



Helen Dalton MP

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR MURRAY

Electorate Newsletter



Independence Day

■ Helen Dalton with her Griffith staffers Pip Walker and Giorgia Ceccato.

I'm Helen Dalton, your Independent representative in NSW State Parliament.

It's my job to fight for you on issues like hospitals, mental health, schools, roads and water.

I used to be a member of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers (SFF) Party.

But in March, I resigned from the party.

I left the SFF Party when they refused to turn up to a vote to protect water allocations for the Southern Basin and Lower Darling communities.

So, I'll remain in NSW Parliament, but as your Independent MP.

I won't be aligning with any other party - not Labor, not Liberal, not the Nationals and not the Greens. I am totally free to vote according to what my community wants.

My offices in Griffith, Deniliquin and Buronga will remain open, and my team remains dedicated to helping the public.

Feel free to contact my office to provide feedback on how I can help you. My email address is murray@parliament.nsw.gov.au.

Helen Dalton
MP for Murray

INSIDE:
Back by popular demand.
Find-a-word on NSW Government water secrecy excuses. Find the ten words first and win a prize.



People power wins – Tooleybuc Bridge to stay open

In early April, the NSW Government announced they would close Tooleybuc Bridge for six weeks.

This would have devastated Tooleybuc businesses still reeling from NSW and Victorian Government border closures.

I refused to accept the Government's decision.

I drove to Tooleybuc for two emergency meetings and made numerous phone

calls and emails to Government Ministers and MPs. I also reported the NSW Government to the Ombudsman.

A day later, the NSW Government backflipped and decided keep the bridge open.

I'd like to thank Kieran Hogan and every Tooleybuc resident who wrote to Ministers and attended our meetings.

■ Tooleybuc Bridge - residents said no to the closure.

Our fight continues, though. The 98-year-old bridge needs replacing with a new one.

The NSW Government promised this community a new bridge in 2012. I intend to hold the Government to their commitment.



■ A number of MPs were invited to an emergency meeting but didn't turn up

Counselling rooms and community centre opens in Goolgowi

Huge congratulations must go to the Goolgowi community, who were rocked by tragic suicides in 2020.

Local resident Marie Clarke immediately rallied the community and worked hard to set up mental health services in the town.

In April, the town saw the opening of new counselling rooms and a community centre, supported by Carrathool Council. Griffith Aboriginal Medical Services are supplying a counsellor.

My office will continue to support this wonderful community-driven initiative. The next goal is to get ongoing funding from the NSW Government to make the centre a continued success.



■ Counselling Rooms in Goolgowi.



■ I hope the buildings behind me are not sold off by the Government.

Deniliquin TAFE must not be sold

I was shocked to read a secret NSW Government briefing note detailing their plans to sell off 10 Deniliquin TAFE buildings.

Basically, the National Party want to flog off the TAFE buildings and turn regional TAFE centres into online learning hubs, with remote access learning.

This is a terrible idea. You can't learn practical skills from a computer screen, with your teacher in Albury.

Students need face-to-face learning and practical experience.

Deniliquin TAFE has already lost carpentry and plumbing.

Given the shortage of tradies and builders, we should be investing more in TAFE, not less.

I have called on the NSW Government to immediately rule out the sale of more regional NSW TAFE Campuses.

Woman of the Year

It was my honour to choose Leeton's Beverley Moore as my 2022 Woman of the Year, in recognition of her astonishing life transformation.

In 1997, Beverley saw her beloved father die, leading to her life spiralling out of control.

She developed drug problems, was unemployed for long periods and then had to escape domestic violence.

Beverley could have easily thrown in the towel, but she's come back so strongly and now dedicates her life to community service. She cooks meals at the Leeton Op Shop on a regular basis, educates school children about NAIDOC Day and helps those coming out of jail readjust to everyday life.

I couldn't imagine a more worthy recipient for this honour.



■ Helen Dalton with Beverley Moore at Leeton Op Shop.

The Deni Dawn Fraser

Congratulations to all the primary and secondary students who participated in the Riverina Regional Swimming Carnival held at Leeton Swimming Pool in March.

Swimmers from around my electorate achieved fantastic results with a special mention to Elena Mulham from Deniliquin High School, who broke a 20-year record for the Girls 17-19 50 meter freestyle event.

Well done to our swim champions and thanks to those who represented the Riverina in the State Championships.



■ Well done to Elena Mulham.



■ Sara Carter ready to launch.

Getting doctors, nurses and midwives into regional areas

The chronic shortages of health professionals across the Murrumbidgee and Far West is a major concern.

The number of GPs in regional NSW has gone from 800 to 200.

People in our area are waiting more than four weeks to see a GP.

The maternity ward at Griffith Base Hospital was on the verge of closing due to a shortage of midwives.

Hospitals in Hay, Hillston, Leeton, Deniliquin, Finley and Jerilderie are also battling chronic shortages.

I'm sponsoring a bill in Parliament to bring the pay and conditions for NSW nurses and midwives up to Victorian standards.

We have also aligned with Rural and Remote Medical Services Ltd to call for an urgent \$300 million package to save rural GP services.

Follow our campaign on regional health on my Facebook page Helen Dalton MP.

Griffith hospital transfers to Wagga

1,268 TRANSFERS FOR ORTHOPAEDICS

882 TRANSFERS FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE

SINCE JULY 2015

Let's push for these services in Griffith

Follow Helen Dalton

Helen Dalton MP or visit www.helendalton.com.au

Cancer treatment centre to open in Griffith

It's fantastic to see a new cancer radiation therapy unit will be built in Griffith later this year.

The Riverina Cancer Care Centre facility will save cancer patients in Hay, Hillston, Deniliquin and Griffith a two to three hour drive to Wagga for treatment.

But there is one big question?

Will the centre provide a free service, or will patients have to pay a \$480 gap payment, as they do in Wagga?

The NSW Government needs to pledge a \$600,000 annual payment to make sure the service is free for all patients (bulk-billed).



■ Helen honoured Riverina Cancer Care Centre oncologist Dr Renuka Chittajallu in Parliament.

I have now met with the Health Minister twice to plead the case for NSW Government support.

Let's hope they make the right decision.

Children in foster care need support to age 21

More than 30 per cent of children leaving foster care end up homeless within their first year of leaving care.

The reason – the NSW Government cuts off their financial support when they turn 18. How many 18 year olds can afford rent and living expenses with zero parental support?

In February, I invited Labor, Liberal, National, Green and Independent MPs to a Homestretch/Uniting Forum advocating for the NSW Government to increase support to foster care leavers until they turn 21.

Victoria have raised the age to 21. It's time for NSW to follow suit.



■ I organised a bipartisan forum in NSW Parliament.



■ Helen outside Finley Hospital.

Mental health – your feedback

Following a spate of youth suicides last year, I reached out on social media asking people to share their experiences of the mental health service provision in the Murray electorate. Over 100 people contacted me via phone, email and social media messages.

My office also interviewed mental health experts, psychologists, parents and young people to learn about their experiences and listen to their suggestions for change.

I've now drafted a paper that brings together this research and feedback. It provides an overview of people's experience of accessing mental health services; problems with regional mental health service provision and proposes solutions to improve mental health care in the Murray electorate and across rural NSW.

I will present this paper to the NSW Government and use it as a basis for regional mental health advocacy. To obtain a copy, go to my website: helendalton.com.au or contact one of my offices.

Push for Government to gift land to address our housing shortage

Rental vacancies across Murray are at an all-time low.

The NSW Government says this is a “champagne problem” because it means the regions are booming.

I call it a crisis. People who are homeless or sleeping rough are not drinking the NSW Government’s champers.

In February, I hosted a housing forum that brought together councils, housing providers and charities – uniting them to form a combined strategy to address our accommodation shortage.



■ Helen Dalton addressing the Griffith Housing Forum.

In March, I met with the NSW Planning Minister, requesting he provide unused NSW Government-owned land to housing providers for free – so it can be utilised for social and affordable housing to provide temporary worker accommodation.

I’m in contact with Councils to scope out available land. This is an issue I’m keen to get firm commitments from the NSW Government as soon as possible.



■ Griffith Housing Forum.



■ The old hospital certainly needs an upgrade.

New Wentworth hospital

Wentworth is finally getting a much needed new hospital. The government have set aside \$30 million.

This is something I have fought for over a number of years. The important thing now is for the community to get involved in the planning and consultation.

Follow my Facebook page Helen Dalton MP to find out how you can have your say.



Anniversary congratulations

Big congratulations to Norma and Joseph Burns, who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last year. If you’ve got a special birthday or anniversary you’d like us to recognise, drop me a line at murray@parliament.nsw.gov.au.



■ Helen and Mia Oberin.

My secret weapons

I love seeing young people passionate about rural issues making a difference to their communities.

In my office, we have recruited some excellent Year 12 school leavers to work as Electorate Officers.

Alice Ryan (Murrumbidgee Regional High School), Mia Oberin (Moama Grammar), Giorgia Ceccato and Zarah Sully (Marian Catholic College) have all done a stellar job representing me and fighting to improve rural services.

I wish them all the best in their future careers and hope to see them return to our community after graduating.



■ Alice Ryan and Giorgia Ceccato.

Yabba for Yanga

Balranald locals are fed up with the Government's neglect and mismanagement of Yanga National Park.

Effective local management could see Yanga deliver an economic boom to the town, while also protecting the environment.

Instead, Government has made it a National Park, locked it up and left it to become a big wasteful fire hazard.

A passionate new group called "Yabba for Yanga" was established to transform this great community asset.

Join the "Yabba for Yanga" Facebook group to support their fight.



■ I introduced the newly formed Yabba for Yanga Group to the shadow environment minister.

I'm NOT aggressive

In 2020, my ex-party conducted a "focus group" to test what people think of me. One guy in the focus group said he thought I was "too aggressive." I totally disagree. In fact, I often bake sponge cake and bring it to work. My staff all love it. If they don't, I smack 'em upside the head.



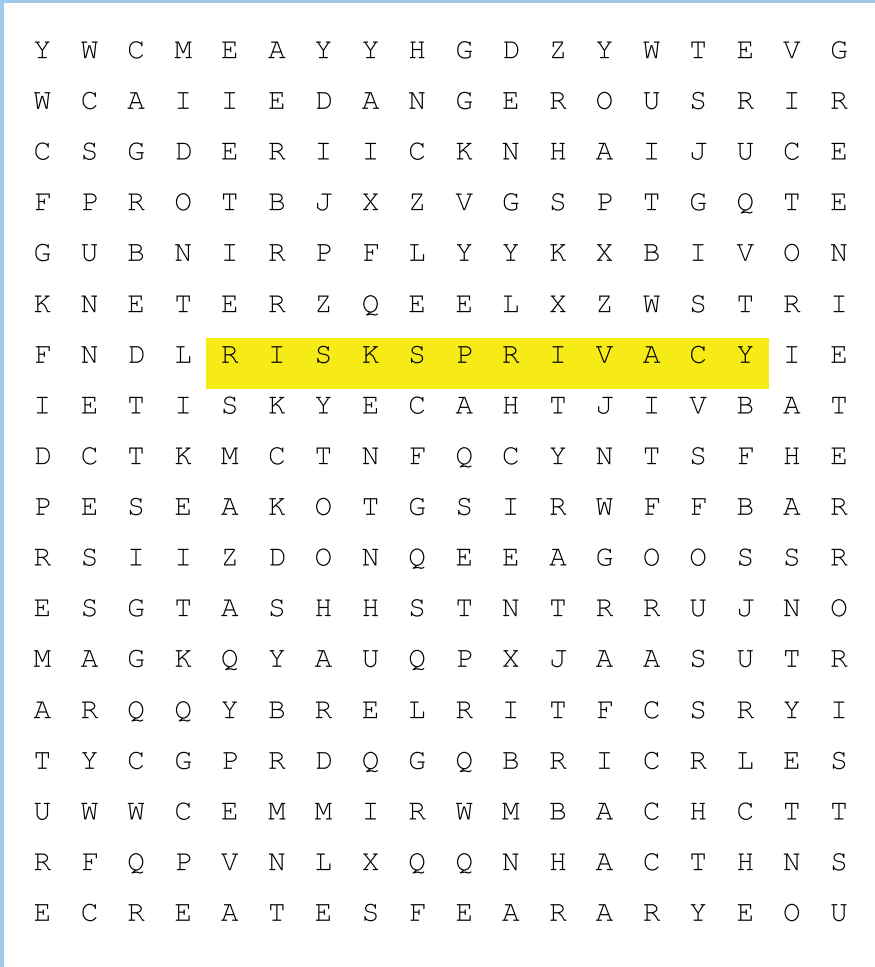
■ My famous sponge cake.

Excuses To Keep Water Ownership Secret

FIND-A-WORD

I introduced a new law in NSW Parliament to end the secrecy around water ownership in NSW. My Bill would have forced politicians to declare their water interests. It also would have created an online public register listing all foreign and domestic companies that own our water. More than 11,000 people signed a Speak Up petition saying you supported this.

But the NSW Government voted down my Bill. In doing so, they came up with all sorts of excuses against a public water register. I've highlighted one in this find-a-word puzzle: "risks privacy". Can you name the other ten? The first person to identify all ten and send the words/phrases to murray@parliament.nsw.gov.au will win a prize.



Agriculture Visa must be established now

It's a great time for many farmers, but we're not reaching our potential due to a chronic shortage of workers.

I've long called for a dedicated Agriculture Visa, allowing our farmers to employ foreign workers in positions they can't fill locally.

We have a Labor Party promising to abolish the Agriculture Visa and a Coalition Government who hasn't yet issued a single Ag Visa, despite launching the scheme in 2018.

This is extremely disappointing. I'll be pressuring both sides of politics to get this Visa Program operating immediately.

I have also pursued the NSW Government to put proper rules in place to guard against exploitation of labour hire workers.

While the vast majority of farmers do the right thing, labour hire arrangements are poorly regulated and this needs to be fixed now.



Helen Dalton MP

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