

## NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 13 MAY 2016

### STRONGER COUNCILS | STRONGER COMMUNITIES

- The NSW Government has announced 19 new councils in NSW which will reduce waste and red tape, freeing up close to \$2 billion over the next \$20 years to ensure our councils are more efficient, provide better services and deliver new infrastructure for residents.
- Each new council will receive up to \$10 million to meet the costs of merging and up to an additional \$15 million to kick start new investment in community infrastructure through the Stronger Communities Fund – this means new councils and their communities will decide on new projects like pools, libraries, sporting fields, car park extensions or grants to junior sporting groups.
- The rate protection policy commitment means residents of new councils will pay no more for their rates than they would have under their old council for four years.
- Reforms will also be introduced to Parliament that ensure the community will once again have confidence in councils again - there will be a \$2,500 cap on political donations for council elections, councils will no longer be able to decide on planning decisions that councillors have a stake in and dishonest councillors who use their position for personal benefit may be forced to hand over their ill-gotten gains.
- In principle, the Minister for Local Government supports creating a further nine councils, subject to decisions of the courts.
- For more information, including delegate reports, community submissions and more new council information please visit: [www.strongercouncils.nsw.gov.au](http://www.strongercouncils.nsw.gov.au).

## **CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME TO COMBAT LITTER IN NSW**

- The NSW Government has delivered on another key election commitment and announced a 10 cent refund container deposit scheme that will significantly reduce litter across the state – the single largest initiative ever undertaken to reduce litter in NSW.
- The scheme will give people the financial incentive to do the right thing and recycle drink containers to help reduce the estimated 160 million drink containers littered every year.
- Some of the scheme's features include:
  - 10 cent refund for anybody who returns an eligible container;
  - Collection depots will range from large-scale depots through to stand-alone reverse-vending-machines and pop-up sites;
  - Funding of the 10 cent refund as well as the associated handling and administration fees will be provided by beverage suppliers.

## **NEW CONGESTION-BUSTING CBD METRO STATIONS AND HARBOUR RAIL TUNNEL ANOTHER STEP CLOSER**

- The NSW Government has announced the start of the planning approval process on the Sydney Metro City & Southwest – the second stage of Sydney's new congestion-busting rail line.
- The public can now have their say on brand new metro stations at Crows Nest, Victoria Cross, Barangaroo, Martin Place, Pitt Street, Central and Waterloo as part of the first Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chatswood to Sydenham section of the project, which closes on June 27.
- The EIS revealed that:
  - The project will result in around 30 million fewer car trips annually in 2036.
  - New twin railway tunnels will be built, stretching 15.5km from Chatswood to Sydenham and more than 40m below the surface of Sydney Harbour;
  - A specialised tunnel boring machine combining two types of tunnelling technology will be required to deal with the unique ground conditions under Sydney Harbour; and

- The project is expected to support more than 6,200 jobs at the peak of construction in 2017-18.
- Sydney Metro, together with signalling and other rail upgrades across the existing network, will increase capacity of train services in the CBD from about 120 per hour today, to up to 200 services beyond 2024.

### **\$88 MILLION BYRON CENTRAL HOSPITAL OFFICIALLY OPENED**

- The NSW Government has officially opened the \$88 million Byron Central Hospital and mental health unit.
- Services include 24-hour emergency care in a state of the art, 14 bay emergency department, low-risk maternity services, enhanced x-ray and medical imaging, increased cancer care and an on-site pharmacy.
- The new 20 bed sub-acute mental health facility is a first for the Byron Shire which will support step-up and step-down services to ensure people can live well in the community.

### **ENCOURAGING MATHS AND SCIENCE AT SCHOOL**

- Future primary school teachers are being trained as science and maths specialists to engage younger students in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects.
- From this year, teaching students from at least three NSW universities can become STEM specialists by electing to study additional maths and science courses.
- The first group of graduates with a specialisation in maths and science will be eligible to teach in NSW schools from the end of 2017
- The NSW Government is also investing \$20 million during this term of Government to upgrade 50 science labs in NSW public schools.

### **INDUSTRY SUPPORT FOR VOCATIONAL STEM SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE JOBS OF TOMORROW**

- The NSW Government has announced that nearly 550 vocation education students across NSW have been approved as eligible for a “Jobs of Tomorrow” scholarship.

- Under the NSW Government's \$25 million scholarship program, students training in high level science, technology, and engineering (STEM) related courses through Smart and Skilled are eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship.
- More than 20 peak industry bodies and some of Australia's most innovative companies have partnered with the NSW Government to support scholarship recipients.

## **NEW BENEFITS FOR INJURED WORKERS**

- Injured workers will now be eligible for two new benefits that provide further support for them to return to work.
- A \$1000 new employment assistance benefit is available to all injured workers who return to work with a new employer – this is set to benefit 11,500 current claimants and can be used for expenses such as child care, clothes, transport and tools.
- Up to \$8,000 is available under the education or training assistance benefit for only those workers with 20% impairment who have been receiving benefits for 78 weeks or more. This is set to benefit 4,000 current claimants and can be spent on training or education course with a registered training organisation or a registered higher education provider.
- Information on the new benefits is available at [www.insurancereforms.nsw.gov.au](http://www.insurancereforms.nsw.gov.au).

## **POSITIVE MENTORS TO ASSIST YOUNG OFFENDERS**

- The NSW Government has announced \$700,000 over three years to support a mentoring program at Frank Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre and the Riverina Murray Juvenile Justice Community Office.
- Mentors will work with juvenile offenders as part of a program to reduce the rate of reoffending and help young people in custody improve their lives.
- This program will assist 90 young offenders in the last six months of their sentence and the first six months of their release into the community.