



# OAKESHOTT INDEPENDENT

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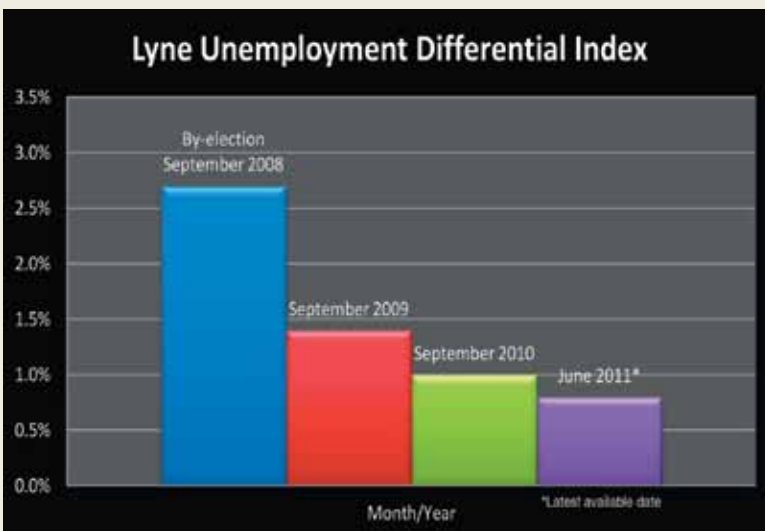
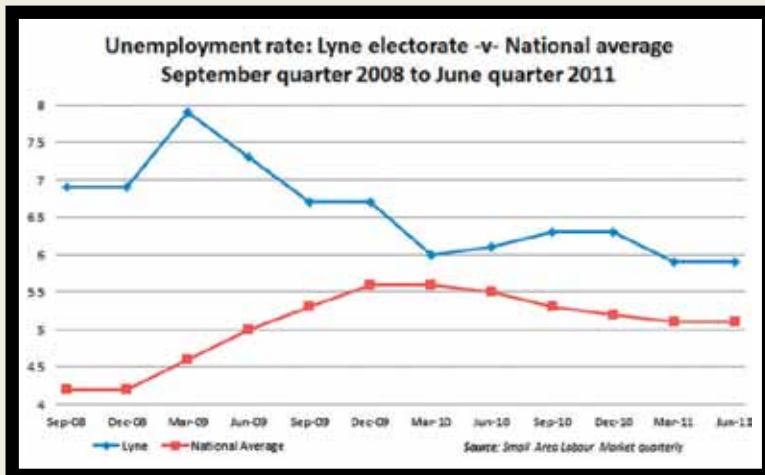
Port Macquarie News: September 30, 2011  
Manning River Times: December 3-4, 2010

## Local jobless rate hits record low – 5.9%

At 5.9 per cent, the Lyne electorate's unemployment rate is at its lowest level in the seat's 60-year history. This result reflects our resilient small business sector and the hard work of many people. On the back of our Regional Employment Plan, we have consistently narrowed the gap between local and national figures over the past two years. Our region still faces economic challenges, but as a community we have made some important changes that are finally delivering results for the Mid-North Coast. Our record low unemployment rate is one example of these improvements.

## We are closing the unemployment gap!

These graphs show the difference between unemployment levels within the Lyne electorate, and the national average. Historically, our electorate has always had jobless rates well above the national figure, but as you can see, the difference has more than halved since September 2008. The gap is closing...

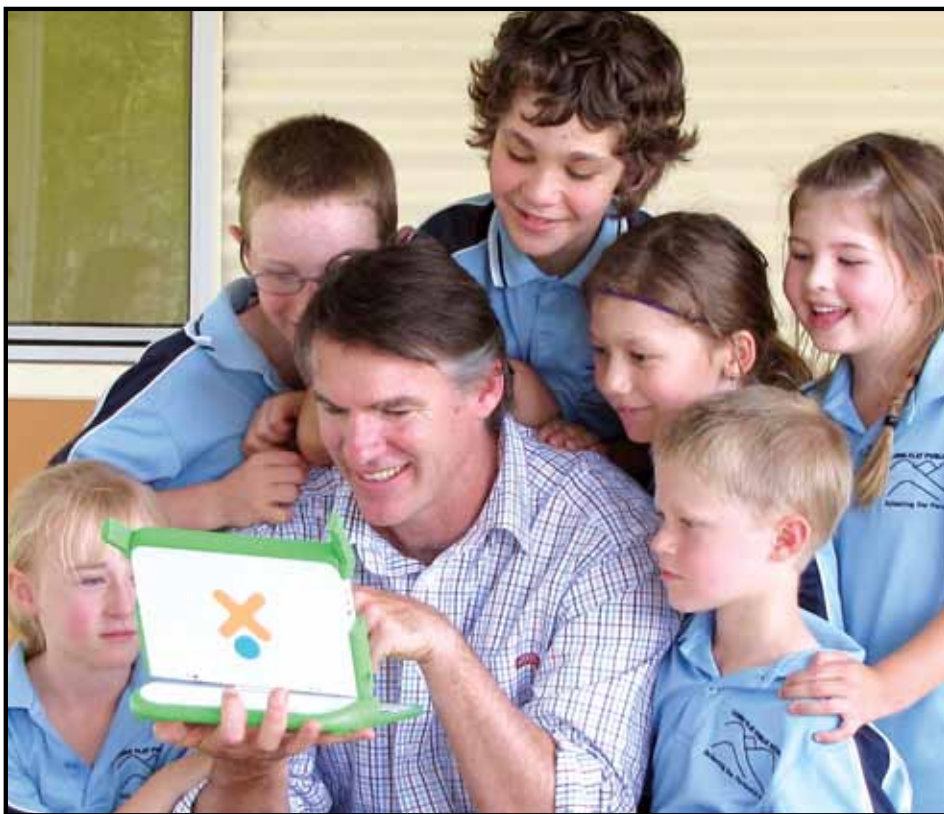


## \$265 million for students in regional Australia

In the 60-year history of the Lyne electorate, more money than ever before is being spent on local education and learning. For example, the \$265 million Youth Allowance package that was passed in the House of Representatives last month is a vital step in addressing access and participation rates in education. I am pleased to have been involved in negotiating this package with the Prime Minister, while at the same time killing off the inner-regional versus outer-regional deal done by the Labor, Liberal and National parties in the Senate two years ago. This new money is now going to where it is needed most and students in regional communities like ours are the winners.

## 21st Century learning - one laptop at a time

For 60 years our region has accepted poorer, indigenous and regional students being 30 per cent less likely to engage in higher learning than their richer, urban, non-indigenous peers. This is a shameful failure of policy. Australia is in urgent need of practical solutions that make a real difference to addressing this inequality. The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) program is doing just that, with Long Flat Public School students the latest beneficiaries. Children at Mt George Public School have also been provided with purpose-built laptops through this program. 21st Century learning embraces information communication technology and our region is pushing hard to provide more opportunities for this to happen.



*Students at Long Flat Public received free laptop computers last month courtesy of the One Laptop Per Child program. ▲*



*Jenny Higgins is the new Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinator supporting the Gloucester area. ▲*

## Meet Don and Jenny

Creating new pathways for students from their school education through to higher learning and employment has been a central plank of our local education and employment strategy. This work has now received a further boost with the appointment of two Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators working in the Lyne electorate. Mr Don Mackenzie is serving the Mid-North Coast and Northern Rivers while Ms Jenny Higgins is responsible for the Hunter/Central Coast region, which includes Gloucester. Their role involves supporting existing education pathways and linking new local initiatives with relevant government programs and funding, while complementing the role of our Local Employment Coordinator Renee Hawkins. As a region, we are serious about the role education pathways play in building stronger communities and a more resilient local economy. Anyone interested in education and training pathways is welcome to contact Don on 0432 750786 or Jenny on 0412 780191, while Renee is also available on 0402 507697 to talk jobs.

## Outcomes, outcomes, outcomes...

In the 60-year history of the Lyne electorate, we are now delivering more than ever before. Here's an update on just some of the improvements being made across our region.

### On regional projects, including airports:

A host of local projects are vying for a share of a further \$200 million being offered in round two of the new Regional Development Australia Fund, which opened earlier this month. The fund has already delivered 35 projects across rural Australia. Meanwhile, Virgin Airline's commencement of direct flights between Port Macquarie and Brisbane last month has reinforced the importance of local airport upgrades at Taree, Kempsey and Port Macquarie to the region's economic future. The \$19 million regional aviation plan has been funded by the Federal Government and is the largest allocation to local airports in the electorate's 60-year history.

**Status:** *\$200 million second round of RDA Fund now open and airport upgrades on track.*

### On health:

A \$100 million redevelopment of Kempsey District Hospital is among the projects being submitted by the NSW Government to the \$475 million second regional priority round of the Commonwealth Health and Hospitals Fund (HHF). The proposal has strong support from the community. More than 60 regional health projects, including the \$110 million Port Macquarie Base Hospital (PMBH) redevelopment, were funded in round one. Designs for the fourth and fifth pods at PMBH are complete and construction work is expected to begin in the second half of 2012. Kempsey is understood to be one of nine submissions from the NSW Government, so it will be highly competitive from here. For more details contact the electorate office on 6552 4780 or 6584 2911.

**Status:** *Work progressing at Port Base Hospital and the Kempsey submission is now in.*

### On education:

A \$500 million funding boost to regional and rural education will see \$20 million allocated to a multi-partner university presence on the Mid-North Coast, the biggest funding boost to education in the 60-year history of the Lyne electorate. Applications to the fund closed earlier this month and announcements are expected in the new year.

**Status:** *Regional funding announcements are expected soon.*

### On roads and bridges:

More than \$30 million of work on roads and timber bridges in the Manning and on the Bucketts Way at Krumbach was secured in the 2011/12 Federal Budget. Priority projects are being submitted by local government for assessment and approval. A \$1 billion announcement in the Federal Budget to bring forward works on the Pacific Highway includes \$35 million for the Port Macquarie to Kempsey section.

**Status:** *Local roads and bridge projects funded and being submitted for assessment. National reform of local road funding being pursued.*

### On jobs:

Since we successfully lobbied in 2009 to become a 'priority employment region', the Mid-North Coast has achieved record low unemployment at 5.9% and continues to close the gap on national and state averages. This lobbying has secured a full-time Local Employment Co-ordinator working with locals on a Regional Employment Plan, and two local Jobs Expos that have placed almost 400 people into work.

**Status:** *Next Mid-North Coast Jobs Expo on February 17, 2012.*

### Securing our aged care workforce:

Another direct outcome of this continued support has been the development of an industry specific aged care jobs plan to help address skills shortages as our population continues to age. Aged care employers, job services agencies, training providers and other stakeholders are working with a specialist project officer on strategies to maintain a sustainable aged care workforce on the Mid-North Coast. This work is vitally important to the future of local aged care services and anyone wanting to get involved is welcome to contact the project officer, Jan Johnson, on 0418 289408.

**Status:** *Aged care jobs plan now delivering.*

## Simpler and fewer taxes:

Most people would prefer fewer, more efficient taxes and a simpler tax system. We led this fight in the recent Australian Tax Forum and the following is now happening:

- Legislation introduced to allow small businesses to instantly write-off business assets costing up to \$6500 (a \$6.75 million annual benefit to our local business community)
- Legislation introduced to refund the 15 per cent superannuation contributions tax for people earning less than \$37,000 (an extra \$10.7 million a year for low income earners locally).
- Legislation passed to lift the tax-free threshold from \$6,000 to \$18,200 in July 2012, with plans for a further increase to \$21,000 currently being considered.
- Business Working Group formed, to report prior to Christmas, looking at business taxation issues including the potential for tax benefits in loss carry-back and equity financing.
- State Tax Working Group formed, to report by year end 2012, looking at harmonisation of state taxation, fewer state taxes, and options to eliminate bad state taxes

such as insurance taxes and stamp duties on property.

- \$1 million per year for further detailed research on contentious areas of future tax reform, such as housing, superannuation and road-user charging.
- Better governance arrangements now being finalised regarding the Australian Taxation Office itself so as to protect the integrity of our tax base.
- Agreement from government on a full parliamentary debate on comprehensive tax reform and negotiations now underway for a 10-year roadmap for tax reform for Australia.
- Small Business advocacy group COSBOA (Council of Small Business of Australia) and the Australian Tax Office now meeting regularly to deal with administrative, regulatory, and red tape issues facing small business.



*With New England MP Tony Windsor and other delegates at the Australian Tax Forum in Canberra. ▲*

## Taking a stand on coal seam gas

Congratulations to the hundreds of residents who attended the Project Blue protest against coal seam gas mining at Taree last month.

As the only local parliamentarian to write to the NSW Government inquiry into coal seam gas mining, I was delighted to see hundreds of residents attend the 'silent people's protest' in Taree, which coincided with the inquiry's Taree hearing.

Coal seam gas developments are determined by state planning authorities, but the potential risks associated with the extraction processes on our food-producing lands and water resources, and the hurried approval of the Gloucester wells, left me with no option but to seek federal intervention.

It is therefore pleasing to report that on the Gloucester proposal, at least, the Commonwealth did get involved. Now, the Environment Minister has extended his assessment period for a further six months until March 29 next year to allow for more water tests to be carried out.

As well, water quality issues are at the heart of a new law sponsored by my Independent parliamentary colleague, New England MP Tony Windsor, which I have seconded.

The new law, which will give the Commonwealth the means to intervene if mining ambitions represent a threat to water quality, is currently awaiting debate in parliament.

If passed, it will allow the Commonwealth to get involved in mining and coal seam gas exploration applications approved by the state, if the development has, will have or is likely to have a significant impact on the water quality, structural integrity or hydraulic balance of the water resource.

The long-term approach to securing quality water, quality soils and fresh foods are important for all Australians, and I am very keen to participate in developing sensible policies that better address these issues.



*Launching The Manning Alliance's Project Blue campaign with the alliance's chairman Peter Epov. ▲*

## \$5 million Defence contract delivers Manning jobs boost

A \$5 million Defence contract awarded to Stebercraft in Taree will bring more than 30,000 hours of new employment to the Manning. That's how much work will be required for Alan Steber and his team to supply five new General Purpose Support Vessels to the Navy. Construction on the new craft began in September, with the fifth vessel expected to be delivered by December 2012. Opportunities for Defence contracts are real and, nationally, are worth between \$5 billion and \$9 billion a year. I strongly encourage anyone interested in finding out more about these opportunities to contact our office on 6552 4780 or 6584 2911.



*Celebrating the announcement of Stebercraft's \$5 million Defence contract with Steber International CEO Alan Steber and the Manning Business Chamber's Economic Development manager, Steve Attkins.*

*Pic courtesy of the Manning River Times ▲*



*Rugby League legend Arthur Beetson and Senator Jacinta Collins joined more than 1000 job seekers and about 60 exhibitors at the second Mid-North Coast Jobs Expo in Taree.*

*Pic courtesy of the Manning River Times ▲*

## Mid-North Coast in top 3 on jobs growth

We know the unemployment rate for the electorate of Lyne is at its lowest level since the seat was formed more than 60 years ago. And after the recent release of labour force data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, employment growth is adding to the story. The bureau's figures for September revealed that the Mid-North Coast and North Coast region had the third highest employment growth throughout Australia, with the number of people working from Taree to the Tweed increasing by 12,600 people, or 5.5 per cent. This is more evidence of the local economy's resilience and a reward for good, hard, honest work by many good local people. Well done to all!

## Third Jobs and Skills Expo announced

It's on again! After placing almost 400 people directly into work at events in Port Macquarie and Taree, a third Jobs and Skills Expo has been locked in for the Mid-North Coast. The expo, which operates like a 'jobs marketplace', will bring employers, training providers and jobseekers together at the Port Macquarie Indoor Sports Stadium from 10am to 3pm on February 17. Anyone wanting to offer a job or to get involved as an exhibitor at the expo should call the Centrelink Business Hotline on 13 1158. Jobseekers wanting more information are also welcome to call on this number.

In the current political climate, when many are talking down our country and its economy for their own political interests, here are some facts to help set the record straight. As you can see from this newsletter, a lot of great work is being done in our community, and none of it by the naysayers!

## Mythbusters

### Myth-information: 'Australia is going broke'

**Fact:** Australia has one of the lowest rates of government borrowings as a percentage of GDP<sup>i</sup> in the world.

Country	Debt as a percentage of GDP	World debt ranking, out of 166 countries <sup>ii</sup>
Japan	234	1
Greece	139	3
Italy	119	7
Ireland	101	12
United States	99	13
Singapore	95	17
France	87	19
United Kingdom	81	22
Canada	80	25
Germany	76	29
Israel	74	30
<b>Australia</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>135</b>

### Myth-information: 'People are losing their jobs because Australia's going broke'

**Fact:** Australia has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the developed world. France's unemployment rate is 9.4%; United States' rate is 9.1%; Germany's is 6.2%; Greece's is 15.6%; Ireland's is 14.8%; Italy's is 6.6%; Spain's is 20.4%; Australia's is 5.2%<sup>iii</sup>.

### Myth-information: 'Nothing is getting done in this Parliament'

**Fact:**

Parliament	Pieces of legislation passed in first year <sup>iv</sup>
43rd (Current)	165
42nd (Rudd)	159
38th (Howard)	141

### Myth-information: 'Oakeshott supports one side of politics all the time'

**Fact:** The reality doesn't match the convenient rhetoric. Here are 10 examples of what has really gone on in the Parliament over the past 12 months;

Bill/Motion	Sponsoring MP	Lyne vote and outcome
National Broadband Network Financial Transparency Bill	Turnbull (Liberal)	Supported (lost)
Motion on foreign ownership of agricultural land and agribusiness	Cobb (National)	Supported (passed)
Flood Levy	Swan (Labor)	Opposed (passed)
Auditor-General Amendment Bill	Oakeshott (Independent)	Supported (passed)
Evidence Amendment (Journalists' Privilege) Bill	Wilkie (Independent)	Supported (passed)
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (Public Health and Safety) Amendment	Hartsuyker (National)	Opposed (passed)
Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Fair Protection for Firefighters) Bill	Bandt (Greens)	Supported (passed)
Social Security Amendment (Student Income Support Reforms) Bill (Youth Allowance)	Evans (Labor)	Supported (passed)
Motion to increase mental health spending and expand Headspace program	Dutton (Liberal)	Supported (passed)
Motion on Special Disability Trusts	Moylan (Liberal)	Supported (passed)

<sup>i</sup> GDP is the total market value of all final goods and services produced in a country per year <sup>ii</sup> International Monetary Fund <sup>iii</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics <sup>iv</sup> House of Representatives Statistical Digest