



Welcome to the October/November issue of the **Cunningham Examiner**:

Its purpose is to keep you updated on issues affecting our local community. I want to hear from you too. If you want to promote a community event or just make a comment, my contact details are:

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Previous editions of the **Cunningham Examiner** can be found on Sharon's website.

Health: **a top priority** for our local community

Sharon Bird MP has reviewed all the issues raised by local people over the last three years and found that health is the number one concern.

"Of all the issues raised with me over the last three years health (39%) has been the most prominent, closely followed by education (27%), workplace policies (11%) and the environment (11%)," Sharon Bird MP said.

"The campaign to get an MRI machine for Wollongong and the battle to get the cancer drug Herceptin on the PBS list were two big issues," she said.

The battle over health is set to continue in the Federal Election campaign with Labor's \$2 billion plan to fix hospitals.

"Federal Labor's \$2 billion National Health Reform Plan will improve health and hospital services across Australia and help end the blame game between State and Commonwealth governments. This will lead to better hospitals and better patient care."

The plan also involves a \$290 million program for a Commonwealth Dental Health Care program with 650,000 people in the public dental queue waiting to get their teeth fixed. GP super clinics will be established that reduce pressure on hospitals, and \$81 million has been committed to put an extra 9,250 nurses into Australia's hospital system.



Health campaigns in our local area – 2004 to 2007.

Kevin Rudd & Sharon Bird New Leadership

Labor pledges **boost to pre-schoolers**

Early childhood education will receive a strong boost if Federal Labor is elected.



Sharon Bird reading to kids for National Reading Day.

Local MP and former teacher Sharon Bird said “a Rudd Labor Government is committed to providing all four year olds 15 hours of early learning per week, for 40 weeks per year, delivered by a qualified teacher.”

“Federal Labor is aware of the difficulties many New South Wales parents face in accessing preschool for their four year olds,” she added.

The importance of early development is well documented by expert research and international evidence, and also by the experiences of parents. Federal Labor believes that high quality early years education must be available to Australian’s children.

“If elected to Government, Federal Labor will ensure that our children’s early years are a national priority so that they don’t miss out on the benefits early learning and development can bring,” said Sharon Bird MP.

Maldon-Dombarton line crucial for Port

The arrival last month of two large ships that will visit Port Kembla to unload imported vehicles for the Australian market has underlined the need to complete the Maldon-Dombarton rail link.

“It is estimated that up to 250,000 vehicles will be unloaded from these ships each year. The expansion of Port Kembla also includes increased container and cargo handling boosting the need for the completion of the Maldon-Dombarton line,” Sharon Bird MP stated.

These 35-kilometre Maldon-Dombarton line would:

- link the Port of Port Kembla to south-west Sydney,

- increase job and business opportunities between the two regions,
- increase the capacity of the Port of Port Kembla as an export port, and
- free up the competition between freight and passenger travel on the existing Illawarra line.

The completion of the Maldon-Dombarton rail link is crucial to the longer term expansion of the Port of Port Kembla.

“The unloading of motor vehicles adds to the \$300,000 business case funding I recently secured for completing this rail infrastructure,” Sharon Bird said.



Sharon Bird with Jennie George MP and Illawarra Business Chamber President Terry Wetherall at the arrival of car-carrying ships.

WORKCHOICES HITS TAFE STUDENTS

A study has shown that TAFE students are concerned about the impact of WorkChoices on their hours and rates of pay.

The report is the second part of a comprehensive study commissioned by the NSW Teachers Federation on how WorkChoices is impacting young people.

Wollongong TAFE teacher Rob Long told the Examiner that his students were working longer hours than ever before.

“Many students are working weekends with no penalty rates and one is working four part-time jobs just to survive. In my ten years of teaching young adults I’ve never seen it so bad,” Mr Long said.

The spread of individual contracts – AWA’s – is undermining working conditions. As one student said in the report “I had to sign; because they were like, ‘Oh yes, you’ve got to fill it in.’ So, I just signed it.”

“This report underlines why we must get rid of WorkChoices”, Sharon Bird MP concluded.

'My life as a journey'

by Gracia Tshibanda Ngoy



Sharon Bird MP and Gracia Tshibanda Ngoy with Labor Shadow Minister for Immigration Tony Burke on his recent visit to Wollongong.

In July 2005, my family arrived in Australia, as refugees under the Federal Government's Humanitarian Visa program. It was a really exciting time, and a delight, because I saw the cultural diversities within the country.

I also became involved in a youth community radio programme called 'Young and Wireless'. I was interested in listening

to and contributing to other young people's lives in Wollongong.

In 2006 I was referred to an organisation called SCARF by a friend. After being introduced to the organisation, my family got help in many ways such as academically, socially, resettlement and many more.

I attended the homework sessions that SCARF ran twice a week, and I could see improvements in my studies. SCARF has really impacted my life for good and this has resulted in my wanting to have an active role in the organisation. In July 2007 I enrolled as both a member and volunteer for SCARF. This has been a great experience for me and I have learned so much already by volunteering.

I hope that my dream to be a television journalist, which is my passion, is heading in the right direction.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXTRACT FROM AN ARTICLE BY REFUGEE **GRACIA TSHIBANDA NGOY** ABOUT HER LIFE AND THE HELP SHE HAS RECEIVED FROM SCARF.

I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1991. At a very young age my interest developed into the television industry. From 1999 to 2002, I got involved in a national television kids' show called 'Gran-pere'.

In 2002 my family moved to South Africa due to political and tribal conflict that attacked our homeland. When moving to South Africa it became a challenge to adapt to a new country, language and lifestyle. My father wasn't able to obtain a job, and we had many more problems beside.

Even so, with the passion to continue to pursue my dream, I became involved in a radio Catholic show called Kids' Catholic Club.

Wollongong's big heart impresses Labor man

Federal Labor Shadow Minister for Immigration Tony Burke visited Wollongong recently and was impressed with local success helping new migrants settle in Australia.

"Wollongong's big heart in helping migrants who've come from strife-torn lands around the globe is to be highly commended," he said.

Mr Burke was in Wollongong to meet with local community groups. He met representatives of the Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council, Illawarra Multicultural Services and the St Vincent de Paul Society.

"Tony heard first hand from our local organisations the great work we do in resettling migrants. He also took the time to listen to locals' experiences with the immigration program," Sharon Bird MP said.

Tony Burke and Sharon Bird also visited the Strategic Community Assistance for Refugee Families (SCARF) Homework Centre at Wollongong City Library. SCARF is a local volunteer community organisation assisting settlement into Wollongong of refugee families. SCARF volunteers offer a Homework Help Program to high school students at Wollongong City Library (See story this page).

Local runs up \$12,000 for charity

Local ultra marathon runner Dave Taylor raised over \$12,000 for the Australian Aerial Patrol by clocking up over 600 kilometres on a treadmill recently.

Sharon Bird was one a range of locals who took the opportunity to support Dave by putting in an hour on the treadmill.

"Dave deserves our thanks and recognition for his outstanding charity work," Sharon Bird said.

Dave was attempting to beat the seven day world record of 650 kilometres for treadmill running. He came close to getting the record and matching his feat of two years earlier where he broke the open world record.

The attempt took place at Wests Illawarra with treadmills supplied by Beaton Park Lesiure Centre.



Sharon Bird on the treadmill supporting Dave Taylor's world record attempt at Wests Illawarra.

Authorised by Sharon Bird MP, Shop 501, Globe Lane, Wollongong

Active Outdoor Play for Fun & Health

With concern about rising obesity levels in Australian children, it's important to encourage kids away from computer and television screens for regular exercise. But exercise must be enjoyable and fun. That's why Healthy Cities Illawarra is promoting active, outdoor play through its 'Play Illawarra' initiative.

Active play is the most natural form of physical activity for children and apart from burning calories can have many other physical, mental and social benefits. Active play is fun for everyone; the whole family can participate as part of a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

Earlier this year the 'Play Illawarra' website – the first of its kind in Australia – was launched to provide parents and carers across the Illawarra with detailed information on more than 250 playgrounds in the region. From Helensburgh to Nowra the website provides colour photographs, geographical locations and information on other surrounding facilities such as seating, shade, water, BBQs and disabled access. More than just a directory of playgrounds, the Play Illawarra website promotes safe, active play for children and their carers by including information on upcoming play events, play services such as playgroups and play centres, and loads of other information and links on play related topics such as creative play space design and better urban planning for play.

"Active outdoor play in community open spaces is fun, healthy and can create a great sense of community. You will be surprised how many of your neighbours you can meet if you start a game of touch, or play Frisbee in your local park," HCI Manager Frank Wallner said.

"As a community, we have to be committed to reclaiming our park and public spaces so that every child can enjoy more opportunities to play safely and explore the world outside their own lounge room," he said.

Healthy Cities Illawarra works to improve and promote the health, physical environment and quality of life of the people of the Illawarra. It is a non-profit, community-based organisation and is part of a global movement founded by the World Health Organisation.



Local MP Sharon Bird with Healthy Cities Illawarra Secretary/Manager Frank Wallner.

A HEALTHY SNACK

Frank's Easy Vegie Slice

Take it to the park as a quick and easy picnic snack



INGREDIENTS

- 4 slices wholemeal bread
- 1 tablespoon polyunsaturated margarine
- 4 lean slices ham
- 1 small onion
- 1 small zucchini
- 1 tablespoon self raising flour
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped parsley
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup grated fat-reduced cheese

METHOD

- 1 Cut the crusts off the bread. Spread bread lightly with margarine.
2. Arrange spread side up on the bottom of a shallow dish.
3. Cut the ham into small pieces. Put in a bowl.
4. Grate the onion and zucchini. Add to the bowl.
5. Use a fork to beat the eggs.
6. Add eggs, flour, parsley and cheese. Stir well.
7. Spoon mixture over bread. Cover with plastic wrap.
8. Microwave on medium-high for 8 minutes. Serve hot or cold.

Six ideas for active healthy kids & families

- 1** Parents need to be role models for an active lifestyle: try to fit in 30 minutes of exercise yourself
- 2** Take your kids outside and join them in games – kids love seeing Mum, Dad or Granddad on a swing!
- 3** Limit your child's screen time – set a limit of 1-2 hours per day when they can watch TV or play computer games
- 4** Use your local park and explore some of the others in the region
- 5** Join in a local play group or get together with other parents to do fun activities together in your local area
- 6** Choose fruit as a great snack and drink plenty of water