

Closure of the Pension Bonus Scheme

From 20 September 2009, the Pension Bonus Scheme will not accept any new entrants (unless the entrant qualifies for Age Pension before 20 September 2009).

Existing members may remain in the Scheme and continue to accrue entitlements under existing rules, unless they nominate to leave the Scheme.

Individuals who are working and who

meet the qualifications for Age Pension before 20 September 2009 can still register for the Pension Bonus Scheme, but they must register as soon as possible.

The Government has introduced a new Work Bonus to encourage seniors to participate in the work force. Under the new Work Bonus, only half of the first \$500 of fortnightly employment

income will be included in the pension income test for pensioners over age pension age. Any earnings over \$500 will be included as usual.

For some, it may be beneficial to talk to a financial adviser about the best options. This applies especially to current Pension Bonus Scheme members who are thinking of claiming a pension. Alternatively, they can talk free of charge

to a Financial Information Service officer about their earnings or about options with savings, investments and related arrangements by calling 13 2300.

To find out more about the changes, visit our website at www.centrelink.gov.au or call Centrelink on 13 1202 for languages other than English or visit a Centrelink Customer Service Centre.

Blue Horizons

Mount Tomah Botanic Garden will embrace the enchantment of nature by hosting the eagerly anticipated Blue Horizons photographic exhibition by Wyn Jones.



Wyn has captured the essence of the Blue Gum Forest in this photographic celebration of the 50th anniversary of the designation of the Blue Mountains National Park.

“My personal contribution to this celebration is to display images of the Blue Gum Forest and Upper Grose Valley so that people will understand the feeling I experience when I am out there.” Wyn explains. “I want to communicate the passion I have for the place and the ‘others’; the myriad of species which make the Blue Mountains their home.”

Wyn’s exhibition is the culmination of over 40 years of work exploring, interpreting and photographing nature. Wyn’s lifelong relationship with the outdoors began during his early years living in rural New South Wales. During this period he wrote poems and stories and drew, photographed and painted scenes from the surrounding landscape.

Following his return to Sydney for high school, Wyn completed a Syd-



ney University degree in agricultural science before continuing on with research at New England University. There followed a long professional life as an ecologist, studying endangered plants and the life histories of Australian birds and marsupials of

the forests. Wyn is an experienced ecologist, bushwalker, environmental educator, artist, photographer, poet and musician with a passion for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The Greater Blue Mountains Area received World Heritage listing in 2000 as the biodiversity and natural attributes of the area were officially recognised. With Mount Tomah Botanic Garden to open the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Exhibition Centre in early 2010, Blue Horizons provides a timely link for visitors to the garden to experience the breathtaking beauty of the Blue Mountains region.

Mount Tomah Botanic Garden will host Blue Horizons from Saturday 29 August through until Sunday 20 September, 2009. The exhibition is on display in the visitor centre from 10am to 4pm daily and is free after garden entry.

Helping volunteers pay for necessities

Community organisations in Blaxland can once again receive up to \$5,000 to pay for basic necessities, such as petrol, computers and office equipment. Member for Blaxland, Jason Clare, is urging local groups to apply for funding under the Rudd Government’s \$21 million Volunteer Grants Program.

“Our community relies on volunteers. They help the elderly, the young, and those who are generally doing it tough.

“Often, volunteers have to dip into their own pockets or supply their own equipment just to do this important work. “For instance, they might pay for their own petrol, or provide their own computer to do admin work in the office. “This is where the Volunteers Grants Program can relieve the burden,” Mr Clare said. “Last year, local organisations received \$19,500. “One of them was the Mustangs Baseball Association, which used almost \$4,400 to buy a new fridge, sporting uniforms and a ride on mower. “This year, I’d really like to see more community groups take up this opportunity,” Mr Clare said.

The funding is available to non-profit organisations, which are supported by volunteers. They can receive grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 to purchase equipment, including computers, tools and air conditioners, and also help with fuel costs. Applications close on 25 September 2009.

JASON CLARE MP-
Member for Blaxland



High-flyer Livanes fights charges

IT SHOULD have been a good year for the high-flying Sydney real estate lawyer **George Livanes**.

In 1991 the Emerald City was on the cusp of a s-teroidal property boom and he was a 39-year-old partner presiding over the real estate practice of Clayton Utz, one of Australia’s biggest firms.

At home, his family of six was finally moving into a \$1.3 million-dollar home in Balgowlah Heights after two years of renovations.

In the decade that followed, he would represent the Bulldogs Rugby League Club and sit on the board of SCECGS Redlands, one of Sydney’s most expensive private schools.

Clayton Utz would boast that in Mr Livanes and fellow partner Peter McMahon it had “two of the leading real estate lawyers in the world” according to the British publication Who’s Who Legal.

But now the 57-year-old is bankrupt and preparing to defend himself against 10 charges of fraud and two charges of obtaining a financial advantage by deception.

The charges relate to more than \$3 million in deductions he claimed over the Balgowlah home and another property from 1991 to 2002.

“The very large majority” of claims were in relation to the home where his family lived, Mr Livanes’s bankruptcy trustee, John Melliush of Ferrier Hodgson, said.

“Given that he’s a property lawyer it didn’t make sense ... but he said he had advice that it was OK.”

Mr Livanes said he would be “strenuously defending” the charges but did not want to go into the details of his defence. His debts were close to \$6 million when the Tax Office declared him bankrupt in 2006, four years after it began an investigation into his returns.

Mr Livanes said the charges threatened to damage his professional reputation and he hoped clients would consider him innocent until proven guilty.

David Fagan, the chief executive partner at Clayton Utz, said Mr Livanes’s tax issues were a private matter. Mr Livanes was a highly respected practitioner who left the firm in 2005, he said.

Photo: George Livanes . . . bankrupt.