

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 7 November 2014

17,300 JOBS CREATED AS NSW UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DROPS

- The NSW Government has welcomed a drop in the State's unemployment rate, which has now come in below the national average for 11 straight months.
- New ABS figures show the NSW unemployment rate at 5.7 per cent for October, down from a revised 5.9 per cent the previous month.
- This is a strong result with 17,300 jobs created in NSW in October – more than two-thirds of the number created across the entire country.
- Since the March 2011 election, the NSW Government has helped to create 132,000 jobs off the back of our investments in the key drivers of the economy.

DETAILS OF NEW M5 REVEALED

- The new M5 tunnels will be higher, wider, flatter and future-proofed as part of plans unveiled this week for Stage 2 of Australia's biggest road project, WestConnex.
- The new tunnels will more than double capacity on the M5 East, with the new M5 tunnels to accommodate three lanes in each direction, providing another route for traffic from the airport and port precinct to Western and South Western Sydney.
- The NSW Government has also announced the acquisition of a 16 hectare industrial site at St Peters as a key interchange for the world class motorway, avoiding the need for major residential acquisitions and limiting impacts on green space.
- The St Peters Interchange will provide access to key roads in the area, which will also be upgraded, and provide access to the Sydney Airport and Port Botany precincts from South Western and Western Sydney once WestConnex is completed.

FIRST TEST TRAINS HIT THE TRACKS ON SOUTH WEST RAIL LINK

- The new South West Rail Link is one step closer to opening with train testing and staff training now underway, before services are due to begin early next year.
- Over the coming weeks, local residents will be able to see trains running between Glenfield and the new Leppington Station as Sydney Trains carries out extensive tests of the line, trains, signalling and other equipment.
- From day one the South West Rail Link will operate services to the Liverpool CBD, stopping at Leppington, Edmondson Park and Glenfield stations, with services to be fully integrated into the Sydney Trains timetable in the future.

- The NSW Government is getting on with the job of delivering infrastructure, and this project is one year ahead of schedule and \$300 million under budget.

NSW GIVES SUPPORT TO NT GAS PIPELINE PROPOSAL

- Premier Mike Baird has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NT Chief Minister Adam Giles to work closely on the development of a pipeline connecting the Northern and Eastern Gas Markets.
- The proposed 1,000km gas pipeline connecting the Northern Territory and eastern seaboard would have significant benefits for consumers in NSW.
- The NSW Government is actively exploring all possibilities to increase gas supply to our domestic consumers and the MOU is an important step in offering NSW Government support to the process now underway.
- The Territory Government will open expressions of interest from the private sector for building and operating the pipeline next week and is expecting strong interest.

TEACHERS KEEP LEARNING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS

- Students across NSW will benefit from an unprecedented agreement between the Department of Education and Communities and the NSW Teachers Federation to create a professional development plan for every NSW public school teacher.
- Like all professions, it is essential for teachers to continue learning and it is this philosophy that is at the heart of the Performance and Development Framework, which will start next year.
- The NSW Government has committed an additional \$17 million for teacher professional development — an increase of 50 per cent. From 2016 all teachers will be required to undertake 100 hours of professional development every five years to retain their continuing accreditation.
- The Performance and Development Framework will be implemented for the 2015 school year and will complement the wide-ranging reforms of the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning initiative that were introduced last year.

THREE NORTH WEST RAIL LINK TUNNELLING MACHINES NOW DIGGING

- Three of the North West Rail Link's massive tunnel boring machines are now in the ground and tunnelling, as work continues on Australia's biggest public transport project, which is set to open to customers in the first half of 2019.
- The latest boring machine, Isabelle, was launched at Cherrybrook this week. A second machine, Florence, got underway at Bella Vista last week, joining the first machine, Elizabeth which has already dug more than 600 metres.
- The North West Rail Link is the first transport infrastructure project in Australian history that will use four tunnel boring machines at once – a great example of the sheer size of this world-scale infrastructure project.

- This is another major milestone as we get on with the job of building the North West Rail Link, which is the first stage of Sydney Rapid Transit, the city's brand new modern railway network.

CONSUMERS SHOPPING UP A STORM AS RETAIL TRADE SPIKES

- Latest ABS data shows consumers are confident in the State economy with latest retail trade figures showing \$7.5 billion went through NSW cash registers in September.
- Figures released this week show retail trade increased 1.7 per cent in September to be up 9.5 per cent through the year – the highest of all the States.
- NSW achieved the best retail sales growth of all the States on a monthly basis, and growth was well above the national average.
- This is a welcome boost to the NSW economy and it's hoped the trend will continue in the lead up to Christmas.

ASSISTING VICTIMS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- The NSW Government has announced measures to help support survivors of institutional child sexual abuse as part of its initial response to the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*.
- Attorney General Brad Hazzard said the NSW Government recognises the mistakes of the past and is resolved that it should never happen again.
- Amongst the measures to be undertaken by the NSW Government: care records will be made available as soon as possible to clear the backlog of applications from victims, an active plan of recognition will be established at the Parramatta Girls Home, and other survivors will be consulted to examine options for a state-wide place of recognition or memorial to acknowledge past wrongs.
- The NSW Government is listening carefully to the personal and heartbreaking stories as they unfold at the Royal Commission and we want survivors to get the recognition and assistance they need.

SKILLED RELOCATION INCENTIVE RECIPIENTS ENJOY REGIONAL LIFE

- The NSW Government has welcomed the passing of legislation in NSW Parliament to fulfil its commitment and continue offering the \$10,000 Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive through to the end of March 2015.
- The incentive, which is paid in two equal instalments to eligible applicants who move to regional NSW for full-time employment, had been taken up by more than 300 applicants, with another 252 applications pending.
- It is estimated the continuation of the SRRI will help deliver 85 successful job seekers or business operators and their families to regional NSW per month through to the end of March next year.
- The NSW Government is attracting an economically active demographic to regional NSW as part of its efforts to drive employment and business growth.

NEW FLYING FOX MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- A new strategy has been announced that will reduce flying-fox camps around populated areas, while maintaining human health as a priority.
- The plan will empower councils to resolve issues within their communities and take appropriate local action at the earliest opportunity.
- Flying-foxes remain protected, and under the new policy land managers will be able to obtain a five year license to create buffer zones by removing vegetation, and carrying out camp disturbance or dispersal by clearing vegetation or encouraging animals to leave using noise, water, smoke or light.
- The strategy also finalises 'special circumstances' provisions to allow orchardists to apply for shooting licenses in rural areas in the short term, while making more than \$4 million available for those who choose to use netting as an alternative to shooting.

HISTORIC EAST DOME PLACED AT SYDNEY OBSERVATORY

- A new dome has been placed on Sydney Observatory, which will cater for people with disability.
- The new building includes a lift to provide access into the dome and a specially designed telescope.
- The state-of-the-art telescope has an articulated relay eyepiece, sourced from the United States, which will make viewing the stars and planets of the night sky and other astronomical events easy for people with disability as the telescope is adjustable to different heights.
- The copper dome has been stored off site at Macquarie University for several years and its reinstatement represents a milestone for the Observatory and its accessibility.

FANTASTIC RESPONSE TO NEW GOLD OPAL CARD

- There's been a fantastic response from the community to the Gold Senior/Pensioner Card, with more than 7,000 Gold Opal cards issued on the first day the electronic ticketing card was made available to seniors and pensioners.
- Seniors and Pensioners don't have to use the Gold Opal card if they don't want to, but more than 7,000 chose to order the card online and over the phone on day one, to ensure they pay no more than \$2.50 a day to use public transport.
- The launch of the brand new Gold Senior/Pensioner Opal card marks another milestone in the Opal rollout, and will make a huge difference for seniors and pensioners when it comes to paying for and using public transport.
- The Gold Senior/Pensioner Opal card is available for NSW Seniors, Pensioner Concession card holders and NSW War Widows. To order a Gold Opal card customers can call 13 67 25 (13 OPAL) or visit the Opal website at www.opal.com.au

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