

# CUNNINGHAM EXAMINER

## New free paper

Welcome to the first edition of the *Cunningham Examiner* – a free local newsletter.

It will serve as a useful guide to what is happening in our local community.

Be it government policies affecting your daily life or community initiatives that will help us all, the *Cunningham Examiner* will keep you up to date.

We want to hear from you too. If you want to promote a community event or just make a comment either write to me at PO Box 387, Wollongong 2520 or send an email to Sharon.Bird.MP@aph.gov.au

*Sharon Bird*



## MRI Licence needed now!

**Demands for an MRI licence at Wollongong Hospital have been frustrated by privatisation of our health services.**

It's been revealed in Federal Parliament that the Howard Government now favours giving 'access to private rather than public in-patient services'. The radical shift towards health privatisation is the latest reason given for their refusal to grant an MRI licence to Wollongong Hospital.

It defies the wishes of local residents who have campaigned for a MRI licence, according to Federal Member for Cunningham Sharon Bird.

"The Howard Government wants to leave our health services in control of private operators," she said. Without the licence patients can't make a claim under Medicare.

"We already have an MRI machine funded by the NSW Labor Government. All we want the Howard Government to do is provide the MRI licence."

"I'm going to fight for this until the Federal Government gets sick of me and gives Wollongong Hospital's MRI machine the licence it deserves."

**Sharon Bird has launched an MRI petition which she will present to Federal Parliament. The petition can be signed at Wollongong Council Libraries or by calling in at Shop 501, Globe Lane, Wollongong**



Local Federal MP Sharon Bird is fighting to get Wollongong Hospital an MRI licence.

## Saving children's lives

A new campaign has been launched to reduce the tragic number of children drowning every year.

New figures from the Royal Life Saving Society Australia revealed 40 children aged under five had drowned last year.

Their protection is the priority of "Keep Watch" – a campaign to prevent toddler drowning.

Supervision, swimming skills and resuscitation are the pillars of the campaign.

Anyone wanting a free information pack can contact Sharon Bird on 4228 5899 or go to the campaign website – [www.keepwatch.com.au](http://www.keepwatch.com.au)



## Health Insurance Premiums rise

In March, the Federal Minister for Health, announced an average increase of 7.96% to private health insurance premiums nationally.

"People have been contacting me and telling me that their premiums have increased by as much as 20%," Sharon Bird said.

"I want to take these staggering increases up in Parliament," she said. Please contact Sharon's office on 4228 5899 and tell her your story, you can choose to keep your name confidential.

# Funding for flood mitigation

The Illawarra's claim for flood mitigation funding has been recognised with a series of projects to get underway across the region.

For example, the footbridge in Colgong Crescent, Towradgi will be raised with a grant of \$83,333.

Federal Member for Cunningham, Sharon Bird, said they were included in the latest round of funding secured for Wollongong City Council.

Other funded projects included:

- \* \$166,667 for channel widening at Fairy Creek, Gwynneville;
- \* \$20,000 for modifications to the detention basin at Black Diamond Place; and
- \* \$200,000 to upgrade the culvert in Lemrac Avenue.

Meanwhile, over \$500,000 in additional funds has been dedicated to natural disaster mitigation works.

"The biggest priority has been to set up a buffer zone where our suburbs meet the bush," Ms Bird said.

"We've got \$360,000 to do that and I'll be fighting for more."



Councillors Val Zanotto and Janice Kershaw with Sharon Bird at the footbridge that will be raised over Towradgi Creek.

Illawarra Mercury  
4.12.2004

## Remembering our war heroes

Massive crowds have surged to remembrance services in recent years.

And the sea of young faces shows children hold a welcome interest in Australia's heritage. Two updated websites give students a chance to learn even more about our wartime service.

The Visit Gallipoli website – [www.anzacsite.gov.au](http://www.anzacsite.gov.au) – meets both curriculum requirements and instils a sense of history in students. Another website – [www.wv2australia.gov.au](http://www.wv2australia.gov.au) – offers teachers and students information about significant events from World War II.

"It's never been more important to promote our nation's legacy to the next generation. 2005 represents the 90th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign and 60th anniversary of the end of World War II," Sharon Bird said.

"Let's remember, honour and learn from the sacrifice of our veterans."



Sharon Bird with local veterans Mike Morris, Peter Poulton and Doug Johnston.

## Interest rate hike hurts local families

The March interest rate rise will put more financial pressure on local families.

The Reserve Bank has raised official interest rates by 0.25%. This means that mortgage rates may rise to 7.30%.

This also puts pressure on the banks to raise interest rates on personal loans and credit cards.

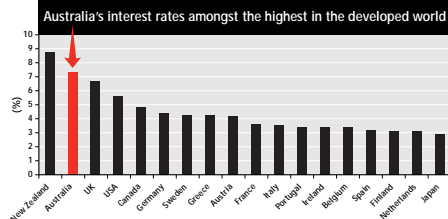
Renters will also be hit by the interest rate rise as owners are forced to increase rents to cover the cost.

Small business owners won't escape either as business costs will increase and either prices will rise or profits fall.

"During the election campaign, John Howard and Peter Costello promised local families they would keep interest rates down," Sharon Bird said.

"Four months after the election and already interest rates are heading up – and there is talk of another increase in the near future."

Mortgage	Extra monthly repayment
7.3% \$200,000	UP \$32 ↑
\$300,000	UP \$48 ↑
\$400,000	UP \$64 ↑
\$500,000	UP \$80 ↑



# Maternity Payment – Don't forget to claim it

**New mothers are being urged to quickly claim the \$3000 Maternity Payment – or risk losing it altogether.**

The Howard Government has instructed Centrelink to give new mothers only 26 weeks after the birth of a child to claim the payment.

The \$3000 baby bonus is available for all families and is not means-tested.

Federal Member for Cunningham, Sharon Bird, wants to make sure local families claim what they are owed.

"I know that you're never busier than when you have a new baby and dealing with Centrelink is the last thing on your mind," she said.

"But the Howard Government has put a strict timeframe on claiming the \$3000 payment.

"So if you need a hand, please call my office on 4228 5899 and we'll get you the forms you need."



*Sharon Bird is working to get local families a better deal.*

## Always available



"As your local MP, I want to hear what's important to you. That's why I will be holding regular street meetings around the Illawarra.

If you need help with Centrelink, Childcare, Aged Care, Taxation, Veterans' Affairs, Superannuation, Telstra, Visas, Passports or any other Federal issue please contact me."

Sharon Bird MP  
Member for Cunningham

Office: Shop 501, Globe Lane, Wollongong NSW 2500  
Mail: PO Box 387, Wollongong NSW 2520  
Phone: (02) 4228 5899 Fax: (02) 4228 5077  
Email: Sharon.Bird.MP@aph.gov.au

## Lending a McHappy hand



Customers of Woonona McDonald's were shocked recently when local MP Sharon Bird swapped serving in Parliament for serving burgers and fries to help raise funds for Ronald McDonald House. Sharon assured customers it wasn't a second job but just a way to help sick children. Across Australia, McHappy Day raised nearly \$1 million this year.

## Every home should have one

**Floods and fires are a sad fact of life, and the Illawarra region has been badly affected in recent years.**

That's why the State Emergency Service's idea of families preparing an emergency kit is a good one.

It can be put in a sturdy, easy-to-carry bag or storage box. The SES recommends including basics like a portable radio, torch, first aid kit and emergency contact lists.

For full details go to [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au) and follow the link to the family emergency kit or contact Sharon Bird's office on 4228 5899 for a copy.

## Grandparents can claim

Grandparents who are sole carers are now eligible for a Child Care Benefit.

The Benefit covers the full cost of up to 50 hours per child per week in approved child care.

It was introduced in January but there has been a slow uptake of the Benefit.

To find out more on eligibility details or how to claim the Benefit, call Sharon Bird on 4228 5899.

# Victory for retirement village residents

Retirement village residents have had a major victory in the campaign to remove the threat of a GST applying to basic living services.

The Howard Government had threatened to extend the GST to hit all people living in serviced apartments.

But they've been forced to back down and now guarantee these residents will never be subject to the GST.

Federal Member for Cunningham, Sharon Bird, said the news will come as a relief to local retirement village residents.

"They weren't just worried about the GST being slapped on basic living services," she said.

"They also feared the Government would hit them with back-taxes and penalties.

"Labor fought this measure tooth-and-nail and have had a major victory in forcing John Howard to back down."

She said residents who had already paid the GST will have it refunded.

## Bulk billing rates fall

Local patients are finding it harder than ever to access a bulk billing GP.

New figures reveal that there has been a 4% drop in bulk billing in Cunningham in the past 4 years.

Even worse, the out-of-pocket cost of each GP visit has risen by \$5.38 to \$14.27.

Federal Member for Cunningham, Sharon Bird, said: "It's a bit rich for the Howard Government to make it harder to find a bulk billing GP at the same time as they increase out of pocket costs."

"If you are having problems with bulk billing please contact my office on 4228 5899," Sharon said.





**WIN A COPY OF POSSUM MAGIC**

**NATIVE BIRDS AND ANIMALS COLOURING COMPETITION – CLOSING 30 APRIL 2005.**

**SEND YOUR ENTRY TO: POSSUM MAGIC COMPETITION, PO BOX 387, WOLLONGONG 2520**



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_