$1 million for new Armidale Airport roundabout

NSW Deputy Premier Troy Grant and Minister for Roads and Freight Duncan Gay were in Armidale this week to announce $1 million to help deliver a roundabout to provide improved access to the Armidale Airport Industrial Area from the New England Highway. This means plans to advance the industrial hub development near Armidale Airport can be realised by the local council and the money ready to be used in the next term of Government, if the NSW Liberals & Nationals are re-elected on March 28.

The roundabout will be located about 500 metres south of the existing entrance to the airport on the highway making it easier to access council’s subdivision, the industrial land on the eastern side of the highway and the historic Saumarez Homestead. Traffic will rise as a result of the industrial development, and with increasing passenger numbers at Armidale Regional Airport, we need the appropriate road service in place to mitigate future traffic congestion on the New England Highway.

While here, the Deputy Premier also announced a massive $90 million commitment to upgrade the Newell Highway to the north of Moree, including extra passing lanes.

Moree Hospital upgrade next on the agenda

I would like to make a commitment to the people of the Moree district, that if re-elected I will be working very hard to secure funding for the redevelopment of the Moree District Hospital. In the 21 months since I was elected I’ve been working with the communities of Armidale and Inverell to secure the $90 million in commitments to redevelop both ageing hospitals, and if re-elected I want to do the same for Moree.

These redevelopments will be ‘game-changers’ for the Armidale and Inverell district communities, underpinning their economic growth and social wellbeing. In my view the Moree district communities are also entitled to the very best in health and patient care. Based on my experience and record with Armidale and Inverell projects, I have a plan to see our health facilities in Moree upgraded too, should I be given the chance to work with the local community in a little under two weeks’ time.

I’ve already had several discussions and meetings with clinicians and management about the potential scope of a redevelopment of the hospital that would include new operating theatres and sterilising unit, a new emergency department and new and expanded renal dialysis and chemotherapy units. With in excess of 9,000 presentations at the emergency department each year, Moree hospital is a very busy facility. I know the staff are doing a brilliant job but they are restricted by the ageing infrastructure of the hospital.

$25 million to eliminate worst country mobile black spots

I welcomed an announcement from Deputy Premier Troy Grant yesterday that a re-elected NSW Government would contribute $25 million to install more mobile phone towers in reception ‘black spots’ across country NSW. This would be the first time in the state’s history that the government had partnered with the Commonwealth to improve regional mobile coverage.
This funding from the State government will allow for up to 50 extra mobile phone towers to be built in the bush, which is fabulous news. The lack of mobile reception gets raised with me every week by people right across the Northern Tablelands who are concerned about safety along our major roads and remote properties or who find it difficult to conduct business in the region.

$15 million boost to support Landcare NSW

I’ve also welcomed a commitment from NSW Deputy Premier Troy Grant to provide a $15 million boost to Landcare across NSW if the government is re-elected on March 28. This huge funding boost will provide a foundation to ensure the long-term viability of Landcare networks across country NSW and the availability of on-ground facilitators across the state, including in the Northern Tablelands.

Most pleasingly, it will enable the huge volunteer effort in this region to continue well into the future. Recently I met with Landcare representatives from across the Northern Tablelands who were concerned with recent cuts to their organisations by Local Lands Services. I am delighted that the government has listened to the concerns expressed by my colleagues and I and have pledged $15 million over the next term of government, a huge $13 million more than was allocated over this four-year term.

Northern Tablelands to benefit $12 million boost to community transport

I’ve welcomed the announcement this week that a re-elected NSW Government would increase funding for community transport by a further $12 million over the next four years. In March 2011 the government doubled community transport funding over four years with an increase of $12 million – the first funding boost to community transport since 1998. If re-elected, it will continue this support with a further $12 million boost. This will mean extra services and extra support for the most vulnerable members of the Northern Tablelands who rely on these services day in and day out.

Without community transport, many people in our community would struggle to do the things many of us take for granted. Whether it’s getting to the doctor, the chemist, seeing family or heading to the shops – community transport is a lifeline for many local residents. With an ageing population in the region, the need for community transport services will only increase. I am proud of the work our local community transport providers and volunteers do for this community and am pleased this funding boost from the State Government means they have the support they need.

Out and about

I was in Bingara on Thursday to host a morning tea to congratulate Gwydir Shire Council's Deputy General Manager Leeah Daley on her recent Women in Local Government Award. Leah has been juggling heavy work commitments with family and study and has the admiration and respect of her colleagues. Well done Leah.

I was pleased to able to drop in to the Armidale Rotary Science Engineering Challenge at UNE this week. Teams from schools across the Northern Tablelands gathered to test themselves with a number of challenges throughout the day. Well done to Rotary and all the schools. They all had lots of fun and learned a great deal as well.
Kelly’s Plains Public School will soon have its ageing and inadequate amenities block refurbished thanks to $150,000 from the NSW Government. It was an absolute pleasure to visit the school last week to meet with the school community to discuss the project. It was also great to meet this year’s student leaders Seamus Hunt and Bethany Eickoff who greeted me with huge smiles at the front gate.

Goodbye and good luck to Rick Sloman who this week tendered his resignation from his position as NSW SES North West Regional Controller. Rick has been based in Moree for the past 12 months and it has been a pleasure to work with him. I wish him well as he moves back to New Zealand where he will take up a position with the Wellington Rural Fire Authority. I’m now looking forward to working with Acting Regional Controller Brian Parsons.

Today and the weekend

Armidale will be busy this weekend with plenty of sporting events in addition to the first weekend of graduations at the University of New England. The graduation ceremonies will be held on Friday and Saturday and I wish the graduands all the best for the future. There will also be a big junior rugby union training camp at TAS, bringing many families our way. Meanwhile, the 24th Armidale Gem and Craft Show will draw hundreds to the Showground. Armidale will be busy this weekend and it’s a great chance to welcome the many visitors who will be here.

On Saturday morning I am heading over to Inverell for Multicultural Day celebrations in Campbell Park which should be a great way to kick off the weekend. Then I head out to Bingara for the annual show which promises to be a great day. The volunteers on the Bingara Show Society have worked hard and I am looking forward to the show opening and spending a few hours taking in the fun.

Bill and Peta Blyth will once again throw open the gates of their Delungra property Mimosa for the return of Opera in the Paddock on Saturday night. The highlight will be the opportunity to see world class opera singers and musicians, including Teddy Tahu Rhodes, the feature performer. It should be a wonderful evening under the stars.

On Sunday morning, I will have the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Guyra Community Garden. A hard working team of volunteers have been toiling in the soil for some time now and the opening of the garden will be a terrific event.

I’ll wind up the weekend at the Armidale Racecourse on Sunday afternoon for the Armidale Harness Racing Club meeting. A great to prepare for the final week of campaigning to start from Monday.

ADAM MARSHALL MP
Member for Northern Tablelands