

Gaol not the Right Goal

The NSW prison population continues to rocket with tough bail laws putting more people behind bars.

But prison fails to address the underlying causes of offending such as trauma and disadvantage. NSW has high recidivism rates and the harsh experience of jail can make reoffending on release more likely.

The proportion of women in prisons is growing and most women prisoners have been victims of abuse and are imprisoned for less serious offences. Strip searches, intimidation and lack of family access can re-traumatise women inmates and punish them further.

In Parliament I called for a change in focus towards rehabilitation and support. In response to my question about women prisoners, the Minister for Corrections outlined new programs like women's rehabilitation units in three correctional centres and "intensive services programs" to help women access their children and mental health services.

I asked about conditions in prisons, with some facilities in frequent 'lock-downs' during which inmates have only one hour of exercise a day, and about delays and high mark-ups for purchasing basic needs like toothbrushes.

Evidence shows that locking more people up for longer doesn't make the community safer. I hope new programs in this year's budget mark a shift away from building more prisons to support and rehabilitation to help people get back on their feet.



Alex Greenwich MP
Member for Sydney

EQ EXPANSION?

The push to change planning controls for the Entertainment Quarter away from film purposes could see visitor accommodation, sporting centres, and more car parking in the parklands. I asked the minister not to allow further commercialisation and development in the Moore Park Master Plan.

ADDRESSING THE CALIFORNIA SENATE

NSW and California are sister states and I was proud to attend the Long Beach Pride celebrations and address their senate on our shared values of fairness and equality on the birthday of Harvey Milk – the first openly gay person elected to public office in California – at the invitation of Senator Ricardo Lara.

HARBOURSIDE TOWER HOPE

In response to our objections to a 39-storey tower at the Darling Harbour Harbourside site, the planning department asked the developer for further work on height, location, podium scale, public space and amenity. It's not clear whether this will lead to improvements, but it is a good sign. Along with local residents I will monitor the situation.

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEVY REVIEW

Following community outrage over massive Fire and Emergency Services Levy increases after decreases were promised, the government will defer levy changes and review its proposed new formula. The insurance based levy was set to move to one based on council rates for all property owners.



Alex addressing the California Senate



Congratulations Paddington Uniting Church on its 140th Anniversary

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FROM PARLIAMENT

HIGH CARE NURSING HOMES NEED NURSES

I supported a Shooters Fishers and Farmers bill to require all nursing homes with high care needs residents to have a registered nurse onsite at all times – as was the case until 2014. Registered nurses can administer vital pain relief drugs, gauge when to refer a patient for further medical attention and perform life-saving procedures. Given recent nursing home horror stories, we need to improve care to give vulnerable residents and their families peace of mind. While the government opposed the bill in the lower house, I understand it is considering the matter.

SUPPORTING LGBTI STUDENTS

Parliament again debated the Safe Schools program and disappointingly government speakers pandered to community misinformation about what simply is a voluntary anti-bullying resource to make schools safe for LGBTI students. Federal funding of the program ceased and while the state government is developing a new anti-bullying resource to replace it, government speakers used the opportunity to imply that Safe Schools is a homosexual indoctrination program. In response to my concerns the government promised to develop the new resource with key LGBTI advocacy groups.

GREYHOUND CRUELTY REINSTATED

Backflips in politics should be reserved for bad decisions but the government and opposition joined forces to overturn the greyhound racing ban, which was about stopping shocking cruelty like live baiting. While some improvements to welfare standards were introduced, cruelty will continue because it is part of the business model and the industry is notorious for cover-ups. A civilised society would not promote animal torture and suffering for gambling and I voted against the bill.



DEFECTS REFORMS NEEDED

Too many buildings have defects causing owners considerable costs and disruptions, but options for relief are limited. Timelines and defect type limits for pursuing a builder under statutory warranties have become overly restrictive and home building insurance is only available when the builder dies, disappears, becomes insolvent or refuses to comply with a court or tribunal order, and large apartment buildings are excluded. Notwithstanding, the government underwritten home building insurance fund is over \$300 million in deficit.

The government is opening up home building insurance to the private market, with independent oversight of premiums. During debate I again called for apartments to be included in the scheme.

The government must focus on ways to encourage better building practices that prevent defects.



NEW CANNABIS APPROACH NEEDED

While cannabis laws across the world are being relaxed, NSW maintains one of the harshest approaches to use. Recreational cannabis use is much higher than other drugs, yet its contribution to crime and poor health is low. In Parliament, I called for an evidence-based approach to cannabis use that does not criminalise recreational users and focuses police and court resources on drug supply and trafficking. I support a Labor bill to ensure seriously ill people who benefit from medicinal cannabis can access treatment.

follow my work at

www.alexgreenwich.com.au



Alex with Jo Haylen MP at Rainbow Families Report launch



Rally opposing greyhound cruelty



Shopping without plastic bags

PLASTICS POLLUTION DISASTER LOOMING

In Parliament I asked the environment minister to reduce plastic pollution from plastic bags, packaging, microbeads and microfibres. While the minister said that the government has asked the CSIRO to research biodegradable plastic bags to inform future legislation, light weight plastic bags are being banned across the world and we don't need further research to take this basic step. Similarly microbeads are being banned across the world yet Australia only has a voluntary phase-out by 2020 before a ban will even be considered.



Marina at Elizabeth Bay to get bigger

ELIZABETH BAY MARINA DECIDED

RMS will go ahead with plans to expand the Elizabeth Bay Marina. Our campaign got berths for 20-metre boats replaced with 15-metre boats, which will reduce view impacts, plus 24-hour water access for kayaks and water taxis, and night work restrictions. While there will be no net gain in boats with four swing moorings to be removed, there will be more and larger boats berthed, which will reduce views and increase activity. The facility is bigger with more concrete on the water.

As the owner, developer and consent authority, RMS can now proceed. In Parliament I asked the minister why lessees were cleared out long before a decision was made.



Another landmark slips into private hands



Opposing forced local council amalgamations

MORE PLANNING CHANGES TO COME

My submission to the government's draft planning bill supported improvements to community consultation and oversight of complying development; however I argued that a new direction in planning is urgently needed to protect the state's future in the face of climate change. Polluting activities like mines and roads are approved through the planning system, and planning laws must reflect emission reduction targets and the need to address climate change.

RATE PROTECTIONS

The government has had to concede that forced council amalgamations may deliver higher rates not the promised lower rates. While I do not support rate pegging or forced amalgamations, I supported the bill to require a merged council to use rate structures set by the previous council for three years. This is vital to ensure that Paddington, Woollahra and Edgecliff residents are not hit with a predicted 53 per cent rate rise if Woollahra Council is forced to merge with Randwick and Waverley councils. Forced mergers mean disruption, large bureaucracies, and lost grassroots representation and local expertise.

With Ku-ring-gai and Woollahra councils winning court action against forced mergers, the government should refocus reform on strengthening councils' long term sustainability and financial viability.

PRIVATISATION RISKS PRIVACY

Some services are best provided by governments and in Parliament I supported an Opposition motion to block a law that will enable the privatisation of Services NSW operations. Services NSW provides essential government services like registration of births, deaths, marriages, vehicles and business and licensing including medical assessments. I told Parliament it is not appropriate to let a for-profit company manage the private and personal information held by the service.

This follows the disgraceful privatisation of the lands title registry which risks titles fraud and increased costs for home buyers and sellers.

Campaigns & People

HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

More people can be seen sleeping on the street, and in parks and squares. In Parliament I asked the Minister for Social Housing for action to help rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo, Belmore Park, Martin Place and Wentworth Park, where homelessness rates seem to be growing. We also need a second Common Ground project like that in Camperdown, which provides long term homeless people with complex needs a home with onsite support and homemaking skills to help them get back on their feet. Promised action from federal and state governments is long overdue to ensure that affordable housing is available in Sydney.

TIME FOR MAKARATTA

Fifty years on from the 1967 referendum that changed the Australian constitution, the First Nations National Constitutional Convention released the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' to set a new agenda for reconciliation with Australia's First Nations people. It calls for a representative voice to contribute to the Parliament and a treaty or 'Makaratta'. I asked the Premier what the NSW Government will do to further this process and for action to 'close the gap' on Indigenous health and welfare.

THANK YOU PETER BONSTALL BOONE

I was sad to hear about the loss of Peter Bonsall Boone. He was a true champion of LGBTI communities and fought battles and broke new ground to make Australia a more inclusive place. My thoughts are with the love of his life Peter who he wanted to marry after 50 years together. LGBTI couples should be able to marry like everyone else and we urgently need marriage equality laws.

SKILLED MIGRANTS SHOULD BE WELCOME

Replacing the 457 visa with a two-year temporary skilled visa that excludes any pathway to residency could reduce Australia's competitiveness in future information, ideas and high level skills based economies and harm our reputation as a welcoming country. Local unemployment has little to do with the 457 scheme but increasing skilled workers can help some industries grow. Abuse of the scheme should be tackled, but in Parliament I spoke on the need for fair processes for people who want to contribute to the community and become citizens.

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES SAVED

Our campaign stopped the federal government slashing community legal centres' funding. Community legal centres provide free legal advice and represent disadvantaged and vulnerable people and I joined state parliamentary colleagues to oppose the slashes. I asked the NSW Government to increase funding to meet the shortfall identified by the Productivity Commission.

CAMPBELL'S STORES WIN

The three-storey 'luxury retail' glass building proposed for the site adjacent to the 1850's Campbell's Stores on the harbour has been refused on heritage grounds and instead the space will likely have a landscaped terrace for outdoor dining under a glass awning and public seating area. I welcome the change which protects harbour views from The Rocks and integrates with the heritage precinct. The department's Environmental Assessment Report acknowledged objections from me and the National Trust as well as 112 others.



The City of Sydney 'homeless count' volunteer team



Cheree Toka hands over 'Aboriginal Flag on Sydney Harbour Bridge' petitions at Parliament House



Marriage Equality too late for this longterm couple



Alex, Jenny Leong MP and Lord Mayor Clover Moore welcoming new citizens



Heritage stores saved at Campbell's Bay