

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 7 March 2014

NSW NUMBER ONE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

- The NSW economy is now the best performing in the economy in the country on both a quarterly and annual basis.
- The ABS National Accounts released this week showed for the first time since data collection began, NSW has posted the strongest demand growth on a yearly basis of all the states for two consecutive quarters and is well above the national average.
- Treasurer Mike Baird said despite ongoing national economic uncertainty the result shows the NSW economy remains in a relatively strong position.
- This data is recognition of the NSW Government's sound economic management during challenging times.

OUTSTANDING IMPROVEMENTS IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE

- Patients being treated more quickly in emergency departments across hospitals as a result of a major reform from the NSW Government.
- The Whole of Hospital Program has been introduced at 23 hospitals with most dramatically increasing the number of patients who leave the emergency department within four hours, whether to be discharged, admitted or transferred to another hospital.
- Leading improvers were Westmead (up 29.5 per cent), Liverpool (23.5 per cent), Nepean (16.3 per cent) and John Hunter (15.9 per cent).
- Minister for Health Jillian Skinner said the results had been made possible by the NSW Government's addition of 4,100 more nurses, 1,400 more doctors, giving local clinicians more of a say in how their hospital is run and introducing smarter ways of ensuring patients are seen sooner.

NSW HOUSING CONFIDENCE BOOST

- NSW has kicked off 2014 with yet another rise in housing approvals, recording 4,736 approvals for new homes in January – a boost for the NSW economy and great news for homebuyers.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show housing approvals for January are up 5 per cent on December 2013. The 12 months to January 2014 saw 47,987 new homes approved in NSW.
- Since the NSW Liberal & Nationals Government came to office there has been a marked upward trend in housing approvals.

- During Labor's last five years in office, monthly approval figures averaged just 2,657 – we are now averaging 3,346 dwellings per month.

MORE PRESCHOOL PLACES FOR REGIONAL NSW

- The NSW Government is getting on with the job of increasing the number of children who attend preschool in the year before school.
- A \$5.6 million capital works program will create an additional 362 preschool places in NSW.
- The funding has enabled the construction of three new preschools and the extension of 10 preschools across NSW.
- The preschools that benefit from this capital works program are largely in regional areas, which will ease to ease the strain on services in those communities.

SUPPORT FOR RETRENCHED WORKERS

- The NSW Government will provide a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate to businesses that employ workers who have recently lost their jobs through large-scale restructures.
- We understand the impact job loss can have on families and that's why the NSW Government is determined to do all we can to support those workers and create new employment opportunities.
- *Fresh Start Support* is an extension of the NSW Government's Jobs Action Plan where a \$5,000 rebate is currently available.
- Under the new package guidelines an employer which makes 100 or more employees redundant in metropolitan areas, or 50 for non-metropolitan areas, can be listed as a designated employer, and former employees of this designated employer will activate the *Fresh Start Scheme* \$1,000 supplement when a new employer hires them.

TAXI COUNCIL JOINS COWARD PUNCH CAMPAIGN

- The NSW Taxi Council had thrown its support behind the public education campaign against drug and alcohol-fuelled violence and will display a poster version of Danny Green's "one punch can ruin lives" ad on the back of taxis across Sydney.
- The Premier joined the Taxi Council in unveiling the ads and congratulated them for joining the campaign to promote cultural change and personal responsibility around drugs and alcohol.
- The Danny Green ad is now being run on TV and radio, and with other media companies now on board, will soon be installed on CityLight screens in and around Kings Cross and the CBD, on screens in pubs and clubs and at petrol bowsers.

CUSTOMER FIRST: UNLOCKING 1,000 RAIL CAR SPACES FOR COMMUTERS

- More than 1,000 rail staff car spaces will be handed over to commuters, as part of Customer First, a new program to deliver benefits to customers.
- The Customer First initiatives to be rolled out over coming months, include more than 1,000 rail staff car spaces handed over to customers; a comprehensive station

refresh program starting with deep cleans and improved security at 19 key stations and targeted operations with the Police Transport Command and Transport Officers.

- This is on the back of recent customer wins including Opal being rolled out on 120 train stations across the network, 68 brand new air-conditioned Waratah trains delivered, dedicated Twitter handles for specific lines, and more than 1,000 services as part of the new timetable.
- Initially more than 370 staff car parking spaces will be handed back to customers at stations including Campbelltown, Blacktown, Penrith, Liverpool, Gosford, Hornsby and Woy Woy.

MORE FUNDING FOR PARKES AND FORBES HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENTS

- An additional \$45.9 million has been announced for Parkes and Forbes Hospitals, increasing the total budget for the Lachlan Health Service project to \$113.4 million.
- The NSW Liberals & Nationals committed \$67.5 million toward the redevelopments of the two hospitals in 2011. Funding will be increased to \$72.5 million for Parkes Hospital and \$40.9 million for Forbes Hospital.
- Parkes Hospital will be redeveloped on a new site, while Forbes Hospital will be refurbished. Areas to be upgraded include the Emergency Department, Inpatient ward and Ambulatory Care treatment area.
- The project is on track to begin construction this year and is scheduled for completion in late 2016.

2014 NSW WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

- The winners of the 2014 NSW Women of the Year Awards were announced during a special reception at NSW Parliament House on the eve of International Women's Day.
- The winner of the 2014 Premier's Woman of the Year Award is Turia Pitt - a mining engineer, and an inspirational burns survivor and motivational speaker.
- The winner of the 2014 People's Choice Community Hero is Faten El Dana, the President of the Muslim Women's Welfare of Australia who has been recognised for her commitment to improving the lives of migrant women.
- The inaugural recipient of the 2014 Young Woman of the Year is Lakshmi Logathassan, who promotes access to education through a project she founded sending government-funded laptops that are no longer needed by Australian students and sending them to students in Kenya and Sri Lanka.

DUKE AND DUCHESS AND YOUNG PRINCE GEORGE TO VISIT NSW

- Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and young Prince George will visit Sydney and the Blue Mountains between 16 and 20 April 2014.
- Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Marie Bashir AC CVO and NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell will co-host a reception at the Sydney Opera House welcoming Their Royal Highnesses to NSW on 16 April.

- The Duke and Duchess will visit the Blue Mountains to view the recovery and offer comfort and support to those affected by the devastating October bushfires.
- The Royal couple will also visit the Royal Easter Show, enjoy a surf lifesaving display at Manly beach, visit Bear Cottage, visit Taronga Zoo to open the Bilby enclosure, and attend the Easter Sunday church service at St Andrew's Cathedral.

HONOURING NSW ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DIGGERS

- Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello has announced *Wartime Legends*, a Centenary of Anzac initiative encouraging special recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' military service during the First World War.
- The Centenary is an opportunity to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' contribution to Australia's First World War campaigns through local commemorative activities.
- Information about how organisations can participate in *Wartime Legends* and other Centenary of Anzac initiatives in NSW can be found at: <http://www.veterans.nsw.gov.au/centenary/>

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