



Constituency Statement

Main Committee

8 February 2010

Sharon Grierson MP

Ms Grierson: (Newcastle) (4:20 PM) — I rise today to commend some of the great community work that has taken place over the last few months in the rejuvenation of the Newcastle CBD and, in particular, the Hunter Street Mall. Over three Friday nights in December of last year the Red Lantern Night Markets lit up the mall and surrounding streets. Market stalls from local artists and designers, as well as some great food, had the area buzzing with a lively atmosphere not seen for some time. Crowds of Novocastrians filled the streets, making the most of the summer weather and eclectic Christmas shopping opportunities. Those visitors spilled over into the retail shops, which opened for the evening. There was no talk of barriers, such as railway lines or parking. There were no excuses, just good entrepreneurship and successful creative ideas. Coordinated by Justine Gaudry, Alison Buchanan and Rebecca Thomson, the markets were supported by Livesites, a Newcastle City Council initiative promoting cultural events held across the Newcastle area. These individuals and groups must be congratulated for their efforts. This event coincided with Newcastle City Council's decision to finally open the mall to traffic—another successful initiative.

Prominent among the features of the markets were the wildly successful Renew Newcastle projects. A local not-for-profit organisation, Renew Newcastle was established to find short- and medium-term uses for buildings in Newcastle's CBD that are currently vacant, disused or awaiting development. Renew Newcastle aims to find artists, cultural projects and community groups to use and maintain these buildings until they become commercially viable or are actually redeveloped. It is not set up to manage long-term uses. It is not a property provider or manager. It just aims to generate activity in buildings that would otherwise sit there empty until a future long-term activity happens.

The Rudd government has been supporting the CBD too, with \$8½ million to support the relocation of the Newcastle Regional Museum into the CBD. It is those sorts of policies that are complementing the work of Newcastle City Council and Renew Newcastle. Renew Newcastle was also recognised last year with a City of Newcastle Service Award for the outstanding contributions it made to the revitalisation of the Newcastle city centre. Marcus Westbury, its leader, was awarded Newcastle Citizen of the Year for 2010. I congratulate Marcus. I also had the

pleasure of awarding a community volunteer award to Marcus Westbury last year. The Renew Newcastle project has been a breath of fresh air to the CBD, and it could not have happened without his tireless work.

Renew Newcastle's work in the Hunter Street Mall continues. This Friday just past saw the first Renew Newcastle exhibitions of 2010 in the Loop Space and Totoro's Tea House, both located in the mall. I commend Marni Jackson, a board member of Renew Newcastle, for the work she has undertaken in making such projects a success. I give my support to the regeneration of the CBD of Newcastle and the wonderful, creative entrepreneurship being shown.