

SPRING 2022



HUNTER NEWS

A NEWSLETTER FROM DAN REPACHOLI • YOUR LOCAL FEDERAL MEMBER FOR HUNTER



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Thank You

Welcome to my first Hunter News – a quarterly newsletter with highlights of what I've been up to as your local Federal Member of Parliament.

I want to again thank you for electing me as your Federal Member for Hunter. I have been working hard to meet with so many of our wonderful local organisations, schools, clubs and residents about the issues that matter to them.

My electorate office is up and running at 3 Edward Street, Cessnock – my giant head is on the window and the side of the office so you can't miss it. You can either drop in Monday to Friday between 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm, call me on 02 4991 1022 or email me at Dan.Repacholi.MP@aph.gov.au

Some of the things that my office can help you with include:

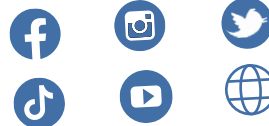
- Advocacy on Federal Government issues
- Issues with Centrelink, Immigration, Passport and the NDIS
- Assistance with Federal and other Government grants for sporting clubs, schools and community organisations
- Special messages for significant birthdays and anniversaries; and
- Flag requests for schools and not-for-profit organisations

If you ever need help with these issues or any other issue – or you just want to have a chat about something that is important to you, please get in touch.

All the best,

Dan Repacholi MP

Federal Member for Hunter



Fixing Aged Care

The very first piece of Legislation passed in the 47th Parliament, was the Bill in response to the Aged Care Royal Commission.

I was pleased to be able to join our Aged Care Minister, Anika Wells, to assist in tabling the Legislation in Parliament.

We made a promise to Australians that we would take better care of their loved ones and we have delivered on this promise.

The Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Response) Bill 2022 was passed in the Senate on Tuesday 2 August 2022, enabling major improvements to aged care in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

We made a promise to restore dignity, humanity and security for older Australians and this Bill is a critical first step in improving aged care.

This legislation will:

- ✓ Replace the outdated Aged Care Funding Instrument with a new aged care subsidy funding model from 1 October 2022.
- ✓ Enable the publication of the star ratings for all residential aged care services by the end of 2022.
- ✓ Include measures to extend the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) to all in home care providers, commencing from 1 December 2022.
- ✓ Introduce a new Code of Conduct for approved providers, aged care workers and governing persons from 1 December 2022.

After nine years of neglect, reform in aged care has finally begun. This task will take years, but this Bill passing is a critical first step to ensure our most vulnerable people are treated with the dignity they deserve.

We are also getting to work on delivering nurses back into nursing homes and stopping the rorting of Home Care fees with new caps.

It's going to take a while to undo the neglect of the former Government, but we are absolutely committed to delivering the care that older Australians deserve and these big changes start us on that journey.

It's going to mean more time for important things like wound management, help with eating, getting out of bed in the morning and, crucially, just being able to stop and have a quick chat.

And it's going to mean we're able to keep a closer eye on where the billions of dollars of taxpayer funds are going. That money should be going to the care of older Australians, not glossy marketing schemes, office fit-outs and other things.



Floods Hit Hunter Hard

The flood event in July hit the Hunter electorate hard with Broke, Wollombi and the surrounding suburbs suffering extensive damage to properties and homes. The floods also impacted parts of Lake Macquarie, Cessnock, Singleton and Muswellbrook Local Government Areas.

All of the local government areas that were impacted, including Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Muswellbrook and Singleton were all declared natural disaster areas and a number of assistance payments and grants were put in place immediately to help out people impacted by the floods.

Lessons were learnt from previous flood events and getting assistance on the ground immediately was something that was needed.

I was immediately in touch with Senator the Hon Murray Watt, Minister for Emergency Management to get things moving.

Following up after disasters like this is also very important and recently, I had Senator Tony Sheldon, Special Envoy for Disaster Recovery in the electorate to meet with a number of key people who were involved in the floods and heard first hand the ongoing issues that people are facing in the recovery process.

Tony will be working with Murray Watt - Senator for Queensland, Minister for Emergency Management on how Governments can improve recovery and resilience processes.

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Ensuring people could access the support they needed when the floodwaters receded was very important.

I worked closely with Ministers the Hon Bill Shorten and the Hon Murray Watt to ensure impacted communities could access grants as soon as possible. Below are details of the payments that are available.

- The one-off Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment of \$1000 per eligible adult and \$400 per eligible child is available to people who have suffered a significant loss as a result of the floods, including a severely damaged or destroyed home or a serious injury. It is a non-means tested, tax-exempt payment.

Residents have until 1 February 2023 to make a claim.

- The Disaster Recovery Allowance has also been made available to assist employees and sole traders who experience a loss of income as a direct result of a major disaster and is payable for a maximum of 13 weeks. The Disaster Recovery Payment is a taxable, fortnightly payment.
- \$80 million committed to assist with the clean-up and removal of flood and storm related damage, debris and green waste;
- Grants of up to \$75,000 to assist primary producers that have suffered direct damage;
- \$36 million committed for a building assessment program for flooded properties, and free demolition of those found to be uninhabitable; and
- Grants of up to \$50,000 to assist small business and not-for-profit organisations that have suffered direct damage.

Back To Home Grants of up to \$20,000 which will help residents with the cost of urgent repairs, safe reconnection of utilities, replacement of essential household goods and rebuilding homes will help victims get their lives back on track.

MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

In the week following the floods, I welcomed Assistant Minister for

Mental Health, the Hon Emma McBride MP, to the electorate.

Homes and businesses were flooded, dozens of local roads were closed, and many people were cut off by flood waters and this has had a huge impact on people financially and on their mental health as well.

People impacted by the floods can access a range of national, regional, and local mental health support services through their Primary Health Networks (PHNs) which are funded by the Australian Government.

The Head to Health digital platform provides information, advice, and links to free and low-cost phone, online and face-to-face mental health services.

The Head to Health phone service is also available to all Australians on 1800 595 212 so they can be assessed and connected to mental health services in their region that best meet their individual needs.

If immediate 24/7 help is required, people impacted by the floods should contact:

☎ Lifeline on 13 11 14

☎ Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636

☎ MensLine on 1300 78 99 78

☎ Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800 (children under 12 years)



New Bridges Improve Access Across The Hunter Electorate

The new Anvil Creek Bridge at Greta and the Weir Bridge at Barnsley have been officially opened, offering safer and better access for the community and visitors.

The Anvil Creek Bridge on Nelson Street in Greta was made possible thanks to a \$690,800 contribution from the Federal Government under its Bridges Renewal Program, and a \$1.3 million contribution from Cessnock City Council.

As locals well remember, the previous Anvil Creek Bridge was a single-lane timber bridge that was no longer suitable for the needs of the community.

The timber bridge had a heavy vehicle load limit placed on it and there was no pedestrian access across the bridge to the Greta Train Station at the western end of Nelson Street.



The old timber bridge has now been replaced with a new, 24-metre-long, two-lane concrete bridge with 200 metres of upgraded road pavement on both sides.

There is also a 2.5-metre-wide pedestrian pathway on the new bridge, which provides safe and easy access to the train station.

Nothing is more important than ensuring people get home safe and sound at the end of each road trip, whether it's just a quick run to the local shops or an interstate freight haul.

The Weir Bridge at Barnsley is now also open, providing safer and faster travel for motorists in northern Lake Macquarie.

I joined Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser to open the new dual-lane bridge which replaced the single-lane weir crossing that closed to traffic in early 2021.

The project, which was jointly funded through the Federal Government's Bridges Renewal Fund and Local Community and Infrastructure Fund,



will improve reliability of the transport network through the area.

The Federal Government is committed to building a better future for the Hunter Region and for all Australians by delivering infrastructure like the new Weir Bridge.

We contributed \$4.7 million towards the project, with Council funding the remaining \$2.3 million.

I look forward to delivering more big infrastructure project across the electorate during the next few years.

Community Battery For Cameron Park

Recently I joined with Minister for Energy the Hon Chris Bowen MP, Cr Kay Fraser - Lake Macquarie Mayor and Ausgrid Chief Customer Officer Rob Amphlett Lewis to launch the first community battery outside of Sydney, which has been put right here in the Hunter at Cameron Park.

The battery works by harnessing and storing solar power from local homes, providing savings on energy costs and allowing more renewable energy into the grid.

The Hunter has been the powerhouse of NSW for the last century, and we will continue to be the powerhouse of NSW with projects like this.

I would encourage residents in Cameron Park take a look at the Battery and see if they are eligible to access the trial.

For more information on Community Batteries visit ausgrid.com.au/sharedbattery.



Local Jobs & Skills Roundtables

In the lead up to the National Jobs and Skills Summit, I had Senator Tony Sheldon join me for a number of local roundtables to ensure the issues in the Hunter were part of the national discussion.

We were joined by workers from a diverse range of industries including First Nations groups, Local Government, the disability sector, aged care, manufacturing, mining, tourism, media and unions.

This is all about how we can build a bigger, better trained, and more productive workforce; boost incomes and living standards; and create more opportunities for more Hunter residents to get ahead and to reach their aspirations.

The Summit has recommended some immediate actions and identified opportunities for medium and long term reform.

The Employment White Paper will now be established and the Terms of Reference will be available shortly.

The Employment White Paper will build on the outcomes of the Summit. It will be a shared vision and



comprehensive blueprint for the future of Australia's labour market.

I would encourage everyone to make a submission and you can contact my office for details on how to do this.



Grants Assistance Available

A number of Federal Government grant programs have opened for schools and organisations across the Hunter electorate.

Full information about these grants and how to apply is on my website at www.DanRepacholiMP.com or you can call my office for more information on **02 4991 1022**.

I also publish a monthly Grants Newsletter that has the details for a large number of grants that could be of benefit to individuals, community organisations and schools across the Hunter electorate.

I would encourage you to visit my website and sign up to be on the list.



Delivering More GPs For The Hunter Electorate

I have seen and heard the horror stories of people waiting days and even weeks to be able to get into see their GP.

Coupled with the cuts made by the previous Government to the opening hours of the GP Access After Hours Service in Toronto, it has made it almost impossible for some to see a doctor while they are sick, so our Emergency Departments are overcrowded with people seeking medical help.

The Government has acted to make it easier for people in the Hunter electorate to see a doctor in our community.

The Government is delivering on its election commitment to better support communities across the country where there is a GP shortfall, such as across the Hunter region, meaning local practices will now be able to access doctors from the Bonded Medical Program as well as overseas trained doctors.

Updating the Distribution Priority Areas (DPA) will see more than 700 areas with either full or partial DPA classification across Australia.

This is a result of the Albanese Government's election commitment to provide automatic DPA classification to regional centres classified as Modified Monash (MM) 2, as well as maintaining exceptional circumstances DPA classifications.



Because international medical graduates and overseas trained doctors are only able to access Medicare if they work in a DPA area, a DPA classification means practices in DPA areas have access to more doctors who can work for the local community.

All 707 areas in need across the country, including those in the Hunter electorates will have priority access to this bigger pool of doctors.

The update will mean that the Kurri Kurri – Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Maitland, Morisset – Cooranbong and Cessnock Region catchment areas will now all have DPA status.

This change will mean residents in Cessnock, Cameron Park, Morisset, Cooranbong, Toronto, and right across the Hunter electorate, now have access to a broader pool of available GPs, which means improved access to quality care and reduced waiting times.

MOBILE OFFICES

The Hunter electorate covers more than 10,000 square kilometres and spans from Wyee Point in the south to Sandy Hollow in the west.

As many people cannot attend my office due to the distance required to travel, I hold regular mobile offices and street stalls right across the Hunter electorate.

I advertise my upcoming mobile offices and street stalls in my weekly e-newsletter and on my website at www.DanRepacholiMP.com

You can always call my office on **02 4991 1022** to see when I will next be in your area. If your matter is urgent, you can always speak with my staff or I can arrange a chat over the phone.



Flag Requests

One great part of my job is getting to visit local schools and not-for-profit organisations to present them with flags for presentations or display.

My office can provide the National Flag, the Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag.

All you need to do is drop me a short letter or jump onto my website, www.DanRepacholiMP.com/community-hub/flag-requests/ and fill in the form. Flags can be collected from my office, or I can arrange a visit to present them formally.

Flags are also available for Australian exchange students, serving defence personnel and families of war veterans.



STAY UP TO DATE

Every week, I publish a short e-newsletter about the issues of the week and my travels around the electorate. You can sign up via my website, www.DanRepacholiMP.com/contact/e-news-sign-up or by sending me an email.

During my campaign, I used social media to connect and engage with our local community. I'd like to extend that level of service to my new role as your Federal MP.

Please follow me online, and in particular, engage with comments.

See you online!



Congratulatory Messages

Did you know that Australians who are celebrating certain milestone birthdays or wedding anniversaries can request a congratulatory message from the Prime Minister, Governor-General, Prime Minister, Premier, Federal and State MP and Mayor?

My Electorate Office can organise congratulatory messages for 50th, 60th, 65th and 70th Wedding Anniversaries and for 90th & 100th Birthdays from the Governor-General, Prime Minister, Premier and Federal, State and Local MPs.

The Queen and Governor-General will also send special messages for 60th Wedding Anniversaries and 100th Birthdays.

You can request a congratulatory message through my electorate office. To request a message, you can call the office on 02 4991 1022, contact me via my website, www.danrepacholimp.com or visit the office at 3 Edward Street, Cessnock. Please note that you must provide evidence (eg. birth certificate, marriage certificate, statutory declaration).

The message will be posted directly to the nominee. For surprise messages, an alternate postal address (to a relative or care-giver for example) can be given for the message.

A congratulatory message can be requested up to two months prior to the event. A belated message request can be requested up to one month after the event.



JP Services Available

If you need any documents signed or certified, there are JPs in my office every day during business hours. Drop in if you need the service.



WANT TO BECOME A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE?

By volunteering to become a JP, you will provide services to your community or place of employment.

To become a JP you will need to:

- Step 1: Confirm your eligibility and register for JP Online.
- Step 2: Complete the JP Knowledge Test on JP Online.
- Step 3: Complete the JP appointment application on JP Online. This includes requesting a NSW Member of Parliament (MP) to consider nominating you.
- Step 4: Take the Oaths of Office.

Visit the JP website: www.jp.nsw.gov.au for more information.

Dan Repacholi MP, Your Federal Member for Hunter

ALWAYS AVAILABLE TO HELP If I can help with any Federal Government matters please call my office on **02 4991 1022** or send an email to **Dan.Repacholi.MP@aph.gov.au**

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