

# Talking Tablelands

with **Adam Marshall** MP  
your Member for Northern Tablelands



## Merry Christmas

IT'S almost the end of another busy and productive year for communities across the Northern Tablelands and most people are wondering where the year has gone and looking forward to a holiday break.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the community on many projects and issues this year, and while we have achieved a great deal and have much to be proud of, next year promises to be even more exciting with many projects still to be undertaken.

Relative to regional NSW, the Northern Tablelands has punched above its weight this year with a huge investment in infrastructure projects to address the needs of our growing region. Among the highlights was the opening of the new \$4.2 million Emu Crossing Bridge at Bundarra, which was the culmination of many years of hard work by locals, and now work has begun on the new \$1.45 million Abington Creek Bridge nearby.

I was delighted to see the government recently invest \$4.6 million to secure the future water supply for Boggabilla and Toomelah. There have been serious water issue in both these communities and soon they will be in the past for good. This follows the successful completion of the \$1 million off-stream water storage at Glen Innes, which allows the community to store a two-year supply of town water in addition to the flow from Beardy Waters.

On the health front, construction works will start soon on the \$60 million redevelopment of Armidale hospital, a project many have believed would never occur. Planning for the \$30 million redevelopment of Inverell Hospital on track with the clinical services plan to be finalised by the end of January. I intend holding a community meeting in February to provide an update on the project.

I am expecting planning work to also begin on Moree Hospital and the helipad designs for Glen Innes Hospital to be finalised early in the New Year, allowing that important project to proceed, with much community support and finance. All of these works will dramatically improve health care right across the electorate.

On the back of recent rains, a good harvest in many areas and strong cattle, sheep and grain prices, our rural community has experienced a turnaround in fortunes from this time last year. Despite this, as the weather warms up, everyone is looking to the skies hoping for soaking rain over the Christmas period.

As this will be my last newsletter for the year, I wish everyone in the Northern Tablelands a very Happy (and wet) Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

*Adam Marshall*



## Full steam ahead for hospital redevelopments

I WAS thrilled to release the schematic designs and plans of the \$60 million redevelopment of Armidale Rural Referral in October.

The planning team has worked in partnership with local doctors, nurses, allied health, support staff, local community representatives, patients and the Aboriginal community to develop the layouts and configurations of the new and redeveloped facilities

Site preparation work will begin soon ahead of the calling for tenders for construction work early next year.

This is an important and exciting milestone in the \$60 million redevelopment, made possible with the allocation of \$1 million in this year's Budget.

The redevelopment will deliver a mix of new and redeveloped facilities, including the construction of a new four-story building which

will be directly linked to each floor of the existing three-story main hospital building.

The community will see a new and relocated emergency department to receive patients from O'Dell Street, new in-patient ward, four new operating theatres, a central sterilizing supplies department and a new and expanded critical care unit.

Planning for the \$30 million redevelopment of **Inverell Hospital** is also on track. New England Health Services Planner Louise Evans was appointed in September to develop the Clinical Services Plan and consultation is well underway with hospital staff, local clinicians, health service providers, the Inverell Shire Council and various community groups and stakeholders. I will be holding a public meeting in February to update the community on the plan and the next steps for the redevelopment.



Hunter New England Health Chief Executive Michael DiRienzo, Armidale Hospital Operations Manager Catharine Death, Northern Tablelands General Manager Wendy Mulligan and Facility Planner Claire Groombridge with the released plans for the \$60 million Armidale Hospital redevelopment.

**Adam Marshall** MP

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## Campaign for new Inverell Police Station

I TOOK the opportunity in Parliament last month to step up my campaign to see a new 24-hour police station built in Inverell and the installation of modern audio visual technology in the town's local court house.

I'm very pleased the Deputy Premier and Police Minister Troy Grant accepted my invitation to visit the station and I'm looking forward to the opportunity to show him the situation first-hand.

Inverell is a burgeoning regional centre with a fast growing population, and needs a larger and modern-day justice precinct.

The Inverell police station, built in 1960, is by far the oldest of the three 24-hour police stations in the Northern Tablelands electorate.

It was built to accommodate 14 police officers and today 46 officers work in those same conditions, providing 24-hour protection for the community.

## Proposal to grow cannabis at Glen Innes

LAST month I put a proposal to Primary Industries Minister Niall Blair to utilise the DPI Research Station at Glen Innes to conduct controlled medicinal cannabis cultivation.

This trial could begin within the next 12 months, depending on the outcome of several clinical trials currently underway.

The station is one of the state's oldest research facilities and has a strong track record of world leading research in livestock and pastures.

I believe the facility would be ideal for this purpose and I'm very pleased that this potential use has the strong support of Glen Innes Mayor Col Price and council.

It would breathe new life into the facility and see teams of staff and researchers based in the community, which would be great to see.

## \$14.1 million Murray-Darling Basin funding program – Round Two now open

I WELCOMED an announcement this week by the Commonwealth and NSW Governments that \$14.1 million is now available to rural and regional communities that were most impacted by the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

I would like to encourage Moree district businesses and not-for-profit organisations in particular, as well as Moree Plains Shire Council, to apply for funding to create more jobs, strengthen business confidence and diversify the local economy.

In May this year I publicly expressed my dismay when the northern region of the Murray-Darling Basin failed to attract a single dollar of the \$18 million available in the first round of the Regional Economic Diversification Program.

Following subsequent meetings with the Regional Development Minister John Barilaro I am very confident funds will be distributed to many worthwhile projects in the northern basin in this round.

## Emu Crossing Bridge officially opened

IT was a fabulous day for Bundarra and the region last month when Roads Minister Duncan Gay officially opened the new and permanent bridge over the Gwydir River.

The \$4.2 million structure will hopefully stand as long as its predecessor - 96 years and ensure Thunderbolt Way is no longer cut in large rain events.

This new bridge would not have been achieved without the enormous effort and passion over many years by the local bridge committee, Uralla Shire Council and the broader community. People power still plays a huge role and this project is a prime example.

Uralla Council managed the project very well, completed the road approaches and contributed \$700,000 to the work along with \$3.5 million from the State Government. The nearby Abington Creek bridge is now being replaced at the cost of \$1.45 million. It will be completed in April next year.



Emu Crossing Bridge Committee members James Harris, Mel Lowell, Steve Kellelt, David Lowell, Spencer Hall, Stuart Beryman, Roads Minister Duncan Gay and Deputy Mayor Bob Crouch.

## Say NO to violence

I WAS proud to mark White Ribbon Day in Inverell this year by taking part in the street march alongside hundreds of locals. As a White Ribbon Ambassador I called on the community to stand up, speak out and act to prevent men's violence against women.

We have all heard the shocking statistic that on average, one woman is killed every week as a result of intimate partner violence. That is why I call on the electorate community to join me in raising awareness of this despicable crime and make women's safety a man's issue too. I commend the Inverell Anti-Violence Committee and other community-led groups across the Northern Tablelands Electorate who work to raise awareness of this issue.



White Ribbon Day march in Inverell.

For more information about White Ribbon Day and to take the oath visit [www.whiteribbon.org.au/day](http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/day). If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence please call the 24-hour NSW Domestic Violence Line on **1800 65 64 63**.

## Environment Minister launches ZNET plans

THE Environment Minister Mark Speakman was in Uralla in October to launch the blueprint for what could be Australia's first renewable energy self-sufficient town.

The final document was developed from a partnership with consultants, community members and Uralla Shire Council, and the Minister and I were amazed by the breadth and scope of the blueprint, a real credit to all those who worked so hard over many months.

The aim is to identify how an Australian community could satisfy all its energy needs from renewable energy, in a way that is competitive in terms of price, quality, security, and reliability. For Uralla Shire, this action alone could save 15.7 per cent of its total energy consumption with a significant portion of remaining energy consumption being sourced from on-site renewable generation.

This initiative again confirms the vast potential and support for renewable energy projects throughout the Northern Tablelands region.



Uralla Shire Mayor Michael Pearce, Minister of Environment and Heritage Mark Speakman and ZNET Uralla Reference Group Chair Sandra Eady pictured at the blueprint launch in October.

## Prizemoney boost for racing clubs

MOREE, Inverell and Armidale Racing Clubs will receive a major boost in prize money thanks to the State Government's legislation to match NSW's wagering tax rates with Victoria's.

Every TAB race at Moree, Inverell and Armidale would have the minimum prize money offered per race increased by \$5,000 to \$20,000 from July next year. This will mean more jobs, larger crowds and help to grow

our local racing industry. Racing is an important part of many communities across the Northern Tablelands – everyone loves to get to the races and enjoy a great day out socialising and having fun.

Local trainers, jockeys, owners and punters have been crying out for increased prize money to invigorate the industry and the benefits will flow to the whole community.

# Working for the Northern T

## ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM – TRIENNIAL FUNDING

- ✓ **\$153,000** for the **Moree Plains Art Gallery** to further develop its education programs



- ✓ **\$450,000** for **Beyond Empathy** to continue to work with marginalised and disadvantaged communities
- ✓ **\$180,000** for **New England Regional Art Museum** to run its educational programs and community workshops
- ✓ **\$420,000** for **Arts North West** to continue with its multiple programs throughout the region



## FUNDING WINDFALLS

- ✓ **\$21,000** for the **New England Writers Centre** for writing programs and workshops
- ✓ **\$30,000** for **Opera North West's** 2016 programs and Opera in the Paddock
- ✓ **\$20,000** for a local campaign to reduce stealing from motor vehicles in **Armidale**



- ✓ **\$1,221,466** to tackle weeds across the region in the next 12 months as part of the **NSW Weeds Action Program**
- ✓ **\$2,000** for the **Warialda's P&A Society** to assist with the cost of hosting the 2016 National Shearing and Wool Handling Championships
- ✓ **\$50,000** to improve street lighting in vandalism hotspots in **Boggabilla**



## NEW VEHICLE FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

- ✓ **Over \$200,000** for the provision of a storm response truck and Ford Ranger 4WD for the **Inverell and Ashford SES** units
- ✓ **\$150,000** category 1 Tanker for the **Dundee RFS**
- ✓ **\$450,000** rescue tanker for the **Uralla Fire & Rescue Station**
- ✓ **\$180,000** Category 7 fire tanker for **Yetman RFS**
- ✓ **\$180,000** Category 7 fire tanker for **Gilgai RFS**

## ROAD WORKS UNDERWAY

- ✓ **\$1.8 million** for repair work on a 2.5km section of the **Gwydir Highway** at Glen Innes



- ✓ **\$3.5 million** to complete an upgrade on the **Guyra to Ebor Road**
- ✓ **\$2.6 million** for the reconstruction and widening of a 3km section of the **Newell Highway** at Gurley near Moree.
- ✓ **\$800,000** upgrade of **New England Highway** south of Armidale
- ✓ **\$600,000** on upgrade of **Waterfall Way** at Ebor

## Water problem solved at Copeton Dam

LIFE for visitors to Copeton Dam near Inverell has got a whole lot more comfortable with the installation of a \$600,000 water treatment plant at the Copeton Waters Holiday Park.

Funded by the NSW Government's Public Reserves Management Fund, the plant was completed this month and will deliver an ongoing source of fresh drinking water.

The number of visitors to the park in the past six months has increased between 35 and 50 percent so it certainly is gaining an excellent reputation and rightly so. This will make camping at Copeton ever more appealing.



*Copeton Waters Holiday Park Manager David Allen.*

## COMMUNITY PRESCHOOLS OUTREACH GRANTS PROGRAM – \$7,000

- ✓ Ashford Pre-School Kindergarten
- ✓ Glen Innes Pre-School
- ✓ Grace Lutheran Pre-School
- ✓ Boongaia Pre-School
- ✓ Moree Pre-School
- ✓ Kiah Pre-School
- ✓ Armidale Community Pre-School
- ✓ Adventureland Pre-School
- ✓ Armidale Montessori Pre-School
- ✓ Minimbah Pre-School
- ✓ Kingstown Preschool
- ✓ Gwydir Mobile Children's Services
- ✓ NRAW 2
- ✓ Kandangindi Pre-School
- ✓ NRAW 1
- ✓ St Peter's Pre-School - Armidale
- ✓ Drummond Park Pre-School
- ✓ Tingha Pre-School
- ✓ Inverell Jack & Jill Pre-School
- ✓ Uralla Pre-School
- ✓ Bundarra Pre-School
- ✓ Glen Innes Pre-School - Outreach Program
- ✓ Bingara Pre-School
- ✓ Warialda Pre-School



*Gwydir Shire Council's Social Services Manager Suzanne Webber at the Bingara Preschool.*

## Boost for Ashford rugby league

WITH the help of a \$75,000 grant from the NSW Footy Facilities Fund, Ashford's Sports Ground, home of the town's Roosters Rugby League Club, will soon be receiving a major upgrade to its amenities.

The \$150,000 project will see the construction of a new canteen and new brick amenities block at the ground, which will include dressing rooms for teams and officials and public toilets.

Well done to the Ashford Rugby League club, its players and supporters, for their huge contribution to the project, as well as the critical financial support of Inverell Shire Council.



Ashford Rugby League club president, Mick Lewis.

## NSW Treasurer visits Armidale



Armidale Business Chamber board member Annie Keegan and President Susan Cull with NSW Treasurer Gladys Berejicklian.

IT was tremendous to welcome NSW Treasurer Gladys Berejicklian to Armidale in September where she met with local business owners and operators and addressed a luncheon, hosted by the Armidale Business Chamber, about the NSW Budget and the state of the economy.

It's not often we see Treasurers in our region but Gladys accepted my invitation to come and see first-hand some of the business success stories we have here and how we can do more to help create more jobs and support business growth.

I wanted her to also understand our region better so as to help promote what we have to offer to people looking to invest, relocate and find a job.

# Congratulations

## Spelling bee finalists Premier's Prize for science

CONGRATULATIONS to the two students from Armidale City Public School, Year 3 student Sam Russell (junior division) and Year 5 student Peter Gooley (senior division runner up) who spelled their way through to the state finals of the 2015 Premier's Spelling Bee.

It's an impressive effort as Sam and Peter finished ahead of a record 134,000 students from 939 public schools who competed in this year's spelling bee.

## NSW International Student of the year

UNIVERSITY of New England (UNE) Iraqi student Dunya Alruhaimi won the NSW International Student of the Year award in the Higher Education category.

It's thoroughly deserved recognition for Dunya who has made an enormous contribution to UNE's rich cultural fabric.

She is an outstanding example of a leader whose actions enhance multiculturalism and encourage unity within communities.



## Regional Achievement & Community awards

### ✓ People's Choice Award

CONGRATULATIONS to Danny Middleton and his team at BEST Employment Inverell on winning this wonderful accolade for their project BEST Food Garden.

I've spent a lot of time at the garden and fully appreciate the wonderful impact this garden is having in the Inverell community and further afield, as Glen Innes recently established its own community garden.

### ✓ Community Managers Award

THE War Memorial Hall Reserve Trust won the Department of Primary Industries Crown Reserve Trust – Community Managers Award.

This dedicated group of volunteers have worked tirelessly over many years to maintain and improve their wonderful little hall which was built 107 years ago in memory of those lost in WWI.

ARMIDALE-based NSW Department of Primary Industries researcher Dr Hutton Oddy was recently awarded the Premier's Prize for Science and Engineering for his research to improve efficiency and enhance animal health in the livestock sector.

Dr Oddy's work and the work of the staff at the Beef Industry Centre have made significant contributions to the productivity of our regional and national livestock industries.



## NSW Education Minister's awards

✓ INVERELL High School Year 12 student Hannah Worsley received an Award for Excellence in Student Achievement in recognition of her outstanding achievements and contribution to public education.



✓ ARMIDALE High School's Head Teacher of Science Amanda Garvey received an Excellence in Teaching Award for her outstanding achievements and contribution to public education.

## \$4.6 million to keep taps flowing in Boggabilla and Tomelah



Moree Plains Shire Deputy Mayor Sue Price, Mayor Katrina Humphries and General Manager Lester Rogers were excited to receive the news of the \$4.6 million water security project.

THE State Government has allocated \$4.6 million to the Moree Plains Shire Council to undertake a project that will ensure the water security for Boggabilla and Toomelah.

Council will construct a new bi-directional pipeline between the townships; new inlet infrastructure at Boggabilla and new transfer pump stations in Boggabilla and Toomelah.

Over the years, Boggabilla and Toomelah have experienced water security and reliability issues so this is excellent news for the communities.

## Minister opens new Glen Innes water storage



Primary Industries, Lands and Water Minister Niall Blair and Glen Innes Severn Mayor Col Price at the official opening of the new \$1.02 million water storage.

I WAS delighted to welcome Minister for Primary Industries, Lands and Water Niall Blair to the region in September to open the \$1.02 Glen Innes off-stream water storage upgrade.

With \$970,000 of state government funds, the project will give the community access to water through periods of drought of up to two and a half years.

In addition to the storage work done at the Glen Innes Aggregates quarry, the funding has also allowed for the full development of water bores on Red Range Road.

These bores are capable of supplying 600 kilolitres of water every day, which equates to almost half of the water required when Glen Innes is on Level 4 water restrictions. The previous Beardy Waters supply had the capacity to last just five months after flow ceased.

## \$2 million extra for public schools

AS a passionate advocate of the Gonski education reforms, I was pleased to announce recently a 12 per cent increase, an additional \$2 million, in needs-based recurrent funding for Northern Tablelands public schools for 2016.

With these extra resources for 2016, our local Northern Tablelands schools will benefit from an additional \$8.01 million in recurrent funding under the NSW Government's Resource Allocation Model (RAM) – and there's more to come.

It's what NSW public schools have wanted – a significant increase in funding guaranteed into the future, with the greatest benefits flowing to schools and students with the greatest need.

This would not have happened without the leadership of Education Minister Adrian Piccoli and a determination to put the needs of students first in our education system, not politics.



Moree Public School students.



Moree Preschool students Harriet Blair, Nixon Lott, Maggie Gray and Cooper Ayre.

## Funding increase for preschools

Preschools across the Northern Tablelands electorate will receive a 2.5 per cent funding boost next year and many may be eligible for bonus payments of up to five per cent.

The extra support for community preschools was part of a \$45.5 million package from the NSW Government to increase the number of children attending preschool in the year before school.

This will take a lot of pressure off services and should help to keep fees stable for parents. In addition, the government is providing bonus payments to services who enrol four and five-year-old children for 15 hours per week.

## IPART Fit for the Future report disappointing

IN the wake of the October release of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) into the state of local councils across NSW, I made it very clear to my councils and their communities that I would stand with them, regardless of the position they adopt on mergers, and have taken that to the government in the strongest possible terms.

The report found that in the Northern Tablelands, Moree Plains, Inverell and Glen Innes Severn Councils were 'fit', while Gwydir, Guyra, Uralla and Armidale Dumaresq were 'unfit' for the future.

While there's no doubt that mergers can work in the

right climate, in and of itself merging councils doesn't resolve the issues confronting local government, in fact, it can in sometimes exacerbate the problems.

I found the IPART assessment of councils' viability to be disappointingly deficient in some areas, and the criteria obtuse which has impacted on the final 'fitness' ratings of some councils in the region.

As a former Mayor and now State MP, I'll continue to stand by all councils in the Northern Tablelands and work to achieve benefits via the new New England Councils Joint Organisation.

## Costa Tomato Farm growth great for the region

I WAS pleased to have the opportunity last month to inspect the recently completed and now operational 10 hectare expansion of the Costa tomato farm at Guyra, making it one of Australia's biggest horticultural businesses.

With the help of State Government funding, the company also upgraded the road entrance from the New England Highway to the site of the new glasshouses, allowing easier and safer access.

The new glasshouses will help the company to achieve its long-term goal of producing 21 million kilograms of tomatoes a year and will also see the creation of 171 new full time jobs.

The Costa Group employs up to 6,000 people during the peak harvest season across Australia with more than 2,000 people in NSW alone through its tomato and berry growing operations – around 400 of which are now in Guyra.



Costa Group's Project Engineering Manager Rodney Merritt and Guyra Shire Mayor Hans Hietbrink pictured at the expanded Tomato Farm.

# Out and about in the electorate



**New emergency service vehicles:** Yetman and Gilgai RFS members with their new Category 7 tankers.



**Hunter New England Health Quality Awards:** Inverell Health Service Maintenance Team members Steve Wood, Russell Robinson, Darren Sparke, Tom Owen and Bob Multimer won the Excellence in Service Provision award.



**Flashing lights now installed at all 93 Northern Tablelands schools:** Macintyre High School student leaders Caleb Hamilton and Sarah Flick and Principal Lindsay Paul.



**Police Remembrance Day:** Police officers from the New England Area Command at the Remembrance Day service at St Peter's Cathedral Armidale.



**Small schools are great schools:** Mallawa Public School.



**Gardening in Glen:** Glen Industries Manager Kylie Hawkins, Carri Wood, Inverell BEST Food Garden coordinator Danny Middleton, garden project coordinator Karen Donnelly and Cara Lightfoot at the spring planting of the new Glen Industries community garden in Glen Innes.



**More Salvation Army:** Family Store Manager Jill Stilsbury welcomes funding for their free financial counselling service.