

Weekly column

Friday 3 March 2017

### **Better than ever**

After a few very busy weeks in Parliament it was great to get on the road again in the electorate this week and inspect the end result of some important community facility upgrades.

**Yetman War Memorial Hall** is now looking better than ever despite being over 80 years old, thanks to a **\$15,343** NSW Government's Community Building Partnerships grant. The hall has had its ceilings and walls painted, with the floor sanded and polished. With the hall used by locals of all ages, good flooring ensures young children don't get splinters and older folks can have stable footing.

The hall has seen several upgrades over the past few years – and it's really a different facility compared to when Charmaine Potter spearheaded the campaign for renewal. That shows not only how much the war memorial hall means to the community, but also the passion that brings the small town together. The upgrades have gone hand in hand with Inverell Shire Council, who has assisted with fans and ceiling upgrades.

I also had the pleasure of officially opening the newly redeveloped and heated **Glen Innes Pool**. The NSW Government provided a \$1.4 million low interest loan to Glen Innes Severn Council to assist upgrades to the Aquatic Centre – which saw a new toddlers play pool installed, the old 33 metre pool formed into a new 25 metre pool with disabled access and a seven metre hydrotherapy pool and new change room facilities.

The upgrade works are very impressive and a credit to the vision and quality workmanship of Glen Innes Severn Council. Visitors can also look forward to new filtration, better wind and sun protection as well as a new spectacular water play area where the wading pool once sat. The pool is an important social, recreational and sporting hub for any regional town during the summer months, so it's a valuable investment from state and local governments.

### **Statement on possible deregulation of Moree to Sydney air route**

I want to ensure the Moree community that I will not support any move which threatens the continuation of regular air passenger services between Moree and Sydney. Moree's air link with Sydney is crucial for business, health services, tourism and government services and it cannot be jeopardised.

I have had a number of discussions with the current carrier (QantasLink), Mayor Katrina Humphries and community members over the past few days. QantasLink signed a contract through to the end of 2018 to service the Moree community, on the basis of exclusivity with a regulated route. In my view, that contract must be respected and honoured.

While we should have an open and informed conversation about whether a regulated or deregulated option is best for Moree and the continuation of an air service in the long term, no decision should be made, especially now, that negatively impacts the community. Any discussion and decision-making process has to recognise the unique nature of the Moree to Sydney route, servicing around 34,000 passengers per year.

I'm not opposed to the principle of deregulation and I acknowledge that it may work in some places, but I feel strongly that it is not in the best interests of the Moree community at this time. Exclusivity, via regulation, is currently vital for the Moree to Sydney route and the ability of the community to attract and retain a carrier. This may change in the future, but it is certainly the case at the moment.

### **Glen Innes on show in Parliament**

THE Glen Innes Agricultural Show was awarded a "blue ribbon" in State Parliament last week when I delivered a speech commending volunteers and entrants for the 35 judged sections. Agricultural shows are a great way to highlight the strength and identity of a region. Through showing produce, arts and crafts, music and food of Glen Innes, thousands of travellers will have a greater appreciation for the town and region.

The show committee has almost a hundred members working to organise events and entertainment, as well as stewards and judges for dozens of different categories of agricultural talent. Each and every member of the committee is a vital part of the Show – I only wish I could have mentioned them all by name. In a time when many committees are struggling to attract members, it's a testament to the strength of the Glen Innes community that so many people work to make it a reality.

### **High hopes for local custodian for Moree Lands Office**

I am now confident a permanent resolution to the ownership future of the historic Moree Lands office building is closer to being finalised. The Frome Street building will not be sold off by government and talks are well underway to keep the iconic heritage structure in the trusteeship of the local Moree Historical Society.

If the discussions are successful, then it will mean the building is held in trust by the society and its ownership remains in the hands of locals. If the negotiations end as most hope, it will put an end to a long running and distressing saga that at one time threatened to see the former Lands Office and its reservoir of records put at the mercy of a commercial sale.

### **Ensuring Guyra's water security a top priority**

High level talks are underway to ensure Guyra has a water supply to secure the growing town's future and improve quality. The town has more than 1,500 residents connected to the urban reticulated water supply network; however the current system has little capacity for continued population growth or ability to cope during

extended dry periods. Water security and quality is a necessity for any community that hopes to grow and thrive.

I have been approached by many locals wanting these issues resolved to provide certainty for the future and give the community more growth potential for business and industry. It's very tough to attract new residents to any community that has an unreliable water supply or has quality issues. Guyra has a lot to offer newcomers – but first, we need to ensure we have the capacity for the town to grow. I want this project to get started as quickly as possible and I think we may see a breakthrough soon.

### **Changed traffic conditions on Waterfall Way Armidale**

I would like to advise motorists of changed traffic conditions on Waterfall Way at Armidale from next week for essential maintenance work to be carried out between Castledoyle and Cookes Roads. These works will ensure travellers can be safe and comfortable, and are part of our commitment to improving roads across the Northern Tablelands.

Work will be carried out from Monday, 6 March, for six weeks between 7am and 6pm on weekdays and 8am and 1pm on Saturdays, weather permitting. The road will be reduced to one lane and a reduced speed limit will be in place for the safety of workers and motorists and may affect travel times. Motorists are advised that access to Waterfall Way from Castledoyle Road will not be permitted during work hours. Motorists will be detoured via Canambe and Mann streets.

### **Local youth kept on track with new program**

Centacare New England North West new Youth on Track program was officially launched in Inverell this week. Youth on Track has received scores of referrals from local schools and police youth liaison officers since commencing late last year. The demand for services continues to grow as part of the \$14.5 million state government initiative to help break the cycle of crime.

The scheme is designed to coordinate services for 10-17 year old young offenders at risk of long-term involvement in the NSW justice system. Keeping youth out of the justice system is vital not just for community safety, but also in ensuring young people have a future we can all be proud of.

### **First train brings a better deal for Moree growers and industry**

Today I watched the first grain train from Moree's new intermodal terminal, located at Broadbent Grain, leave the station for the Port of Newcastle carrying 2,200 tonnes of locally grown grain. The train will replace 56 B-double trucks that would be heading usually heading to Brisbane. It's so large that it takes six hours to fill, working non-stop. The project, one of six Fixing Country Rail pilots announced in August last year, was completed \$400,000 under budget, with the NSW Government contributing \$1.6 million towards the reinstatement of the 2.8 kilometre section of the discussed Moree to Inverell branch line.

The upgrade is expected to shift 250,000 tonnes of grain and 6,400 cargo boxes of cotton and pulses from road to rail each year, and would see significant freight cost savings between Moree and the Port of Newcastle. Each train saves around \$40,000 in freight costs for producers. Today is a great day for growers, the agricultural sector and Moree.

### **Moree solar farm a shining example of renewable success**

Today I also attended the opening of Moree's 56 megawatt solar farm – Australia's biggest single axis tracking solar array and the second-largest nationally. The 1.5km<sup>2</sup> facility will keep the lights on in 24,000 homes, helping to diversify the state's energy mix and producing 95,000 fewer tonnes of carbon dioxide than traditional power generation.

Renewables can be set up anywhere there is wind or sun and in the Northern Tablelands, we can be thankful for both – and this solar facility is proof that our region is the perfect place to generate power. We will continue to power ahead and be the renewables hub of the State.

### **Today and the weekend**

I was at Elsmore RFS station on Friday afternoon for the official opening of the new Elsmore RFS station. Our rural firefighters are important to the social fabric of the bush and I'm delighted this group will now have a new and comfortable station to work from. I will then head back to Inverell for the opening of their annual agricultural show. Always a great event.

On Sunday I'm heading to the Armidale Markets in the mall for an important community announcement and then down to Uralla to check in at the NSW Fire and Rescue Zone games.

**ADAM MARSHALL MP**

**Member for Northern Tablelands**