

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 20 June 2014

NSW BUDGET: IN CONTROL

- The 2014-15 NSW Budget shows a significant turnaround in the State's finances, with the Budget expected to return to surplus one year earlier than forecast in the Half-Yearly Review.
- The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government inherited a Budget with an unsustainable debt trajectory, and an economy that had become the laggard of the nation. Three years later, the Budget has been secured and NSW is at or near the top of the nation on all leading economic indicators.
- The Budget also delivers a significant improvement in the state's Net Debt position, now estimated to be around \$8.6 billion (\$7.1 billion less than originally estimate), along with a forecast deficit of \$283 million dollars for 2014-15, before an expected return to surplus of \$660 million in 2015-16.
- This Budget begins the heavy-lifting on the biggest infrastructure projects in Australian history including: \$1.3 billion for the rebuilding and repair of our major hospitals; \$863 million for the start of major construction of the North West Rail Link; and \$398 million for work on the 33km WestConnex motorway.

BUDGET DELIVERS FOR THE REGIONS

- Regional communities across NSW will benefit from the 2014-15 Budget with \$1 billion in new funds for infrastructure projects to be delivered through Restart NSW.
- We are ensuring mining affected communities gain more from the Budget, with \$87 million allocated in 2014-15 for the *Resources for Regions* program.
- A \$325 million boost will also be given to the *Water Security for Regions* program – bringing the total outlay to \$366 million – to fund infrastructure works, including dams, to secure water supplies and drought-proof regional communities.
- This Budget invests in regional roads, with \$200 million for a new *Regional Freight Pinch Point and Safety Program* to improve key freight corridors. We are also establishing a \$50 million *Western NSW Freight Productivity Program* to seal, widen and deliver other improvement works on freight corridors and there is \$37.5 million for the *Fixing Country Roads* program.

RECORD HEALTH BUDGET BOOSTS FRONTLINE CARE

- Record health funding in the NSW Budget will enable an extra 120,000 patients to be treated in an emergency department or admitted to hospital this year.
- Recurrent spending in health will be \$18.7 billion in 2014-15 - an increase of \$929 million (or 5.2 per cent) on a like-for-like basis compared to the previous year.
- Almost \$1.3 billion will be spent on health capital works in 2014-15, including money to commence redevelopments at Westmead Hospital, St George Hospital and Gosford Hospital.
- There is also \$24.5 million to commence construction on five new ambulance stations at Bankstown, Blacktown, Kogarah, Liverpool and Penrith.

A BUDGET THAT DELIVERS MORE FOR THE VULNERABLE

- The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will deliver more support for children and young people in the child protection system and increased funding for social housing as part of a \$5.8 billion investment in the 2014-15 NSW Budget.
- It is a priority of the NSW Government to provide a better social housing program and to bolster caseworkers with more resources to help break the cycle of disadvantage.
- There is an additional \$500 million over four years for child protection, including additional resources to support the transition of out-of-home care to the non-government sector, more assistance for caseworkers and a major technology upgrade.
- Reforms like *Safe Home for Life* are part of the \$1.6 billion the NSW Government will invest in 2014-15 to keep children and young people safe and enable them to grow and reach their potential.

\$400 MILLION RESERVED TO TRANSFORM TRAVEL TO SYDNEY'S SECOND CBD

- Funding to progress plans for light rail in Parramatta - Sydney's second CBD - is a centrepiece of the 2014-15 NSW Budget.
- The NSW Government has set aside \$400 million from its major infrastructure fund, Restart NSW, to accelerate work on a Western Sydney light rail system.

- This follows the NSW Government's recent funding commitment to start work immediately on identifying the highest priority corridor for the introduction of light rail in Parramatta and carry out a detailed feasibility study. The Budget commitment ensures the project is ready to go once the feasibility work is complete.
- This major project could provide a key missing transport link and change the way people travel in and around Sydney's West.

SKYTRAIN CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

- The first sod was turned on the skytrain and new Kellyville railway station this week, as part of the NSW Government's \$8.3 billion North West Rail Link (NWRL) project.
- The new Kellyville station, one of eight new stations being built for the NWRL, is the next stage of construction on this important project that will make a difference to the daily lives of commuters for generations to come.
- This week's Budget included \$863 million to get on with major construction of the NWRL – Australia's biggest public transport infrastructure project, and is also the important first stage of Sydney Rapid Transit – the new railway network that includes a second Sydney Harbour rail crossing and Western extension to Bankstown.
- The new Kellyville station will deliver major benefits for the local community, including 1,360 brand new commuter car parking spaces as well as new bus, taxi and bicycle facilities.

MORE PREMIUM CUTS ON THE WAY FOR BUSINESS

- There has been a further reduction to WorkCover premiums as part of the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government's commitment to make the scheme both fair and sustainable.
- It means 200,000 employers across 414 industries will benefit from an average premium rate reduction of five per cent – saving them more than \$113 million a year, with 343 industries receiving a greater than five per cent reduction.
- The NSW Government's WorkCover reforms have not only prevented premium increases, but enabled premium reductions in the past year. This has protected thousands of jobs and helped grow the State's economy.

- The former Labor Government left behind a broken scheme with a growing \$4.1 billion deficit that had negatively impacted business confidence. Key reforms and better management has put the scheme in a much stronger position, restoring its financial sustainability.

LAWS COVERING POLICE POWERS SIMPLIFIED

- The NSW Government is supporting frontline police with new laws giving officers clearer and more effective powers to protect the public.
- Police told the government the old laws were too complex and didn't reflect the realities of 21st century policing.
- The new legislation, passed by Parliament this week, strikes the right balance between ensuring police can do their job safely and efficiently while providing appropriate safeguards for the community.
- The NSW Government has also introduced reforms to give police powers to destroy dangerous drug exhibits sooner, while maintaining sufficient samples for scientific analysis.

ENERGY REBATES GET BOOST IN BUDGET

- The NSW Government's energy rebates to help ease energy costs for families will rise from 1 July, with \$228 million allocated in the Budget.
- The Low Income Household Rebate will increase to \$235 per year, up from \$225 and is available to eligible Commonwealth concession card holders.
- The NSW Family Energy Rebate will increase from \$125 to \$150 per year.
- The NSW Government is doing everything it can to decrease the cost of living for households and the energy rebate schemes are a key part of that commitment.
- For information on the rebates and to apply please visit: <http://www.resourcesandenergy.nsw.gov.au/energy-consumers/financial-assistance/rebates>

BUSHFIRE PROPERTY PROTECTION LAWS PASS PARLIAMENT

- Sensible new laws have passed Parliament to give residents in designated bushfire-prone areas additional powers to protect their homes.
- The new rules will cut red tape for residents whose homes are located in designated areas close to bushland, so they can clear trees and vegetation from their property.

- Residents in a bushfire zone will be able to clear trees within 10 metres of their house, and clear shrubs and other vegetation within 50 metres of their house.
- Designated bushfire zone areas – known as a ‘10/50 vegetation clearing entitlement area’ – will be determined by the Rural Fire Service.
- A consultation period will commence shortly. For more information go to the NSW Rural Fire Service website: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

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