



Dear Residents of the Berowra Electorate,

At the 2016 election I promised to put Federal money on the table to push forward improvements to New Line Road.

Last year, I was successful in securing \$10 million for the planning of the project. The State Government has since matched the funding and work has now begun on the full planning for an upgrade of New Line Road so it can be ready for State Government investment.

This newsletter provides you with more information on this important development, as well as some other updates for 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.

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

New Line Road upgrade - planning has commenced

New Line Road is a major bottleneck in the electorate, causing issues with traffic flows as well as pedestrian safety, and this planning process is the first step to fixing it.

Last year I secured \$10 million of Federal funding to plan the upgrade of New Line Road. This is a State road and my promise was to put Federal funding on the table to get the planning done so the road is ready for State Government investment.

Development of a business case for a future upgrade of the road is now underway. This is the first step of the planning process.

Local residents will see technical experts along New Line Road surveying the condition of the existing road and utility infrastructure.



There will be an opportunity to have your say about the future of New Line Road in the second half of next year as the planning process develops options for the future upgrade.

NorthConnex - not far off now

New videos have been released that will help drivers become familiar with NorthConnex before their first journey. This video has been used to simulate the journeys drivers can expect when NorthConnex opens in the next few weeks.

We want motorists to take note of the new entry and exit points, where they will navigate new movements and how the motorway connects to the broader road network. Click below to watch the video.



[Visit the NorthConnex website](#)

Meeting with Minister for Aged Care and aged care providers in the electorate

This week I hosted the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Senator Richard Colbeck for a Zoom discussion with aged care providers in our electorate.

The discussion was a chance to check in about how facilities are planning in case there is a Coronavirus outbreak in their facility. The Minister also answered provider's questions about how the Federal Government is assisting to protect the health and

safety of the residents and staff in aged care.

Building on the \$205 million COVID-19 Support Payment provided to all residential Aged Care providers in June 2020, the Australian Government has recently delivered a further \$245 million injection into all facilities across Australia.



This funding supports enhanced infection control capability, including through an on-site clinical lead. Funding may also be used to address other COVID-19 related costs such as increased staffing costs, communications with families and managing visitation arrangements.

Our aged care providers have been doing an incredible job during COVID-19, responding to both the needs of residents and their families. This meeting was important to ensure they could ask questions of the Minister, but also for the Minister to hear some of the challenges aged care providers are facing. I want to thank and acknowledge all the people in our community who work in aged care for the great care they provided our greatest Australians.

National Science Week grants - Apply Now

Organisations and individuals with ideas for exciting National Science Week events for next year are being encouraged to apply for a grant to make their idea a reality.

Preparations for next year's annual festival of science are now underway, with grants of up to \$20,000 available for those who are ready to inspire Australia's next generation of big picture thinkers.

National Science Week will run from 14 - 22 August 2021 and is Australia's largest festival with over a million people participating in thousands of events each year.

Applications for 2021 National Science Week grants are now open, and close on 28 October 2020.

To find out more about National Science Week go to www.scienceweek.net.au

To apply for a grant, or read the updated grant opportunity guidelines, click below.

[Apply for a Grant](#)

Interim report for the Inquiry into the Working Holiday Maker Program: addressing agricultural labour shortages

I want to update you about some work I have been doing in my role as Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, as it involves matters that effect every one of us.

Our agricultural and horticultural industries are facing substantial labour shortages for the upcoming harvest season. The agricultural and horticultural sector has come to rely on working holiday makers (backpackers) to play a substantial role in harvesting, however international border closures have created a shortage of backpackers, with none expected to enter the country in the immediate future.

If farmers are unable to find workers, this will affect the availability of fresh produce we enjoy every day and could increase the cost by up to 60%.

We recently released an interim report, making a number of recommendations for dealing with the labour shortages, the more significant recommendation is:

- Developing a “Have a Gap Year at Home” campaign to appeal to young Australians who might have chosen to travel overseas to instead see some of their own country and undertake work in the agriculture and horticulture sectors

Our ability to encourage and motivate Australians to undertake this work has immediate and long-lasting impacts on Australia's food security and food prices.

I welcome the Government's recent announcements addressing agricultural labour shortages in line with the recommendations of the Interim Report. The recent announcements include:

Incentivising young Australians to take a 'domestic gap year'

The Committee recommended that the Government put in place measures to attract young people and people on support payments to take up regional work in the form of a 'gap year at home'. The Government announced that it is investing \$33.7 million in being invested to support farmers by encouraging and incentivising Australians to take a 'domestic gap year' to work in the agriculture sector this coming harvest season.

The 2020 Budget provides, \$17.4 million in relocation support and \$16.3 million in temporary Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY eligibility changes to incentivise people to take up seasonal farm work this summer.

Providing relocation assistance

The Committee recommended the Government establish a one-off payment to help with travel and accommodation costs incurred when picking fruit in regional areas, to be paid after a certain period of time working in regional, rural and remote areas.

The Government last week announced that relocation allowances of up to \$6,000 for Australians and up to \$2,000 for eligible visa holders will be available from 1 November to undertake seasonal work in agriculture.

From 1 November 2020, relocation assistance will be available to people who relocate to harvest and regional areas to take up at least 6 weeks of agricultural work, including Australians who are not receiving income support and those with the right to work in Australia.

Allowing essential agricultural worker movement between states

We also recommended that the Government recognise the importance of enabling agricultural workers to move across state borders and facilitate appropriate exemptions and permits subject to approval by health authorities.

The National Agriculture Workers' Code has been delivered to provide for the COVID-safe travel between states – five of eight Australian jurisdictions have implemented it except for Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania.

Application fee waivers

The Committee also recommended concessions for WHM visa holders who haven't been able to make full use of their visa. The Government announced that backpackers on Working Holiday Maker visas who have been unable to come to Australia or who had to leave Australia early due to COVID-19 will be eligible for a Visa Application Charge waiver, when they decide to return to Australia.

Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme

The Committee recommended that further work be done to work with state and territory governments to recruit additional SWP and PLS workers to fill the agricultural labour shortfalls.

The Morrison Government has since announced a further \$9 million to ensure employers can access Seasonal Worker Programme workers to meet these shortfalls.

The SWP and PLS have a dual purpose – it provides direct and tangible benefits to our farming sector and also to our Pacific family by providing income, skills and valuable remittances to support the economic development of participating countries.

Filling these positions will not come at the expense of getting Australians into jobs as approved employers can only recruit through the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) if they can demonstrate they cannot find suitable Australian workers.

These announcements enable Working Holiday Makers, a major contributor to Australia's tourism industry and agricultural labour force, to support Australia's critical sectors at this time.

The Committee will continue the Working Holiday Maker inquiry, and report on the wider terms of reference later in 2020.

If you or anyone you know is interested in these opportunities go to the Harvest Trail website by clicking on the link below. You can also watch my presentation of the report to the Parliament below.



[Harvest Trail](#)

[Read the Interim Report Here](#)
