

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 23 OCTOBER 2015

LOCAL COUNCILS – FIT FOR THE FUTURE

- Almost two-thirds of NSW councils are not fit for the future, according to a new report by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).
- The IPART report found reducing waste and red tape through local government mergers could free up close to \$2 billion over the next 20 years for NSW ratepayers, which could stabilise council rates and fund better services and new infrastructure for communities across the state.
- The NSW Government is establishing a new Stronger Communities Fund, providing each new council up to \$15 million to invest in community infrastructure projects and funding of up to \$10 million for each new council to ensure ratepayers do not pay for the up-front costs of merging. This funding will be available to those mergers agreed to by councils and the NSW Government.
- NSW Premier Mike Baird said the report shows the situation is now critical and that action is needed to ensure ratepayers get value for money and the services and infrastructure they deserve.
- Councils have 30 days to respond to the IPART report. Councils assessed as not fit have been asked to identify their merger preferences.

\$113m IN NEW FUNDING TO NSW SCHOOLS

- The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is investing a record \$113 million in additional funding to support NSW public school students who need it most.
- The funding for 2016 was possible by NSW being the first state to sign the Gonski agreement and means NSW students will benefit from needs-based funding totalling \$860 million, distributed through the Resource Allocation Model (RAM).
- The needs-based funding will provide support for more students in NSW public schools than ever before, including:

- Over 400,000 students from low socio-economic backgrounds;
 - More than 55,000 Aboriginal students;
 - An additional \$10 million to support more than 156,000 students learning English as an additional language; and
 - Additional support for students in over 1,000 rural and remote NSW public schools.
- These reforms put the students at the heart of school decision making with principals and school communities having a greater say over how they use resources to best meet the needs of their students.
 - The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is shifting resources to the school level to provide a simpler, fairer and more transparent distribution of school funding.

THE BAYS PRECINCT

- Premier Mike Baird and Planning Minister Rob Stokes have announced the NSW Government's plan for the transformation of Sydney's Bay Precinct.
- The Bays Precinct Transformation Plan identifies how the inner harbour precinct in and around Sydney Fish Market, Rozelle Bay, the White Bay Power Station and Sydney waterfront will be revolutionised.
- The NSW Government vision for The Bays Precinct is to drive an internationally competitive economy by creating destinations on Sydney Harbour for high-tech jobs and sustainable homes of the future.
- The plan was informed by more than 200 public submissions and feedback from the community.
- The NSW Government is committed to returning this prime harbour front land to the community and to providing new waterfront destinations and public spaces.

NSW ECONOMY CONTINUES TO LEAD THE NATION

- NSW is the nation's leader on economic activity – well ahead of the other states and territories.
- ANZ's Stateometer has confirmed that NSW is the only state growing strongly above its long-term trend.
- NSW Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian said NSW has well and truly cemented its position as the economic powerhouse of Australia.

- After four and a half years of hard work from the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government, NSW is now the nation's leader on jobs, housing and economic activity.

RACE HATE LAWS

- The NSW Government is cracking down on race hate speech to better protect vulnerable people and groups from serious racial vilification.
- Under the Government's plan, most of the recommendations of the Law and Justice Committee's Report into racial vilification laws in NSW will be adopted. These include:
 - increasing maximum penalties;
 - allowing the President of the Anti-Discrimination Board to refer complaints directly to the NSW Police; and
 - extending the time limit for commencing prosecutions from 6 months to 12 months.
- Following extensive consultation with stakeholders and the community, the NSW Government will release a draft bill in January 2016.
- The NSW Liberal & Nationals Government is committed to maintaining NSW's reputation as one of the most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities in the world.

CHILDREN'S CHAMPIONS

- Attorney General Gabrielle Upton has announced the victims of child sexual assault will now be better supported through the courts with new laws paving the way for the pilot of Children's Champions and the pre-recording of evidence.
- Ms Upton said the victims of child sexual assault deserve our unwavering support, care and compassion, particularly during the stressful court process.
- Allowing victims to pre-record their evidence as early as possible will reduce the stress and trauma of being part of the court process. Children's Champion will be there every step of the way to help the victims as well as to communicate with Police and the courts.
- The NSW Government has already increased the maximum sentence for sexual intercourse with a child under 10 to life imprisonment, added an additional 13 child sexual assault offences to the Standard Non-Parole Period Scheme, and appointed two specialist District Court Judges to hear child sexual assault matters across NSW.

- These latest measures deliver on an election commitment and demonstrate the ongoing commitment of the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government to better protect and deliver justice for child sexual assault victims.

BUILD A BRIDGE AND GET OVER IT... AT BARANGAROO

- NSW Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Andrew Constance has announced the opening of a new pedestrian bridge over Sydney's Sussex Street providing direct access into the Barangaroo precinct.
- The new bridge is part of the NSW Government's \$306 million Wynyard Walk project.
- Mr Constance said this is one of many new landmarks appearing on Sydney's changing western foreshore – providing a new access point to this rapidly developing area.
- Transport customers will also use the bridge to access the new Barangaroo Ferry Hub which is due to be completed in 2016.