

## **NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 19 December 2014**

### **HALF-YEARLY REVIEW REVEALS IMPROVED BUDGET FORECAST**

- NSW Treasurer Andrew Constance has released the Half-Yearly Review, which forecasts a Budget surplus of \$272 million in 2014-15 - a \$555 million improvement on the Budget-time forecast.
- Across the forward estimates, a surplus of \$402 million is now forecast in 2015-16, a surplus of \$1.096 billion in 2016-17 and a surplus of \$1.038 billion in 2017-18.
- Higher than expected property transfer duties are the significant driver of the 2014-15 surplus forecast, but it is partially offset by a softening in payroll tax and mining royalties.
- Mr Constance said the economy is strong in response to the Government's policies of investing in the key drivers of growth – jobs, housing and infrastructure.

### **OPAL CONCESSION CARD FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

- Thousands of students will be able to tap on with the Concession Opal Card in February 2015, giving students access to cheaper and more convenient travel on public transport.
- The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has now completed the rollout of Opal on all trains, buses, Sydney Ferries and light rail, and more than 1.5 million Adult, Child and Gold Senior/Pensioner Opal cards have been issued.
- Five major tertiary institutions have signed up to be part of the Concession Opal Card rollout, paving the way for thousands of students to start tapping on with Opal from February next year, in time for O-Week.
- Tertiary institutions that have signed up so far are: University of NSW, Notre Dame University, Macquarie University, Navitas English and Australian Catholic University, with more institutions expected to come on board.

### **PLAN FOR GROWING SYDNEY**

- The NSW Government's *Plan for Growing Sydney* has been announced to make Sydney an even better place to live and cement our status as one of the world's most exciting cities.
- The metropolitan strategy will reinvigorate key Sydney suburbs with more choice of homes linked to improved public transport and access to services like shops, restaurants and education and health facilities.

- Some of the plan's key actions include shifting the city's centre of gravity from east to west by establishing Parramatta as a major CBD, alongside the Sydney CBD, for jobs and world-class shopping and entertainment
- We also want to create vibrant new neighbourhoods with access to local jobs and first-class local amenities by renewing the area between Greater Parramatta and the Olympic Peninsula.

## **NSW GOVERNMENT REFORMS HOME BUILDING LAWS**

- New laws to protect homeowners when they renovate, build or buy their home will come into effect on 15 January 2015.
- A cornerstone of the new Home Building reforms is the 'major defect' definition. For the first time, the law recognises fire safety and waterproofing issues as major elements in a building's structure.
- NSW Fair Trading will be given the power to refuse a licence application or revoke a builder licence, and will be given greater power to crack down on 'phoenixing' where a building company collapses and starts up again under a new name to avoid debts and scrutiny by the regulator.
- The changes are part of the NSW Government's plan to ensure the state's building sector continues to grow, while making sure consumers are better protected.

## **INDUSTRIAL AREA TO BE REVITALISED AS PARRAMATTA GROWS**

- The NSW Government will partner with Parramatta City Council to revitalise the Camellia Peninsula – only a few kilometres east of the Parramatta CBD - and support local jobs.
- Parramatta is front and centre in the NSW Government's plans for the future of Sydney, and the NSW Liberals & Nationals will work with Parramatta City Council to develop a new vision for the area.
- The NSW Government recognises the Camellia Peninsula has enormous potential to become a thriving commercial centre, close to new homes, expanded employment and improved transport.
- Work will start immediately to prepare a structure plan. For more information visit: [www.planning.nsw.gov.au/urbanactivation](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/urbanactivation)

## **DECISION ON FISHING AMNESTY ANNOUNCED**

- A decision has been made on the future of line fishing from ocean beaches and headlands at 30 mainland marine park sanctuary sites across NSW.
- Based on independent scientific advice, and environmental, social and economic considerations, the NSW Government will retain an existing amnesty allowing shore-based fishing to continue at 10 sites, and remove the amnesty at 20 other sites, where sanctuary zone rules will be enforced.

- The amnesty was announced as a temporary measure in 2013, while a thorough risk assessment of the impact of these activities was undertaken.
- The full list of beaches and headlands where line fishing will be allowed or revoked can be found at [www.marine.nsw.gov.au](http://www.marine.nsw.gov.au)

## **GOOD NEWS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT CUSTOMERS**

- Bus and light rail Opal fares will remain unchanged in 2015 and all other fares will increase only in line with CPI.
- The NSW Government has decided to not increase fares to the amount recommended by IPART when they come into effect of 4 January 2015.
- There will be no changes to the \$2.50 travel cap for Gold Senior/Pensioner Opal card customers or for those still purchasing paper Pensioner Excursion Tickets (PETs).
- The daily travel cap of \$15 and weekly travel cap of \$60 will stay the same for the 1.5 million Opal cards that have now been issued.

## **TENDER AWARDED TO DESIGN AND BUILD NEW WICKHAM INTERCHANGE**

- Newcastle's revitalisation is another step closer with the contract awarded to design and build the new transport interchange at Wickham for customers to connect with trains, buses and light rail.
- The project will include a new fully accessible pedestrian bridge over the rail corridor near Railway Street.
- Laing O'Rourke Construction Australia has been appointed to undertake this important project for the Hunter and its first task will be to improve the design of the interchange
- Construction of the new transport interchange and stabling facilities is expected to be complete in late 2016. Light rail construction is expected to start in late 2015.

## **RED FIRE ANT CONTROL AREA EXTENDED**

- Surveillance and eradication efforts are being stepped up in the war against highly invasive imported red fire ants detected at Sydney's Port Botany.
- Authorities are taking every step to prevent any potential spread of the pest and have extended the control area across a two kilometre radius to assist with surveillance and eradication efforts.
- A control order has also been activated to limit the movement of high-risk materials out of the control area, such as soil, logs and gravels that could contain the fire ant.
- The NSW Government has over 400 biosecurity staff who work hard to protect our \$12 billion primary industries sector. The staff are working around the clock to respond to this detection to stop the spread of this pest.

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