



Dear Resident of the Berowra Electorate,

### **Floods**

Over the last week we have watched the flood crisis unfold, affecting many parts of NSW including Wisemans Ferry and the numerous communities along the Hawkesbury River in this electorate.

It was important to me to return from Parliament this week to visit individuals and families who have been affected and deliver groceries to those who have been cut off by the floods. We welcome the clear skies and a reprieve from the rain, however it is important to remain vigilant around flood waters.

The coming days will be incredibly difficult for many in our community and surrounding communities whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by the floods, as we seek to recover and rebuild. Thank you to our incredible SES and RFS, as well as all the other volunteers who have been working tirelessly to protect our community and for the work you will do in coming days. My heart goes out to all those who have been affected including to the family of the man who tragically passed away in Glenorie.

You should have received an email from me earlier this week with information regarding the floods and supports available, and I have included that information again in this newsletter.



### **Treatment of women in Australian society**

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and address some of the events in the Parliament in recent weeks. Some very confronting and terrible stories about the treatment of women in Parliament have prompted wider discussion about the treatment of women in their workplaces, schools, university and homes. The March4Justice which

occurred across the country last week demonstrated how deep the concerns about the treatment of women are.

Hearing how many young women have been sexually assaulted is the most confronting of all the shocks of the past month.

We are failing our girls and our boys if we don't do something to turn this around.

I committed in the Parliament this week to playing my part in making Australia a better, safer, more tolerant place for women and called on other men around the country to join in these efforts as well.

I also welcome the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Work Practices being run by Kate Jenkins. The Australian Parliament should be the best example of professional conduct and the treatment of women and this review will help us to make the adjustments necessary.

You can watch my speech to the Parliament here:

[Speech to Parliament](#)

This newsletter provides further information on recent policy announcements that affect our community and on the work I have been doing in the Parliament and in our community.

Please feel welcome to share this newsletter with others who may be interested. I encourage you to follow my social media for up-to-date news too. Anyone who wants to be added to the newsletter distribution list should email [julian.leeser.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:julian.leeser.mp@aph.gov.au).

If ever my staff or I can assist you in any way, please don't hesitate to phone my office on (02) 9980 1822 or send an email.

Kind regards,  
Julian Leeser

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## Flood assistance

### Where to go for assistance or information

The SES can be contacted on 13 25 00 for rescue, assistance to evacuate or other emergency help. In a life-threatening emergency, you should call 000.

You can also visit the NSW SES website or the Hills SES Facebook page for information and updates. ABC Radio and the Bureau of Meteorology also provide regular updates on warnings and the general flood situation.

## Government support

Those across the electorate who have suffered significant losses or whose income has been affected by these weather events may be eligible for Government assistance.

The **Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP) is a non-means tested payment of \$1000 for eligible adults and \$400 for eligible children.** The AGDRP is available to people who have sustained a serious injury or whose homes have been lost or directly damaged due to the storms or floods. It is also available to immediate family members of someone who has lost their life.

The Australian Government **Disaster Recovery Allowance (DRA) is a short-term income support payment.** DRA may be available to assist individuals who have experienced a loss of income as a direct result of the storms and floods. The maximum payment rate is equivalent to JobSeeker and is means-tested based on your income.

The best way to find out whether you can access one of these payments is to call the **Services Australia Disaster Assistance phone line on 180 22 66.** To find out more about the support available go to:

**Support available**

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## Vaccine Rollout

On Monday, Australia entered Phase 1B of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Phase 1B will encompass around 6 million Australians who are over 70 years old, health care workers, adults with certain medical conditions or disabilities, and critical and high-risk workers (such as police officers and emergency services).

Phase 1A of the rollout is still in progress and more than 200,000 Australians have been vaccinated so far. That includes over 45,000 aged care residents in 500 aged care homes across the country. As we improve the supply chain and ramp up production, the Government remains confident that every Australian will receive their first dose of the vaccine by the end of October this year.

The rollout is occurring at hospitals and GP clinics. In our electorate, nine clinics will begin administering vaccines as part of Phase 1B. If you are eligible for a vaccine in Phase 1B, you will be able to book a vaccine appointment through the eligibility checker. That will also inform you about the best location for you to receive the vaccine. Please do not contact your local doctor directly, as they will be unable to help you in booking an appointment if you are eligible. You can find the eligibility checker here:

[Check eligibility](#)

The Government has also recently launched a 'Is It True?' campaign to tackle disinformation about the vaccines. If you have concerns about the vaccines, I would encourage you to visit the 'Is It True?' website at:

['Is it True?'](#)

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## Extension to Telehealth

Telehealth has helped many people in our electorate to continue accessing the medical services upon which they rely over the last twelve months. The Government recently announced an additional investment of \$1.1 billion to extend the successful national COVID-19 health response.

**As part of that additional investment, Medicare support for telehealth has been extended until 30 June 2021.**

To date, more than 52 million telehealth services have been delivered by more than 82,000 providers to 13 million Australians.

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## Jobs

### Getting more young people into apprenticeships and traineeships

Last year, as part of our economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Morrison Government announced \$1.2 billion in funding to support Australian businesses to employ 100,000 new apprentices and trainees. It is very excited to see that those

placed have been taken up in less than 5 months. **432 of those apprenticeships or traineeships** were supported in Berowra.

In recognition of this high demand, the cap on the number of supported places has been lifted. That means that all eligible employers will be able to receive support for 50% of the wages for a new or recommencing apprentice or trainee. This is great news for young Australians and Australian businesses.

If you are thinking of taking on an apprentice you can find out more about this program here:

## Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements

### Support for tourism and aviation

After the challenging year that we have had many Australians could do with a holiday. The Government is funding 800,000 half-price airfares to encourage Australians to take a holiday to one of 13 regions in the first half of 2021. Those destinations have been selected based on Austrade travel data which indicates the areas most affected by the loss of international tourism.

This initiative is part of the \$1.2 billion package which the Government is implementing to support the tourism and aviation industries going forward. We recognise that COVID-19 is continuing to impact those sectors and now, more than ever, they need domestic support.

Other key measures include job support for Australia's two international passenger airlines, low-interest loans to small and medium sized businesses in affected sectors, and extension of support to travel agents.

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## Inquiring into Australia's Skilled Migration Program

I'm pleased to Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration. I recently tabled the interim report of our Inquiry into Australia's Skilled Migration Program. Migration has been heavily affected by COVID-19. Going forward, it is important that we think about how migration can contribute to Australia's recovery from this challenging period.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on Australia's workforce. While 94% of Australians who lost their jobs or were stood down to zero hours are now back in work, there are still significant skills shortages in our economy. As a result of

COVID-19, over half a million temporary visa holders left Australia, resulting in significant skills shortages.

The committee has also heard that job vacancies in November last year reached 254,000, higher than at any point in the last 10 years.

Skilled migrants create Australian jobs. Employers have made it clear to the committee that they always prefer to employ Australians over migrants, but the skills they need aren't always available here. Australia needs to replace skilled migrants that left our shores. Without the return of skilled migration, Australia's economic recovery will be severely hampered and it will be harder to create more jobs for Australians. Skilled migrants are not replacing Australian graduates, nor are they replacing unskilled unemployed Australians, but they are filling the missing middle of our economy, including people who can train Australians and whose presence in a business can create more Australian jobs.

You can watch my tabling speech here:



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## Environment

### **Alan Finkel appointed as special adviser for low emissions technology**

Australia's former Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel, has recently been appointed by the Morrison Government to the newly-created role of Special Adviser to the Australian Government for Low Emissions Technology.

Dr Finkel is an expert in the field of low emissions technology and will play an important role in furthering our commitment to addressing climate change by lowering emissions.

In particular, he will advise on implementing the Government's Technology Investment Roadmap.

The Roadmap is guiding the Australian Government's \$18 billion investment in low emissions technologies over the next decade. That Federal Government investment is expected to encourage an additional \$70 billion investment from the private sector and other levels of Government by 2030. Dr Finkel is an excellent choice to help in guiding that process.

## **National Plan to Tackle Plastic Waste**

Tackling plastic waste is an important environmental priority for our Government. Australia's consume 1 million tonnes of single use plastic each year and we know that must change.

The Minister for the Environment, Sussan Ley, recently launched the Nation's first National Plastics Plan. This plan will strengthen the fight against plastic waste on five fronts:

- Legislation
- Investment
- Industry targets
- Research and development
- Community education

I would encourage you to read more about the National Plastics Plan here:

[National Plastics Plan](#)

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## **Grants Programs Open to Applications**

### **Women in STEM Cadetships and Advanced Apprenticeships Program**

Women are traditionally under-represented in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The Government wants to see more women in STEM and we know there is a large number of Australian women who are well-suited to working in those fields.

That is why the Government is expanding the *Women in STEM Cadetships and Advanced Apprenticeships Program* from 500 places to 600 places. The program provides grants to support women in completing any of 37 STEM courses alongside



part-time employment. Supported courses include an Associate Degree of Engineering and an Advanced Diploma of Cyber Security.

[More information](#)

### **Boosting Female Founders Initiative**

The *Boosting Female Founders* initiative is a grants program which supports female entrepreneurs to scale up their business. Female entrepreneurs often face greater obstacles in getting early-stage finance and this program seeks to break down those barriers. Under the last funding round, more than 50 female-founded and led businesses were supported to bring their business to new markets and create new jobs.

The Government has committed \$11.6 million to the second round of this grants program. Applications for the current funding round are open until 22 April 2021.

[More information](#)

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## **Local Community Updates**

### **Clean Up Australia Day**

Clean Up Australia Day 2021 occurred on 7 March this year. I was pleased to join the Beecroft Civic Trust and other local community groups to help in cleaning up their communities on a bright Sunday morning.



### **School Upgrades Completed**

It has been great to visit a number of schools across the electorate over recent weeks to see the recent upgrades to equipment and facilities at some of our local schools which have been completed with funding from the Morrison Government.



**Hillside Public School** has installed two new glass touch screen panels and **Mount Kuring-Gai Public School** have purchased a new interactive whiteboard. These innovative tools will help to develop student learning.



**Thornleigh West Public School** have renovated their creative learning space, which will complement the learning and teaching of staff and students at the school.



**Cheltenham Girls High School** are benefiting from their new shade sail structure, which will help to keep the school community safe from the sun.



**Arcadia Public School** have an impressive new sand-based playground, which will help the students to learn through play.



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## **This fortnight in Parliament**

### **Speeches to the Parliament**

#### **Dr Richard Geeves**

I recently had the honour of commemorating the life of Dr Richard Geeves, a well-known local GP who tirelessly served the community over many years. Dr Geeves was a long-term member of the Rotary Club Pennant Hills and a staunch advocate for caring for older Australians. [Click here to watch my speech.](#)

### **Mentoring Men 25twoZERO Movement**

Mentoring Men's 25twoZERO Movement aims to cut male suicide from 2500 to ZERO.

The initiative encourages widespread community engagement in physical activity to reduce levels of anxiety and promote wellbeing.

Team members sign up to walk, cycle, swim, do sit-ups, any form of exercise so long as it has a measurable goal of 2,520 to help people focus on the underlying importance of this movement. I would encourage everyone to get involved, to sign up or find out more go to: <https://www.25twozero.org.au/>

[Click here to watch my speech.](#)

### **Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children**

Last week, I spoke about Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children (ROMAC). ROMAC is a volunteer-run organisation which organises medical practitioners, hospitals, airline sponsors and other supporters to provide important surgical treatment to children from the Oceania region every year. [Click here to watch my speech.](#)

### **Youth Unemployment**

One of my great concerns since the pandemic began was about the unemployment of our young people, particularly the level of unemployment of our young people.

Research from the previous global shocks indicates that the longer a person is on welfare the harder it is for them to get off welfare benefits. That's why it is critical that we get people off welfare and into a job.

Last week's labour force numbers indicate the unemployment rate of 6.3 per cent in January dropped to 5.8 per cent in February. Around 88,700 new jobs were created, 40 per cent of those jobs went to young people and 80 per cent went to women. Our response to the unemployment crisis indicates how seriously we are taking these matters.

[You can watch my speech by clicking here.](#)

### **Harmony Week**

Our successful multicultural society is one of the hallmarks of Australia, and it is one of the hallmarks of my community in Berowra.

Harmony Week was a great opportunity for me to speak about some of the organisations and people in my community who are engaged in bolstering and celebrating and providing services to that successful multicultural Australia that we have including:

- Australian Community Inspired Association Inc
- Cherrybrook Chinese Community Association
- IABBV Hindi School Inc

- St George Maronite Catholic Church Thornleigh
- Moving Forward Together

[You can watch my speech by clicking here.](#)