

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 14 February 2014

EMERGENCY DROUGHT ASSISTANCE PACKAGE EXPANDED

- Additional assistance measures for drought-stricken farmers in NSW have been announced by the NSW Government as primary producers continue to experience extremely dry conditions.
- The measures expand the current emergency in-drought support to an additional 20 local government areas (LGAs) and the far west Unincorporated Area in NSW, and increases the total funding for the support package to \$14.6 million.
- The measures include Transport Assistance Reimbursements and Emergency Water Infrastructure Grants. Western Lands Lease payments, Local Land Services rates and Wild Dog Destruction Board rates will be waived.
- The temporary emergency assistance package will be expanded to include the LGAs of: Armidale; Bogan; Central Darling; Cobar; Coonamble; Gilgandra; Glen Innes; Gunnedah; Guyra; Gwydir; Inverell; Moree Plains; Narrabri; Tamworth Regional; Tenterfield; Uralla; Walcha; Warren; and Warrumbungle, as well as Broken Hill and the far west Unincorporated Area.

NSW LEADS NATION IN JOBS GROWTH IN JANUARY

- NSW recorded an additional 8,400 jobs in January – more than were created in any other state.
- The ABS figures showed the unemployment rate in NSW steady at 5.8 per cent, despite a rise in the national rate from 5.8 per cent in December to 6.0 per cent in January.
- Treasurer Mike Baird said he is encouraged by the numbers and show the labour market in NSW holding its own in testing national and global circumstances.
- NSW continues to have the second-lowest unemployment rate among the states, after WA.

OPAL CARD ROLLED OUT IN WESTERN SYDNEY

- Electronic ticketing is now available in Western Sydney with the Opal card rolled out for train customers on a further 22 train stations.
- It means Opal can now be used on stations from Homebush to Casula via Granville, as well as along the Carlingford line and to Olympic Park - a further extension of Opal along 26 stations will occur on 28 February from Harris Park to Emu Plains and also to Richmond via Schofields.

- Opal will make a huge difference for train customers in Western Sydney giving them benefits such as lower fares, weekly travel rewards, daily caps and discounts for off-peak travel
- For a regular Parramatta to Town Hall train commuter a weekly paper ticket costs \$41.00, and with Opal customers will only pay \$37.60 and be rewarded with free travel on any mode for the rest of the week after eight paid journeys.

MACQUARIE GENERATION SALE TO ENABLE INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

- The NSW Government has agreed to sell Macquarie Generation to AGL Energy, freeing up valuable resources for investment in critical infrastructure projects across NSW.
- The gross sale proceeds consist of \$1.505 billion in proceeds from AGL Energy and cash of \$220 million currently held by Macquarie Generation – the sale is conditional on the ACCC not opposing the outcome.
- Treasurer Mike Baird said the sale will allow the NSW Government to recycle the value of the asset on the balance sheet, which means more money for critical road, school and hospital projects across NSW.

GOSFORD WATERFRONT TO BE REVITALISED

- Waterfront dining and shopping, along with new apartments and jobs are the future of Gosford's waterfront under plans finalised today by the NSW Government.
- Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Brad Hazzard has approved the rezoning of 9.9ha on Gosford's waterfront by the Central Coast Regional Development Corporation (CCRDC) to allow a combination of commercial, residential, hotel and conference facilities stimulating commercial activity and creating up to 2,000 new jobs.
- This will include new regional community facilities, spaces and recreational areas and new waterside restaurants and retail facilities on an expanded Breakwater.
- This is great news for the revitalisation of Gosford's waterfront and will help boost the Central Coast's economy by acting as a catalyst for the renewal of the Gosford CBD. View further information on the rezoning of the Gosford waterfront at: www.ccrdc.nsw.gov.au

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON NEW SCHOOLS FOR SYDNEY'S NORTH WEST

- NSW Premier and Minister for Western Sydney Barry O'Farrell has turned the first sod for the construction of a new education precinct at The Ponds in Sydney's North West – which will include a new primary school, high school and a school for students with special needs.
- The delivery of these new schools will ensure that as housing is built in Sydney's North West there will be places available for students to attend a public school.
- The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is investing more than \$50 million in the new schools which will accommodate 1,780 students and open at the start of 2015.

- Unlike the former Labor government, we are building projects to meet Sydney's future needs, including the North West Rail link and the three new schools at The Ponds.

SOUTH WEST RAIL LINK MILESTONE: 14 BRIDGES COMPLETED

- Fourteen bridges along the South West Rail Link between Glenfield and Leppington have now been completed, marking another important milestone in the major infrastructure project.
- Passenger services for the South West Rail Link are now on track to commence in 2015 – one year earlier than originally planned, and the project is \$100 million under the \$2.1 billion budget.
- Each of these crossings has been a significant achievement - the 80-metre Hume Highway underpass for example was constructed while tens of thousands of drivers passed overhead, across eight lanes of traffic.
- The South West Rail Link is a key part of the NSW Government's record infrastructure program including the North West Rail Link, WestConnex, Pacific and Princes Highways, and new hospitals in Campbelltown, Blacktown, Tamworth, Dubbo, Parkes and Wagga Wagga.

\$8.6 MILLION MAITLAND SPORTSGROUND UPGRADE

- The first NSW Government Community Cabinet meeting of the year has been held in the Hunter, where an \$8.6 million upgrade of the Maitland Regional Sportsground was announced.
- The Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund (HIIF) will contribute \$5.6 million, which will be complimented by a further \$3 million from Maitland City Council.
- The NSW Government will help fund Stage One of the four stage project, which will see the current, out-dated grandstand demolished to make way for a brand new pavillion.
- When this upgrade is complete it will provide vastly improved facilities for players, spectators and potentially our local visitor economy as sport and other events consider Maitland as their venue of choice.

WORK TO BEGIN ON BURRENDONG DAM

- Construction will begin in March on more than \$12.4 million upgrade works on the Burrendong Dam in the State's Central West.
- The two separate projects are the \$4 million world-first cold water works and the \$8.4 million second phase of dam safety upgrade works.
- The NSW Government is committed to improving vital water infrastructure for our regional communities.
- The NSW Government has invested more than \$300 million in dam safety upgrades in the last three years - industry estimates about 60 per cent of funding for dam safety upgrades is injected into local economies through purchase of materials, labour and engaging local subcontractors.

INDIAN TOURISTS ENCOURAGED TO HAVE A 'JHAPPI TIME' IN NSW

- A Bollywood-style tourism campaign aimed at encouraging visitors from India to come to Sydney and NSW has been launched as the NSW Government continues to grow tourism in one of our key priority markets.
- Sydney is the number one Australian destination for Indian travellers, and regional NSW is growing in popularity so the 'Jhappi Time' campaign – or 'Hug Time' in Hindi - aims to increase the State's popularity among Indian tourists.
- India is one of the State's most important tourism, trade and business investment markets, and 'Jhappi Time' will enhance tourism from India, which is currently worth an estimated \$183 million a year to the NSW economy.
- The NSW Government is committed to boosting the number of tourists visiting our shores because of its importance to growing the economy and improving jobs, especially for young people.

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