



**Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle**

**4 September 2008
Adjournment Speech to the Federal Parliament**

Newcastle City Council Elections

Ms Grierson (Newcastle) (12.55 p.m.)—I want to draw attention to the fact that before we return to parliament, in just over a week, local government elections will be held in New South Wales. The election in Newcastle is very important because our city faces several important challenges. Our CBD is facing the challenges of revitalisation, continuing the wonderful work started by the Building Better Cities program, and of ensuring it has a diverse heart that reflects retail, residential, commercial, creative and recreational activities. We also have to overcome significant infrastructure neglect across the whole city that is delaying our progress. Another challenge for our city is providing effective and efficient management as we bring in a new general manager, who I wish well and I welcome to our city. We also need a council and councillors who will best serve the basic needs of our people and our residents. We need to know that essential services are delivered in the best, most timely and most efficient ways that represent value for money. The other great challenge for the city of Newcastle is as a leader: as the regional capital that helps to lead the development of the Hunter region.

Given those challenges, I wish to say that I think it is time for new leadership, a new set of councillors and a new approach in our city. We need leadership that is genuinely collaborative, consultative and inclusive of all the stakeholders of our city, without fear or favour. We also need leadership that assists our city to have a strong and united voice that reflects the vision of the people of Newcastle for the city's future. We need councillors with a more modern focus. Because working with younger people I do know that they have new ways of looking at engagement and of communicating. They also understand best practice in management and efficiencies. They understand that it takes some particular modern practices to build a strong, effective and efficient city and to give people confidence in the probity and accountability of the city council. We need councillors in our city who are willing to commit to the young people of our city, to value them and to understand that they make an important contribution. Regrettably, in our city they have become the focus of negative attention because of the emphasis on binge drinking and those sorts of minority antisocial events. It is time for our young people to be given more encouragement. Certainly there should be more encouragement for the creative side of our city that enriches their lives and allows them to remain in our cities and become great citizens of the future. That is the sort of harmony that I think our new councillors could build.

I want to commend to the city of Newcastle the Labor team. They are young. They are vibrant. They are committed. They are the youngest team we have ever put up, with an average age of less than 40, and they are standing for council at the peak of their careers and family life. It is unusual because city councillors are often people who have retired and are coming back to contribute something, but I think it is important in this century that we take on new and younger people who are willing to make a real investment. So I commend Sharon Claydon, Tim Crakanthorp, Nuatali Nelmes and Michael Jackson, who are all in lead positions in their wards. I also commend to the people of Newcastle our lord mayoral candidate, Marilyn Eade, an experienced and effective councillor who has stood aside from a council position to put herself before the people solely as a lord mayoral candidate willing to lead a young and vibrant team who share her and their ambitions for our city: so that it can truly take its place as a regional capital and live up to the reputation it has earned—but perhaps does not communicate to the rest of Australia as strongly as it could—as the seventh largest city, by population, in Australia.

With a new Federal Government in place – one that is intent on reform, nation-building and prosperity through social inclusion, there is a great opportunity for Newcastle City Council to elect a new team of civic leaders to work collaboratively to make our 2020 visions a reality.