

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 22 November 2013

CLEANING UP POLITICS AND ACTING ON CORRUPTION

- NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell has legislated in preparation for the Independent Commission Against Corruption's report into the coal mining rights at Doyles Creek and Mt Penny.
- The NSW Government will wait to receive the ICAC's advice on these matters before considering any specific action, but it's important we are in a position to act if necessary on any recommendations.
- Currently there is no general power to cancel a mining exploration licence in circumstances where the granting of the licence, or the licence-holder itself, is otherwise somehow tainted by corruption.
- It is the intention of the NSW Government to only use this special power where the ICAC has determined serious corrupt conduct has infected, in some essential respect, the granting of a licence or licence holder itself.
- Mr O'Farrell also announced the NSW Government would accept all the corruption prevention recommendations of the ICAC's recent report, which improve accountability and transparency.

NSW STRIKE TEAM TO COMBAT GANG CRIME

- The NSW and Australian Governments are establishing a joint strike team to combat gang crime, as part of the \$64 million National Anti-Gangs Squad.
- The NSW Strike Team will comprise of officers from NSW Police, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Taxation Office.
- As part of this Strike Team, NSW Police will have access to Commonwealth intelligence from agencies including the Australian Crime Commission, Australian Federal Police, Australian Taxation Office, Centrelink, Customs and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.
- The formation of this squad demonstrates the unprecedented level of cooperation that exists between Federal and State law enforcement agencies that are cracking down on organised crime.

ADDITIONAL IN-DROUGHT SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR NORTH WEST NSW

- Emergency in-drought support measures are available for primary producers and communities dealing with extraordinarily difficult circumstances in North Western NSW.

- The NSW Government has allocated \$7.6 million to the emergency support measures for the Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett local government areas – on top of measures announced on 30 October 2013.
- The package includes transport assistance reimbursements and transport subsidies for animal welfare for stock going to sale or slaughter.
- Western Lands Lease payments and Wild Dog Destruction Board rates have been waived and emergency water infrastructure grants available, which the Commonwealth Government has indicated it will match.
- For more information, contact the NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593.

CUSTOMERS BEAT THE HEAT WITH 60TH WARATAH TRAIN DELIVERED

- In great news for commuters as we head into summer, almost 90 per cent of Sydney's trains are now air-conditioned.
- The delivery of the 60th Waratah train means the state-of-the-art carriages are now running more than 6,300 services every week across Sydney.
- All timetabled trains on weekends are now air-conditioned, giving customers the ultimate comfort during that time.
- The new Waratah trains are allowing the NSW Government to provide more than 1,000 additional weekly rail services as part of the new timetable released in October.

KINGS CROSS SECURITY UPGRADE – ID SCANNERS START 6 DECEMBER

- The NSW Government has nominated 6 December as the intended date for the introduction of linked ID scanners in high-risk licensed premises at Kings Cross, as part of the suite of measures to improve security in the precinct.
- The use of ID scanners at 35 high risk venues, which will be linked to a central ID scanning system, will support the use of banning orders on troublemakers at high-risk Kings Cross venues to help keep the venues and precinct safe.
- High-risk venues will be required to operate ID scanners from 7pm on Fridays continuously through to 7am on Mondays; on public holidays and the preceding evening.
- In addition to ID scanners, the NSW Government has introduced numerous other measures to crackdown on alcohol-related violence, including the Three Strikes scheme, recruiting an additional 420 police officers, giving police additional 'move on' powers, introducing a new offence of intoxicated and disorderly and trialling sobering up centres.

POLICE OUT IN FORCE ON OUR PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

- A two-day crackdown aimed at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour on the public transport network was launched by police this week.

- As part of Operation Fusion 2 more than 250 police officers were deployed at transport hubs and on railway routes across Sydney, as well as in the Illawarra and the Hunter.
- The high-visibility operation was led by the NSW Police Transport Command, which was established by the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government in 2012.
- Police Minister Michael Gallacher said the presence of police officers on our transport network is restoring safety and confidence to thousands of commuters every day.

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN

- Sweeping reforms have been introduced into NSW Parliament which will give the state's most vulnerable children the best chance of a better future.
- The new laws increase early intervention services, streamline the adoption process and provide more support to new mothers.
- Under these new laws, if an expectant mother with a drug addiction doesn't fulfil their obligations the government will take steps to protect the child.
- These reforms also acknowledge the greater role open adoption, or long-term guardianship in the case of Aboriginal children, can play in providing vulnerable children with the basic need of a safe home for life.

NEW LAWS BENEFIT CONSUMERS AND MOTOR VEHICLE INDUSTRY

- New laws to provide greater protection for consumers while supporting businesses in the motor industry have been passed by the NSW Parliament.
- The laws increase penalties for odometer tampering from \$11,000 to \$22,000 and allow Fair Trading inspectors to issue orders to a licensed dealer or repairer to fix faults without the consumer having to resort to legal action.
- We are cutting red tape for business by reducing licence categories from 22 to just three and allowing a licence exemption for simple repair work that does not impact on vehicle safety, such as fitting basic accessories like windscreen wipers and roof racks.
- In another step to ensure consumers are being protected, the NSW Government has announced a Parliamentary Inquiry into the relationship between insurers and repairers – it will examine key issues such as principles of consumer choice, transparent business practices, effective dispute resolution systems, a competitive marketplace and importantly, the safety and quality of repairs.

NETWORK SAVINGS NOW 10 TIMES ABOVE TARGET

- Households across NSW will benefit from \$4.3 billion in savings that have been identified through the NSW Government's restructure of the three electricity distribution businesses.
- Updated savings forecasts by Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy and Essential Energy confirm the total projected savings in the five years to 2015/16 are now more than 10 times the original target of \$400 million in operating expenses over four years.

- Lower costs by the electricity businesses mean downward pressure on prices as costs will no longer flow through into household power bills
- The savings realised through network reform have also assisted the NSW Government in providing more than 800,000 rebates to eligible families and households in 2012-13.

JUSTICE JAMES WOOD TO HEAD PAROLE BOARD

- One of Australia's eminent former judges and most respected legal minds, retired Justice James Wood AO QC, has been appointed the new Chair of the NSW State Parole Authority.
- As a former Supreme Court Justice, Chief Judge and Royal Commissioner, Justice Wood is extremely well qualified to lead the Parole Authority.
- Attorney General Greg Smith SC said Justice Wood brings to the role an exceptional understanding of both the criminal justice and correctional systems, and has a deep interest and commitment to building integrity into administrative systems.

\$3.5 MILLION EQUIPMENT BOOST FOR CANCER RESEARCH

- Medical Research Minister Jillian Skinner has announced \$3.5 million in funding for equipment to enable NSW cancer researchers to better understand cancer cells and discover new, targeted treatments.
- 11 successful grant applicants will bolster cancer research, including brain cancer in children, advanced lung cancer, melanoma, profiling the DNA of cancer patients and mobile breast cancer imaging.
- NSW is home to some of the best cancer researchers in the world and arming them with innovative technologies is vital to further our efforts to fight the disease.
- The new technology includes a storage facility for the Garvan Institute, which will house tens of thousands of patient genomes, allowing new patients to be compared with other patients who have similar genome profiles and for whom information exists, such as how they responded to different therapies.

PORT OF NEWCASTLE TRANSACTION PROCESS BEGINS

- The formal transaction process for the 98-year lease of the Port of Newcastle to fund the revitalisation of central Newcastle is underway.
- The NSW Government's decision to proceed with the long-term lease of the Port was only taken after a scoping study confirmed it was in the best interests of the people of NSW.
- The transaction would allow the NSW Government to invest in much-needed infrastructure, while at the same time allow the NSW Government to focus on delivering core services across the State.

E-PLANNING TO SAVE FAMILIES TIME AND MONEY

- The NSW Government has announced a \$1.6 million boost for councils to make it easier for homeowners and builders to get faster development approvals by using an online planning tool.

- Already 34 councils are using the Electronic Housing Code (EHC) which allows the community to access planning information at the click of button to help them more easily lodge fast-tracked applications.
- The EHC improves accuracy, reduces red tape and allows property owners to find out what is possible on their land without having to wade through hundreds of pages of documents.
- By June next year about 80 councils will be using the EHC. For more information visit: www.ehc.nsw.gov.au

BOOST FOR NSW ENVIRONMENT WITH 100 NEW TRAINEES

- The NSW Government is creating up to 100 new traineeships for field officers on the frontline in national parks across the state.
- This is a varied, hands-on outdoor career that is vital to caring for our national parks and everything they protect.
- These new trainees will be directed towards high visitation areas, high risk fire locations and where the need for younger field officers is greatest.
- The Field Officer Traineeship Program was triggered by a need to further improve succession planning in the face of an ageing workforce.

MUMS AND KIDS MATTER

- Young mothers with a mental illness will be given additional support so their children can remain with them while they receive treatment as part of a new program.
- The \$12 million initiative, *Mums and Kids Matter*, will ensure more mothers remain with their children as they undertake their journey to recovery.
- Wesley Mission will run the program and will offer new high, medium and low packages of care and short term housing to increase the number of mothers with serious chronic mental illness living in stable housing.
- This initiative works to improve the mental health conditions of both mother and child to prevent hospitalisation and homelessness, while also providing assistance to improve their social and economic situation.

ADAM GOODES NAMED NSW AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR

- Champion Sydney Swans player and indigenous community leader Adam Goodes has been named NSW Australian of the Year 2014.
- Goodes won the award for his work with indigenous communities, in particular for establishing the *Go Foundation*, which empowers the next generation of Indigenous role models in all walks of life.
- NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell said Goodes was a great role model for all Australians and a very worthy winner.

- Other NSW Australia Day award winners are inventor Peter Ford (NSW Senior Australian of the Year 2014), paralympian Jacqueline Freney (NSW Young Australian of the Year 2014) and Reverend Graham Long (NSW Local Hero 2014).

COSTCO A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN WESTERN SYDNEY

- The State's second Costco retail warehouse has opened in Casula in a vote of confidence in the Western Sydney economy.
- Costco Crossroads provides an economic boost to the local area; almost 400 jobs have been created and the warehouse will be open seven days a week.
- This fits with the NSW Government's plan to create jobs closer to where people live because it reduces congestion on our roads and allows more family time.
- The retail giant's presence in Casula will increase competition, place downward pressure on the price of consumer goods and could lead to opportunities for successful NSW-based Costco suppliers.

NEW CHANCE FOR FANS TO SEE MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL IN SYDNEY

- Sports fans will get another chance to be a part of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see Major League Baseball in Sydney with two new exhibition games to be played in the lead up to the MLB Opening Series in March 2014.
- The two games will see Team Australia take on the Arizona Diamondbacks and Los Angeles Dodgers at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday 20 and Friday 21 March 2014.
- The MLB Opening Series games have proved to be some of the hottest tickets in town and these two exhibition games will give 80,000 fans another opportunity to secure tickets.
- The MLB Opening Series will give an estimated \$13 million boost to the State's economy and showcase Sydney to the world via a massive global television audience.

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