

# MICHAEL McCORMACK MP

*Putting the Riverina first*



March 2014

## New Government gets on with the job

**WHEN the Coalition was elected to Government on 7 September 2013, we had a clear plan to get Australia back on track. Just over six months since being sworn into Government, the Coalition is implementing that plan and keeping our promises to rural and regional Australia.**

We went to the last election with a plan to develop a strong five-pillar economy: to build on our strengths in manufacturing innovation, agriculture exports, advanced services, world class education and research, as well as boosting our mining exports, to make the most of our comparative advantages in international markets. The key to implementing our plan to grow and strengthen the economy is the removal of Labor's carbon tax. The Coalition kept our promise to table legislation to scrap the carbon tax within the first sitting days of the new Parliament. But while the Coalition understands the cost the carbon tax is placing on Riverina families, farmers and small businesses, the Senate is yet to pass the legislation and listen to the wishes of the majority of Australian people.

The Coalition has a plan to grow Australian agriculture and ensure farmers are able to do what they do best, free from unnecessary red and green tape. This is why the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, has announced a White Paper into the competitiveness of Australian agriculture.

The Government is keeping its commitment to abolish Labor's ineffective mining tax which did not raise anywhere near the amount of money the former Government promised. In the Riverina, the Barrick Lake Cowal gold mine near West Wyalong was in the firing line. The mining tax was unable to raise sufficient revenue from the big miners and targeted smaller operators such as Lake Cowal in trying to raise money. Unfortunately, like the carbon tax, the mining tax repeal is currently stagnated in the Senate, awaiting Labor and the Greens to listen to the Australian people and axe the tax.

Much of Labor's budget was contingent on mining tax revenue and means much of the funding for regional projects, such as those offered as election promises, cannot proceed.

The Coalition is also keeping our promise to protect Australia's borders and break the people smugglers' business model by stopping the arrival of asylum seekers by boat. This is putting a stop to the people smugglers trading in the lives and desperation of asylum seekers and securing Australia's borders.

Small business is at the heart of every country community. With many Coalition MPs having run small businesses, the Government understands how difficult red tape can be to small business, particularly in regional areas. This is why the Government implemented a "Repeal Day", a day to remove unnecessary and burdensome regulation from small business, making compliance easier and bolstering confidence in what is the engine room of the economy.

The Riverina has also benefited to the tune of \$5.7 million in funding for four Trades Training Centres, or TTCs, which will benefit six schools throughout the region. I am very pleased the Coalition Government has acknowledged the need for such facilities in our region and found funding for the projects, particularly in such a difficult budget environment. These Trades Training Centres will ensure Riverina students will be well equipped with the skills local, national and international economies will need now and into the future. There is more information about the TTC funding in this newsletter.

Finally, I would like to thank the people of the Riverina for the confidence you have placed in me to be your representative in Federal Parliament. It is a real honour and privilege. I worked hard for the region in the last Parliament and was able to secure some much-needed funding for the region, particularly for the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, Griffith Community Hospital and the Multi-Purpose Service at Hillston.

I am very pleased the Australian people have elected the Abbott-Truss Coalition to Government and that I have gained a place in the Ministry, working hard to get things done for the Riverina and the nation. I am already working within the new Government to ensure the people of the Riverina get their fair share, particularly with the Trades Training Centre funding and the Government's commitment to cap water buybacks. I will continue to work hard for you over this term in Government.

If there is something I or my office can assist with, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Once again, thank you.  
Yours sincerely,

*Michael McCormack*

Michael McCormack MP  
Federal Member for Riverina



## REPRESENTING THE RIVERINA

**THREE fine local entrants will represent Riverina in the Sydney Royal Easter Showgirl final.**

Medical student Jasmine Corbett, 19, of Junee (main picture), Griffith's Emily Chilvers, 24, (inset) a teacher at Wade High School, and registered nurse Carly Acheson, 24, of Wagga Wagga (banner photo) were chosen from 22 who took part in the recent Zone 7 Final at the Yoogali Club.

More than 300 people attended a gala dinner to hear these outstanding young ladies talk about their ambitions and their love of the local region.

**THE NATIONALS**



## Region to benefit from \$5.7 million in Trades Training Centre funding confirmed

IN fantastic news for Riverina students, the Coalition Government has confirmed it will fund \$5.7 million in the Round Five (Phase One) Trades Training Centre projects in the region. This means the Riverina has funding for four Trades Training Centres, benefiting six schools.

Temora High School, Batlow Technology School and Tumbarumba High School will each have a Trades Training Centre facility, while Ardlethan Central School will have a \$2.845 million centre built with Aria Park and Barellean Central Schools as partner schools.

These four Trades Training Centres will provide students with certificates in engineering, building and construction, hospitality, agrifood operations, carpentry and joinery and the metal fabrication trade.

The large amount of funding, which is warranted and welcomed, particularly in a difficult budget environment, was found for these important and worthy Riverina projects.

The Trades Training Centres will help equip local students with a valuable skill set to use throughout the region. It is important that skill shortages are addressed, particularly in country areas, and these centres empower schools to provide outstanding vocational opportunities for students to stay in local areas and gain employment.

Temora High School Principal Pat Nethery welcomed the announcement, saying he was thrilled and the facility will be of great benefit to Temora. "This will not only benefit the youth of the town and district, it will be a real asset which can prepare future generations with the skills they require," Mr Nethery said.

The Department of Education is now working with the four schools to begin the construction of these important projects.

### Schools funding at a glance:

- ✓ Ardlethan Central School: \$2,845,000 to establish the Riverina Access Partnership of Schools Trade Training Centre with Aria Park and Barellean Central Schools to provide Certificate I in agrifood operations, Certificate II in agriculture, Certificate II in construction pathways, Certificate II in engineering and Certificate II in hospitality.
- ✓ Batlow Technology High: \$855,000 to establish the HV Smith Memorial Trade Training Centre to provide Certificates II and I in engineering.
- ✓ Temora High \$1 million for the Goldenfields Learning Community Trade Training Centre to provide Certificates II and I in engineering and Certificate II in construction pathways.
- ✓ Tumbarumba High \$1 million for a centre to provide Certificate I in manufacturing and Certificate II in engineering.



**AT TEMORA:** With 2013 Temora High School Student Representative Council Executive and Year 10 representatives:

*Lauren Inch (Year 10), Lloyd Galloway (Year 10), Madison Turner (SRC Secretary), Hannah Mackey (SRC Treasurer), Ruby Kite (Vice-President), Ryan Kennedy (SRC President), Bethanie Durham (Year 10), Mayor Councillor Rick Firman and Principal Patrick Nethery.*

## Government confirms \$500,000 for CCTV in Wagga

**CLOSED** Circuit Television (CCTV) is vitally important to the safety of people and small business. This is why the Coalition announced a Building Safer Streets Fund prior to last year's election.

As part of the Government's fund, \$500,000 has been allocated to five CCTV projects along Baylis and Fitzmaurice Streets within Wagga Wagga's Central Business District.

This funding, which has been confirmed by Justice Minister Michael Keenan in recent weeks, will complement funding from the New South Wales Government, Wagga Wagga City Council and Committee4Wagga's admirable fund-raising efforts to improve the city's facilities.

In a letter I wrote to Prime Minister Tony Abbott immediately following the Coalition announcing the fund, I highlighted some crime statistics along the main street, including the fact there had been 80 recent assault incidents in the vicinity of Baylis and Fitzmaurice Streets.

According to former Detective Inspector Rod Smith of the Wagga Wagga Local Area Police Command, the monthly average of alcohol assaults which are non-domestic violence related is 14, which is significantly higher than the monthly average in NSW.

I am pleased Wagga Wagga has received such a large investment from the Federal Government as part of this fund.

The Wagga Wagga CBD CCTV project is a great example of the community working together to improve our services and I am delighted the Federal Government is able to commit half a million dollars in funding towards this vital project.

## FEDERAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR DROUGHT-STRICKEN FARMERS

FOLLOWING a meeting of The Nationals' party room in Bundaberg in February and the Prime Minister's tour of drought-affected western New South Wales and Southern Queensland, the Federal Government will provide assistance to drought-stricken farmers.

The Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, and Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, have announced the Government's assistance measures include funding for the following:

- More generous criteria for accessing income support will be made available to farmers from 3 March 2014 instead of 1 July 2014.
- Drought Concessional Loans totalling \$280 million will be allocated to give eligible farm businesses the resources to recover from the effects of drought.
- Assistance of up to \$12 million to assist drought-affected farm businesses to install water-related infrastructure.
- \$10 million in assistance will be available to help reduce the impact of pest animals in drought-affected areas.
- \$10.7 million to increase access to social and mental health services in communities affected by this drought.

Further information is available by visiting [www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/drought](http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/drought) or contact my offices.

## Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance

I AM proud to be serving in the Abbott-Truss Government as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance.

Within the finance portfolio I have responsibility for:

- discretionary compensation mechanisms, including act of grace payments and waivers of debts owed to the Commonwealth;
- Comcover, the Commonwealth's self-managed insurance fund;
- correspondence relating to the administration of superannuation arrangements for Australian Government civilian employees; and
- administration of Commonwealth's non-Defence property portfolio.

There is a wide range of discretionary compensation mechanisms which allow me to authorise one-off or periodic payments or waive debts owed to the Commonwealth where I consider that it is appropriate to do so because of special circumstances.

These can include (but are not limited to):

- the action or inaction of the Australian Government has directly resulted in a loss; or
- the application of Commonwealth legislation or policy has caused an unintentional or inequitable outcome; or
- there is some other relevant anomaly or moral imperative.

There is a wide range of cases involving programs and agencies from right across the Commonwealth and each case has to be considered on its merits.

The first site visit I made as Parliamentary Secretary was to the location for the new Post Entry Quarantine Facility (PEQF) at Mickleham, Victoria, which has obvious advantages to the Riverina given our region's strong agricultural links.

The PEQF is a major undertaking with a price tag of \$293 million. It will replace a number of dispersed and outdated

facilities. Construction is expected to begin soon with the first phase due for completion in late 2015 and a final second phase due for completion in late 2018.

In addition to my specific responsibilities, my role as Parliamentary Secretary gives me an opportunity to work with the Minister for Finance, Senator The Hon. Mathias Cormann, in helping to shape Treasurer Joe Hockey's forthcoming Budget. The debt burden left behind by Labor means that this next Budget is going to be a tough one with some difficult decisions to be made. You can read more about Labor's legacy of debt in this newsletter.

I also had the opportunity on 13 February 2014 to introduce my first legislation as a member of the Government – a series of appropriation bills which provide funding for a range of policies and programs consistent with the 2013-14 Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

While obviously this new role brings with it fresh challenges and obligations, it does not alter my commitment to being a strong local advocate for the people of the Riverina. You can find out more about what I have been up to on my Parliamentary Secretary website: [www.parlsecfinance.gov.au](http://www.parlsecfinance.gov.au)



**HONOURED:** Humbled to be sworn in as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance by Her Excellency the Governor General Quentin Bryce and Prime Minister Tony Abbott looking on.



## Have an idea about Australian agriculture? Now's the time to think big and have your say

**FEDERAL Agriculture Minister, Barnaby Joyce, has announced the Government is seeking contributions from farmers, small businesspeople and associated industries about Australia's agricultural competitiveness.**

The Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper is about forming Australia's long-term agriculture policies and consulting with growers, producers and other key stakeholders to see what can be improved.

The terms of reference invite contributions regarding food security, access to investment finance, regulation, transportation, agricultural competitiveness as well as the contribution Australian agriculture makes to regional economies and communities.

### I strongly urge locals to have their say.

Minister Joyce has said this is the time to think big on Australian agriculture. Many people have a view about ways we can improve our production and competitiveness and this is the best forum to voice those ideas.

The White Paper will also have a public consultation period, visiting Griffith on 8 April 2014. Interested locals are invited to nominate themselves for an interview by emailing [agriculturalcompetitiveness@pmc.gov.au](mailto:agriculturalcompetitiveness@pmc.gov.au) or contact my Wagga Wagga or Griffith electorate offices.

Submissions are currently open and must be received by 5pm on Thursday 17 April 2014. Further information on the White Paper can be accessed via [www.agriculturalcompetitiveness.dpmc.gov.au](http://www.agriculturalcompetitiveness.dpmc.gov.au)

## Farmers given certainty as water buybacks capped



**DISCUSSION:** Hearing from Mark Bonetti whose father John is a long-time irrigation farmer at Benerembah.

### RIVERINA farmers have been given certainty about water allocations after New South Wales finally signed up to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The NSW Government wisely decided to hold out and not sign up to a deal it found untenable under the previous Federal Government. Both the Commonwealth and State Coalition Governments understand how vital water and irrigation is to help feed and clothe the nation.

The Federal Coalition Government has kept its promise to cap water buybacks at 1500 gegalitres, leaving only 249 gegalitres to be recovered. This was a commitment the

Coalition made following my decision to cross the floor and move a motion to disallow the passage of the Murray Darling Basin Plan on the last sitting day in November 2012.

In January this year, the Coalition also kept its promise to trade Commonwealth water holdings in a tender to irrigators within the Basin. Senator Birmingham announced the Government would place an additional 10 gegalitres from its water allocation up for tender in northern NSW.

In a move that was welcomed by irrigation communities, the announcement is a very important step for irrigators and river communities.

It will be beneficial for the Murray-Darling Basin and trading is something I raised with both the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment, Simon Birmingham, when the Coalition came in to Government last year.

Murrumbidgee rice grower Debbie Buller said common sense has prevailed with this announcement.

"While this is obviously in the Gwydir Valley, it makes sense to use the additional water allocation for productive uses in a season where the environment has already been looked after," Mrs Buller said.

"This is an allocation for one year and is a good policy in times where there is the capacity to do so."

Benerembah rice and grape producer, John Bonetti, also endorsed the sale of Commonwealth water holdings.

"Given the recent hot weather in the Riverina, this announcement gives us some confidence," Mr Bonetti said.

"Demand for water has been extreme because of the weather, but if you can keep water up to the crops they do not seem to be suffering in the heat."



**AG TALK:** Discussing rural policy and the all-important White Paper with Minister Barnaby Joyce.

## SAVE THE DATE

Tuesday 8 April 2014

Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper Public Consultation

Griffith

Meetings by appointment

To book a time, email

[agriculturalcompetitiveness@pmc.gov.au](mailto:agriculturalcompetitiveness@pmc.gov.au) or contact my Wagga Wagga or Griffith electorate offices.

## SHIRE'S BEAUTY ON SHOW AGAIN ON TUMBATREK

**THE best of the Tumbarumba Shire was on display in February as more than 80 people trekked 14 kilometres along the Hume and Hovell track, taking in some of the region's rich beauty and diversity.**

Started in 1985 by former Nationals' Leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, Tumbatrek is steeped in the majesty of the natural beauty of the Tumbarumba Shire and Australian political history. Now in its third year since being restarted, the trek was joined by Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell, Albury MP Greg Aplin and Member for Wagga Wagga, Daryl Maguire.

Premier O'Farrell used the opportunity to encourage city people to travel to parts of regional NSW to see the beauty of our State, particularly in the Snowy Mountains. With many attractions, a strong wine industry, as well as local motels and restaurants and proximity to major centres such as Wagga Wagga, Mr O'Farrell said the Tumbarumba Shire is a great place for Sydneysiders to

spend their tourism dollar in the country.

There was also a strong contingent of Local Governments represented, with Tumbarumba Mayor Ian Chaffey and many Tumbarumba councillors joining, as well as Temora Mayor Rick Firman and Mayor of Wagga Wagga, Rod Kendall.

Many locals also joined the trek, including enthusiastic students from Tumbarumba High School who are participating in the Tumbarumba2Kokoda program and will walk the Kokoda Track leading up to ANZAC Day next year.

Despite the heat, the 80-strong contingent enjoyed the trek and were then treated to the hospitality of the Tumbarumba Shire Council for lunch, as well as receiving a commemorative medal to mark the success of the walk.

Congratulations to all who participated, particularly Marilyn Gilbert of the Tumbarumba Shire Council, who again helped co-ordinate this successful annual event.



**TUMBATREK 2014:** (from left) Albury MP Greg Aplin, Tumbarumba Mayor Ian Chaffey, Wagga Wagga Mayor Rod Kendall, Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion, Riverina MP Michael McCormack, Premier Barry O'Farrell, Wagga Wagga MP Daryl Maguire and Temora Mayor Rick Firman following the successful 2014 Tumbatrek bushwalk.



# 31 March deadline approaching for ANZAC Grant applications

**APPLICATIONS for the \$125,000 in funding for the Riverina's commemoration of the Centenary of World War I close soon.**

A meeting of the Riverina's ANZAC Centenary Local Grants committee in Griffith in January set a deadline of 5pm on Monday 31 March 2014 for submissions for funding to be received by my offices.

The committee will hold another meeting in Narrandera in April to make its recommendations as to which projects should receive funding from the Federal Government.

Committee Chairman John Sullivan has expressed a desire that the Riverina's allocation be used for "seed" funding for a number of projects.

Applications for funding can be submitted for projects which fit the following criteria:

- public commemorative events, including the commemoration of important military anniversaries, enlistments and other First World War events which have had a significant impact on the local community;
- new First World War memorials or honour boards;
- the restoration of existing First World War memorials or honour boards;
- the preservation, interpretation and display of First World War wartime and military memorabilia and artefacts; and
- relevant school projects, such as research with a focus on military involvement and social impacts and the products of research, e.g. written material, documentaries etc.

For further information, please contact my Wagga Wagga or Griffith offices.



**SCHOOL VISIT:** *It is always a pleasure to talk to tomorrow's future leaders about my role and their hopes and dreams. With Canberra being so close to the Riverina, this electorate has more schools than most – particularly primary – visit Parliament House and the excursion is always a real highlight for students. Wagga Wagga's Lutheran Primary Year 6 classes are eagerly looking forward to their trip to the nation's capital on 12 May. I spoke to them recently about happenings in Parliament and gave my support to their really positive initiative "We Care" emphasising cyber safety and aimed at stamping out online bullying.*

## FIXED WIRELESS BROADBAND ROLLOUT UNDERWAY IN REGION

**THE rollout of fixed wireless broadband as part of the National Broadband Network has begun throughout the region.**

The Coalition Government is committed to completing the NBN sooner, more affordably for consumers and at less expense to taxpayers.

Since coming to Government, the Coalition has also undertaken a strategic review of the National Broadband Network to assess the progress of the rollout and display them to consumers in easy-to-understand terms. As part of this, the Government has also released a new website, MyBroadband, which gives consumers access to information about the NBN rollout and the progress of broadband connection in their community.

Further information is available by visiting [www.mybroadband.communications.gov.au](http://www.mybroadband.communications.gov.au)

### AT A GLANCE

Construction has commenced in the following towns:

- Ardlethan
- Arian Park
- Barellan
- Bilbul
- Collingullie
- Corbie Hill
- Currawarna
- Hanwood North
- Junee
- Khancoban
- Ladysmith
- Lake Wyangan
- Leeton
- Narrandera
- Springdale
- Stanbridge
- Temora East
- Temora West
- Tharbogang
- Wagga Wagga
- Yanco
- Yenda North
- Yoogali North

## DEBT SITUATION HAS TO BE FIXED

**JUST prior to Christmas I attended the launch of the 2013-14 Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) by the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance.**

One of the most worrying highlights of MYEFO was the size of the debt left behind by Labor and just how big that debt burden is expected to grow without tough decisions being made.

MYEFO projected that gross debt would reach \$430 billion by 2016-17 and without any policy change was on course to blowout to as much as \$667 billion by 2023-24.

Labor knew that it would need to borrow more than the \$300 billion permitted by its own debt limit. The debt limit has now been abolished which removes the risk of a US-style Government shutdown happening here.

However, clearly something needs to be done if we are going to pay down the debt, put spending on a sustainable footing for the future and build the infrastructure our country needs.

As a first step, the Government has delivered on its commitment to establish a Commission of Audit to take a good hard look at spending right across the Commonwealth. No doubt some tough decisions will need to be made, but I am confident that the Abbott-Truss Government is up to the task.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDES BUSHFIRE ASSISTANCE

JOINT funding is now available from the Federal and State Governments following the fires which ravaged parts of the Coolamon, Gundagai, Junee, Tumbarumba, Tumut and Wagga Wagga Local Government Areas in January.

Following the fire's outbreak on 18 January 2014, the Federal Government will provide natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements funding.

These assistance measures include:

- personal hardship and distress assistance;
- restoration of essential public assets;
- counter disaster operations;
- concessional loans for small businesses and primary producers;
- freight subsidies for primary producers;
- concessional loans for voluntary not-for-profit bodies; and
- grants for voluntary not-for-profit bodies.



**THANKS:** *Farmers and landholders thank tireless Rural Fire Service crews for their efforts during the January bush fires between Wagga Wagga and Tumbarumba.*

For further information, please visit [www.disasterassist.gov.au/Currentdisasters](http://www.disasterassist.gov.au/Currentdisasters) and follow the Riverina links or contact either of my electorate offices.