

## QUEANBEYAN AGE COLUMN 1 FEBRUARY 2008

### QBC MEETS WITH NEW MEMBER FOR EDEN-MONARO

This week QBC Executive members met with new Member for Eden-Monaro Hon. Dr. Mike Kelly AM MP who has agreed to be Joint Patron of Queanbeyan Business Council along with NSW Member for Monaro Mr. Steve Whan MP.

Not only were we able to congratulate Dr. Kelly on his win at the Federal Election, but also his appointment as Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support and Civil-Military Cooperation.

The meeting was most productive from QBC's perspective, letting us put our perspective on the current challenges for Queanbeyan and Region. It built upon an earlier address Dr. Kelly gave to a General Meeting of QBC members prior to the election.

Issues included:

**Water Supply** – Members sought a strong commitment of federal intervention for the direct provision to Queanbeyan from the Commonwealth's Googong dam should either:

- Water be denied,
- Water be tied to unreasonable conditions,
- Water supply remain unresolved once the NSW statutory rezoning issues have been addressed.

In particular, QBC expressed its concern at the prospect of the Googong Dam being transferred to the ACT whilst Queanbeyan's water for greenfield developments remains unresolved. Dr. Kelly understood the situation, telling Members that he was in consultation with Minister for Home Affairs, Hon. Bob Debus on this issue.

**Roads Funding** – Traffic within the Queanbeyan CBD is a significant brake on development and economic activity, and QBC believes a permanent bypass is needed. There have been a range of studies undertaken dating back over thirty years, and yet no firm solution exists. Responsibility for the roads question crosses jurisdictions, and QBC believes this is a reason for the lack of progress on this key issue. Accordingly, QBC sought Commonwealth leadership in bringing together NSW and the ACT to achieve the required concept, funding, and approvals. Dr. Kelly expressed his support for QBC's position, telling members that significant funding has been allocated to alleviate problems in Pialligo Avenue, Kings Highway and Lanyon Drive – which would include dual carriageway construction from the new railway bridge being constructed by NSW Government through to Monaro Highway. He was supportive of the concept of a regional road strategy to include a future Queanbeyan by-pass.

**Rental Properties shortage** – Reference was made to an article on page 5 of *The Queanbeyan Age* 18 January reporting an exodus to Canberra due to the shortage of affordable rental in Queanbeyan. Dr. Kelly advised that

Minister for Housing, Hon. Tanya Plibersek, will take a multi million dollar proposal to the next COAG meeting to construct 50,000 rental properties in Australia. These would be offered to eligible applicants at 20% below current market rental.

**Shortage of trade skills** – QBC requested clarification of the Federal Government's position regarding High School Technical Colleges and the Australian Technical College being established in Queanbeyan. Dr. Kelly advised that the new Labor Government would honour contracts from the previous government. He believed the Australian Technical College in Queanbeyan had the potential to be complimentary to the plan for Trade Skills in High Schools.

Other topics included support for improved sporting facilities in the City, CBD development issues (including parking) and regional tourism development. Dr. Kelly is keen to put together a Regional Tourism Forum in the near future.

All in all it was a great exchange of views and information.

### **THOUGHT FOR THE DAY - SHOPPING LOCALLY IS GOOD FOR ALL**

The depth and breadth of business in Queanbeyan is really quite extraordinary. We are all familiar with the various retail precincts in the City, but a drive around the industrial areas off Yass and Gilmore Roads can be an eye-opener. If we all make a conscious effort to support our local businesses, the resulting cash-flow revolves throughout our City to the benefit of all.

We are not merely talking of retail, but also manufacturers, health services, lawyers, accountants, real estate, business services, consultants, electricians, plumbers, motor repairs, dry cleaners – the list is almost endless.

Business to business is an important part of this equation, and we do know that the existence of quality networks is an important reason many businesses are here in the first place.