



*Rob*

# OAKESHOTT INDEPENDENT



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## Rob's Word

**Welcome to the first newsletter on federal matters and a summary of the first 100 days as your local MP in the Australian Parliament.**

With a global financial crunch landing the week I arrived in Parliament, we have seen the extraordinary response from Government of \$37.3 billion of spending in this first 100 day period. This newsletter will outline some areas where this spending has assisted life on the Mid-North Coast, as well as a snapshot of other local events/outcomes of significance. I hope you enjoy it, and I welcome all feedback – good and bad. This newsletter will be a semi-regular point of contact with you and I hope to report back to you about four times per year through this format.

Other ways for us to communicate also exist. A website is now 'alive' and feel free to provide any feedback you want through [www.robakeshott.com](http://www.robakeshott.com), or via email at [robert.oakeshott.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:robert.oakeshott.mp@aph.gov.au). Likewise, our office also appreciates the 'old school' methods of communication and the addresses at the top of this page are available for any handwritten mail, phonecalls, or even personal drop-ins. Basically, if you have a problem or issue that you want to try and resolve with the Federal Government, we are here and willing to help where we can. We view our core business as helping you with Government wherever possible.

Alongside this role is the job of trying to determine the best laws possible for the Mid-North Coast and for Australia. In the first half of 2009, we can expect debate on increasing the pension rate, debate on industrial relations laws, and debate on climate change targets set just prior to Christmas. These are just three of many examples where national policy discussions will soon occur, and laws will be decided, so any feedback from anyone on these topics is definitely welcome.

And then, at the same time, we will continue to drive long-term outcomes for the Mid-North Coast with our own specific policy agenda. Early in 2009, I will be releasing a policy document for the Lyne electorate – the first time in 60 years that I am aware of this happening. It will very much be focused on the wants and needs of our region, and how best we can achieve them. Again, when this is released, all feedback is welcome, as it will be a working document that I hope reflects the wishes of our area in the best way possible.

*Enjoy this first newsletter,*

## \$1.43m for greener electorate

Twelve local environmental projects received \$1.43 million under the Federal Government's Caring for our Country initiative.

### Projects include:

- Restoration of the coastal corridor at Hallidays Point by the Manning Coastcare Group – \$87, 179
- Enhancement of the coastal dunes and wildlife corridor system between Crescent Head and Port Macquarie by the Macleay Landcare Network - \$85, 381
- Coastal habitat rehabilitation in the Hastings and Camden Haven catchments by Port Macquarie Hastings Council - \$45,372

For a full list of projects or more details on the Caring For Our Country program go to [www.robakeshott.com](http://www.robakeshott.com) or phone 6552 5222 or 6584 2911.

Another green initiative in our electorate is the Green Gym pilot program which encourages people to improve their wellbeing by participating in a healthy activity that also improves the environment.

Green Gym volunteers have been assisting with koala habitat restoration around Port Macquarie and working to improve beach and coastal environments with the assistance of a \$100,000 grant from the Federal Department of Health.

For more details see [www.conservation-volunteers.com.au](http://www.conservation-volunteers.com.au) or call 6552 5222 or 6584 2911.



Rob Oakeshott (left) and State MP Peter Beseling (right) with the Green Gym volunteers. They are (back from left) Mark Foster, Michael-Halliday, Paul Price and, front, Erika Frenda and Roz Anderson.



Rob is joined by children from Herons Creek Public School at the recent opening of their \$90,000 undercover playground. Yes, this is the whole school in the photo! And yes, small schools have an incredibly valuable role to play not only on the Mid-North Coast but throughout Australia.

## One down, one to go

In September I met with the Education Minister Julia Gillard to discuss the future of the Port Macquarie and Taree Australian Technical College sites, which had 350 students, over 40 staff and an uncertain future post 2009.

The Port Macquarie campus' fate is now largely resolved and it will be renamed the Newman Senior Technical College. There still remain some 'access and equity' concerns to be sorted out between government and non-government sectors but the general issues are now secure.

In the Manning, no decisions have yet been made over the future of the Hot Tuna site where the Taree campus was located and discussions continue.

I am continuing negotiations with Canberra, local business and education providers in relation to the future of this important site with decisions to be made by June/July this year. Anyone who wants to be involved in this process can contact our office on 6552 5222 or 6584 2911.

## Manning and Hastings Skills Development Groups now alive!

I am really pleased to be part of a new era in the provision of education on the Mid-North Coast which will see traditionally competing providers work together for the common goal of lifting education standards in the region.

Two working groups have been formed and have now met to begin the long journey of seeing improvements to school retention rates, greater equity and access to facilities, improved post-secondary qualification levels across the board and even greater engagement with business on vocational education.

Our region has some challenges when it comes to education, with comparative statistics showing we are behind the rest of Australia in many areas. I, and I know many others within the region, are very keen to see this change for the better.

## Study For A Job, Study For A Job, Study For A Job!

At risk of repeating myself, this is the mantra you will continue to hear as we fight higher-than-average unemployment and lower-than-average wages in our region through a renewed commitment to education.

As part of this push, we need to take full advantage of any and all Commonwealth programs.

The Education Tax Refund (ETR) and free childcare diplomas are just two recent examples.

Under the ETR, parents can obtain a tax rebate of up to \$1500 per child for any equipment bought for the home to assist with learning. This can include computer hardware, software and, importantly, improvements to internet connections.

I encourage you to think about it, contact my office on 65525222 or 6584 2911, or seek professional advice on how to access the rebate.

The Government is also offering to pay fees for students enrolling this year in a TAFE-delivered Diploma of Children's Services or an Advanced Diploma of Children's Services – another great incentive for anyone who has thought about a career in childcare services.

**Go to [www.nci.tafensw.edu.au](http://www.nci.tafensw.edu.au) for more details.**

I will continue to put examples such as these to the community and ask you to follow them up where you can.



## Welcome to New Office Team

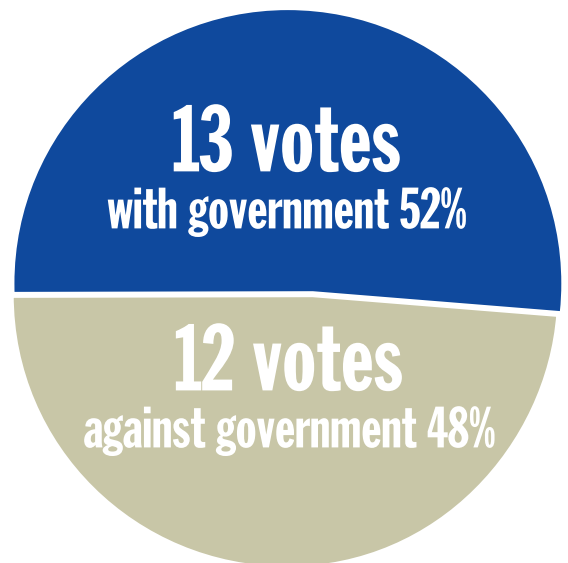
Part of the new role as Federal MP is to have a back-up crew working on the many issues faced by an electorate of 90,000 people. The new team are working hard with me on getting the best possible outcomes from Canberra for you. They are all good people and I hope you get to meet them soon.

The Federal team (from left) is Zita McGregor, Kaye Newell, Garth Norris, Jane Titterington, Michael Chappell and myself.

## Voting records so far...

As an Independent MP I am very aware of my accountability and transparency in representing you personally, as a region and as a nation. Here is my voting record for the first three months in the Parliament. I will continue to weigh up each issue based entirely on its merits to you, the Mid-North Coast and Australia - no vested or outside interests, no fear or favour. Any time you want to discuss any of these issues, feel free to contact me on 6552 5222 or 6584 2911 or via email at [robert.oakeshott.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:robert.oakeshott.mp@aph.gov.au)

Pie chart illustrating Votes with the government (13) and Votes against the government (12)



My maiden speech to Parliament and other information can be found at [www.roboakshott.com](http://www.roboakshott.com)



## Swearing In Canberra

One of the first jobs for a new Federal MP is the formal 'swearing-in' process at parliament.

No - it doesn't involve bad language but is the formality of entering the parliament for the first time and meeting all your new colleagues.

There were plenty of jokes about "fresh meat" but I can say I have yet to meet an MP in Canberra I haven't liked. Unbelievable I know... but true.

This swearing-in was closely followed by my first speech to the parliament. Every new member has 20 minutes to talk about issues important to them and their electorate and this speech is available at [www.roboakshott.com](http://www.roboakshott.com) or by ringing 6552 5222 or 6584 2911 for a hard copy.

All feedback is very welcome.

## \$3 million for local councils

The three councils in our region recently shared in the spoils of \$250 million released in the Federal Government's newly established

### **Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Fund.**

Funded projects include:

- Comboyne tennis court (\$50,000)
- Wauchope Rocks Ferry Reserve upgrade (\$100,000)
- Tacking Point Lighthouse coastal walkway (\$100,000)
- Crescent Head Pool free-standing undercover area (\$30,000)
- Kempsey CBD improvements (\$138,000)

Greater Taree City Council will announce its successful projects by the end of January.

For more details, go to your council's website at either  
[www.hastings.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hastings.nsw.gov.au),  
[www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gtcc.nsw.gov.au),  
[www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au).

## \$10.4 Billion

### **Economic Security Strategy a winner for the Mid-North Coast**

Almost 44,000 households in our electorate received an early Christmas gift in the form of one-off payments to pensioners, carers and eligible families from the Federal Government. This was the third highest number of cheques into an electorate out of the 150 electorates nation-wide.

Local retailers reported a spike in trading from mid-December so, whether you agree with the overall handout or not, it is hard to argue against this being a significant and timely boost to our economy.

I know there are a range of a views on this money and the way it was put into the national economy, so if you feel strongly one way or the other, please feel free to leave a comment on my website at

[www.roboakeshott.com](http://www.roboakeshott.com).

## \$50.1m for North Coast Rail and Pacific Highway

The **National Building Package** recently injected \$4.7 billion into critical infrastructure projects, including two local standout projects – the Sydney to Brisbane rail link and Pacific Highway upgrades.

This is much needed "top-up" money for both.

As rail is undoubtedly the future for our region I am very pleased to see our electorate get \$45.1 million for the Sydney to Brisbane line.

An additional \$5 million was also allocated to bring forward the work on the Pacific Highway's Taree-Port Macquarie link and the Bulahdelah by-pass. These projects are expected to be complete in about 18 months.

I recently introduced the Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese to some of the 500 employees currently working on the highway between Taree and Port Macquarie.



## \$6 million for Taree Health Campus

I was delighted to recently welcome Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon to Taree.

During her visit, the minister confirmed \$6 million in Commonwealth funding for a purpose-built Rural Health Education Campus centre at Manning Hospital which is due to be completed in 2010.

This building will help expand opportunities for trainee doctors, nurses and allied health workers and will be an important nerve centre for improving the delivery of health in the Manning region. More details are available at [www.roboakeshott.com](http://www.roboakeshott.com) or by phoning my office on 6552 5222 or 6584 2911.



Proposed design for the education campus.  
(Image courtesy of the Manning River Times)



Celebrating the opening of the Lake Cathie Medical Centre with me earlier this month were (from left) Member for Port Macquarie Peter Besseling, Dr Lorraine Evans, Practice Manager Nicole Lewis-Bain and Dr Sam Nelapati.

## \$1.4 million Lake Cathie Medical Centre open

The \$1.4 million Lake Cathie Medical Centre is now open. This new facility is a welcome boost to primary health services at a time when the shortage of GPs in our region is placing extreme pressure on our hospitals.

Congratulations to Dr Sam Nelapati and his team and good luck in business.

### But wait, there's more!

Further relief has come in the form of recent government approval for three GPs in the Camden Haven region under the District of Workforce Shortage scheme.

These approvals, along with the opening of the Medical Centre at Lake Cathie, are the start of a long campaign to improve community based health resources within our growing Mid-North Coast communities.

### But wait... there's more!

I am also working with North Coast Area Health and the Hastings GP Network to lobby government for an overhaul of the classification system which currently denies our GPs financial incentives which are available to doctors working in other rural areas.

For further details ring our office on 6552 5222 or 6584 2911 or go to [www.roboakeshott.com](http://www.roboakeshott.com).

## \$55 million request for hospital lifeline

Port Macquarie residents have made it clear that a fourth pod at Port Macquarie Base Hospital should be a priority and both State and Federal Governments are now being lobbied hard.

In November I sent a submission to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd for \$55 million to finance this much-needed upgrade from the \$10 billion Commonwealth Health and Hospital Fund that was established last year.

Significantly, the North Coast Area Health Service and NSW Health Department have also included the expansion in their submissions for the fund.

We will continue to lobby on this and if you want to help, please write to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd at PO Box 6022, House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600. More details are available at [www.roboakeshott.com](http://www.roboakeshott.com).

I will continue to work with the Member for Port Macquarie Peter Besseling over the coming 12 months to ensure every possible avenue of government support is exhausted in relation to this critical project.

## The Good, The Bad And The Ugly

### The Good

Thank you for the kind words and support on the birth at the end of last year of our third child Angus, baby brother to Sophie and Olivia. After six weeks, all five in the clan are doing well and he made for a special present tucked under our Christmas tree.



(Image courtesy of the Port Macquarie News)

### The Bad

As a hip-hop dancer, I'm told I make a good politician, and here's the picture that proves it! The Deadly Days festival in Taree, which provided the backdrop to this artistic calamity, was a successful and well-received community event and saw over 500 indigenous community members from the Mid-North Coast explore their education options at the Taree TAFE campus. With 50% of the Manning indigenous population under the age of 21 it is a "no-brainer" that we emphasise education as a key to our whole community's future. More details on education options can be found at [www.nci.tafensw.edu.au](http://www.nci.tafensw.edu.au)



### The Ugly

Some might suggest my nose is an easy target, but I didn't see this one coming from boxing trainer Troy Glover, who runs free self defence and exercise classes for indigenous youth at the Punching Monkey Gymnasium in Taree. This excellent program is one of many funded through a \$300,000 grant from the Federal Attorney General's Department as part of crime prevention strategies in the Manning region. The program will run throughout 2009 and I encourage young people in the Manning area who are interested in having a go to drop in and see Troy at his gym, or ring him on 65500811.



(Image courtesy of the Manning River Times)

If you want to help Rob, go to [www.roboakeshott.com](http://www.roboakeshott.com) or ring **02 6552 6522** or **6584 2911** and let's get the Mid-North Coast moving forward together.

**CONTACT DETAILS** Robert Oakeshott Independent Member for Lyne

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