WEEKLY COLUMN

Friday, 27 May 2016

$51,750 TO EXTEND MOREE'S CYCLEWAY AND FOOTPATH NETWORK

A network of footpaths linking Moree's key infrastructure will be extended after the State Government delivered $51,750 to Moree Plains Shire Council as part of a shared plan to promote healthier lifestyles.

The funds will go towards construction of a shared footpath/cycleway along Adelaide Street between Chester and Boston Street, and the pathway along Gwydir Street.

These last sections will complete a major network of pathways throughout Moree and give residents much easier access to the CBD, hospital, schools and playing fields.

The work supports a shared desire by State government and Moree Council to encourage healthier lifestyles. We know that community members are more likely to walk or cycle if they have a convenient route to use.

This project is good news for the Moree community and will encourage and enable more people to walk and ride, contributing to a more active and healthier lifestyle."

MILLION-DOLLAR FLYING FOX FIGHTING FUND

One million dollars is being made available to NSW councils who need to manage colonies of flying foxes.

I urge councils in my electorate to apply for the funding, made available by the NSW Government to manage problem bat colonies.

I've seen first-hand the devastation that flying fox camps cause.

A colony that camped on the McIntyre River in Inverell laid waste to riparian vegetation and was problematic for residents for the duration of its stay.

At Blair Athol Estate near Inverell, a flying fox camp established in 2013 stripped 150 year old trees of vegetation, and caked them in bat excrement. The smell and noise was horrendous, and very damaging to a once thriving hospitality business. At Blair Athol and nearby, people could not use their rainwater tanks because of contamination from the bats.

And flying foxes carry Hendra Virus and Lyssavirus, both potentially fatal diseases. A resident at one of the infested Inverell properties was last year scratched on the leg by a juvenile flying fox, with serious health implications.

The Government is making available a grants package of up to $1 million for councils preparing camp management plans, implementing camp management plans and emergency actions for camps where there are significant community impacts.
Government will contribute $1 for every $2 invested by councils in bat management, although one-for-one support will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The grant allocation process will be administered by Local Government NSW in accordance with terms agreed with the Office of Environment & Heritage.

NEW ARENA FOR GURLEY PONY CLUB

The old drench drums that mark out Gurley Pony Club's dressage ring are going, to be replaced by a portable arena, after the club secured a $3,420 grant from NSW Premier Mike Baird.

The club's senior instructor, Rita Rogers, told me the grant will mean that children learning dressage will have a real arena boundary to work within, which encourages discipline and horse control.

The pony club has been making do with drench drums and wooden poles laid on the ground to mark out practice areas.

The club was desperate to secure some funds to upgrade their equipment, so I approached the Premier and I'm delighted he agreed to the request for assistance.

With a relatively small contribution, the state government is able to make a big difference to the club's capacity to train young riders in a rigorous sport.

This is one of those many instances I see as an MP, where small grants go a long way to supporting communities that make a huge contribution to this district.

PREPARING THOSE WITH DISABILITY FOR THE NDIS

Disability usually means a narrowing of choices, but from June 30, disabled people in NSW will have a widening of their choice of services under the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The transition into the NDIS was discussed this week at a Provider Readiness Forum in Armidale, opened by NSW Minister for Disability Services John Ajaka.

This scheme means that for the first time, the thousands of people with disabilities in my electorate are in charge of their future in terms of where, when and how they access the services they are entitled to.

The forum helped disability providers prepare for a new era of 'comparison shopping' for services. It's important that people get prepared for these changes.

Minister Ajaka today also announced that an extra $3 million will be made available by the NSW Government to help the disabled and their families prepare for the NDIS by prolonging the My Choice Matters program through to June 2018.

The NSW Consumer Development Fund, My Choice Matters, was created in 2012 to help people prepare for the NDIS through workshops, resources and e-learning tools, like My Learning Matters.

$3,000 FOR NEW STARTING BLOCKS AT BINGARA POOL

Racing off the blocks at Bingara's town pool will be a lot less hazardous after the Bingara Swimming Club secured a $3,000 grant from the State Government to replace the rusting, slippery 1960s-vintage blocks now in use.

While the investment by was relatively small, the return would support new generations of swimmers.

A lot of country towns built their public swimming pools in the years after World War Two and those facilities have given endless pleasure to the towns' residents ever since.

But half-a-century on, a lot of those pools are showing their age. It would be ideal to rebuild those facilities using the latest technology, but with other priorities on the public purse, the least we can do is invest in keeping them safe and functional.

This grant is about doing just that.

MORE FUNDING TO CELEBRATE OUR MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

The 2015/16 Multicultural NSW Celebration Grants provide funding of up to $5,000 for festivals and events that bring communities together, showcase the benefits of cultural diversity and promote social cohesion.

There are so many reasons to celebrate our region's rich cultural diversity.
The Celebration Grants are about supporting those important events as well as spreading important messages about cultural harmony and cohesion.

Our State and many communities in the Northern Tablelands are fine examples of how multicultural communities can work successfully.

I encourage any non-for-profit community organisation or local council planning an event to consider applying.

Last financial year, more than 100 local community events received funding under the Celebration Grants program.

$8 MILLION AVAILABLE TO HELP BRING LOCAL HERITAGE 'BACK TO LIFE'

I'm encouraging local heritage item owners and managers to apply for a State Government local Heritage Activation Grant to rejuvenate local heritage places.

Each year for the next three years, $2.67 million will be available to owners and managers of local heritage items through the program.

Heritage Activation Grants are open to owners and managers of heritage items listed on their council's local heritage registers.

These items have already had their heritage values assessed and the government wants to provide ways of making it easier to open these spaces to the community.

Heritage Activation Grants provide funding for local councils, businesses and community organisations to reactivate and animate local heritage spaces to preserve their heritage significance.

Applications for the funding close on Monday, 27 June 2016. For more information on Heritage Activation Grant program and the Heritage Near Me program and to apply, please visit www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Heritage/heritage-near-me-incentives.htm

CREATING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGION'S YOUNG PEOPLE

More than $1.1 million in state government funding is now available for innovative projects that will help young people in country areas realise their full potential and benefit the wider community.

Applications for the state's Youth Opportunities Program were now open.

The program funds local organisations to deliver youth-led and youth-driven community projects.

The Youth Opportunities Program supports grassroots projects that will make a real and positive difference to the lives of young people in our region.

If you have a good idea or project, don't miss this opportunity. Apply for funding today.

Since 2012, Youth Opportunities has provided more than $6.8 million in funding to over 120 projects across NSW involving more than 31,500 young people.

Locally, projects at Bundarra Central School and Guyra's Youth Hub have been funded previously through this program.

The online application process is now open and closes at 5pm on Monday, 27 June 2016. Successful applications will be announced later this year.
For more information on Youth Opportunities, visit www.youth.nsw.gov.au

THE WEEKEND

I'm looking forward to attending the Inverell Business Awards tomorrow night and celebrating the many local business success stories over the past 12 months.

On Sunday I'll be participating in the Armidale Reconciliation Bridge Walk. The walk commences at noon in the Visitor Information Centre carpark on the corner of Marsh and Dumaresq Streets and involves a short circular walk across Stephens Bridge. I'll also be addressing those present at the conclusion of the walk, along with local Aboriginal elders.

ADAM MARSHALL
Member for Northern Tablelands