

# CLAYTON BARR'S State News

Winter 2021



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

## TAFE sell-off and cuts

TAFE has been delivering vocational education and training for over 188 years, providing an opportunity for people across NSW to gain practical knowledge to help them in an increasingly hard jobs market. During a very challenging time when people are at most need of TAFE's services the Berejiklian Government are cutting TAFE jobs and selling campuses.



Earlier this year it was decided that TAFE NSW would cut 678 roles with 470 being in regional areas, including 80 in the Hunter with 12 jobs at our local TAFEs of Cessnock and Kurri Kurri. This follows on from having already cut 8,000 TAFE teaching jobs, right across NSW.

Our TAFE system has been gutted. Right now we need TAFE more than ever to bridge the gap of people who need to be retrained after jobs losses due to the pandemic and those who are trying to become skilled in order to get a job.

Our State and Federal Governments, along with industry and employers, are telling us we have a 'skills crisis'. Where will people be able to go to get the qualifications they need to find employment?

The cuts to TAFE and the increased focus on online learning courses further reduced the ability for people to be able to have hands-on learning to develop their practical skills.

An 'its all online approach' fails to recognise that many students who have thrived at TAFE were not so terrific with the books at school. "Online" and "bookwork" is not the answer for every student.

Almost one in seven young people are unemployed in the Hunter. TAFE should be a Government priority to boost job security for young people and address skill gaps. We should be investing in TAFE, not selling off TAFE campuses and cutting staff who play vital roles in helping students.

## Local Woman of the Year

Local Woman Kim Sweeny was named the Cessnock Electorate's Woman of the Year at the NSW Woman of the Year awards in March.

Kim was recognised for her outstanding dedication to children and their education through her 40+ years working as a world class and nation leading educator.

Kim has worked at many local schools including Branxton Public School, Kurri Kurri Public School, District Offices of Public Schools, Abermain Public School and as a school leader at Cessnock East Public School for the last 18 years.

As Principal at Cessnock East Public School for 13 years Kim was responsible for the implementation of many new and creative programs including REAL Project (Rigorous Engaging Authentic Learning) and Cessnock Academy of STEM Excellence (CASE) a partnership between local high and primary schools.

In recent years Kim has been recognised with awards from Cessnock Community of Great Public Schools (CCGPS) in 2017 Excellence in leadership, as well as being a finalist for Principal of the Year at the Australian Education Awards 2018.

In simple terms, Kim transformed Cessnock East Public School and this led to this wonderful local school being a finalist at the 2018 education awards.

Retiring in September 2019, Kim's legacy lives on in her students and former co-workers who continue to implement programs to help students and support members of our community.

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# NSW for sale

**The NSW Liberals and Nationals Government led by Premier Gladys Berejiklian has announced a privatisation plan which will see New South Wales sell off thousands of hectares of public land to property developers.**

At the 2019 State Election, asked if they had any plans to sell off or privatise any more public assets, the Premier said "No, no, no if we were we would have told you." That was on national television. Promises don't come much bigger than that.

Despite that promise in 2019 the Berejiklian Government established a website which contains a database of every government owned property across the state. They are now inviting buyers to use this database to decide which properties they might like to buy and redevelop.

This website lists state-owned properties from hospitals, high schools, TAFE campuses through to vacant land, fire stations, halls, parks and playgrounds and is a virtual 'for sale guide' for anyone interested in making an offer.

Recently we have seen the sale of the Scone TAFE campus without any consultation with the community and despite strong community opposition to this sale.

It raises the chances of TAFE campuses like Kurri Kurri, Glendale and Cessnock, and other state owned property being sold off and redeveloped into new housing developments or private training facilities.

Over the last 10 years the Berejiklian Government have sold off many of the state's profit-generating assets; profits that would have come back into state revenue to be used across the state. Revenue that is desperately needed in regional areas to fund hospitals, education and infrastructure.

Selling public assets by a Liberal/ National Government should not come as surprise, they do it every time they come into Government. It is up to us as individuals to decide if we will stand for this and make our voices heard.

## UP FOR GRABS



2 Wyndham Street, East Branxton



22 Armidale Street, Abermain



Lang Street, Kurri Kurri



Minmi Street, Stanford Merthyr



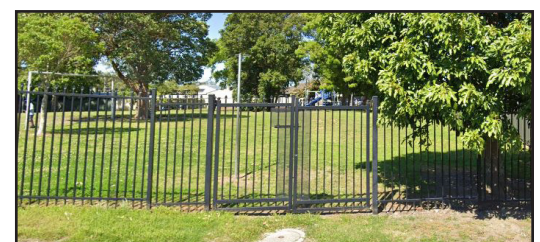
Darwin Street, Cessnock



56 Appletree Road, Holmesville



1 Water Street, Greta



66 Brown Street, West Wallsend



## Crisis in NSW public education

**A recent report from an independent inquiry by Dr Geoff Gallup has found workloads, uncompetitive salaries and significant teacher shortages have combined to create a crisis in NSW public education.**

The report, the first since 2004, found that the dedication and commitment of teachers remained high but there had been major changes in the volume and complexity of work since the last investigation. The workloads of teachers are unsustainable in the long term and take teachers away from their core responsibilities of teaching and learning.

Constant policy changes, significant increases in student needs, rapid changes in technology, the expansion and frequent reform of the curriculum, new compliance measures, administration, data collection, reporting responsibilities and higher community expectations of what schools and teachers can do have all contributed to increased teacher's workload.

On average teachers are working 55 hour weeks, with many teachers working much longer hours in an attempt to meet student needs while dealing with the compliance and administration burden they have been saddled with by the NSW Department of Education.

Instead of giving teachers time to prepare lessons and collaborate with colleagues on how best to lift results and how best to help students, our teachers are instead burdened with huge administration workloads. Teachers now have two jobs - one as teachers and another as administrators.

The report recommended an increase in the time teachers have to prepare lessons. Despite obvious increases in workloads, allocated preparation time has not changed since the 1950s in high schools and the 1980s in primary schools.

Our teachers and school staff are being stretched to breaking point. It's no wonder our teachers burn out or leave the job early.

## Community Building Partnership Projects completed



The Community Building Partnership Program (CBPP) was established in 2009 by the then Labor Government and has provided funding to hundreds of community groups, sporting clubs and councils across NSW to build or upgrade local facilities.

Seeing local organisations and groups receiving funding and completing the works is one of the most rewarding parts of my role.

This year alone I have visited with a number of organisations that have completed projects funded from both the 2019 and 2020 CBPP.

Projects funded include the restoration of the main croquet lawn at Mt Sugarloaf Croquet Club, the purchase of a wood thicknessing machine with a spiral head cutter for Cessnock Woodturners Inc, upgrade of the tennis court lighting at Branxton Tennis Club, installation of solar panels at Edgeworth Community Pre-school, installation of new automatic doors for greater access at Hunter Region Business Hub, fixed grandstand and installation of seating around football fields at Miller Park for Greta Branxton Junior Soccer Club and the installation of a covered walkway at Mulbring Public School.



# \$47,177 in Local Sport Grant Funding

**12 projects from across the Electorate received funding as part of the 2020-21 Local Sport Grant Program. The program aims to increase regular and ongoing participation opportunities in sport and active recreation in NSW.**

Congratulations to all the successful groups. This funding will help our local sporting groups and organisations to upgrade existing equipment and facilities; an opportunity to build on their coaching programs; purchase new uniforms, and more, with the aim to encourage people to increase their participation in sport.

## SUCCESSFUL RECIPIENTS:

- **Abermain Weston Hawks RLFC** secured **\$3,000** for the purchase of playing and training equipment for their new women's team.
- **Branxton Golf Club Co-op Ltd** secured **\$15,000** for the installation of a recycled water storage tank to assist in drought-proofing the course.
- **Cessnock District Hockey Association** secured **\$2,921** to hold a hockey event to encourage new players and pre players to compete in a structured sporting event.
- **Coalfield United Amateur Swimming Club** secured **\$1,922** for the provision of swimming and water safety training courses.
- **East Cessnock Bowling Club** secured **\$4,042** for a boxing skills participation weekend.
- **East Cessnock Bowling Club** secured **\$5,000** for purchase of a boxing ring.
- **Edgeworth Eagles Football Club** secured **\$3,690** for the purchase of a ride-on mower for field maintenance.
- **Fernances Creek Riding Club** secured **\$2,500** for the upgrade of the show jumping and dressage arena surface.
- **Hotel Cessnock Cricket Club** secured **\$3,360** for the installation of bench type seating at Michael Drain Oval.
- **Hunter District Cycling Club** secured **\$3,000** for the Hunter District Cycling Time Trial event.
- **Hunter Valley Football Association** secured **\$1,992** to purchase football training equipment.
- **Weston Junior Football Club** secured **\$750** for the development of a new website.

# Ambulance service at breaking point

**Our ambulance service has been under enormous strain for a long time. As populations have grown and local hospital services have been cut, our number of paramedics and ambulance vehicles have not kept pace.**

Alarming my office has received too many calls telling me of the times when people have waited hours for an ambulance to arrive.

It will concern us all that if a local "ambo" calls in sick there is no money to call in a replacement, so they are forced to work short staffed. Another issue is the inability for our hospitals to be able to cope with the demand placed upon them. Our ambulances services are often waiting at hospitals to transfer patients into the care of already stretched emergency departments; a result of hospital under-funding.

A recent report of ambulance waiting times for emergencies shows times have blown out. This is unacceptable. Not only are NSW Ambulance personnel being put at risk, they are also the lowest paid out of all paramedics in Australia.

Too many lives are lost, because of underfunding and understaffing of our paramedics who are being placed under enormous stress. They need more support from the Government to allow them to help us. If you have your own story to tell, please talk to us.

## Here to help

**As your local State Member for the Electorate of Cessnock I can help by:**

- Advocating on your behalf with issues such as public housing, police, education, public health, state roads, transport, youth and community services
- Writing to Ministers on your behalf seeking their assistance in resolving issues you may have with the NSW Government or its departments
- Arranging milestone anniversary and birthday congratulatory messages

## Connect with me

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