



**Sharon Grierson MP  
Federal Member for Newcastle**

**4 December 2008  
Statement to the Federal Parliament**

**ONE YEAR REPORT CARD & FUTURE AGENDA FOR NEWCASTLE**

**Ms GRIERSON** (Newcastle) (12.10 pm)—I would also like to reflect on the first 12 months of the Rudd Labor government. For the people of Newcastle, I am very proud to say that we have been able to deliver on all our election commitments. They have ranged from \$10 million for our stadium, the Energy Australia Stadium. The government has certainly have delivered that: the construction has commenced. The building of the new western grandstand, with the cooperation of the state government, is also underway.

We have seen the completion of the \$51.8 million Weakleys Drive overpass. I was delighted to attend the opening of that overpass to traffic in October. I acknowledge that that was a project that began with the support of Mr Baldwin, the member for Paterson, prior to my taking over that area of his seat in the redistribution. It has been a good relationship with RTA—one that has delivered a very much needed traffic solution, particularly for the people in Thornton area of my electorate.

Health has been an outstanding achievement over the first 12 months of the Rudd Labor government for the people of Newcastle. The government not only provided a Medicare licence for the Mater hospital PET scanner; we also gave \$2.2 million to improve and upgrade the scanning equipment and the facilities. I must thank Minister Roxon. It was her visit to those facilities where she observed firsthand the need for them to be upgraded. We are very lucky that people who are suffering from cancer in particular are now able to have the benefit of the PET scanner, which makes very good diagnoses for treatment and prognoses.

We have also delivered to the people of Newcastle 50 new mental health nursing places at Newcastle University. Being a regional city, we provide services to the whole region for mental health. There is a critical workforce shortage in this area, and those 50 new mental health nursing places will be well received.

We also delivered on an election promise that we would fund the completion of the Hunter Dementia and Memory Resource Centre. We provided \$200,000 to complete that facility, and I congratulate Alzheimer's Australia for working so well with us in the region and also the community who helped to fund that very much needed centre. We have also made sure that the GP Access After Hours service is assured of three years funding.

Tenders have been called for a Medicare licence for one MRI machine in the Newcastle-Hunter-Maitland region. The Mater hospital in my electorate is the biggest provider of oncology services in the state, so I am sure its tender will be competitive.

We have also delivered an education revolution. I know that Newcastle University were pleased to receive \$13.7 million to improve infrastructure and student amenities. Our stage 1 computer roll-out saw 2,500 computers allocated to electorate. We have also started scoping for the new early learning centre that will be built in the Hamilton-Merewether area. I look forward to a further announcement about that before the end of the year, making sure that that is delivered.

On the front of fighting climate change, we are a carbon dependent economy and for two years now the community, industry and I have worked very hard together to shape our economy in the future direction of sustainability and clean energy. \$25 million for clean coal research at CSIRO Newcastle was delivered in the May budget. Scoping is almost complete for the National Solar Institute, which will have its headquarters at CSIRO, Newcastle. And we have tendered for the Clean Energy Enterprise Connect Centre—something I would very much like to see located in the Newcastle electorate to give the critical mass to that direction of our economy. So, overall, I do know that not only have we delivered wonderful outcomes to the people of Newcastle, they have also been recognised in some wonderful ways.

I thank the Prime Minister for the community cabinet coming to Newcastle. I also thank him for being part of Andrew Johns's walk, the Joey Johns walk to Sydney to draw attention to mental illness and to bipolar disorder earlier this year. I also congratulate three people in particular: Newcastle's teacher of the year, who won the national teacher of the year, Carolyn Hayden; Dr John Wright, who was awarded the lifetime achievement medal by CSIRO; and the young Master Builders Australia national apprentice of the year, Andrew George.

A wonderful year for Newcastle.

**Ms GRIERSON** (Newcastle) (12.29 pm)—I am delighted to stand and speak further to my previous speech about the achievements of this first year and extend it to the future agenda for the electorate of Newcastle. I would like to lay out some of the areas we have succeeded in and where we will be building on our strengths in the future. One of the good things that Newcastle has done—and fortunately I have been able to work with our stakeholders for the last seven years very successfully—has been to build the knowledge base of our economy. Manufacturers were some of the first people to take on quality standards and to position themselves as a knowledge based industry. Of course, the challenge for them in the future, as in the whole nation, is to increase exports. That is an area I look forward to working on with them in my electorate.

We have certainly built a knowledge base around clean energy at CSIRO Newcastle, the energy flagship in the Energy Division, and at Newcastle University. Since we started a couple of years ago working towards a more sustainable economy, we certainly have seen CSIRO strengthened with the National Solar Institute to be put there, and

Newcastle University has set up a clean energy research centre. BHP, unfortunately, has closed its technology centre, but we are negotiating as hard as we can to see if there is a possibility to keep them involved in the clean energy research sector in Newcastle, and I hope that those talks can progress satisfactorily. It is important now that we have our research entities in Newcastle working so well that we do attract more partnerships with national, regional and international corporations.

In the field of medical research, we are very hopeful that the Hunter Medical Research Institute will receive the infrastructure funding it does need in the future. We know there are competing needs, but it is a well-established medical research institute, it is a collaboration between Newcastle University and the Hunter New England Area Health Service, and it does through that partnership is make changes through research to actual clinical practice. For example, its discoveries in the asthma research area in Newcastle have led to millions of dollars per annum savings on the PBS. Its work on stroke and the handling of stroke patients has seen a reduction in bed days for patients, so it is important that our medical research area be funded and embedded into our community.

We also do want to continue to showcase innovation, and I pay tribute to Neville Sawyer particularly, who guided the very successful Newcastle innovation festival this year around clean energy and the work we are doing there. Neville was also one of the people who set up the Hunter Founders Forum to showcase new companies and to link with financial institutions for venture capital opportunities.

Another area of research in our region that we are very proud of is the work of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation. It recently gave a presentation at a breakfast where the speaker was Wayne Swan, the Treasurer, and it emphasised that one of the things holding back our region is our retention rates. Although many of our young students continue on to a TAFE place, a training place or into work, unfortunately our take-up of tertiary education, higher education places at university, is not high enough. That is certainly an area that I look forward to working with the Hunter Valley Research Foundation and our education institutions to see what we can do as part of the education revolution to bring our most needy students up to the level we want them to be, and certainly to have the take-up of university places increased. I think the policies that were announced by the Deputy Prime Minister are going to be very much central to that.

The next challenge for our city is its sustainability as an economic entity, a social entity, and a survivable entity. Having gone through the June storms in 2007 and seeing Queensland suffering the same sort of extreme weather event, I think we are accepting that these events are going to continue more regularly, and I think there has to be some review of our cities under the Major Cities Unit. I think part of that will not just be the way cities function, but the way they survive some of the challenges thrown to us by climate change in the future.

Part of that challenge for the sustainability of the economy of the city of Newcastle is building up its service sector, and I look forward to a Federal Court building being

constructed in our area. We are the next cab off the rank, so for the city of Newcastle there is a great future. I think the forward planning and projections are excellent...  
*(Time Expired)*