



# THE ENTRANCE PENINSULA

## COMMUNITY PRECINCT

ENCOMPASSING: THE ENTRANCE; THE ENTRANCE NORTH; LONG JETTY TOOWOON BAY; BLUE BAY & SHELLY BEACH

### **The Federal Member for Dobell, Craig Thomson's presentation 16 February, 2010 AT 7:00pm on “Update On Federal Government Programmes”**

Craig was warmly welcomed by the chairperson of T.E.P.C.P, Vivienne Scott, and thanked him for his attendance and agreeing to address the Precinct Committee on Federal issues effecting residents of the Central Coast.

This time last year, in his address, Craig emphasised that Australia was better placed than most countries to handle the impacts of the World Financial Crisis. One year on Craig warned that, even though Australia had managed not to go into recession, the biggest thing facing Australia was the World Financial Crisis. This was the first time since the Great Depression of 1929 that world's growth had gone backwards. It was that big a deal! The Federal Government's Stimulus Program saved Australia from recession. Craig is the chair of the Standing Committee on Economics in the House of Representatives, and he said he was worried about the possibility that the world may go into a double dip recession. Portugal, Spain, Ireland and Greece are at present on the verge of financial collapse. The USA is giving mixed signals about its recovery. The good news for Australia is that China is OK and continues to buy our minerals.

The political argument on the stimulus package is about money. It is about the size of the debt the Federal Government is incurring to ward off the recession. The amount of Sovereign Debt can be quantified by using what percentage of Gross Domestic Product, ( GDP ), it is. In Australia it is expected to peak at 13%. This is much lower than most countries and as an example the USA's debt is running at 70% of GDP.

Craig went on to detail the key measures funded to create jobs and stimulate the economy. On the Central Coast we have been able to get the jobs here. He was able to report that The Entrance retailers had had a good Christmas last year and while Wyong Shire has amongst the worst unemployment levels in Australia, the level of unemployment in Wyong actually fell from 7.5% to 7% as a result of the Stimulus Package. He expanded on the reasons for this including informing us that the Federal Government was also addressing the nations skill shortage by requiring that the Construction Stimulus Package required 25% of their workforce to be trainees. This has led to a lot of out of work apprentices to be able to finish their training.

The first thing Kevin Rudd did when the new government was confirmed in 2007 was to ask MP's to go and spend time with the homeless. Out of this a Social Housing program was developed as one of the Government's first priorities. When the World financial Crisis hit, the Government was in a good position to accelerate the Social Housing program. Additional funds were allocated as part of the stimulus package. The plan was to stimulate the construction industry. The Federal Government gave money to the State Government and it was their choice it invest it in The Entrance. If I was choosing a place to put social housing it would not be in The Entrance. The Entrance is the end of the line and is too far from rail lines, hospitals, TAFE and Universities. Another reason you would not choose The Entrance is the high vacancy rates in units in The Entrance. It would have been better to buy vacant units here, but that would not have stimulated the construction industry. In the future the Local Member should have more input, when funding is given out, as to where it is being spent.

## Questions:

- Q1. Anne Rowland: In the press there has been a lot of reports about the poor standard of home insulation. Is the standard of construction of new buildings OK?
- A1. The problem we have is there is three levels of government. Health and Building is a State issue. The building codes have been in place for a long time and have to be taken on face value that they are acceptable. With Insulation the codes were not in place to protect workers. Shonky builders will break the law no matter what but we have to rely on the building inspectors to enforce the building code.
- Q2. Anne Rowland: The speed in having the construction stimulus implemented has caused problems. Is the Government learning anything from this?
- A2. Where it is appropriate to build. NSW Housing went for sites that were easy to acquire. There is no waiving of inspections.
- Q3. Vivienne Scott stated that there was no provision for parking and there is no consultation under NSW SEPP laws. No Hospitals.
- A3. The program on Social Housing was to halve the number of homeless by 2020. The Central Coast has a large numbers looking for housing. Social Housing acts as a break on house prices. The problem is the supply of land. Councils should not be drip feeding releases. A new stimulus plan was the school building program. The Stimulus Package increased the amount of funding to hospitals by 50%. 165 Emergency Departments had direct stimulus. Waiting lists were at 75,000 people and the stimulus program was able to get 61,000 people off the waiting list. At Hamlyn Terrace the new Super GP Clinic is being built. 104 staff with 40 plus doctors. It is difficult to get in to see a doctor on the Central Coast and this should relieve the pressure. The Federal Government is putting in \$2.5million while a private consortium is investing \$16million. The facility will be opened in 2011. The Federally funded Mardi to Mangrove pipeline will be finished in 2011.
- Q4. Luke Nayna: Has the State or Federal Government done any costing of the Stimulus - does it offset the cost in the long term?
- A4. Without the Stimulus we would be in recession. 120 thousand unemployed are measurable and affected. Youth unemployment in Wyong Shire is 40% in the 15 to 25 year old bracket. It is a terrible situation. Social Housing has no impact on these figures. The Federal Government has declared Wyong Shire a High Priority Employment Zone to target funding here. On 28th February there will be an Employment Expo at Mingara. The Central Coast is now becoming the food processing centre of Australia with continued job growth.
- The State run education system has appalling levels of student retention. There is a 30% retention rate where the benchmark is 80 to 90 % for most of the State. More money is needed in our schools. We need to turn out more skilled students. There is no easy solution to systemic underachievers and unemployment
- Q5. Colin Kennedy: Many kids do well when they leave school early.?
- A5. I am not talking about motivated kids. I am talking about lost kids in between. They have no plans to go to university but are not even gaining the skills that make them employable. \$16million has been allocated to Trade Training in Central Coast Schools to help combat this.
- Q6. Tom Lyons: You used the term Sovereign Dept. What did you mean by it?
- A6. Sovereign Dept is government debt. Australia buys more than it exports. We do not have the money to provide credit because we do not save enough. Banks have to raise 50% of their money from overseas. Banks do 5 year deals and will have to pay more when these agreements end. This means they have an excuse to raise rates however their huge profits argue against this.

- Q7. Name not recorded: The Entrance to Tuggerah Lakes is almost blocked. Why hasn't it been dredged?
- A7. The past dredging of the lake has been undertaken by Wyong Shire Council with the co-operation of the State Government. However the Federal Government has funded the Tuggerah Lakes Study and Coastal Management scheme. The Federal Government has allocated \$20million for the implementation of the Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Scheme which involve the planting of Salt Marsh and the removal of sea grass.
- Q8. Jeremy Holderness: Transport is one of the biggest problems facing our Precinct. You have not mentioned Transport and Roads.
- A8. The Federal Government has contributed through the "Black Spot" scheme; has contributed to Sparks Road and the Link Road at Warnervale as well as providing Council with additional funds to fix local roads.
- Q9. Name not recorded: When you look out to sea you see hundreds of ships waiting off the coast.
- A9. The Federal Governments investment in a third coal loader at Newcastle will reduce the waiting time for ships. The \$860million investment in a new freight line up the east coast will also help.
- Q10. Helen Ford: will the overall plan to put freight back on rail help the F3?
- A10. A dedicated freight line means that cheaper freight costs result. It could remove up to 1000 trucks from the F3 per day. A lot of the problems arising from the lack of infrastructure has resulted from previous governments, both Liberal and Labour, with an obsession with budget surpluses at the expense of infrastructure. All levels of Government need to ensure they invest in infrastructure.

Keith Ford moved a vote of thanks to Craig and was thanked by a round of applause.

Note taker: Doug Darlington