

## NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 12 September 2014

### TUNNELLING STARTS ON \$8.3 BILLION NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

- Tunnelling has begun on the \$8.3 billion North West Rail Link – Australia’s biggest public transport project.
- This is a huge milestone in the delivery of this project and shows we are getting on with delivering the vital infrastructure this State desperately needs.
- Four massive tunnel boring machines will dig about 120 metres a week and operate underground 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The North West Rail Link is due to open in 2019 and is the first stage of Sydney Rapid Transit, the city’s new fully automated rail network.

### 75,000 NSW TEACHERS TO BE ACCREDITED

- About 75,000 NSW school teachers will be accredited under national standards and will be required to undertake ongoing professional development.
- The NSW Government wants all teachers to be accredited by the end of 2017 and has introduced legislation to make it mandatory.
- Until now, only teachers who began teaching after October 2004, or who had a break from teaching of five years or more, have needed to be accredited.
- These changes are part of the NSW Government’s commitment to further improve the status of the profession and the quality of teaching in all NSW schools, which we outlined in our *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* reforms.

### 45,000 JOBS CREATED IN AUGUST

- Unemployment in NSW dropped to 5.7 per cent in August to remain the second lowest in the nation, and well below the national average.
- The drop of 0.2 per cent was made possible by 45,000 jobs created last month.
- The NSW unemployment rate has been below the national average for nine consecutive months.
- Since coming to office the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has created over 165,000 jobs.

## **FIT FOR THE FUTURE**

- The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has announced record funding of up to \$1 billion to ensure NSW has strong, modern councils to deliver the housing, jobs and local infrastructure people need.
- We are committed to Rebuilding NSW and to achieve this we need a strong local government sector. However, this is not possible when more than one-third of the State's councils are facing financial problems - losing more than \$1 million a day.
- The Fit for the Future package includes \$258 million to assist councils that decide to merge and make the changes needed to provide better services to communities.
- Fit for the Future councils will also be able to access cheaper finance to build and maintain the facilities that communities need, saving councils up to \$600 million.
- For more information visit: [www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au)

## **NSW TRUMPS OTHER STATES IN DOMESTIC TOURISM STAKES**

- NSW continues to lead the nation in domestic tourism, with the latest National Visitor Survey recording the most visitors, nights and expenditure of any other state.
- Over the past 12 months, we have attracted 26.6 million domestic visitors, well above Victoria with 19.6 million, and Queensland with 18.1 million.
- Domestic visitors to NSW spent \$15.3 billion, an increase of \$837 million year on year, representing the highest expenditure level increase nationally.
- These results show that NSW is on track to meet our target of doubling overnight visitor expenditure in NSW by 2020.

## **BRINGING COURTS INTO LOUNGEROOMS**

- NSW is leading the way to give media outlets better access to broadcasting judgements and sentences in major criminal trials.
- This week NSW became the first state in Australia to pass legislation to support the broadcasting of judgements and sentences in the Supreme and District Courts.
- Increasing media access to demystifying the court process is a key step in ensuring the community has confidence in the justice system.
- The new law will make filming the norm rather than the exception, however protections are in place to ensure the safety and security of people such as witnesses and victims are maintained.

## **NEW OFFSET POLICY TO MANAGE BIODIVERSITY**

- The NSW Government has announced a new approach to biodiversity conservation, which will give landholders an opportunity to receive payments for managing biodiversity on their land.
- From October, landholders will be able to receive stewardship payments via a new fund, which will be established to collect developer contributions to 'offset' the impact of large projects.

- The fund will source offsets on behalf of developers, and use the money to help landowners manage these offsets on their properties in a win for the environment, farmers and industry.
- Further information on the offsets policy and the proposed biodiversity fund is available at, [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodivoffsets/biooffsetspol.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biodivoffsets/biooffsetspol.htm)

## **TOUGH ON-THE-SPOT FINES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL OFFENCES**

- The toughest on-the-spot penalties in Australia for environmental offences are now in effect across NSW.
- The ten-fold increase in penalties will provide the Environment Protection Authority with greater regulatory powers to tackle environmental crime.
- An on-the-spot penalty of up to \$15,000 can now be issued by the EPA for the 10 most serious environmental offences such as, pollution of water, illegal disposal of asbestos or hazardous waste, and operating without a licence,” Mr Stokes said.
- Offenders are already on notice that they may be sentenced to up to 7 years in jail or be fined up to \$5 million and shift the power back in favour of the independent regulator rather than the polluter.

## **SNOWY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED**

- Legislation has passed through the NSW Parliament to create a Snowy Advisory Committee to better manage the Snowy Hydro Scheme.
- The *Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013* replaces the Snowy Scientific Committee with a new and more representative body that will balance community issues with scientific and technical expertise.
- The Snowy Advisory Committee will provide independent, specialist advice to the NSW Government on environmental flow releases from the Snowy Hydro Scheme.
- It will have access to the latest NSW Government information and monitoring, modelling and research to be a much more effective advisory body.

## **\$9 MILLION FACILITIES OPENED AT HOLROYD SCHOOL**

- New \$9 million learning facilities have been opened at Holroyd School, allowing the school to continue assisting students with complex learning needs with the best-available resources.
- The project replaced demountable buildings with new permanent facilities, and existing classrooms were upgraded to provide 15 additional ones.
- An existing classroom block underwent a minor refurbishment to provide a special education unit, covered walkways, ramps, toilets and laundries.
- Holroyd is one of 19 schools for specific purposes and was upgraded by the NSW Government using \$94 million of residual Building the Education Revolution (BER) funding.

## **NEW CHAIR FOR COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION**

- Former Chairman of Cricket NSW, Dr Hari Harinath OAM, has been named the new Chair of the Community Relations Commission's (CRC) Advisory Board.
- The NSW Government is confident Dr Harinath will be an effective advocate for the State's multicultural communities. He is a medical practitioner with 40 years of experience and a leader within the Indian Australian community.
- His appointment comes before the CRC transitions to become 'Multicultural NSW' under the NSW Government's new three-year strategic plan, Harmony in Action.
- The new board will oversee the implementation of Harmony in Action, which will place stronger emphasis on the beliefs and values that unite all Australians.

## **STUDY ON THE GO: HSC TEST YOURSELF APP**

- A new app has been launched to help students prepare for the Higher School Certificate.
- The 'HSC Test Yourself' app uses multiple choice questions from previous HSC exams to allow students to test their knowledge whenever and wherever they want.
- With the HSC written exams starting in October, the app will help students make the most of their study time using information straight from the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES).
- The app was developed by former Greystanes High School student, Shubham Shah, who saw the opportunity to use BOSTES material for an interactive mobile app. It can be purchased from the Google Play store.

## **GURUS WANTED TO UNLOCK GOVERNMENT DATA**

- The State's best and brightest brains are being invited to unlock data collected by NSW Government agencies as part of the Premier's Innovation Initiative.
- The NSW Government is calling on non-government sectors to come forward with new and creative ways to reuse or reinterpret information held by government.
- Expressions of interest for the Premier's Innovation Initiative Open Data challenge can be lodged until 13 October via the NSW Government websites, [www.tenders.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tenders.nsw.gov.au), or [www.data.nsw.gov.au](http://www.data.nsw.gov.au)
- For more information on the Premier's Innovation Initiative visit [www.nsw.gov.au/innovate](http://www.nsw.gov.au/innovate).

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