

Talking Tablelands

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



Rewarding time for the region

THE last few months have been busy and rewarding. The Northern Tablelands is starting to get some attention from Macquarie Street and that's generating some positive feeling across the region.

The recent State Budget was a highlight. We secured a capital spend of \$117.8 million, an investment in the region that easily eclipsed last year's record of \$102 million.

So much for the notion that safe seats are ignored. The state government is re-investing in country NSW and I'm working as hard as I can to ensure that as much of that investment as possible is channelled into our local communities.

Good healthcare is essential for robust communities. I'm delighted that this Budget included \$26.2 million to start construction on the Armidale Hospital redevelopment, and \$1 million to enable planning on the Inverell Hospital redevelopment to be completed.

I'm also working hard to address the past neglect of our country roads. The last Budget delivered another \$66 million for our local transport infrastructure.

As with hospitals, this is the sort of investment that will help our economy for decades to come.

I'm also strongly supporting the private investment rolling into the electorate's brand-new renewable energy industry. By the end of 2016, close to a billion dollars of wind and solar projects will have been built, or will be under construction, in a region that had no power generation capacity at the start of 2015.

The next three months will be as busy - and hopefully, as fiscally rewarding - for our region as the last.

I'm working on securing some important water and sewage projects from some of our smaller communities, and I am pressing the government to relocate government agencies into the Northern Tablelands.

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Record region spend in Budget

ONE of the keys to building a robust regional economy is infrastructure investment. I'm happy to report that the 2016-17 State Budget delivered a record dollop of that investment to the Northern Tablelands - \$117.8 million, which eclipsed even last year's record Budget allocation of \$102.4 million.

Numbers are meaningless by themselves, but the effect of those Budget numbers on our communities will be large.

Our regional roads, already in better shape than they have been for years thanks to this government's focus on repairing regional infrastructure, will benefit from another \$66 million for major projects and upgrades.

Local councils get an additional \$9.22 million to improve local roads, long a pain-point for councils and ratepayers alike.

The government is putting in place the infrastructure environment for regional renewal. The rest is up to us.



Among the Budget highlights for the Northern Tablelands:

- **\$4 million** for Newell Highway pavement replacement between **Mungle Back Creek** and **Boggabilla**.
- **\$1.65 million** to continue planning for new heavy duty road surface on Newell Highway north of **Moree**.
- **\$3.25 million** to replace **Nee Nee Creek Bridge** on Newell Highway, 45km north of **Moree**.
- **\$1 million** for structural maintenance on Gwydir River and Halls Creek bridges, **Bingara**.
- **\$500,000** for drainage improvements on the Gwydir Highway at **Gibraltar Range**.
- **\$3.65 million** to **Inverell Shire Council** for road maintenance.
- **\$2.09 million** to **Moree Plains Shire Council** for road maintenance.
- **\$1.88 million** to **Gwydir Shire Council** for road maintenance.
- **\$720,000** to **Glen Innes Severn Council** for road maintenance.
- **\$1.59 million** to **Armidale Regional Council** for road maintenance.
- **\$1.17 million** to **Uralla Shire Council** for road maintenance.
- **\$2.7 million** to upgrade **Carnarvon Highway** from Gwydir River to Carol Creek.
- **\$1 million** to upgrade **Gwydir Highway** west of Delungra.
- **\$1 million** to upgrade **New England Highway** north of Uralla.
- **\$890,000** to upgrade **New England Highway** south of Guyra.
- **\$700,000** to upgrade **Waterfall Way**.
- **\$600,000** to upgrade New England Highway north of **Glen Innes**.
- **\$600,000** to upgrade New England Highway south of **Armidale**.
- **\$525,000** to upgrade New England Highway north of **Armidale**.

Adam Marshall MP

Armidale office: Suite 1, 175 Rusden Street, Armidale NSW 2350 **Phone:** 02 6772 5552 **Fax:** 02 6772 5026

Moree office: Suites 2-6, 161 Balo Street, Moree NSW 2400 **Phone:** 02 6752 5002 **Fax:** 02 6752 6102

Mail: PO Box 77, Armidale NSW 2350 **Email:** northerntablelands@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.adammarshall.com.au





Member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson, NSW Attorney General Gabrielle Upton, and Adam Marshall at the Armidale Courthouse for the announcement that Armidale will get its own District Court judge.

We have our judge for the bush!

WE'VE GOT our judge! In July, after months of lobbying, Attorney General Gabrielle Upton announced that our region would get its own live-in District Court judge.

The judge, former Crown Prosecutor Jeffery McClennan SC, will live in Armidale, and preside over the District Courts in Armidale, Moree and Tamworth.

This is an important development, as the local legal profession understands only too well.

Because we have been operating under a fly-in, fly-out system where District Court judges are flown up from Sydney to preside during court sitting weeks, the backlog of cases has blown out badly.

We have people in our communities who were charged with offences up to two years ago, and have still not had their case heard in the District Court. This is unfair on those charged, unfair on the victims, and unfair on our communities.

With the community, and supported by the legal profession, I argued that we needed more "judges in the bush", and campaigned to have the situation changed.

Funds were allocated in the 2016-17 State Budget for three new regionally-based judges, and this region won one of them - a great result for our community.

Homes North's new model

HOME affordability for those in need in the Northern Tablelands entered a new phase in June, as Homes North started work on six specially designed units in Armidale.

At the ground-breaking ceremony, I commended the agency and its collaborator, Hibbards Developers, on how they have ensured that the units built as part of the \$2.1 million development are highly energy efficient, so that ongoing costs to residents will be cut.

Homes North and Hibbards have built a model that should have some valuable insights to any community struggling with how to provide good, cheap housing to those who need it.



With Hibbards' Richard Stubbs and Homes North chief executive Maree McKenzie turning the first sod on the \$2.1 million social housing project.



Part of the team turning the first sod on the \$400 million White Rock Wind Farm development at Glen Innes.

Wind farms break new ground

THIS will be a watershed year for renewable energy in the Northern Tablelands, and I'm delighted that it's happening on my watch.

In May, Goldwind started construction of its \$400 million White Rock Wind Farm near Glen Innes; in June, it announced that it had approval for an additional 20 megawatt solar photovoltaic (PV) plant on the site.

Across the range towards Inverell, Wind Prospect CWP has approval to change its Sapphire Wind Farm project from 159 turbines to 109 larger turbines that will put out the same amount of energy.

With FRV's 56 MW Moree Solar Farm, we are fast becoming one of Australia's foremost renewable energy hubs.

Z-Net powering on

IN JUNE, Uralla's Australian-first energy efficiency drive got a "face and a place" when it opened a new office to host the town's Z-Net initiative.

I was delighted to attend the opening and announce \$21,000 in State Government funding to keep the doors open.

Z-Net suggests that by making some well-understood changes to how we construct buildings and source energy, we can run our communities without needing to draw on massive supplies of energy from elsewhere.

I'm an active supporter of the Z-Net project. Previously, I announced \$50,000 to employ Z-Net coordinator, Stephen Griffith. Overall, Z-Net has received more than \$170,000 in State Government support.



Uralla Mayor Mick Pearce and Adam Marshall generate pedal power at the Z-Net office opening.

\$1.7m overhaul for Bingara bridges

SHINY new replacement parts are appearing on Bingara's Gwydir River Bridge as part of the \$1.7 million upgrade program for Fossickers Way.

The new pedestrian walkway across the 232 metre bridge is nearly complete, and other works are being undertaken to extend the bridge's life and practicality.

The Campbell Bridge and 55-metre long Halls Creek Bridge are being overhauled as part of \$6 million allocated in the 2015/16 NSW Budget for road and bridge improvement works in the Gwydir Shire.



Looking over work-in-progress on Bingara's Gwydir River Bridge.

Working for the Northern Tablelands

Social justice

- ✓ **\$320,000** in extra funding for Moree Area Homeless Services, for shelters and services in **Moree, Narrabri and Gwydir** local government areas.



- ✓ **\$24,000** for the **Mungindi Community Home Care Support Program** to extend its office precinct.
- ✓ **\$50,000** to develop **Moree's Cooee Park**.
- ✓ **\$212,000** for **Moree's Armajun Aboriginal Health Service** to enable it to put great focus on disease prevention.



- ✓ **\$160,000** for a technology upgrade to **Inverell Courthouse** to improve safety and the efficiency of hearings.
- ✓ **\$220,000** in extra funding for the Women's Shelter Armidale for shelters and services in **Armidale, Inverell, Glen Innes, Guyra, Uralla, Tenterfield and Walcha**.
- ✓ **\$161,000** to Inverell Rural Outreach and Social Support Services, for an education program to reduce breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) in **Inverell, Moree, Wyallda, Mungindi and Boggabilla**.



- ✓ **\$1.56 million** for social housing improvements across the electorate.

Safe Shooting

- ✓ **\$10,120** for a Canterbury Crusader trap and steel trap house at **Moree Gun Club**.



- ✓ **\$11,100** for two shipping containers to be used as a clubhouse and for storage by **Emmaville Rifle Range**.
- ✓ **\$1,882** for an extension of the stop butt at the **Inverell RSM Club** range.

Health and education

- ✓ **\$26.6 million** to start construction on the **Armidale Regional Hospital** redevelopment.
- ✓ **\$1.1 million** for infrastructure upgrades at **Glen Innes High School**.
- ✓ **\$4.78 million** to complete the \$15 million redevelopment of **East Moree Public School**.
- ✓ **\$1 million** to complete planning for the redevelopment of **Inverell Hospital**.

Cycling and walking

- ✓ **\$40,000** for a shared user footpath on **Abercrombie St, Guyra**.
- ✓ **\$30,000** for a shared user footpath between **Opan St and Tingha Public School**.
- ✓ **\$41,910** for a cycleway along the **Gwydir Highway in Inverell**.
- ✓ **\$19,500** for a shared user footpath along **Adelaide Street, Moree**.



- ✓ **\$2,200** for a shared user footpath in **Inverell**.
- ✓ **\$39,250** for improved pedestrian and cycling access in **Moree**.
- ✓ **\$5,000** for bicycle parking in **Guyra**.

Water

- ✓ **\$200,000** to help two **Moree irrigation enterprises** expand to offset the negative effects of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.



- ✓ **\$485,000** to help **Inverell's Boss Engineering** take on another 28 staff, with an emphasis on youth and the disadvantaged.

Environment

- ✓ **\$985,000** to protect three populations of the endangered Bells turtle across the **Northern Tablelands**.
- ✓ **\$183,000** to **Southern New England Landcare** for environmental restoration projects.
- ✓ **\$69,517** for tackling **Harrisia cactus** within the **Inverell** local government area.

- ✓ **\$53,470** for the **New England Weeds Authority** to eradicate Mexican water lily in the **Gara River**.
- ✓ **\$99,600** for **Northern Tablelands Local Land Services** to tackle weeds in travelling stock routes.



War Memorials

- ✓ **\$3,500** for cleaning and retouching the **Armidale Cenotaph's** honour roll.



- ✓ **\$3,135** for the **Glen Innes ANZAC Memorial Park and Garden** to retouch the entrance gates.

Sports

- ✓ **\$25,000** to **Macintyre Warriors Rugby League Club** to build a perimeter fence around its home ground, so it can charge admission for games.
- ✓ **\$5,000** for **Macintyre Warriors Rugby League Club** for improvements to training equipment.
- ✓ **\$2,590** to **Uralla Bowmen** for improvements to range and clubhouse.



- ✓ **\$3,000** to replace the rusty old starting blocks at **Bingara Swimming Pool**.
- ✓ **\$5,615** for **Armidale City Gymnastics Club** to purchase competition-level sprung beams.
- ✓ **\$1,760** to enable volunteers with **Inverell's Little Athletics Club** to access training for coach accreditation.
- ✓ **\$3,420** so **Gurley Pony Club** can replace the drench drums that mark the perimeter of its dressage ring with a portable arena.



TAFE Digital Hub in Armidale

NOTHING beats growth for boosting the economic activity of a regional centre, which is why I've been lobbying hard to get the new TAFE Digital Hub established in Armidale.

This new unit within TAFE is likely to have about 60 staff. I have been arguing in Macquarie Street that Armidale, with its outstanding NBN fibre broadband services and the university, is the Hub's natural home.

I have some stiff competition from other MPs, but I'm confident that Armidale's appeal will win the day.

Diversifying irrigation

THE economic effects of the Murray Darling Basin Plan have been severe on irrigation-dependent towns, so I was delighted to announce that nearly \$700,000 is being spent in my electorate to offset the Plan's effects.

The funding was delivered as part of the State's *Murray Darling Basin Economic Diversification Program*.

Thriving Inverell business Boss Engineering is putting on another 28 staff, with an injection of \$495,000 in new funds. The agricultural implement manufacturer will put particular emphasis on training and employing local people, including the disabled and disadvantaged youth.

Stahmann Farms received \$51,000 to support expansion of its orchard, backed with a solar-powered irrigation system.

The other recipient, Grove Fruit Juice, will use its \$150,000 grant to also expand its orange orchard near Moree.



Progress at Moree East PS

THE \$15 million transformation of Moree East Public School is well underway, with some of the new customised learning spaces already in use.

In the space of a few months, we've seen parts of an outdated, not very functional school disappear and be replaced with facilities that actively embrace the community as part of the learning process.

This is an exciting and important government project. The redevelopment has begun to make real a vision shared among teachers, parents and students of a school where Kindergarten to Year 6 pupils can be joined by their extended community.

The transformed school will use shared learning spaces that include state-of-the-art classrooms, outdoor learning spaces, a teaching kitchen and a well-resourced library and school hall.



Guyra training funds

GUYRA Adult Learning Association (GALA) is set to more deeply engage with those seeking education opportunities after learning it has access to the NSW Government's 2016-17 \$17.8 million additional investment in community training. Ability to access the funding will help the organisation reach more people, and help those students develop the credentials needed for employment.



RFS airbase opens at Armidale

THE new \$800,000 NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) New England Aviation Airbase, which I opened in Armidale in July, will transform firefighting in the region.

The new facility replaces the quite primitive shed that has been used to date by pilots and volunteers. With a fully equipped command centre, tanker bay, storage rooms, showers, toilets, workshop and a crew room, it will help keep firefighting teams co-ordinated and refreshed during big fire seasons.

Toomelah's cool sandpit

CHARLES Woodbridge was bothered by something. In summer, it got too hot to play in the sandpit.

So the Year 2 student at Toomelah Public School wrote a letter to me asking for assistance.

That message went to Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, who pledged \$50,000 to build Toomelah Public a new covered outdoor learning area (COLA).

What a great result for such a simple request!



NAIDOC week

IT WAS fitting that NAIDOC Week fell in the same month that Australian researchers using DNA mapping established beyond doubt that Aboriginal people were the first humans to walk our continent.

Backed by \$24,500 in State funding, NAIDOC Week in the Northern Tablelands featured 12 great events celebrating the fact that modern Australia has an unbroken link with the world's oldest human culture.

We all know that the old and the new often have an uneasy co-existence, but the nature of the week is celebration and acknowledgement that the thread of this incredibly ancient culture runs through our smartphone-connected society.

Congratulations

Sarah Parker

ARMIDALE hockey star Sarah Parker was selected in the NSW Country Women's squad to contest the Australian Country Championships in Darwin. Sarah is one of our region's top players, but she also puts back into the sport as a volunteer, umpire and a coach of several junior teams. I supported Sarah's Darwin tour, along with Armidale City Bowling Club, Armidale Ex-Services Club, the Armidale Sports Council and Radio Station 2AD/100.3.



Alkira Blair-Bain

ALKIRA Blair-Bain, a Year 8 student at Glen Innes High School, received an insight into the workings of the State's political machinery when she and the other inaugural Aboriginal Students of the Year were introduced to Parliament House.

I nominated Alkira, a committed student and cultural ambassador, for the award. It was a pleasure to introduce her to Parliament House, and give her insight into how our political system works.



Mary Hollingworth

THERE is an unstoppable force working on behalf of the Glen Innes community, and its name is Mary Hollingworth.

In July I caught Mary, wearing her trademark Glen Innes tartan, long enough to present her with a handsomely deserved NSW Government Community Service Award for her tireless work.

She told me that along with the joy of a life given to service, her three grown children (and impending grandchildren) are a powerful motivation to keep on giving.



Tenders called for Armidale Hospital's \$60m upgrade

THE starting gun has been fired on the redevelopment of the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital, with the allocation of \$26.22 million in the 2016-17 NSW Budget.

This funding allows tenders for the \$60 million project to be let out and for major work to begin on a vital development for the Northern Tablelands. An announcement on the winning tenders is imminent.

This is a serious investment by the State in the future of Armidale as a regional medical centre.

When the upgrade is complete, far fewer Northern Tablelands residents will have to travel far away from their

homes and families to get specialist medical attention.

The redevelopment will centre around a new four-storey building which will be directly linked to each floor of the existing three-storey main hospital building. There will be a new emergency department to receive patients from O'Dell Street, new in-patient ward, four new operating theatres, a central sterilising supplies department and a new and expanded critical care unit.

Few towns of 25,000 people anywhere in the world could claim ownership of outstanding clinical and community health services alongside leading teaching and research facilities.



Looking over the original bricks from Armidale Hospital's demolished 1911 infectious diseases ward, to be reused in the \$60 million hospital redevelopment.



With Armidale Regional Council general manager Glenn Wilcox at Armidale Airport after announcing the \$6.3 million upgrade.

\$6.3 million start for air transport hub

WITH a \$6.3 million State Government grant, Armidale Regional Airport is scheduled for an upgrade that will set up the airport precinct to become a regional transport hub.

When I announced the grant in June, I noted that the objective is not just to build a better terminal, but to make it the centrepiece of a new manufacturing and transport precinct.

The initial aim is to improve the airport experience for passengers and airlines by increasing the terminal's size and sophistication, and providing the infrastructure to allow annual passenger numbers to increase from 140,000 to an anticipated 200,000.

The upgrade will wrap the current terminal building

in a much bigger structure that will provide the capacity for baggage scanning – a prerequisite if larger passenger aircraft, like the Bombardier Q400, are to be used on the Armidale route.

Last year I announced \$1.5 million to increase the size of the airside parking apron, which will also support bigger aircraft.

The wider plan is to make the entire airport precinct a vibrant hub for manufacturing, with air transport at its heart.

I commend Armidale Regional Council for this vision. Not just Armidale, but the whole region stands to benefit from this investment.

Bridge removes transport pinch-point

THE last freight pinch-point in the Northern Tablelands section of Thunderbolts Way disappeared in June with the opening of the new dual-lane Abington Bridge.

The original one-lane wooden bridge carried traffic over Abington Creek for 92 years, but it was load- and speed-limited to modern traffic.

Heavy and over-width vehicles had to detour about 30 kilometres, the new bridge effectively condenses 30 km of wasted travel for heavy vehicles into a few hundred metres.

The NSW Government contributed \$705,000 towards the \$1.4 million cost of the new Abington Bridge, under its Fixing Country Roads program.



Cutting the ribbon to open the new \$1.4 million Abington Bridge.

It follows the State's \$3.5 million funding of the \$4.2m Emu Creek bridge, opened last year, which replaced the 96-year-old Emu Creek crossing with a dual-lane concrete bridge.

Inverell Hospital

AS AN admirer of Inverell's self-driven development, I was delighted that this year's State Budget allocated \$1 million to help finalise planning for the \$30 million Inverell Hospital redevelopment.

This is the same funding that brought Armidale Hospital to its current stage of hands-on construction, so I'm confident that I'll be able to go into bat for the Inverell project in the 2017-18 Budget.

It is proposed that the redeveloped hospital will include, among other improvements, new operating theatres, emergency department and post-operative recovery areas, a new and expanded renal dialysis unit and an inpatient unit with special provision for palliative care and dementia patients. There will also be a new maternity and paediatrics unit, ambulatory care and outpatient spaces.

Within 10 years, based on current population trends, almost half the hospital's activity will centre around people aged 70-years and older.

Moree's \$2m rail fix

BY SPENDING \$2 million to repair 2.8 kilometres of the old Moree-Inverell rail line, about 250,000 tonnes of grain and the equivalent of 6,000 trucks of cotton and pulses can be sent to Newcastle by rail, instead of being trucked to Queensland ports.

The rail restoration will link Broadbent Grain's Moree receival facility, on the currently defunct Inverell line, back to the main rail line servicing Moree. That means that instead of trucking produce to Queensland, currently Broadbent's cheapest option, it can rail produce to Newcastle. More jobs for NSW!



Fixing Country Rail

Out and about in the electorate



Talking leadership at the Highlands Small Schools Primary Leadership Luncheon



Pulling on the gloves at Bingara's new community gym



With the Nullamanna Public Hall Trust announcing funding support.



Greeting Armidale's new probationary constables.



Laying a wreath at Inverell's commemoration of the Vietnam war's Long Tan battle.



Announcing funding to restore war memorials at Glen Innes.



Discussing environmental restoration after Southern New England Landcare received new funding.



Inspecting the classic old Boomi sports ground bar.



Meeting Wonksy, the dog-artist whose exhibition supported the great work of BackTrack.