



## **Newcastle's future as a world-class tourist destination**

### **Chamber of the House of Representatives**

**15 September 2011**

**Ms Grierson** (Newcastle) (16:35): After listening to the member for Wentworth, I must send him a copy of my electronic newsletter. I think he would find the last one particularly interesting; it looks at the national accounts and the strength of the Australian economy.

But I actually rise to update the House on the ongoing transformation of Newcastle into a vibrant and buzzing cultural hub, building further its potential as a world-class tourism destination. We are working very well to retain our *Lonely Planet* title of ninth best city in the world to visit. The transformation of Newcastle's economy has been truly remarkable and is now being further understood and studied all around the nation. But Newcastle's industrial past is not something that is forgotten; it remains a key element of the city's rich cultural identity.

At the Newcastle Museum, which was recently opened by Minister Simon Crean, the city's vibrant heritage is the subject of a central exhibition which takes visitors back into the BHP steelworks of old. I am told that, since its opening just a few weeks ago, thousands of visitors have marvelled at our new museum and its links with history. The federal government is supporting the continuing transformation of Newcastle; it

contributed \$8½ million to assist Newcastle City Council to realise this wonderful tourist attraction.

It is a pleasure to work with the people of Newcastle to write the next chapter in the ongoing story of Newcastle's cultural development. Last week I was delighted to again join Minister Crean in my city when he visited Newcastle Art Gallery to congratulate it on receiving \$7 million in Regional Development Australia (RDA) funding for the redevelopment and expansion of the gallery. This wonderful funding has been warmly welcomed by the gallery's director, Ron Ramsey, who has said that it will assist in the 'cultural change' of Newcastle. The expansion will increase the gallery's usable space to over 2,300 square metres, allowing many of the 5,000 previously stored pieces to be proudly displayed for visitors to admire and be inspired by, with a flow-on economic effect of more than \$17 million. We are quite blessed with significant collections that are rarely seen by the public, and these expanded facilities will allow everyone to enjoy the collections, particularly those bequeathed to the gallery by the late Bill Bowmore and the late Anne Von Bertouch, along with the many other works that have been donated, particularly those by the late Margaret Olley. The museum and the Newcastle Art Gallery are anchoring the cultural precinct and giving the Newcastle CBD the opportunity to become a significant tourist destination.

Newcastle has many other natural attractions, such as our sun, surf and sand and our lifestyle—the best of a big city with the best of a regional town—and this investment into Newcastle's cultural infrastructure fosters the innovation and change central to Newcastle's future prosperity. Our cultural diversity is further demonstrated by the

upcoming This Is Not Art Festival, one of the nation's leading independent arts festivals. It features over 400 local, national and international dedicated artists, from performance poets to the latest new digital media innovators. Newcastle is the place they meet to collaborate and create culture, and to celebrate the National Young Writers Festival, which is a part of the TINA Festival. I wish TINA and its organisers well for the upcoming festival during the October long weekend.

However, I note with regret that the new state member for Newcastle, Tim Owen, in his naivety, I suppose, was quoted in the *Newcastle Herald* this morning claiming responsibility for the delivery of the \$7 million RDA funding for the Newcastle Region Art Gallery. He would be far better to acknowledge that he was at the back of a very long queue of sustained community support and lobbying for increased funding for the gallery. Newcastle City Council and RDA Hunter must also be acknowledged for their strong support. Good things do happen in Newcastle through the collective power of many, but the fact is that in his wisdom Minister Crean did not make the \$7 million of federal funding conditional to matching state funds. Instead, he was satisfied that with the funds committed by Newcastle City Council, those raised by the community and our \$7 million a significant stage of the development could occur.

With the people of Newcastle I look forward to the state government matching our contribution in the next budget with a further \$7 million. I also look forward to Newcastle's continued development as a world-class tourist destination, and I thank Minister Crean and the federal Labor government for their ongoing support to our city.