



**Sharon Grierson MP  
Federal Member for Newcastle**

**29 September 2008**

**WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY CABINET  
LAMBTON HIGH SCHOOL**

I pay my respects to the Awabakal people, their elders past and present and thank Phyllis for her generous welcome to country - a ceremony that took place in our parliament in February for the first time in this nation's history.

Thank you Martin for hosting Newcastle's first community cabinet here at Lambton High.

You can be justly proud of your students' achievements and performances tonight and that your school boasts the current holder of the National Award for Excellence by a Teacher, Carolyn Hayden.

And thank you Newcastle for being here with me tonight to take part in our government - your government - and to welcome Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, his Deputy, Julia Gillard and the members of his Cabinet to our great city.

When the Department told me they had to close the registration for this community cabinet after just 2 days because of the overwhelming response, I told them that's because in Newcastle we "never let a chance go by."

After all, as a federation seat, we've been waiting for tonight for over a hundred years.

Prime Minister, your genuine interest in our city is appreciated.

Our history is well known to you – we were the first place in Australia to mine coal, to forge metal, and to engage with a foreign enemy from our shore.

Over the years we've made the steel, exported the coal and built the ships to grow the wealth of this nation.

We've featured on the world stage for healing our city after the devastation of the 1989 earthquake, the 2005 Bali bombing and the 2007 June Long weekend storm.

But as we meet with you tonight, it is our future that is in your hands - just like the new-born baby Carson that you held today at John Hunter Hospital.

This is an exciting time for Newcastle, because we are at the centre of the big challenges facing this country – sustaining a strong economy, ensuring fair workplaces, overcoming infrastructure lags, building skills, knowledge and research, finding climate change solutions and nurturing the health and well being of our people.

We've put on our thinking caps and rolled up our sleeves in all these areas and we're more than happy to share our ideas with you.

Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, this is your fourth visit to Newcastle as my colleague, friend and leader.

You're always welcome.

Newcastle is a great place to come if you want frank and honest feedback given in a spirit of respect and cooperation.

I know that you will receive that tonight.

Because the people of Newcastle share with you a passion and a fierce desire to build the best possible future for our nation - a future that always has people and communities, their well-being and their security, at its heart.

Please join me and my fellow Members of Parliament from our region - Joel Fitzgibbon, Greg Combet and Jill Hall - in welcoming the Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, to Newcastle.