public servants so that they will stay in their roles.

And very importantly steps have been taken to start paying off some of the state's massive debt and to significantly reduce the need for taking on any more debt.

This means making tough decisions that won't always be popular but necessary to help reduce our debt.

Clayton Barr
State Member for the
Electorate of Cessnock

ALWAYS HERE TO HELP



If I can help with any State Government matter please contact me at my office on (02) 49911466 or email at cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au

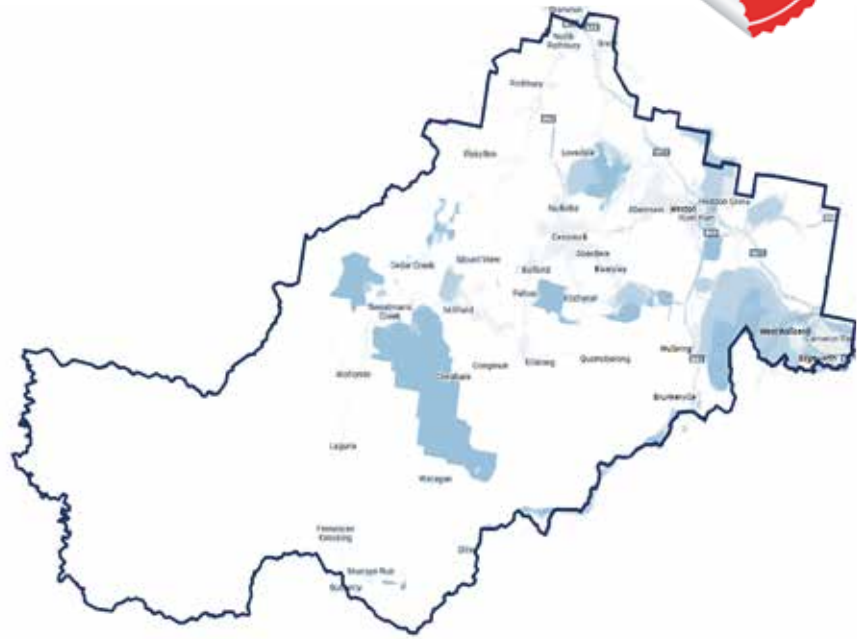
Huntlee Primary and High School planning has begun



Early planning for the new primary school and high school for Huntlee has begun. This initial work includes considering the demographic and education requirements for the schools, conducting site investigations and assessments as well as initial design work.

The design process includes consultation with key stakeholders such as school leadership teams, architects, planners and design professionals.

As the project progresses the NSW Department of Education will share details with the community for feedback.



This budget is providing more than \$8.1 billion in support through more than 100 different measures including:

More than 1,000 first home buyers who have already saved thousands of dollars, paying no stamp duty or receiving a concession under the new First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme.



A \$250 Pensioner Concession Rebate Scheme on ordinary council rates and charges.



Providing private rental assistance through programs including Rent Choice, Advance Rent and Bond Loan to help eligible people get into or maintain a rental lease.



An increase to the Family Energy Rebate and Seniors Energy Rebate by \$250 and an increase to the Low Income Household Rebate and Medical Energy Rebate by \$350.



A new program of \$500 fee relief per child to help with the costs of three-year-olds in long day care at eligible preschools.



Free ambulance services for certain concessions holders, with other exemptions including for people who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse.



Connect with me

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 Budget
Edition


New Fire Station



Investing in emergency services

In the 2023/24 budget the Electorate of Cessnock received \$6.15 million for the new development of Cessnock Fire Station.

Fire and Rescue NSW have purchased land at 7-11 Cessnock Street, Cessnock to replace the fire station which has operated at its Edward Street location for over 100 years. The new station is expected to be completed by early 2025.

Fire and Rescue NSW are currently developing detailed designs for a new state-of-the-art fire station. Once complete the new fire station will deliver a range of benefits, including:

- A purpose-built setup which better accommodates vehicles, equipment and staff
- Change rooms suitable for all genders
- Dedicated 'Clean Firefighter' zones to reduce potential contamination exposure
- A more energy sustainable and environmentally friendly building.

Construction is expected to begin between April and June 2024.

The new purpose-built setup will better accommodate the vehicles and equipment used in modern fire fighting.

I have lobbied previous governments for a long-term solution for the challenges facing the Cessnock Fire Station. The fire trucks these days barely fit through the doors of the current station. The original station was not built to house the large trucks and equipment used to fight fires today.

This is an exciting development for the entire community. The new fire station is a much needed addition to the area. It will provide Fire and Rescue staff with a safe, sustainable purpose-built facility which can better serve the people of Cessnock and surrounding areas.

Cessnock Hospital redevelopment update

Investing in health

The redevelopment of Cessnock Hospital continues to go full steam ahead with \$4.6 million included in this years budget to continue on with the previously announced \$111.5 million investment into the hospital redevelopment.

The redevelopment of the hospital will see a new two storey building built at the current site and include more parking.

A further round of community consultation will be held soon.

Local teachers and support staff made permanent

Investing in education

The Minns Labor Government have delivered on one of their key election promises to convert 16,000 temporary teachers and support staff to permanent positions with over 16,700 NSW teachers and support staff now made permanent.

This includes 220 accepted offers from teachers and support staff in the Electorate of Cessnock.

This commitment aims to turn around the workforce crisis in NSW public schools, which last year saw a record 1,854 teachers resign.

In order to fix the crisis in our education system, we need to be investing in our frontline workers.

If our teachers feel supported and secure in their jobs it will have better educational outcomes for our kids.

Local childcare centres benefit from Local Small Commitments Funding



Investing in education

Three childcare centres/preschools in the Electorate of Cessnock have secured \$190,000 collectively to use for improvement of services for the children in the area as part of the Local Small Commitments Allocation Program.

Investment into early childhood education is essential for our children to thrive. Early childhood learning from 0 to 5 years is really important for kids and their fundamental brain development.

It is important to invest in early childhood education as giving children a good foundation helps with their schooling and later their contributing to society.

Many of the projects which have received funding are essential to assist the development of our youngest citizens including flooring, playground surfaces and safety.

The Minns Labor Government is committed to supporting the NSW early childhood sector, recently announcing funding of \$12.2 million to provide scholarships to early childhood and care (ECEC) workforce as part of the NSW Budget.

Funding has been made available to those in the sector wanting to upskill, those wanting to become early childhood educators and those wanting to gain Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) skills, growing the workforce.

Applications for scholarships for early childhood educators and those interested in joining the sector are now open. For more information visit NSW Department of Education website.



The Kurri Kurri & District Preschool Kindergarten Inc were successful in receiving \$70,000 in funding for various projects.

Projects include replacing interior flooring within their learning spaces.



Edgeworth Childcare Centre Inc were successful in receiving \$50,000 to use for a variety of projects including towards the replacement of the boundary fencing.

The grant will also be used for multiple projects including soft fall replacement and to improve the equipment for children to have a space to play and develop.



Edgeworth Community Pre-School Inc were successful in receiving a grant of \$70,000 for a variety of projects including to remove and replace the current soft fall and extend the sail cover in the outdoor play areas.

Official opening of new Exhibition and Artist Spaces at PACC



Above left: Official ribbon cutting ceremony at opening ceremony.



Above right: With Aunty Cynthia at Artefact exhibit during the opening of PACC.

The official opening of the new Exhibition and Artist space at PACC (Performing Arts Culture Cessnock) was held in early October.

It is a real positive to see a dedicated space which brings arts and culture together for the community.

The refurbishment was made possible through funding obtained under the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund, Resources for Regions and Creative Fund programs with contributions from Cessnock City Council.

The art and exhibition facility is an excellent addition to the community. It was fantastic to view the inaugural exhibition 'Artefact' a retrospective of renowned local Indigenous artist Uncle Les Elvin.

\$5.1 million in State/Federal Funding

Several projects across the Cessnock Electorate received funding under the Infrastructure Betterment Fund and Community Local Infrastructure Recovery Package - Community Assets Program.

The Infrastructure Betterment Fund is focused on building back more resilient essential public assets, such as roads, bridges and drainage impacted by the storm and flood events in 2022. The funding will mean assets are repaired to a standard that can better withstand future natural disasters.

The Community Assets Program focuses on repairing and building back community assets, including walkways, community buildings, and tourism and recreational facilities, impacted by the storm and flood events in February and June 2022.

The projects funded include:

- **\$4,173,931** for the betterment of Thomas Street, North Rothbury
- **\$752,895** for the remediation of the Baddeley Park Hockey Field
- **\$247,000** for the upgrade of the Wollombi Walking Trail to improve access and install historically appropriate kerb and guttering using flood resilient materials.

Link Road update

With the continued development of Cameron Park and surrounding areas we have seen an increase in the number of vehicles using Link Road.

Further to the article in my winter newsletter I have had continuing discussions with Transport for NSW about the traffic and how further changes to the population will impact on Link Road.

Transport for NSW is continuing to work with key developers along the Newcastle Link Road corridor (Winten and Eden Estates) to understand the expected changes in population in this area.

Transport for NSW have investigated a variety of ways to manage the traffic at the intersection and will continue to refine the plans as they receive information.

As soon as Transport for NSW plans are suitably developed, Transport for NSW will engage with the community and request feedback to help inform the final solution.



Above: Cessnock Baddeley Park Hockey Field current surface was severely damaged due to flooding events.

The new Federal and State approach to rebuilding assets after a natural disaster, and to build back better than before, is a welcome change to the old model of doing the same thing over and over again.

Nobody wants to experience natural disasters, but there is little we can do to control Mother Nature. What we can do is to make sure that we help communities get back on their feet and that's exactly what these funds will do.

It is great to see these projects receive funding.

Are you prepared for this bushfire season?



Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers across the Electorate have had a busy couple of months and it is set to get even busier over the summer bushfire period.

Emergency services have been kept busy with hazard reduction burns preparing for the bushfire season. We saw our first local emergency warning of the bushfire danger period in early October at Kearsley/Abernethy.

After the Emergency Alert, NSW Minister for Emergency Services, Jihad Dib meet with members of the Kearsley RFS and Greta RFS to thank them for their efforts and offer support for the remainder of the bushfire season.

As a rural/regional community it is important that we are prepared for the threat of fire. What to do if a fire starts near you, and how to prepare your home or property is extremely important.

In order to prepare it is recommended you have a bushfire survival plan. To help you prepare a plan you can visit www.myfireplan.com.au.

You can also help prepare your home by:

1. Trimming over-hanging trees and shrubs.
2. Mow your lawn and remove all the cut grass.
3. Remove material that can burn around your home.
4. Clear and remove all the debris and leaves from the gutters surrounding your home.
5. Prepare a hose or hoses that can stretch all around the house.

It is also recommended you download the Hazards Near Me app.

The app is your go-to resource for staying updated on local hazards throughout the state. From bushfires to floods and storms, the app offers real-time updates, customisable location-based alerts, safety tips and emergency contact information.

Everyone needs to make sure they are bushfire ready. It is important for all of us to be aware of bushfire danger ratings.

Bush fire danger ratings gives you an indication of the intensity of a fire, if one was to start.

The higher the fire danger rating the more dangerous the conditions. Fire danger ratings have been simplified as part of the new national Australia Fire Danger Rating System.

The new ratings and what you need to know:

NO RATING - minimal risk.

MODERATE - plan and prepare.

HIGH - be ready to act.

EXTREME - take action now to protect your life and property.

CATASTROPHIC - for your survival leave bush fire risk areas.



Make sure your Hazards app is up to date:

- Update your app, or search for Hazards Near Me NSW in your App Store.
- Check your watch zones to be notified about incidents in your area.
- Set up a user profile to use the same watch zones across all your devices.

HAZARDS NEAR ME ALERT LEVELS



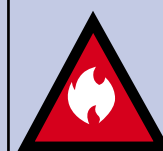
ADVICE

A fire has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes.



WATCH AND ACT

There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.



EMERGENCY WARNING

An Emergency Warning is the highest level of alert. You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Congratulatory messages

Did you know my office can organise congratulatory messages for 50th, 60th, 65th and 70th wedding anniversaries and for 80th, 90th and 100th birthdays from the Governor, Prime Minister, Premier and Federal MP's.

The King and Governor-General will also send special messages for 60th wedding anniversaries and 100th birthdays.

To organise a congratulatory message contact my office or visit my website www.claytonbarr.com.au

Do you know about the Senior Savers card?

If you are over 60 but still working 20+ hours a week and a resident of NSW you are entitled to a Senior Savers Card.

With this card you will be eligible for discounts at participating businesses.

For more information visit www.seniorscard.nsw.gov.au or call Service NSW on 13 77 88.

Are you a Senior?

Are you aged 60 or older and working 20 hours or less of paid employment a week and a resident of NSW?

If yes, then the Seniors Card may be for you! With this card, you will be eligible for discounts at participating businesses.

For more information visit www.seniorscard.nsw.gov.au or call Service NSW on 13 77 88.

Justice of the Peace service available

If you need documents signed or certified, there are JPs in my office everyday during business hours. Local residents can also find their nearest JP by visiting www.jp.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively there are several Community JP Desks operated by local Justice of the Peace association branches. The Morisset and Lake Macquarie Branch and Cessnock Branch are operating across the Electorate. See below for details.

Cameron Park

Where: Cameron Park Plaza (shopping centre outside of the chemist)

Open 10am to 12pm
Thursday: 21 December, 18 January, 15 February, 21 March, 18 April, 16 May.

Saturday: 2 December, 6 January, 3 February, 2 March, 6 April, 4 May.

Cessnock

Where: Cessnock City Library, 65-67 Vincent Street, Cessnock

Every Monday
10am to 1pm

Edgeworth

Where: Edgeworth Town Square (near coffee shop)

Open 10am to 12pm
Thursday: 4 January, 1 February, 7 March, 4 April, 2 May.

Saturday: 16 December, 20 January, 17 February, 16 March, 20 April, 18 May.