



YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Dr Joe McGirr MP INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR WAGGA WAGGA

Edition #2 December 2019

Inside: Boost for Bomen. Lifeline saves Charities. Big-ticket items on Track. Budget Windfall Welcomed. Addressing Autopsy Delays. Projects Secure State Grants

FEATURE

From the Doctor's Desk



Pictured: Dr. Joe McGirr inspecting the industrial estate site at Bomen.

It's hard to believe that almost a year has passed since I was re-elected as the Member for Wagga Wagga.

I would firstly like to thank you for placing your faith in my leadership once more and I look forward to continuing to represent your needs and your views as an Independent Member of the NSW Parliament.

It has been non-stop in the office since March and as 2019 comes to a close, I am pleased to share my year in review with you.

We're entering a time of great opportunity for growth across the electorate, with major developments like the Special Activation Precinct at Bomen, hospital upgrades at Wagga Wagga and Tumut, and plans to build a new primary school at Estella kicking significant goals in recent months.

Following significant advocacy across the year, I was pleased to welcome the first positive step toward reducing coronial autopsy delays for regional residents, with the NSW Government introducing a number of legislative changes and launching an investigative task force to help ease unnecessary wait-times fro grieving families. Further to this good news, I was able to secure funding lifelines for Wagga Wagga Family Support Services case workers and the Tumut based disability information service IDEAS, which has enabled them to continue providing aid to our most vulnerable residents.

It remains my mission to oversee the responsible regional growth of our electorate, ensuring communities feel safe and supported. There is significant work yet to be done in achieving crime reduction, improving access to community housing and addressing youth unemployment, but I am looking forward to those challenges ahead.

In closing, I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year.

Projects for Regional Growth:

KEY ✓ On track ✓✓ Delivered ● Pending

\$30M ✓
Multi-storey car park at Wagga Base Hospital

\$50M ✓
Tumut Hospital Redevelopment

\$6.9M ✓
Pomingalarna multi-sport cycling complex

\$20M ●
Riverina Conservatorium of Music

\$14.4M ✓
RiFL at Bomen

PROGRESS IN DEMERGER PUSH

Local councils and electors were in November invited to have their say on the potential demerging of Snowy Valleys Council.

The news followed years of backlash over the controversial amalgamation of Tumut Shire and Tumbarumba Shire Councils in 2016.

During a number of meetings with the Minister for Local Government, I shared my support for an independent review of the decision, which is now set to be undertaken by the Local Government Boundaries Commission

- an independent statutory authority - following the consultation period. Snowy Valleys Council has worked hard to provide services to both townships and surrounding areas, but the move has undoubtedly placed a lot of pressure on council, staff and the wider community.

While the sentiments of former Tumba Shire residents were taken into account, my priority and the reason behind my call to review the merger, was to ensure the prosperity of residents within my electorate.

POPULATION BACKBONE

In order to meet a 100,000 population by 2038 target, as outlined in A 20-year Economic Vision for Regional NSW, Wagga Wagga City needs to increase more than 2 per cent each year.

A NSW Government funding boost of \$29.18 million to further develop the Special Activation Precinct was welcomed in October, and followed last year's \$14.4 million investment in the Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics Hub for 5.8-kilometre rail siding.

This is more than double the growth rate of previous years. As I have said before, growth - any growth - needs to be achieved responsibly.

I want to congratulate Wagga Wagga City Council on its efforts to design and build up the site, attracting big businesses to the region, which will ultimately secure employment opportunities and support our local economy.

We need to attract demographically balanced numbers, taking into account an aging population. In addition, we need training services to address trade skills gaps; roads, public transport, health service demands and housing to meet needs. The fundamental key to our success: Bomen Industrial estate.

I was delighted to share council's Health Precinct plans with the Treasurer in Parliament this year and I look forward to doing my part to ensure the responsible growth of our region.



I can help you.

As the State Member for Wagga Wagga, I can help you with issues relating to public housing, main roads, police and emergency services, national parks and transport.

I can also assist you with issues relating to health, dental and public hospitals, industrial relations and land and water management.

Other issues are managed by your local council or your Federal MP. Please contact my electorate office on 6921 1622 or email waggawagga@parliament.nsw.gov.au, if you need assistance with issues relating to the State.

Projects for Regional Growth: KEY ✓ On track ✓ Delivered ● Pending

\$30M ✓
Olympic Highway and Sturt Highway intersection upgrades

\$??M ✓
Estella School

\$1M ✓
Early Intervention 'Youth on Track' program

\$10M ✓
Wagga Wagga PCYC upgrade

\$739k ✓
Wagga Wagga Botanic Gardens upgrade

\$1M ●
Adelong Police Station

CORONIAL AUTOPSIES

I was proud to record our first victory in the battle to address the coronial autopsy delays for regional and rural residents this year.

It comes after NSW Forensic Health Pathology services were consolidated in 2016, with deceased residents requiring full coronial autopsy sent to Newcastle for the procedure.

A number of reasons, including an international shortage of forensic pathology specialists, were cited for the move. However, the change inadvertently resulted in harrowing accounts of week-long wait times, further traumatising families and individuals affected by the sudden, unexpected or suspicious death.

While pathology staff have generally completed full coronial autopsy procedures within two or three days, transport to-and-from the facility and episodes of increased caseloads have added to other, previously unidentified system blockages.

Since my election to the role of MP, I have made it my mission to have the entire coronial autopsy system reviewed, with any opportunities for improvement adopted as a result.

Following meetings between myself, NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard and the Attorney General Mark Speakman, health service representatives and my fellow parliamentary colleagues, legislative changes were this year passed to decrease the number of full coronial autopsy cases sent to Newcastle.

In addition, a task force was established to review the entire system, from the point of death to the publishing of the final coronial report.

I am pleased with this outcome and consequential updates I have received since.

I believe changes to the justice legislation made in September could pave the way for cases, requiring basic post-mortem examinations to be carried out locally.

I will continue to lobby for this outcome.

STRUGGLE STREET

Wagga City is without doubt a place of great opportunity, set to break growth records across the next two decades.

But no place is perfect. And the SBS mini-series Struggle Street, which aired in October, captured the heartbreaking challenges some residents face across our electorate and the wider region.

Episodes gave life to the too frequently reported

break and enters, thefts, motor-vehicle fires, house fires, housing, youth and drug-related issues you might otherwise only see as numbers on paper.

While Wagga Wagga has come a long way in addressing these issues - I note the many individuals, groups, organisations, not-for-profits and government representatives already working to curb the trend and patch support systems - there is more to be done.

This year, I have lobbied for increased police numbers and was pleased to welcome six additional positions at the Riverina Police District. I have also met with NSW Police Force deputy-commissioner Gary Worboys twice, to put forward a case for additional officers.



While NSW Government's commitment to build 20 community houses in Wagga Wagga city was timely and appreciated, I intend to keep pushing for additional affordable

rental properties for low-income earners, with accommodation needs, to reduce reported year-long application wait-times.



In addition to advocating for and consequently joining Wagga Wagga City Council's Crime Prevention Task Force, I was pleased to initiate an additional and separate 'reference group' of key government and community agencies to identify areas of need and to explore opportunities for intervention.

Projects for Safe, Supported Communities:

 **\$20M** 
Additional social housing in Wagga Wagga

 **\$6M** 
Additional police officer positions

 **?\$M** 
Crime Prevention Task Force

 **?\$M** 
Struggle Street Reference Group

 **?\$M** 
Women's Advisory Committee

 **\$4M** 
Lockhart to Urana Road

RURAL DOCTORS



For residents in regional and rural areas to feel safe and supported, we need specially trained doctors available 24/7.

However, a critical doctor shortage at district and rural hospitals, like ours in Tumut, is impacting communities across the state.

I have been assured work is underway to resolve the on-call rostering of doctors at Tumut District Hospital.

But more to this, we need a strong commitment and action from all areas of Health to future-proof the workforce across the board.

I have met with the Tumut Community Association members, representatives from the Murrumbidgee Health District and the Minister for Health Brad Hazzard, to raise this issue and discuss opportunities for change. I have also spoken in parliament and I attended a rally in Wagga Wagga, alongside fellow parliamentarians, calling for action in this space.

One solution lies in the localised training and employment of rural generalists - general practitioners with specialist skills - at smaller hospitals across the state.

Working alongside fellow State MPs Steph Cooke, of Cootamundra and Member for Albury Justin Clancy, we requested the Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt support a Murrumbidgee Local Health District and University of NSW designed training program, which needs commonwealth approval to bypass Medicare red-tape.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT



Pictured (left to right): Speaking to a group of future community first responders from remote Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW SES, NSW RFS teams, who were training at the Wagga Wagga Ambulance Station to assist paramedics in time-critical emergencies. My wife, Prof. Kerin Fielding and I congratulating Miss Wagga Wagga 2020 Hannah Smith and Community Princess Brittany Hackett at this year's Miss Wagga Wagga Quest crowning ceremony. Chatting with Henschke Catholic Primary School's Year 6 class, who welcomed me into their classrooms to talk politics. Congratulating National Farm Art Award winner Andrew Whitefield, who took out the local artist title for 'Waterdancer' at the Lockhart Spirit of the Land Festival.



Pictured (left to right): Meeting with Aboriginal artist Owen Lyons to mark Jersey Day 2020. Owen's life was changed after an organ donation ended many years of home dialysis, and we both had on our favourite footy jumpers to mark the occasion. Bringing my A-Game to Connolly Park for Wagga City Rugby Club's Ladies Day, supporting the Amie St Clair Melanoma Trust. Attending the Interfaith Celebration for Refugee Week, alongside my wife, Prof. Kerin Fielding. Attending what was a colourful and lively inaugural Wagga Wagga Mardi Gras Festival.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH DR. JOE MCGIRR MP, INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR WAGGA WAGGA NEWS & EVENTS

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