



# NORTHERN BEACHES BULLETIN

**Andrew Cripps MP**

**State Member for Hinchinbrook**

**Shadow Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs**

**(Proudly Representing Townsville's Northern Beaches including - Black River, Bluewater, Bushland Beach, Burdell, Herveys Range, Mt Low, Purono Park, Saunders Beach, Toolakea, Toomulla, and Yabulu)**

**ISSUE 1**

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Welcome to the first edition of the *Northern Beaches Bulletin* for 2010. I would like to wish the people of Townsville's Northern Beaches a safe and prosperous New Year. I hope you all had a holy and Merry Christmas and spent some quality time with family and friends. I think 2010 will be full of challenges for North Queensland. These challenges will require strong representation to secure a fair outcome for local communities. I will be working hard on behalf of my constituents.

As always, it will be a challenge to keep up the pressure on the Bligh Labor Government to deliver better services and facilities and protect existing services and facilities in the Hinchinbrook electorate and to North Queensland. Sadly, too much of my work involves trying to prevent the withdrawal of existing services and facilities, let alone improving them, or securing more of them.

This year is a federal election year. I hope there will be a change of government in Canberra and the Liberal-National Coalition defeat the Rudd Labor Government. I hope that the people of Townsville's Northern Beaches help secure that change and protect future generations from the heavy burden of decades of debt. I feel Australia needs a conservative government to get us out of the serious levels of debt we find ourselves in, thanks to Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard and Wayne Swan.

Less than three years ago, the Australian Government had no debt, thanks to the good economic management of the former Coalition Government. The people of Australia face decades of tax increases to pay back this huge debt. We can't afford another Rudd Labor Government.

### **BE ALERT, NOT ALARMED ON SCHOOL ASBESTOS REGISTER**

In November 2009, the State Government released a Queensland Schools Asbestos Register. I would urge parents of students in the Hinchinbrook electorate attending schools that are listed on the Schools Asbestos Register to be alert, but not alarmed about the risk of their children being exposed to asbestos fibres.

The way the 3042 page Schools Asbestos Register released by the State Government is formatted is terribly confusing and could raise the anxiety of parents of students who attend schools listed on the register, when there is no immediate threat.

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**ANDREW CRIPPS MP  
MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK**

### **POINT OF INTEREST**

#### **Low Income Earners - No Interest Loans Scheme**

An interest-free loan for individuals or families on low incomes is available to enable people to access fair, safe and equitable credit for the purchase of goods and services. NILS is generally for the purchase of essential household items such as a fridge, washing machine, TV or bed but may also be provided to meet other essential needs like health aids or education costs. NILS is not however available for emergency relief, bond or rent money, living expenses or debt repayment.

To be eligible for NILS a person must earn less than \$30,000 per annum and hold a Health Care or Pension Card. An eligible applicant can borrow between \$200 and \$1,200 with repayments based on what the borrower can afford. The term of the loan is usually around 12 – 18 months. For more information contact my office or the North Community Hub, 52 Palm Drive, Deeragun, Ph - 4751 6511.

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## POWER PRICE INCREASES TO HURT NORTH QUEENSLANDERS

In my view, it was very irresponsible of the State Government to provide such misleading information. Teachers and parents need to be aware that in many schools across Queensland, asbestos was commonly used construction material. That doesn't automatically mean that every school on this list is now a dangerous place for teachers to work and students to learn.

Certainly, there is a need to urgently address the entries on the register that are identified as high risk. It will be a huge task right across Queensland and the State Government needs to provide answers immediately about how this will occur. Other entries are low risk and don't pose much of a threat at this point in time and can be dealt with at a later date.

The State Government needs to provide a clear timeframe for the replacement of what would generally be high risk areas, such as vinyl floor coverings in high use areas that may have been worn down or come loose over the years.

The Education Minister, Geoff Wilson, has claimed releasing the register was about 'increasing transparency and giving parents access to key information about our schools', but this massive document hardly increases transparency and does nothing to inform parents about the issue. Minister Wilson needs to act now to sort out this important issue.

The issue of asbestos materials in schools is a serious one and while teachers and parents certainly have a right to know, I hope no one will jump to conclusions about the safety of school buildings in the Hinchinbrook electorate.

I have previously canvassed the issue of massive electricity tariff increases in the *Northern Beaches Bulletin*. The most recent increases will have a severe impact on North Queenslanders, who also face high transmission charges.

In late December 2009, a further significant increase underlined the failure of the privatisation of Queensland's electricity industry by the State Labor Government and the Bligh Government still refuses to do anything to protect consumers. If the Energy Minister, Stephen Robertson, accepts this further increase, it will mean prices have risen by at least 50 per cent since the State Labor Government deregulated the industry.

The State Labor Government promised no Queenslanders would be worse off. The Minister has the power under the *Electricity Act* to block this increase, but he refuses to do so, even though people and businesses will struggle with the extra cost. In addition, North Queenslanders, already pay higher prices for electricity in comparison to customers in central and southern Queensland, due to high transmission charges.

We need a source of base load power in North Queensland. The Bligh Labor Government is doing nothing about it. Affordable electricity is an essential service in North Queensland.

To add insult to injury, Minister Robertson suggests North Queenslanders adopt a low carbon diet and become more energy efficient. That's easy for a Brisbane based Minister to say. It goes to show he just doesn't understand our circumstances in North Queensland.

### CONGRATULATIONS & THANKYOU TO MARGARET INGRAM 25 Years Service as a Justice of the Peace in Queensland

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010, I was very pleased to visit the Beach Holm community to present a certificate to Mrs Margaret Ingram in recognition of her 25 Years of service to the people of Queensland as a Justice of the Peace. It was also a great opportunity to speak to a number of residents of the Beach Holm community at the Black River Beach Community Hall.

Not everyone understands that Justices of the Peace are volunteers and that they make themselves available to the community without any reward. It is a wonderful thing that we have community minded people, like Mrs Ingram, that get satisfaction out of being of service. Mrs Ingram deserves to be recognised by the community for her efforts over a long period of time.

Other long serving Justices of the Peace can apply for certificates by contacting my office.