

PAID COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER **YOUR USUAL LATROBE VALLEY EXPRESS IS INSIDE**

Safety funding needed

THE STATE and Federal Governments must direct more funding to prevent community violence and anti-social behaviour, according to The Nationals Member for Gippsland Darren Chester.

Mr Chester recently met with the Traralgon CBD Safety Committee, which has been seeking funding to install closed-circuit television (CCTV), operate a night-rider bus service and employ security guards at taxi ranks on Saturday nights.

Mr Chester has lobbied the Federal Government for assistance and spoken on the issue in Parliament but funding has not been forthcoming at this stage.

Mr Chester has now enlisted the support of The Nationals Leader Warren Truss and arranged a meeting between Mr Truss and Traralgon police earlier this month.

"Governments have a clear responsibility to keep our communities safe," Mr Chester said.

"The Brumby Labor Government has failed to provide enough police on the streets to act as a deterrent to trouble-makers.

"At the same time, the Rudd Labor Government is refusing to support community-based solutions put forward by groups like the Traralgon CBD Safety Committee.

"The vast majority of people can go out at night, enjoy a few drinks and act responsibly. But we need to crack down on the minority who are committing these crimes and undermining community safety."

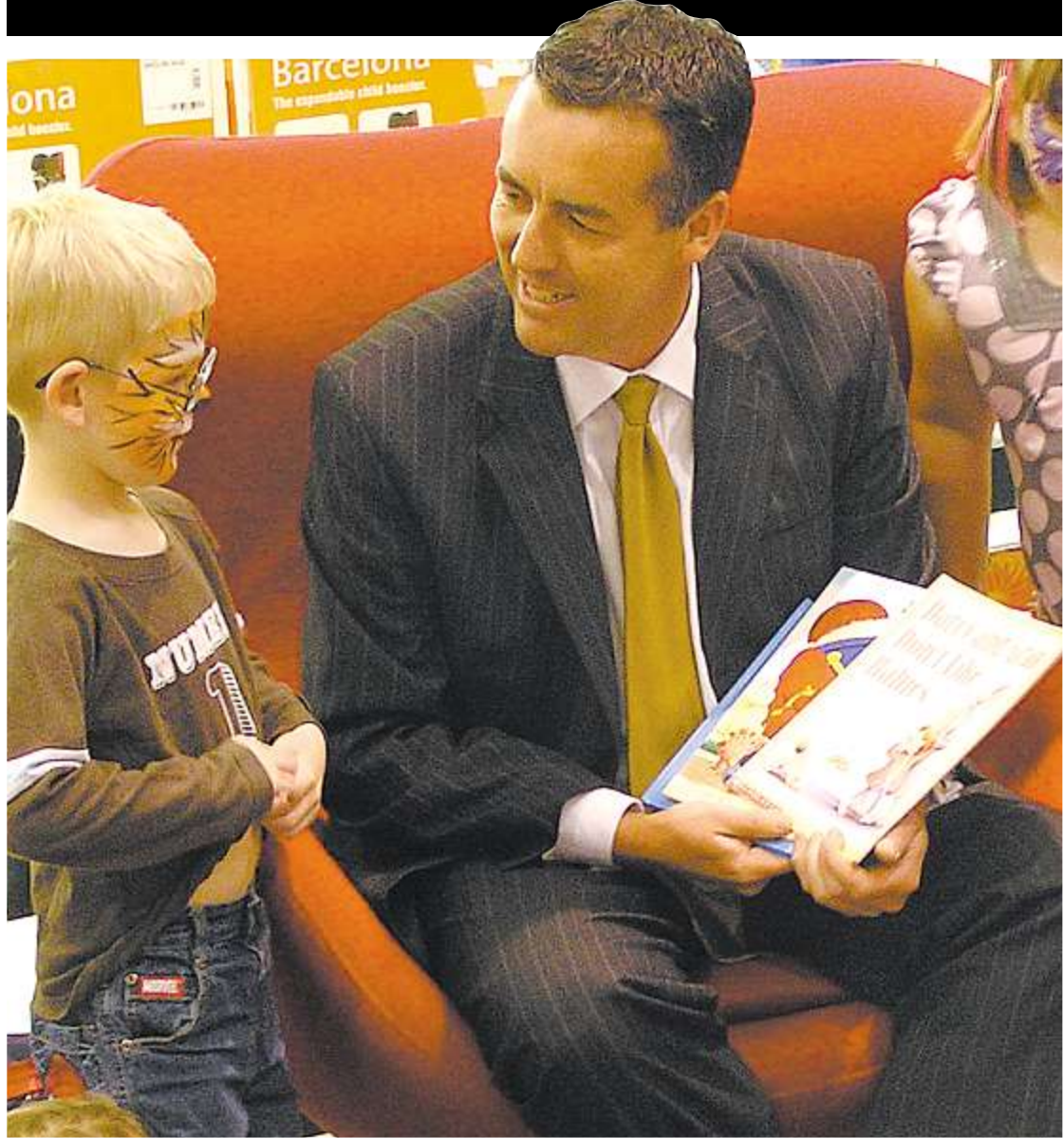
Statistics released late last year showed that assault offences in Traralgon had increased by 15% since 2006/07, including an 80% increase in assaults on victims unknown to offenders during the same period.

In addition more than 600 responses to a community survey conducted by The Nationals Member for Morwell Russell Northe collated in January resulted in 92% of respondents indicating they would like more police on the streets and 91% supported tougher penalties on people found guilty of alcohol-related assaults.



Safer streets: Darren Chester and The Nationals Leader Warren Truss are supporting Traralgon police in their efforts to improve safety on the streets.

Supporting younger Gippslanders



Future generations: Darren Chester supported the Latrobe Best Start Expo at MidValley Morwell by urging parents to read to young children to encourage them to take an interest in education at an early age.

HELPING young Gippslanders to achieve their full potential is a key focus for Federal Member for Gippsland Darren Chester.

Mr Chester has been formally endorsed as The Nationals candidate for the next Federal election which is expected to be held in the second half of this year.

"It's been an honor and a privilege to represent Gippsland in Federal Parliament and I've received a great deal of support from the community since I was elected in 2008," Mr Chester said.

"As a father with four young

children, I'm passionate about helping to provide opportunities for young Gippslanders to achieve their full potential. I've been campaigning for additional support for students from regional areas who are required to move away from home to attend university.

"In Gippsland, we have one of the worst education retention rates in Victoria and we need to keep encouraging young people to achieve their absolute best in their chosen area.

"I also want to keep working to ensure that we receive our fair

share of government funding for essential services like health, education, aged care and roads.

"I will continue to be a strong supporter of small businesses in our region by promoting the 'Putting Locals First' message which is a campaign I started to encourage local residents to shop locally.

"The need for ongoing funding for practical environmental work for organisations like Landcare and to support improvements in the health of the Gippsland Lakes catchment will also remain a key focus if I'm re-elected."

Works commence on Princes Highway upgrade

WORK has commenced on the first stage of the Princes Highway duplication between Traralgon and Sale.

Construction has begun between Traralgon-Maffra Road and Stammers Road at the eastern end of Traralgon.

CMV Truck and Bus Managing Director Jason Hunt said the development would improve safety for the locals who frequent the highway and visitors to the region.

"Ensuring our customers and staff are able to safely access our business on a daily basis is our number one priority," Mr Hunt said.

"The most important aspect of the works from our point of view will be the improved safety at the McNairn Road intersection with the Princes Highway."

The Nationals Member for Gippsland Darren Chester described the project as an essential development for the region.

"The onus is on the Rudd Labor Government to provide ongoing funding for further stages to improve the safety of the highway throughout the region," Mr Chester said.

"The Princes Highway east of Melbourne has the worst accident rate in Victoria and I will continue to lobby both the State and Federal Governments to allocate additional funding to improve the road."



Safety benefits: Darren Chester and CMV Truck and Bus Managing Director Jason Hunt discuss the Princes Highway upgrade.