

## **NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 11 April 2014**

### **16,300 NEW JOBS CREATED IN MARCH**

- NSW created the highest number of new jobs in the nation last month, while at the same time experiencing a significant drop in its unemployment rate.
- The latest ABS Labour Force figures show NSW gained 16,300 jobs in March, as the unemployment rate dropped from a revised 5.7% (previously 5.8%) to 5.3%.
- NSW has the second lowest unemployment rate in the nation after Western Australia and is well below the national average.
- NSW also continues to outperform all the states with the highest number of jobs created in the nation since the NSW Liberals & Nationals came to office, with 127,000 additional jobs.

### **ELECTRICITY BILL RELIEF ON THE WAY**

- Electricity bills are set to fall with less regulation and increased competition on the way for the retail electricity market.
- Shifting to a fully competitive electricity market by removing retail price regulation will put consumers in charge of their bills and make electricity retailers work harder to win your business.
- From July 1, more than a million customers currently on a the regulated price will see reductions on the face value of their bills of 1.5 per cent – but households can save up to an estimated \$400 per year by taking advantage of the deals offered by electricity retailers to customers on competitive market contracts.
- The NSW Government is committed to doing everything it can to reduce the cost of living pressures on families across NSW - customers are encouraged to shop around for the best deal at [www.energymadeeasy.gov.au](http://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au).

### **RECORD LOW CRIMES FIGURES**

- Minister for Police and Emergency Services Michael Gallacher has welcomed the latest report from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, which shows many crimes trending down and many crime statistics at the lowest recorded levels in more 20 years.
- In the two years to December 2013, 15 of the 17 major offence categories have remained stable or are going down.

- It is extremely encouraging to see so many crimes going down and it shows the extra 505 Police Officers the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has delivered is helping to reduce crime.
- The NSW Government made a commitment to increase police resources and strengthen their powers and these results show we are delivering.

## **PREMIER IN CHINA TO DRIVE TOURISM TO NSW**

- NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell has launched a co-operative tourism marketing campaign for China while visiting Guangzhou in the Guangdong Province as part of 'Australia Week in China' to drive jobs and investment in NSW.
- The marketing campaign will see three major Chinese travel wholesalers and their network of more than 1,500 retail travel agents selling Sydney and NSW-only holiday packages across China.
- China is now our number one source of inbound tourists delivering a \$1.4 billion boost to the NSW economy and we want to consolidate those gains and drive it even more.
- The NSW Government wants Chinese visitors to have an all-encompassing NSW holiday experience – from their arrival at Sydney Airport, staying in our hotels, tasting our food and wine, shopping til they drop, to visiting our attractions and exploring our wonderful regions.

## **MAKING LICENSED VENUES SAFER**

- The NSW Government has announced an annual risk-based liquor licence scheme - the latest element of its reform package to make the State's licensed venues safer.
- This scheme will hit bad venues where it hurts most – the hip pocket – and encourage good operators to stay on their game.
- The scheme is designed so anyone holding a liquor licence contributes annually to the cost of maintaining a strong regulatory and compliance system.
- Under the new scheme, three-quarters of the State's 18,400 licensees would only pay a base fee of between \$100 and \$500 a year with loadings added for venues that trade late, have a poor compliance record and risk loadings for patron capacity and location.

## **JOBS ACTION PLAN MAKING AN IMPACT IN WESTERN SYDNEY**

- Western Sydney businesses have been taking advantage of the NSW Government's payroll tax rebates, with more than 10,500 new positions created under our Jobs Action Plan.
- NSW Treasurer Mike Baird has released figures showing half of the top 20 metropolitan areas claiming payroll tax rebates are in Western Sydney including Auburn, Blacktown, Parramatta and Hills Shire.

- Under the Jobs Action Plan, businesses that create a new position receive a \$5,000 payroll tax rebate on that position (increased from \$4,000 in the 2013-14 Budget).
- There were almost 6,000 new jobs created under the Jobs Action Plan across NSW in February – well over five times the number of positions created in February last year

### **TAXI REFORM: SAFER, SMARTER, CHEAPER AND MORE RELIABLE**

- A package of reforms to make taxis safer, save customers money and improve reliability has been announced by the NSW Government.
- The NSW Government's plan to improve taxi services includes halving the typical surcharge on card fare payments by capping it at 5 per cent (saving customers \$2.50 on a \$50 fare), regulating and encouraging the creation and use of innovative new mobile phone taxi booking apps to improve and modernise the customer experience, and enhancing enforcement of vehicle safety and maintenance.
- Customers shouldn't be unfairly penalised with excessive surcharges when it's hard enough already for people to make ends meet.
- This is a small change that can make a big difference, opening up competition and giving customers the information they need when they book a taxi and providing more confidence when a taxi will arrive.

### **OPAL HEADS TO THE CENTRAL COAST, HUNTER AND BLUE MOUNTAINS**

- The NSW Government has completed Opal electronic ticketing on the train and ferry network with it now live on the Central Coast, Hunter and Blue Mountains lines.
- From next week, it will move to 24 bus routes in Northern Sydney' Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby regions.
- Opal is now accepted on all Sydney Ferries services from Manly to Parramatta and all train stations from Bathurst to Bondi Junction and Dungog to Bomaderry plus the 333 bus route from Circular Quay to North Bondi and the 594 bus route.
- To starting saving and enjoying the convenience of bypassing Monday morning queues, go to [www.opal.com.au](http://www.opal.com.au) or call 13 67 25 (13 OPAL). You can also visit the Transport for NSW stall at the Sydney Easter Show and get your Opal card on the spot, including the new children / youth Opal.

### **NSW GOVERNMENT & NRL INJECT \$2M INTO GRASSROOTS RUGBY LEAGUE**

- The NSW Government and the National Rugby League have announced the largest grassroots grants program in the history of the game.
- The new 'NSW Footy Facilities Fund' will see the NSW Government and the NRL invest \$1 million each into a funding program to support junior and senior Rugby League clubs upgrade or build new facilities.
- This may include spending on items such as new seating, goal posts, canteens, lights, fields, fencing, drainage, dressing rooms or storage facilities.

- The 'NSW Footy Facilities Fund' is all about ensuring grassroots Rugby League is well resourced, making it even more attractive for both juniors and adult players.

## **TEACHER MENTORS: EXTRA SUPPORT FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS**

- The NSW Government has announced the appointment of eight mentors to support beginning temporary teachers at 38 schools across NSW.
- Everybody starts their career somewhere, which is why it is so important to support our new temporary teachers with these new experienced teacher mentors.
- The mentors will help the new teachers in preparing, delivering and assessing classwork, in managing the classroom, and through demonstration lessons and observations.
- In Sydney, the mentors will support schools with high numbers of beginning teachers in the Liverpool, Fairfield, Holroyd, and Warringah areas. In regional NSW, schools in Tamworth, Gunnedah, Wagga Wagga and Bathurst will be supported.

## **ROYAL EASTER SHOW A DRAWCARD FOR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS**

- The NSW Government is helping to celebrate the best of regional NSW by announcing funding for the next three years of the Sydney Royal Easter Show.
- Acting NSW Premier Andrew Stoner said the NSW Government's investment would assist organisers to market the iconic Western Sydney event to international visitors, particularly targeting key Asian markets.
- This is the largest annual event in Australia and an iconic showcase of Australian culture, heritage and agricultural excellence which consistently delivers more than \$20 million in visitor expenditure each year for NSW.
- International visitation for the event has grown by over 250 per cent since 2009, and we expect this growth to continue towards 2020 as we continue to take advantage of rising demand in Asia. According to Sydney Royal Easter Show sales figures, nearly 18,000 overseas visitors attended the Sydney Royal Easter Show in 2013, with the majority coming from China.

## **MATCHING DUBBO ABORIGINAL STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS TO REAL JOBS**

- Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Victor Dominello and Member for Dubbo Troy Grant have officially launched one of the State's four Opportunity Hubs in Dubbo.
- Opportunity Hubs seek to coordinate and link training opportunities for Aboriginal students, providing incentives to finish school and transition into sustainable jobs.
- The Hub will match local education, training and employment opportunities for young Aboriginal people in the Dubbo area. Over 950 Aboriginal students will have access to the Dubbo Opportunity Hub to help them develop their career aspirations from a young age and link them to training and employment opportunities.

- Ultimately the Hubs are about increasing school completion rates by creating better pathways and more incentives for Aboriginal students to make the crucial transition from high school to tertiary education and/or full-time employment.

## **NEW COMMUTER CAR PARK FOR LIVERPOOL**

- In a huge win for public transport users in Western Sydney, the NSW Government has announced a brand new 83 space commuter car park will be built at Liverpool Station, as part of the South West Sydney Community Cabinet.
- At the moment there are only about 22 short term spaces and five parking spaces for people with a disability near Liverpool Station – and these additional spaces will help commuters who have had difficulty parking close to the station.
- We have already completed commuter car parks at Glenbrook, Kiama and Moss Vale, construction is underway at Gordon, Oak Flats and Shell Cove and design has started for Canley Vale, Gordon, Sutherland, Granville, Lindfield, Padstow and Rockdale.
- This is on top of more than 1,000 rail staff car spaces that will be handed over to commuters, 1,200 being made available as part of the South West Rail Link and 4,000 new car spaces as part of the North West Rail Link.

## **NEW VARIETIES OF SUSHI RICE A SHOWSTOPPER**

- The NSW Government and rice growers are helping to meet Australia's growing demand for sushi, by increasing production of short-grain varieties to be used in the popular Japanese dish.
- It is estimated Australians enjoy more than one million serves of sushi each year, and a huge increase in sushi consumption has bolstered demand for sushi rice production.
- Researchers at the Department of Primary Industries' Yanco Agricultural Institute are working in partnership with the rice industry to develop two short grain replacement varieties of sushi rice that will be earlier maturing, with good yield potential and can be sown later giving growers more options.
- This kind of research is vital to maintain the State's outstanding reputation in producing rice. Ninety-nine per cent of all rice grown in Australia is grown in NSW, contributing more than \$1 billion to the State's economy.

## **PUBLIC HOUSING AMNESTY: UNDECLARED INCOME**

- Minister for Family and Community Services Pru Goward has announced an amnesty period for public housing tenants to report any undeclared income so their rent can be calculated correctly.
- The amnesty gives tenants an eight-week window to report any income they may be receiving over and above what they have declared to Housing NSW, and avoid prosecution or back-rent.
- Once the amnesty is over, quite substantial penalties can apply, including eviction.

- Housing NSW has clear rules as to how much income, financial assets or property ownership public housing tenants can have, to ensure housing is granted to those in the community most in need.

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