

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 17 October 2014

TROY GRANT NEW DEPUTY PREMIER

- Dubbo MP Troy Grant has been elected unopposed as the new Leader of the NSW Nationals and Deputy Premier, following the retirement of Andrew Stoner.
- Mr Grant is a former police officer who describes himself as a son of regional NSW, and says there's no greater privilege for him than to lead the party he loves and the communities he respects.
- Premier Mike Baird congratulated Mr Grant and says he looks forward to working very closely with Mr Grant to ensure the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government continues its strong record of delivery for regional NSW.
- Monaro MP John Barilaro has been appointed to Cabinet following the resignation of Mr Stoner and takes over as Minister for Small Business and Regional Tourism.

DELIVERED: \$41 MILLION EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

- The official opening of the new \$41 million St George Hospital emergency department marks the delivery of another NSW Liberals & Nationals election commitment.
- Mrs Skinner, who was joined by Oatley MP Mark Coure, unveiled a plaque before meeting with staff and patients who were among the first to be treated in the state-of-the-art building, fully-funded by the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government.
- The existing St George Hospital emergency department is one of the busiest in NSW, seeing more than 68,000 people each year, about 25,000 of whom are admitted.
- The new emergency department will allow for future capacity to manage the growing needs of the population. It includes five resuscitation bays; two designated fast track zones, one for adults and one for children; an Emergency Medical Unit; and eight space off-street ambulance drop off zone.

RESTORING TRUST IN POLITICS

- Premier Mike Baird has announced a package of reforms to restore trust in politics, including tougher penalties for those who break the donations laws, more transparency and less influence from donations.

- Candidates who use third party arrangements to avoid election funding laws will face 10 years imprisonment, while prosecutions will be able to be brought up to 10 years after an offence is committed.
- There will be less influence of donations on the political system by reducing donations and expenditure caps, and increasing the amount of public funding.
- The reforms increase transparency for the 2015 election by requiring political parties to make a disclosure of donations received next February.

STANDARD & POOR'S REAFFIRMS TRIPLE-A

- Ratings agency Standard & Poor's has reaffirmed the State's triple-A credit rating and upgraded NSW to a stable outlook, in a clear endorsement of the strong and stable fiscal management of the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government.
- NSW now holds the highest possible credit rating from all three ratings agencies.
- The announcement by Standard & Poor's illustrates why the decisions we've made were vital to the State's economic well-being, allowing us to re-invest in vital services and infrastructure, despite challenging economic conditions.

THIRD TUNNEL BORING MACHINE ARRIVES IN NORTH WEST

- The third North West Rail Link tunnel boring machine has arrived in Sydney and has been named Isabelle by those working on Australia's biggest public transport project.
- Isabelle is the first of two tunnel boring machines to start work from Cherrybrook, digging the longest railway tunnels ever built in Australia.
- Isabelle weighs more than 900 tonnes, and is being assembled and tested about 14 metres below the surface at the new Cherrybrook Station before she starts digging in the next few months.
- The first tunnel boring machine, Elizabeth, is 330 metres along her underground journey from Bella Vista to Cherrybrook, while the second machine, Florence, is being assembled at Bella Vista to start digging before the end of the year.

TICK OF APPROVAL FROM PUBLIC TRANSPORT CUSTOMERS

- Customers have experienced improved levels of service over the last year on trains, buses and ferries, according to the latest annual Customer Satisfaction Index.
- The Customer Satisfaction Index 2014 includes responses from more than 34,000 customers surveyed independently, and will help drive improvements and keep transport operators accountable.
- There are more than 9,500 extra weekly train, bus and ferry services that are cleaner, more frequent and safer, while the level of service from staff continues to improve.
- The Index surveys customers on public transport issues including timeliness, safety and security, ticketing, comfort, accessibility, cleanliness and customer service and is measured twice a year, and published annually.

KEY WESTERN SYDNEY ROAD GETS GO AHEAD

- A link between the Great Western Highway and the M4 Motorway at Werrington is a step closer, with the NSW and Federal Governments committing \$70 million to the project.
- The Werrington Arterial Road will involve widening Kent Road and Gipps Street into a four lane dual carriageway, and building two new east facing ramps on the M4 Motorway to increase capacity and reduce travel times.
- Tenders to build the project have now been called and work is on track to start early next year and be completed in 2016.
- A new north-south corridor will give the St Marys industrial area better access to the major freight routes and take a significant amount of pressure off The Northern Road and Mamre Road, saving motorists time and money.

MEDICINAL CANNABIS TRIAL GETS NATIONAL SUPPORT

- NSW will lead a collaborative trial, with the support of the Commonwealth and other states and territories, to explore further how cannabis can offer relief to patients suffering from a range of debilitating or terminal illnesses.
- NSW Premier Mike Baird welcomed the support of other jurisdictions for the establishment of a ground-breaking clinical trial on medicinal cannabis.
- The Health Ministers discussed the issue of medicinal cannabis at their meeting on Friday, noting the significant body of evidence linking recreational use of cannabis to mental ill health. Ministers reinforced their opposition to the recreational use of cannabis.
- The NSW Working Group will consider all relevant issues including the scope of the trial, as well as advice from experts regarding the most appropriate way to advance the availability of safe and effective cannabis derived products.

NSW GOVERNMENT AND CLUBS NSW SIGN MOU

- A new Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with ClubsNSW providing certainty for the thousands of clubs and employees across NSW.
- Under this agreement, tax rates affecting clubs have been frozen for another four years.
- The NSW Government is committed to untangling the red tape burden on clubs by increasing cheque issuing limits from \$2,000 to \$5,000, which will remove more than 250,000 cheques from the system.
- This agreement also recognises the role clubs play in sheltering communities and supporting emergency services during natural disasters and other emergencies.
- Under this agreement, local clubs and emergency services will partner to enhance the capabilities of clubs to act as evacuation centres and determine if funding could assist capital upgrades, such as dam expansions.

PETROLEUM EXPLORATION LICENCE APPLICATIONS FREEZE EXTENDED

- Minister for Resources and Energy Anthony Roberts has announced an additional 12 month freeze on NSW Petroleum Exploration Licence Applications (PELAs) and Petroleum Special Prospecting Authority applications.
- The extended timeframe will allow the Office of Coal Seam Gas to complete its comprehensive examination of current PELAs and allow the Government to further assess the application process for petroleum titles.
- The former Labor Government handed out 39 Petroleum Exploration Licences (PELs) in a careless and clumsy fashion with little oversight. NSW deserved better.
- The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has put in place the most comprehensive regulations for the CSG industry in the country.

COMMUNITY SAFEGUARDS WITH TOUGHER LAW

- High risk offenders who are subject to Extended Supervision Orders now face up to five years jail if they breach those orders, under legislation passed by the NSW Parliament.
- The new law will affect violent criminals and some sex offenders who the Supreme Court has determined require ongoing supervision after their release.
- It's regrettable that the state must continue to deal with people who at the expiration of their jail sentence remain a threat to the community of further re-offending.
- The threat cannot be ignored and this legislation reflects the NSW Government's ongoing scrutiny of these issues and our commitment to safeguarding the community.

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE OF MATILDA THE MUSICAL LAUNCHED

- Tickets are now on sale for the Australian premiere season of *Matilda The Musical* giving visitors another reason to come to Sydney, Australia's global city.
- The NSW Government is proud to have secured the Australian Premiere Season of *Matilda*, which will open in July 2015 at Sydney's Lyric Theatre.
- Internationally acclaimed productions such as *Matilda* are a major drawcard for visitors to our Harbour City, making them an important aspect of the NSW Government's goal of doubling overnight visitor expenditure by 2020.
- Based on the beloved novel by best-selling author Roald Dahl, the award winning musical is yet another Australian premiere of an internationally renowned production, secured for Sydney by the NSW Government.

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