

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 18 October 2013

FIREFIGHTING AIR-CRANES ARRIVE TO ASSIST IN BUSHFIRE BATTLE

- NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell this week welcomed the arrival of the 'Gypsy Lady' firefighting Air-Crane to NSW, further bolstering the Rural Fire Service's aerial water-bombing capability this summer.
- In what has already been a difficult bushfire season, two Air-Cranes have been rushed into service early to provide state-of-the-art equipment to assist our outstanding salaried and volunteer firefighters.
- The NSW Government made a commitment to increase hazard reduction and last year hazard reduction burns occurred on about 281,000 hectares of land – more than two-and-a-half times the amount carried out two years ago.
- The cost of the Air-Cranes in NSW is jointly met by the NSW and Australian Governments. For bushfire information and updates visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

RAIL STAFF ON MORE PLATFORMS TO IMPROVE JOURNEYS

- Rail staff will now be on more platforms at Town Hall and Central stations to reduce the time taken by commuters to hop on and off trains.
- The expansion of the 'Fast Track Platforms' program follows the successful trial at Town Hall on platform 3 that has delivered clear customer benefits, with less crowding on the platform and improved boarding times.
- The program started on four extra platforms this week, ahead of the introduction the new train timetable this Sunday 20 October that includes more than 1,000 extra weekly train services.
- This was another improvement for customers introduced by the NSW Government, including more than 55 new Waratah trains now in service, the rollout of Opal electronic ticketing, and improved mobile reception in tunnels.

WESTCONNEX M4 WIDENING CONSULTATION BEGINS

- Community consultation on the WestConnex M4 Widening is about to get underway in a sign the vital project is a step closer to becoming a reality.
- The NSW and Australian Governments are keen to have WestConnex started as soon as possible because we understand the frustration faced by Western Sydney motorists after years of neglect.

- Once completed, WestConnex will bypass 52 sets of traffic lights, take 3,000 trucks off the road and save up to 40 minutes on a trip from Parramatta to the airport.
- Community consultation forums will occur begin on Friday 25 October in Westmead. Full details can be found at www.westconnex.com.au

PUTTING A STOP TO LABOR'S GOLD PLATING

- The NSW Government is amending the former Labor Government's reliability standards which drove over-investment in the electricity network and were responsible for massive increases in household and business power bills.
- From 1 July 2014, amended reliability licence conditions will give greater flexibility to network businesses so they can plan and deliver efficiencies while maintaining current reliability levels.
- The amendments will save more than \$200 million on top of the \$2.5 billion already identified through the NSW Government's restructure of distribution businesses.
- Investment will now be delivered only when necessary and only when appropriate – given network costs are responsible for around 50 per cent of a power bill, placing downward pressure on electricity prices.

SOLUTION FOUND TO DELIVER MORE PERITONECTOMY SURGERIES

- Peritonectomy surgery will be undertaken at Prince of Wales Hospital to allow more patients to have their surgery sooner.
- Peritonectomy surgery is a rare and complex procedure only available in NSW at St George Hospital, leading to significant pressure on the waiting list because of the intensive post-operative care patients require, which can take weeks.
- Six category one patients waiting for the surgery at St George Hospital will undergo the operation at Prince of Wales Hospital between November 4 and December 11.
- Health Minister Jillian Skinner said the St George Hospital Peritonectomy Clinical Review Committee will continue to determine the priority of patients for surgery at both St George Hospital and Prince of Wales Hospital.

PARTIAL DEFENCE OF PROVOCATION

- The NSW Government is seeking public comment on draft laws which would significantly restrict the use of the partial defence of provocation in murder trials.
- Under the proposed changes, defendants will need to show 'extreme provocation' that amounts to a serious indictable offence, in order to be entitled to use the partial defence.
- While we want to end inappropriate use of the provocation defence, such as someone losing their temper and killing their partner after finding out they have been unfaithful, we have not ruled out its use by victims of long term physical or emotional abuse – typically a wife at the hands of an abusive husband.
- The Exposure Draft Bill and Discussion Paper can be viewed at www.lpcird.lawlink.nsw.gov.au - submissions are open until 14 November.

SAFETY UPGRADE FOR MT OUSLEY ROAD

- Motorists will benefit from improved safety and traffic flow on the M1 Princes Motorway, known as Mount Ousley Road, as a safety upgrade starts at the Picton Road interchange.
- The NSW Government has provided \$4 million for the upgrade as part of its commitment to improve roads in the Illawarra.
- Roads and Maritime Services will carry out work to improve safety for vehicles turning left from Picton Road on to the M1 by replacing the T-intersection with a new 700 metre northbound acceleration lane.
- The new lane will allow more time for vehicles to accelerate before merging with other traffic and will separate slower moving heavy vehicles from light vehicle traffic.

YOUNG VETERANS SUPPORTED TO SHARE THEIR STORIES

- The first project by an Australian government to mentor young veterans to speak publicly about their deployment, and the challenges and opportunities faced when returning from service has been launched in NSW.
- *Service Stories* will help young veterans and their families integrate back into society after their deployment. Their personal stories will help to educate the community to better understand and appreciate the needs of those who have served our country.
- Channel 10 journalist Hugh Riminton and former CNN correspondent Damien Thomlinson will mentor veterans in public speaking to help them articulate their stories to students, community groups and corporate NSW.
- *Service Stories* is a joint initiative of the NSW Government, veteran organisation Soldier On and the North Bondi RSL Sub Branch.

NEW NUTRITION STANDARDS FOR MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

- Nutrition standards at every mental health facility in NSW are being overhauled in a bid to reduce the rates of chronic disease that currently sees people with severe mental illness living an average 25 fewer years than the general population.
- The NSW Government is taking the lead on the issue and the new nutrition standards will set a benchmark for mental health units and facilities across Australia.
- The new guidelines will ensure people needing care in our mental health facilities are offered a choice of meals that meet their nutritional needs and support their recovery.
- For more information on the Nutrition Standards for Consumers of Inpatient Mental Health Services in NSW visit the ACI website at www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au

NEW GUIDE TO LIVING AND WORKING IN SYDNEY

- A new 'Guide to Living and Working in Sydney' has been released in an effort to help NSW compete on the world stage and attract the world's best professional talent to Sydney.

- The guide is part of the Global Talent Hub initiative – a partnership between the NSW Government and Committee for Sydney to make Sydney a magnet for globally mobile professional talent.
- It's much more than a guidebook – it's an essential tool to help newcomers find out more about the best places to live, work and play in Sydney, as well as a source of information on government services, education, tax, visas and more.
- The Guide to Living and Working in Sydney is available to download at www.sydneyaustralia.com/en/sydney-lifestyle

GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL PASSES PARLIAMENT

- Legislation has passed Parliament to deliver better eradication and management of introduced pest animals and more robust and effective oversight of volunteer hunting.
- The legislation implements key recommendations of the Dunn Report by disbanding the Game Council and the transferring licensing, hunter education and compliance functions to the Department of Primary Industries.
- A Game and Pest Management Advisory Board will also be established to represent the interests of hunters and provide advice to Government on pest control and research and hunter education courses.
- The reduction of game and feral animals is important to our agricultural sector and to the State's economy, because it causes productive losses of \$70 million each year in NSW.

\$2 MILLION FOR NSW REGIONAL CONSERVATORIUMS

- More than \$2 million in funding has been announced for the State's network of 17 regional conservatoriums in 2014, which encourage musicians of all ages in NSW to experience, learn and perform music.
- Projects include public concerts in a range of music styles, as well as master classes and workshops from top Australian and international musicians and composers.
- The funding includes almost \$670,000 for 22 projects to be delivered by NSW regional conservatoriums in 2014, as well as \$1.4 million to supplement core funding to the 17 regional conservatoriums.
- The NSW Government's support for regional conservatoriums is part of our commitment to the arts and cultural sector, in recognition of its contributions to the economic, social and creative development of our State.

***Want to know what the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is up to this week?
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