



**Her Excellency the Governor**

**Address on the Occasion of  
the Opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament  
of New South Wales**

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2011**

Honourable Members of Parliament

You have been called together to consider proposals from the Government' and other Honourable Members for the first session of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales.

This Parliament opens with a great spirit of optimism – a spirit that such an historic opportunity for change and renewal rightly brings.

Honourable Members gather for this Parliament justifiably proud of their representative roles, but equally, deeply conscious of the new responsibilities bestowed upon them.

Members of the Government, whose program I now present, are especially conscious of the responsibility they have to fulfil the commitments they made to the people of New South Wales at the election on March 26th.

The people of New South Wales have asked this Government to secure the future of our State not just through honest service, wise judgement and sound decision making – those qualities are the building blocks of good Government and they are fundamental requirements for all Members who serve here.

The Government understands that the people of New South Wales have called for more than that and appreciates the expectation of positive action that rebuilds, revitalises and re-energises the great institutional, economic and human resources of our great State.

Improving the performance of NSW is not only essential to the quality of life and opportunities of our own citizens. It can be said that NSW, by its size and capability should, as people expect, lift more than its own weight.

When NSW tests its own limits, the nation shares the benefit.

So the Government's program throughout this term will deliver on the high expectations of citizens for real change, with legislation underpinning long overdue changes outlined in the Government's Five Point Action Plan.

A plan that will:

1. Rebuild the NSW economy, through lower taxes, cutting the cost of living and business growth;
2. Return quality services in areas such as health, transport, education and community safety;
3. Renovate infrastructure, to make a difference to both our economy and people's lives;
4. Restore accountability to Government, by giving people a say on issues that affect them; and
5. Protect our local environment, and returning planning powers to the community.

It is the Government's objective that well before the last of the 1426 days of this Parliamentary term, commitments are delivered and returning benefits to families, businesses and individuals.

The Government's '*100 Day Action Plan*' delivers key elements of the Five Point Action Plan.

Legislation will be introduced and debated from this week onwards, on elements of the '*100 Day Action Plan*' including:

- The establishment of Infrastructure NSW, an independent body combining public and private sector expertise to remove the politics from infrastructure decision making;
- Harmonisation of NSW's occupational health and safety arrangements within the national framework;
- Addressing NSW's critical housing affordability issues with measures to ease housing stress and encourage 'whole-of-state' development, including;
  - extension of the 'Empty Nester' Transfer Duty Concession to those over 55; and
  - repeal of the 'Homebuyers Tax',
- New laws to tackle graffiti offenders with fairer measures to bring graffiti offenders to account, and to foster innovative and relevant local solutions with local groups in community service orders, to help offenders face up to the personal and local consequences of their actions;
- Commencing the establishment of the Integrated Transport Authority, to improve planning and coordination of transport services;
- Measures to re-establish trust, honesty and accountability in government including;

- eliminating government use of taxpayers' money to fund political advertising;
- further measures to regulate lobbyists; and
- campaign finance reform.

## **Addressing the Cost of Living**

The rising cost of living, particularly the cost of electricity, is causing stress to many people.

The Government has established a Special Commission of Inquiry into the partial electricity privatisation undertaken by the Labor Government.

The Commission will determine what actually occurred through the previous sale process and make recommendations as to what actions would be in the public interest for the electricity industry going forward.

The Government is determined to do whatever possible to ease the pressure of living costs and will restructure the electricity industry by merging the three existing distribution companies into two. Savings will be allocated to:

- a new rebate of up to \$150 for families receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A or B; and
- a low-income household rebate of up to \$235.

## **A new planning system**

The people of NSW have increasingly expressed dissatisfaction with government removing their ability to have a say in how their local areas are affected by growth and development.

Equally, investors have been concerned that the planning system lacks the certainty and efficiency to make NSW a reliable jurisdiction for investment.

The Government is preparing to start a long overdue review of NSW's troubled planning system, with the establishment of an expert panel and commencement of a state-wide consultation with communities and stakeholders, developing a new planning system that will serve the public interest into the future.

The Government will also introduce legislation to abolish the controversial Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*, and establish transitional arrangements until a bill for a new planning system is brought to Parliament around the middle of the term.

The government understands that our planning system must deliver certainty about planning rules; certainty about decision making processes; certainty that decisions

will be made transparently on the basis of merit and in the public interest; and certainty that decisions will be made in a timely way.

## **Protecting our Environment**

The quality of our children's opportunities is connected with the quality of our air, food, water and natural environment.

The Government has commenced the process of establishing the Dharawal National Park, and will bring proposals to Parliament in the near future.

A Solar Summit will be held, with industry representatives, energy experts and environmental groups invited to participate to look at practical and effective ways to increase the use of solar energy in New South Wales.

And in the Budget, provision will be made to allocate more money to environmental projects and to encourage local communities to be even more involved in caring for their own neighbourhoods, catchments, coasts and regions.

The natural environmental package will, if approved by Honourable Members, provide additional funding to resource national parks, bush regeneration, Landcare, green corridors, protection for threatened species, air quality initiatives and remediation of contaminated sites.

## **Rebuilding the NSW Economy**

Rebuilding our NSW economy is the first among our five point plan priorities. By rebuilding our economy, we will generate the jobs, investment and revenues to enable taxes to be reduced, more infrastructure built, and more and better public services provided to our growing and ageing population.

The Government has already commenced the Commission of Audit of the State's finances. A report will be made to Honourable Members this week on the implications of the \$5.3 billion deficit.

To honour all its election commitments the Government will:

- Deliver a Budget on September 6<sup>th</sup>, informed by the results of the Financial Audit and the ongoing expenditure review;
- Introduce a Supply Bill to ensure government activities are appropriately resourced for the period between now and the September Budget;
- Fully deliver its commitments for this term, over this term, starting with the '*100 Day Action Plan*' and the 2011/12 Budget, and subsequent Budgets;
- Implement mechanisms to strengthen fiscal and economic management, to retain NSW's AAA credit rating and ensure growth in spending is less than or equal to revenue growth.

The Government believes that fiscal discipline is central to growing the NSW economy.

A strong and sound economy is essential for NSW to compete with other states, and deliver investment in infrastructure and services.

The Government has already signalled a strong intention to lead an agenda in COAG on issues in the national interest, including infrastructure.

Well planned economic infrastructure investment can boost economic growth.

The Government will introduce legislation to establish “Restart NSW”, a dedicated government infrastructure fund.

The Government’s priority is the delivery of the North West Rail Link, for which project teams have already been commissioned.

Infrastructure NSW will be tasked to identify and commence work on one of Sydney’s missing road links, and work with the Federal Government to ensure the Pacific Highway upgrade is complete by their 2016 target date.

Allocation will also be sought for the \$200 million capital roads budget, including the Western Sydney Roads Package, and funding for black spots throughout regional NSW.

The Hunter Infrastructure Investment Fund will also be established for investment in local Hunter priorities.

And preparations are underway to enable the long awaited widening of the M5 West Motorway.

Investing in a world class convention and exhibition centre will help re-establish Sydney’s global tourism appeal, and Destination NSW, an independent expert body to drive a doubling of NSW tourism by 2020, will be established.

NSW has some of the world’s highest achieving universities and researchers, and the Government appreciates them not just for their own merit, but for the potential of our universities to help build the economic capital and exports to drive our economic growth.

The Government will actively seek the tertiary sectors’ advice and involvement in economic development strategies, and will invest more in high level research with the new Bureau of Science, Research and Innovation, and the separate Office of Medical Research in Health.

Maximising our trade and investment opportunities, including strengthening our relationships with our valued Asia Pacific trading partners will be a strategic focus of the Government.

Our multicultural communities with their deep links with many of our trading partners, along with the business sector, will be important partners in these endeavours, along

with renewed efforts through tax, regulatory and planning reform to regain Sydney's reputation as a global finance capital.

## **Economic Growth in Regional NSW**

Regional NSW has enormous attributes to offer newcomers and investors, and the Government intends to back the ambitions of regional areas seeking to stimulate economic growth, jobs, and the social and economic infrastructure that will attract more of NSW's growing population to choose a regional lifestyle.

Parliament will be asked to consider a range of proposals to help our regions maximise their own opportunities and contribute to the State's economic prosperity.

The Government's plan for a 'Decade of Decentralisation' will draw on several elements including:

- The Kickstart Regional NSW Fund, which will command a regional share of the Restart NSW Fund;
- The Jobs Action Plan, which targets the creation of 100,000 extra jobs across regional and metropolitan NSW, with 40 per cent earmarked for regions.

To further encourage business the Government will:

- Introduce regulatory reforms to simplify business processes and save costs;
- appoint a Small Business Commissioner, and
- require government departments to pay their bills within thirty days.

## **Valuing Local Government**

The Government values the contribution of local government to our democracy and understands the value of local people having the power to make decisions that affect their community.

The Government also recognises that local government faces significant challenges in maintaining its assets – the local roads, footpaths, parks and sporting fields and community halls that are essential to local communities.

To address this challenge, a council by council audit will be established to identify infrastructure projects needed in each specific local community.

The Government will support the upgrade of local infrastructure through the **Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme** that will reduce the cost to local government of tackling infrastructure backlogs through an interest rate subsidy.

## **Improving Service to Citizens**

The job of any government in a free society is to serve its people.

It's at the heart of the most honourable intentions of the individuals who seek to represent their own communities in this Parliament.

The Government will introduce legislation and administrative initiatives over coming weeks and months to deliver its commitments to improve customer service across the spectrum and steadily find ways to give back to communities and individuals the responsibility, accountability and power they seek to make decisions for themselves and their own communities.

It is the Government's strong view that local communities should be empowered with opportunities to shape their own lives through better localised service delivery.

The Government will deliver on plans developed over the past three years with numerous community groups across the state, that call for better integration of human services, and early intervention where possible.

The Government is therefore determined to focus not on the convenience of government, but on services that suit the people who need them.

The Simpler Services Plan will develop an internet web portal, innovative 'apps' and personalised locationally aware sms's, a single phone information number, and 'One Stop Shop' walk-in centres to deliver a wide range of community services and information, with a range of technologies.

Citizens will be able to find out their nearest health service, the fastest public transport option, the state of local traffic, the most accessible hospital, and be able to transact a range of government services conveniently through an integrated system.

Among the Government's proposals to improve customer services and responsiveness are:

- The establishment of local health districts, to return to local communities and medical professionals greater control over medical services in local communities;
- the implementation of the Better Hospitals & Healthcare Plan, to open new beds and provide extra nurses; and
- New capital investment in hospital facilities.

The government will also establish a Mental Health Task Force to start planning for the establishment of a new Mental Health Commission, and create the Office of Medical Research to attract and retain talented researchers to find solutions to complex health issues.

Some of the most vulnerable individuals, and their dedicated carers, rely on disability services which too often fail to meet individual needs.

The Government will continue the delivery of the 'Stronger Together' 10 year disability service plan; and work with respected experts in the not for profit sector to extend choice and service quality to people.

NSW will continue to press for a COAG meeting in Sydney, later this year, to focus on the myriad and complex issues around ageing and the needs of older people.

The quality of our education system and the choices it offers are a measure of the quality of opportunity we offer not only to our children, but to all students in all stages of life and work.

Despite significant achievements, the Government believes there are challenges facing the education system. Too many young people are at risk of falling through the cracks with currently one in five Year 9 students at or below the minimum standards in reading, writing and maths.

The Government's Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan will boost resources by \$250 million, with 900 additional teachers to ensure children most at risk develop the foundations for success in literacy and numeracy at an early age.

## **Community Safety**

The safety and security of citizens is a primary responsibility of government.

In addition to budget allocations to improve police station facilities, the Government will offer more local solutions to crime and encourage crime prevention with investments in Neighbourhood Watch, Police Citizens Youth Clubs, and better technology and equipment for police. Prevention of crime, and mechanisms to address recidivism are important to the Government.

Alcohol fuelled violence is an affront to, and sometimes life threatening for law-abiding citizens.

Legislation will be introduced to tackle obnoxious, alcohol-fuelled behaviour and strengthen police powers including toughening 'move on' laws, and reintroducing the offence of 'drunk and disorderly.'

The Government will also trial three 'Sobering Up Centres' including one in regional NSW, and introduce legislation for a new '3 Strikes' approach to licensed venues that are known problem spots.

Our police officers are among those who on our behalf put themselves in harm's way as part of their job.

The Government will introduce legislation to give effect to a long standing policy, to introduce mandatory life sentences for people convicted of murdering police officers, and will also strengthen provisions relating to drivers who engage in police pursuits, the legislation which many people know as 'Skye's Law'.

## **Our Public Sector**

One of the most significant bills to be considered by Honourable Members will be legislation to create the Public Service Commission.

Just as the Government understands it has a prime responsibility to rebuild the economy and secure our State's prosperity, so is it deeply committed to its core purpose of delivering the high quality front line services people deserve.

The Government understands that for the public service to deliver high quality services it must operate with independence, integrity, clear strategic priorities and a firm commitment to the highest performance standards.

The Government has committed to build on the unique values and skills of the NSW public sector and build a new service culture in public administration in NSW.

An expert Working Group advised by the incoming Chair of the Public Service Commission, Professor Peter Shergold, will guide its development, and the Commission will provide and publish a detailed annual report on the NSW public sector – its achievements, its effectiveness and its challenges.

## **Trust and High Standards**

The standards of conduct and professionalism set by all Members of this place, and the staff that support their work, will be an essential element in rebuilding the network of trust that must underpin relationships between the public sector, elected representatives, and the community they serve.

The 'Class of 2011' brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds, chosen by their local communities to be their voice in this historic Parliament.

They join members with longer experience, who will become mentors and colleagues. All members will appreciate that they are here to make decisions on behalf of their communities on issues the people of NSW delegate to their attention.

The Government is determined to extend the opportunities for debate, and to hear the voices of people from every corner of our great state in the consideration of proposals before Parliament.

The Government looks forward to the contribution of all members in activities including questions, debates on legislation and motions, private member's business, and in parliamentary committees where the Government intends to restore the standards and importance of Parliamentary review mechanisms.

The Government will also consult constitutional experts on proposals to establish Recall Elections and a 'Peoples' Petition'.

As I said at the commencement, the new Government embarks on its reform program with optimism, enthusiasm and a clear understanding that positive action is needed to bring about beneficial change in New South Wales.

The firm commitments made before the election and emphatically reaffirmed by the election result will be delivered.

The Government's program will be underpinned by a confidence in the future, by investing in the infrastructure and improving the services that will secure people's quality of life and opportunities in New South Wales for years to come.

It remains for me to extend every good wish to you all.

I now leave you to the important tasks entrusted to you by the people of New South Wales.

ENDS