

NSW GOVERNMENT WEEKLY UPDATE – 24 MARCH 2016

ONE YEAR OF MAKING IT HAPPEN

- NSW Premier Mike Baird has marked one year since the election by inspecting the site of the NorthConnex southern interchange where tunnelling is due to begin within weeks.
- The \$3 billion motorway, which includes twin nine-kilometre tunnels linking the M1 and M2, will be the next major infrastructure project in NSW and will improve travel times for motorists, create 8,700 jobs during construction and will provide long term benefits to the economy.
- The NSW Government has already delivered a quarter of commitments made at the election including:
 - More jobs created in NSW than all other states combined in 2015;
 - Tunnelling completed for Sydney Metro Northwest – Australia’s biggest public transport project;
 - Upgraded health facilities opened at hospitals including Campbelltown, Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Parkes, Forbes and Hornsby; and
 - More school counsellors and investment in quality teaching in our schools.
- The NSW Government is continuing to deliver new infrastructure, better services and is maintaining NSW as Australia’s strongest economy.

PRISON REFORM TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY

- The NSW prison system will undergo a major reform program to lift standards, strengthen accountability and help meet the Government’s commitment to reduce adult reoffending by 5% by 2019.

- Performance targets on measures such as out of cell hours, participation in rehabilitation activities and security, as well as benchmarked budgets will be developed and introduced over two years to allow comparisons between all prisons.
- Market testing will give the Government a realistic idea of how better outcomes can be achieved and how much it should cost to run a successful prison in NSW.
- In addition to the new prison at Grafton and expanding Parklea, more than 1,100 extra beds will support this reform, including 620 modular beds at Cessnock – the equivalent of a new prison, and 160 at South Coast.

SYDNEY METRO NORTHWEST ON TRACK AS RAILWAY STEEL ARRIVES

- More than 100 kilometres of railway tracks have arrived for the \$3.8 billion Sydney Metro Northwest project.
- About 6,500 tonnes of railway steel has been shipped to the Port of Newcastle from Spain in 20 metre lengths via container ship.
- The steel will be laid between Epping and Rouse Hill on Sydney Metro Northwest, Stage 1 of Sydney Metro – Australia’s biggest public transport project.

NEW JUDGES TO EASE PRESSURE ON DISTRICT COURT

- The NSW Government has announced a \$20 million package of funding, including the appointment of two new judges, which will deliver a total 256 sitting weeks for the District Court to address the criminal trial backlog.
- Siobhan Herbert and John Pickering SC have been appointed to enable the District Court with the package also including initiatives such as targeted trial call-overs to bring parties together to resolve matters earlier, additional public defenders and initial plea discussions to identify early guilty pleas.
- The NSW Government is working closely with the District Court to reduce the criminal caseload and deliver fast, fair and accessible justice across NSW.

NAME UNVEILED FOR NEW WESTERN SYDNEY SCHOOL

- A new school in Glenmore Park due to be completed for Term 1 2017 which will cater for up to 160 students with special needs will be known as ‘Fernhill’.

- This new school is an investment of more than \$16 million and will accommodate young people with intellectual and physical disabilities from Kindergarten to Year 12 in state-of-the-art facilities that include special education classrooms, interactive learning spaces, a hydrotherapy pool and a multipurpose hall.
- Since 2011 the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has committed more than \$4 billion to school infrastructure and maintenance, funding 23 new and relocated schools and 50 major upgrades.

‘OPAL RUNNERS’ TAPPED OUT FOR A FAIRER SYSTEM

- Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Andrew Constance has announced the Opal ticketing system has been updated to stop the practice of ‘Opal running’, closing a loophole that potentially costs taxpayers millions of dollars each year.
- Currently, some people are running, cycling, driving or even roller-skating between train stations or light rail stops to tap on and off, earning free travel for the week after only paying around \$18.
- The system has been updated to substantially disrupt this practice by raising the number of transfers needed to make a journey.

UNIFYING OUR COMMUNITY

- Minister for Multiculturalism John Ajaka has announced more than \$300,000 in funding for 22 innovative projects to combat racism, help refugees settle into the community and bring culturally diverse communities together.
- The Unity Grants, which form part of the Multicultural NSW Grants Program, provide funding of up to \$30,000 for projects that bring culturally diverse communities together and promote social cohesion and harmony.
- Successful projects include:
 - Helping Auburn PCYC address social isolation in young people in the local community;
 - Helping vulnerable female refugees in the Hunter find jobs and work towards financial independence; and
 - Supporting young multicultural leaders in Wagga Wagga to host events and activities focused on promoting social harmony.

- For more information about the Multicultural NSW Grants Program visit <http://multicultural.nsw.gov.au/>

HOMES FOR YOUNG HOMELESS

- The NSW Government is taking steps to reduce youth homelessness by trialling a new inner city private rental subsidy to assist young people into secure rental accommodation, education, training and jobs.
- In partnership with Launchpad Youth Community, the trial will encompass two shared households of three people which can be expanded to assist 20 young people over three years. Young people will pay rent at 25% of their income, with the NSW Government subsidising remaining rent.
- Young people aged 16-24 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are provided with a support worker and are required to engage in education, training and job seeking activities to be eligible for the subsidy.
- The NSW Government is supporting thousands of struggling households in the private rental market including subsidies for women and children escaping domestic violence and vulnerable young people.