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New South Wales eNewsletter

with State Election Coverage until 13 April



Monday 02 March 2015

This Newsletter covers policy and legislative developments in the New South Wales Parliament and Government during the week under review. Copies of documents referred to can be obtained by clicking on the reference in this Newsletter or through LexisNexis Capital Monitor's NSW collection on our web site at <http://www.capitalmonitor.com.au/>

Sitting days for 2015 will not be available until after the Parliament resumes in May 2015, following the March general election.

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State Election News

Key Funding

Coalition

[27 FEB 2015: NSW, AJAKA: NSW Government announces new era of inclusion for people with disability - Launched Government's NSW Disability Inclusion Plan, represents huge step forward in inclusion of people with disability in community](#)

[26 FEB 2015: NSW, BAIRD, GRANT: Create in NSW: The NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework - Following extensive sector and community consultation, announced Create in NSW: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework on 26 February, 2015 - Paper Attached](#)

[26 FEB 2015: NSW, BAIRD, GRANT: Powerhouse powers into Parramatta: \\$30 million to grow Western Sydney Arts Precinct - Announced the Powerhouse Museum would be relocated to Parramatta as part of development of arts and cultural precinct in Western Sydney](#)

[26 FEB 2015: NSW, BAIRD, AJAKA: Backs tech savvy seniors - Announced a re-elected Baird Government will double funding to the popular Tech Savvy Seniors program, which provides low cost or free training for seniors in using computers, tablets and phones](#)

[26 FEB 2015: NSW, PICCOLI: \\$148 Million to improve State secondary schools - Re-elected State Government will spend \\$148 million to upgrade nearly 60 secondary schools & improve teaching & learning across State - All children - Deserve great education](#)

[26 FEB 2015: NSW, PERROTTET: Telco upgrade delivers connections, cost savings for emergency services - Announced \\$2.8 million to upgrade the Government Radio Network \(GRN\) with state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment for emergency services](#)

Labor

[01 MAR 2015: ELECTION15: NSW, FOLEY: Labor to abolish chemotherapy co-payment removing financial burden from cancer patients - Labor will provide \\$6.2 million to ensure that chemotherapy is free of charge to all cancer patients in NSW public hospitals](#)

[01 MAR 2015: NSW, FOLEY: NSW Labor to provide \\$100 million for paediatric surgical centre at Campbelltown Hospital - without privatising electricity network - Funding for Centre will be reserved in Labor's \\$3 billion Education & Health Fund](#)

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[Liberal candidates Eleni Petinos \(Miranda\), Nick Aroney \(Kogarah\), George Zakhia \(Bankstown\) and Rashid Bhuiyan \(Lakemba\)](#)

[Liberal candidates Kevin Conolly \(Riverstone\), Andrew Rohan \(Prospect\) and Mark Taylor \(Seven Hills\)](#)

[Liberal candidates Melanie Gibbons \(Holsworthy\) and Maria Diep \(Cabramatta\)](#)

[Labor candidates David Harris \(Wyong\), Kathy Smith \(Gosford\), David Mehan \(The Entrance\) and Jeff Sundstrom \(Terrigal\)](#)

[Greens candidate for Bathurst Tracey Carpenter](#)

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Polls

28 FEB: [Newspoll](#): Coalition leading 54-46 on two-party preferred, with primary votes of 43% for the Coalition, 36% for Labor and 11% for the Greens

27 FEB: [Roy Morgan](#): Coalition leading 52.5-47.5 on two-party preferred, with primary votes of 43% for the Coalition, 36% for Labor and 10.5% for the Greens

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Editorial

Incumbent NSW Premier Mike Baird and his challenger, Opposition Leader Luke Foley, went head-to-head in the inaugural debate of the NSW state election campaign last Friday.

Mr Baird has gone all-in on a plan to privatise the state's electricity network and raise \$20 billion to finance infrastructure plans. Asked what he would do if the Coalition retained Government, but privatisation was to be voted down in the Legislative Council, Mr Baird refused to even countenance the possibility. "There's no plan B and it's quite simple," he said.

Mr Foley urged concern at the Premier's proposals. "If he can't sell the electricity network and if he can't raise \$20 billion, all of his promises mean nothing," Mr Foley warned.

The proposed electricity sell-off is fraught with complications, amid allegations that the Government is downplaying the profitability of electricity assets in order to make the case for privatisation. Bob Walker, Emeritus Professor at the University of Sydney's Business School has put forward a briefing paper that shows that, were standard private sector accounting rules to be used to calculate the value of electricity assets, the public would see these returning 80 per cent per annum on shareholders' equity. While this goes a long way towards explaining NSW's skyrocketing electricity prices, it doesn't explain why such a profitable public asset should be sold so apparently cheaply.

Coming up to the election, Mr Baird is in the difficult situation of needing to maintain closeness with the PM, all the while keeping some distance. The PM's federal electorate of Warringah encompasses the Premier's state electorate of Manly, and the two men reputedly enjoy a close working relationship. Mr Baird has said that he will use this relationship to ensure that NSW gets its fair share of federal funding. On the other hand, the questionable popularity of the PM and his Government's policies may harm Mr Baird at the upcoming election. During the debate, Mr Baird sought to pre-empt a replay of the defeat of Campbell Newman's LNP at the recent Queensland state election. Mr Baird said that Labor would try to emphasise the political and policy difficulties of the Federal Coalition to distract the electorate from NSW Labor's track record.

Both Labor and the Coalition have a hard road ahead to rebuild public trust in government in general. The case of former Labor powerbroker Eddie Obeid is still making its way through courts after ICAC found that he had corruptly lobbied his colleagues to favour his family business interests. The Liberal Party may not be able to make as much out of this as they might like, having their own experience with ICAC last year. The seats of Newcastle and Charlestown had to go to by-elections on 25 October last year after the resignations of Liberal MPs Tim Owen and Andrew Cornwell, when an ICAC inquiry uncovered irregularities in the funding of their election campaigns. The realm of federal politics will continue to touch on the campaign, as ICAC also heard evidence that Liberal Party federal director Brian Loughnane, the husband of the Prime Minister's chief of staff Peta Credlin, was aware that these funding irregularities were taking place.

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Media Statements

Premier and Cabinet

Create in NSW: The NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework

26 FEB: Premier Mike Baird and Deputy Premier and Minister for the Arts, Troy Grant, released Create in NSW: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework on 26 February, 2015. Create in NSW is a ten year framework for contemporary New South Wales. It draws on the strengths and ambitions of our residents, artists, cultural workers and arts organisations across the diverse communities of Metropolitan Sydney, Western Sydney and Regional NSW. Create in NSW sets a vision for a future in which arts and culture are central to the life of our State.

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Powerhouse powers into Parramatta: \$30 million to grow Western Sydney Arts Precinct

26 FEB: Mr Baird and Mr Grant announced the Powerhouse Museum would be relocated to Parramatta as part of the development of an arts and cultural precinct in Western Sydney. A re-elected Baird Government will inject more than \$30 million over the next four years to grow the Arts and Cultural sector, including an additional \$10 million to relocate the Powerhouse and an additional \$7.5 million to support local artists. "We want to extend Sydney's cultural ribbon to Western Sydney so we will invest \$10 million to relocate the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta," Mr Baird said.

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Aboriginal Affairs

'Our Languages, Our Way' Language Grant Program

25 FEB: The Department of Aboriginal Affairs said that OCHRE, the NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal affairs, supports initiatives that improve Aboriginal people's social, cultural and economic wellbeing. The 'Our Languages, Our Way' language grant program will fund Aboriginal community driven projects to strengthen community ownership and participation in language revitalisation projects. Aboriginal community members and Aboriginal community organisations who can demonstrate a level of language knowledge and an ability to develop and deliver community owned language projects are invited to apply for funding under the "Our Languages, Our Way" language grant program.

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Attorney-General and Justice

Funding boost ensures trials go ahead

25 FEB: Attorney General Brad Hazzard welcomed the Federal Government's response to State Government calls for additional funds for lengthy and expensive Commonwealth criminal cases. "The Federal Government has heard the message from the State Government and the legal profession and provided an extra \$5.2 million nationwide for legal aid," Mr Hazzard said. "This will ensure these lengthy and expensive Commonwealth criminal cases underway or imminently underway will be funded for this financial year." The Board of Legal Aid NSW reversed policy changes it had reluctantly made last December after funding for these Commonwealth criminal matters had been exhausted for the current financial year.

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Judges and magistrates visit St Heliers

25 FEB: The Department of Justice said that judges and magistrates spent a day in custody. CSNSW and the Judicial Commission of NSW invited the group to visit St Heliers Correctional Centre - a minimum security prison near Muswellbrook. CSNSW Custodial Director Glen Scholes welcomed the group and spoke about the importance of providing opportunities to inmates to gain vocational skills while in custody. He also outlined steps the Department is taking to manage growing inmate numbers while maintaining the quality of treatment programs. The magistrates and judges learnt about the variety of programs offered to inmates to address their offending behaviour.

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Disaster assistance for Eastern New South Wales communities following October storms

25 FEB: Minister for Police and Emergency Services Stuart Ayres and Commonwealth Minister for Justice Michael Keenan announced that disaster assistance has been activated in 36 local government areas following severe thunderstorms occurring in eastern New South Wales in October 2014. Mr Keenan said the assistance is being provided through the jointly-funded Commonwealth- State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). "Natural disasters are a fact of life in Australia. The financial assistance we're announcing is available through the NDRRA is to help councils with the costs of clean-up operations, and the rebuilding essential public assets," Mr Keenan said.

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Police bugging report calls for complete overhaul of police and covert surveillance oversight

25 FEB: Greens MP and Justice Spokesperson David Shoebridge said the Parliamentary Inquiry into the police bugging scandal has handed down its final report recommending sweeping changes to both the structure of police oversight and the system for obtaining covert surveillance warrants in NSW. This is the first time that a public report has detailed why covert listening warrants targeting senior police, and at least one journalist, were obtained by the NSW Police and NSW Crime Commission from 1999 to 2001 after being rubber-stamped by the Supreme Court. The report is also critical of the two-years-running secret Ombudsman's inquiry into the bugging.

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Education and Training

Baird Government announces new era of inclusion for people with disability

27 FEB: Minister for Disability Services John Ajaka launched the Baird Government's NSW Disability Inclusion Plan - a huge step forward in the inclusion of people with disability in the community - whilst speaking at the launch of the Sydney Opera House's 2015 Access Program. The Plan is central to the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, the Government's landmark legislation which enshrines the rights of people with disability into NSW law during and beyond the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). "We are proud that NSW was the

first state to sign up to the NDIS," Mr Ajaka said.

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Baird backs tech savvy seniors

26 FEB: Premier Mike Baird and Mr Ajaka announced a re-elected Baird Government will double funding to the popular Tech Savvy Seniors program, which provides low cost or free training for seniors in using computers, tablets and smart phones. Under the NSW Liberals & Nationals \$2 million plan, the Tech Savvy Seniors program will be expanded by 3,500 more places per year across 30 regional and metropolitan community colleges and libraries; the addition of a Tech Savvy Seniors Regional Road Show which will reach 40 regional locations and the introduction of online banking courses for seniors.

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\$148 million to improve NSW secondary schools

26 FEB: Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli said a re-elected Baird Government will spend \$148 million to upgrade nearly 60 secondary schools and improve teaching and learning across the State. The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will also invest \$1 billion to provide up to 1,600 new or refurbished classrooms and learning spaces across NSW. Four new schools - two at Parramatta, a new high school for the inner city and another in Ballina - will be built at a cost of more than \$200 million as part of its Innovative Education, Successful Students package.

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Labor to build inner city high school - without selling off our electricity network

23 FEB: Opposition Leader Luke Foley announced a Labor Government will build a state-of-the-art inner city high school on the site of the Cleveland Street Intensive English High School - without selling off the state's electricity network. Mr Foley joined Shadow Minister for Education Ryan Park and Labor Candidates Verity Firth (Balmain), Edwina Lloyd (Sydney) and Penny Sharpe (Newtown) at Cleveland Street Intensive English High School to declare that Labor will investigate all options to allow the new school to begin taking enrolments in Years 7 to 9 in 2018.

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NSW Business Chamber releases major report calling for wide-ranging reforms to secondary schooling

20 FEB: The NSW Business Chamber released a major report on the effectiveness of secondary schooling in New South Wales and called for bipartisan commitment to wide-ranging reforms to post-Year 10 education and training. The NSW Business Chamber and Professor John Polesel from the University of Melbourne co-authored this latest report in the *Thinking Business* series, *Paving the Pathway*, which identifies key issues that impact on the success of school-leavers' transition to work or vocational education and training. The report provides practical recommendations to deliver secondary schooling more effectively in NSW.

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Environment and Heritage

Join 'Follow the Wool Road', a heritage tour this Parks Week

27 FEB: NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) said connecting with nature will be a walk in the park this Parks Week, with over 35 great tours and events to be held from Monday to Sunday, March 9 to 15. NPWS Senior Visitor Services Officer David Duffy invited people to join an overnight bus tour called 'Follow the Wool Road', highlighting the natural heritage of the South Coast and Southern Highlands on the weekend of March 14 and 15. "The activities planned for the week are extremely varied, so there will be something for everyone across the state," NPWS Deputy Chief Executive Michael Wright said.

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Greens reject power sell-off

26 FEB: Greens MP John Kaye said privatising 49 percent of the state's electricity distribution and transmission system will plunge the future of household power bills and the state's greenhouse gas emissions into the hands of multinational profit-driven corporations. "The Greens want constituents in the Central West to be able to embrace the clean energy future and reap the benefits of lower power bills, more jobs and the real chance of developing a vibrant export-based local industry," Dr Kaye said. The Greens are the only party in parliament that have consistently voted against power privatisation.

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Greens back community opposition to NorthConnex plans

26 FEB: Dr Kaye issued a media release criticising the proposed NorthConnex project. "It makes no sense to spend \$3 billion to compromise the community's health and make traffic congestion worse," Dr Kaye said. "Motorway projects like NorthConnex draw more vehicles onto the road. They inevitably decline into slow moving parking lots and impose impossible traffic burdens on neighbourhood roads. Inevitably oxides of nitrogen, micro-fine particles and carbon monoxide will end up in the respiratory systems of the Upper North Shore residents, resulting in increases in lung disease, asthma, cardiovascular diseases and, in the long run, cancer."

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Get involved in seabird habitat restoration on Five Islands Nature Reserve

26 FEB: The Department of Environment and Heritage invited community members to a free seminar about restoring the local seabird nesting and breeding habitat of Five Islands Nature Reserve, offshore from Port Kembla. The seminar will be hosted by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) at City Beach Function Centre in Wollongong on Thursday, March 5, from 6.30 to 8.30pm. Friends of Five Islands ecologist Kevin Mills said historical photographs would be useful in current efforts at the reserve. "Photos of Big Island will help us understand changes there over past decades," Dr Mills said.

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Admire the Merimbula seal but do it from a distance

25 FEB: The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage said NPWS reminded Merimbula locals and visitors to be 'seal

aware' as once again, an Australian Fur Seal has taken up residence. NPWS Ranger George Malolakis said seals often moved into the Merimbula estuary at this time of year due to the rich food source available there. "Seals are wild animals and this one has already bitten somebody. Fortunately they did not require stitches but they were taken to hospital for assessment," Mr Malolakis said. "For everyone's sake, the seal included, it's best to prevent another altercation."

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Getting bottles and cans out of streets, beaches and waterways

22 FEB: Premier Mike Baird and Minister for the Environment Rob Stokes announced a re-elected Baird Government will introduce reverse vending machines across the state as part of a cost-effective container deposit scheme for the recycling of drink containers. The government will engage in comprehensive community consultation on the design of the scheme and the incentive structure for communities to participate. By 1 July 2017, communities will be rewarded for their recycling efforts through the use of reverse vending machines at popular beaches, parks, and public spaces across NSW.

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Fair Trading

Licensing of heavy vehicles

27 FEB: Minister for Fair Trading Matthew Mason-Cox said repairers of heavy vehicles will continue to be regulated by the *Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013*. This means that any NSW trader that does heavy vehicle repairs will require a motor vehicle repairer's licence and tradespeople who perform repair work will need a valid tradesperson certificate. Motor vehicles with a mass of more than 4.5 tonnes are regulated by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and Roads and Maritime Services to ensure that heavy vehicles comply with the national heavy vehicle standards through registration and inspections by authorised examiners.

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Travelling conmen spotted in Lake Macquarie

26 FEB: NSW Fair Trading Commissioner Rod Stowe is warning residents in the Lake Macquarie area to avoid contracting with anyone offering to do roofing work or odd jobs around the house for cash payments. Mr Stowe said Fair Trading had received reports that traders with Irish accents had been travelling door-to-door in the Eleebana area. "Several consumers identified the trader's licence plate and vehicle details and the trader is known to Fair Trading and Police as a travelling conman," he said. "We believe the trader is operating under the business name 'All Weatherproof Roofing Restoration'."

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Fuel complaints rise in January

25 FEB: Mr Mason-Cox said overcharging, contaminated fuel and dual pricing generated the highest number of complaints from consumers across NSW. "NSW Fair Trading received 64 complaints about fuel in the 12 months to January 2015, with monthly complaints hitting a high last month," said Mr Mason-Cox. "We have received complaints from around NSW, from places like Jerrabomberra, Sapphire Beach to Condell Park, Chester Hill and Kensington. We have had numerous complaints about petrol stations overcharging, with one consumer paying for an extra six litres to fill up his car, which normally take a maximum 80 litres to fill up."

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Family, Community Services and Housing

Small rise in Caseworker vacancy rate in December quarter 2014

27 FEB: The NSW Department of Family and Community Services released data showing that the statewide caseworker vacancy rate remained low at five per cent in the December 2014 quarter. The Secretary of the department, Michael Coutts-Trotter, said while there was a one per cent rise in the vacancy rate, it was still a good result and well below vacancy rates in each of the past five years. "Overall, we've gone from 2,068 positions in 2013-14 to 2,128 positions in 2014-15, reflecting the Government's funding commitment for positions that had previously been funded for a limited period," Mr Coutts-Trotter said.

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Cracking down on anti-social behaviour in Public Housing

24 FEB: Premier Mike Baird and Minister for Family and Community Services Gabrielle Upton announced a re-elected Baird Government will introduce a One Strike policy for those who seriously breach their tenancy agreement; implement a Three Strikes policy so that Family and Community Services officials can issue a Notice of Termination if a tenant has received three Breach of Tenancy Agreement notices in a 12 month period; introduce 12 month probationary leases for public housing tenancies of longer than two years; introduce confidential Neighbour Impact Statements; and change the law to ensure that tenants that do not pay rent can be evicted. The Baird Government will also deliver a \$20 million Social Housing Community Improvement Fund.

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Health

NSW Labor to provide \$100 million for a paediatric surgical centre at Campbelltown Hospital - without privatising the electricity network

01 MAR: Opposition Leader Luke Foley said a Foley Labor Government will provide \$100 million for a new paediatric

surgical centre at Campbelltown Hospital - without privatising the state's electricity network. The Paediatric Surgical Centre will include enhanced paediatric outpatient services; increased paediatric anaesthesia and enlarged theatre space. The funding for the Centre will be reserved in Labor's \$3 billion Education and Health Fund, part of Labor's fully-funded \$10.055 billion A Better Way infrastructure package that is not reliant on privatisation of the electricity network.

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NSW Labor to abolish chemotherapy co-payment removing the financial burden from cancer patients

01 MAR: Mr Foley said a Foley Labor Government will abolish the chemotherapy co-payment for all cancer patients in NSW public hospitals. Labor will provide \$6.2 million to ensure that chemotherapy is free of charge to all cancer patients in NSW public hospitals - easing the financial burden experienced by patients and their families. Patients undergoing chemotherapy in some NSW public hospitals currently pay a one-off co-payment for chemotherapy drugs injected or infused via drip. Some cancer patients pay up to \$180 in co-payments for their initial chemotherapy treatment.

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Luke Foley hosts roundtable on ice epidemic at Parliament House

26 FEB: Mr Foley convened a roundtable at Parliament House where he was briefed by emergency and health workers about the impact of the ice epidemic. "Ice is the 21st century heroin and we need a fresh approach to dealing with it before it destroys the lives of more of our kids. I talk to parents and they want a much sharper focus from the State Government on this matter," Mr Foley said. "The emergency responders I met with are workers are at the forefront of a growing social problem, a drug that can turn ordinary individuals into violent and dangerous people."

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Update: NSW Food Authority investigation into scombroid at Sydney café

26 FEB: The NSW Food Authority is investigating reports of scombroid food poisoning at a Sydney café after NSW Health was notified of four cases of scombroid, or histamine poisoning after eating imported tinned tuna served at a Sydney café. As part of the investigation the NSW Food Authority has obtained samples of the product implicated for further testing. The product was: John Bull Tuna Chunky Style in Sunflower Oil, 425g; Best Before: 11 2017 with a Batch Code: FTM40280D. This is minor brand catering product that is not generally available to the public.

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Minister welcomes 1,800 graduate nurses and midwives to NSW health system

25 FEB: Minister for Health Jillian Skinner welcomed more than 1,800 graduate nurses and midwives who are launching their careers at 139 hospitals and health services across NSW. Mrs Skinner visited Liverpool Hospital to meet the cohort of 41 nurses and midwives who will start their careers at that facility. She was joined by Member for Menai and Liberal candidate for Holsworthy Melanie Gibbons and Liberal candidate for Cabramatta Maria Diep. "I congratulate our nursing and midwifery graduates as they embark on this wonderfully rewarding career - about one third of them in rural and regional hospitals," Mrs Skinner said.

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Vale Dan Haslam - an inspirational voice in the medicinal cannabis debate

25 FEB: Mr Foley is saddened to hear of the passing of Dan Haslam and extends his condolences to his family, friends and the close-knit Tamworth community. The death of a young man in his mid-20s is inescapably tragic. Yet in his short time in the public spotlight, Dan challenged society to rethink how we extend compassion to people with terminal illness. Five years ago, Dan was diagnosed with inoperable bowel cancer. For the next four years, he endured debilitating surgeries and chemotherapy. The use of medicinal cannabis - Dan discovered - was a way to control the by-products of his condition, including nausea, severe vomiting, weight loss and mental distress.

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Welfare report highlights the need for urgent NSW action on disability employment

25 FEB: Greens NSW spokesperson on Disability Jan Barham said the recommendation of a Jobs Plan for people with disability and mental health conditions in the final report of the federal Reference Group on Welfare Reform highlights the need for urgent action by state government to pull its weight in delivering jobs. "Although some proposed changes to income support and housing assistance raise concerns, governments need to understand the fundamental importance of making their first actions to improve the opportunities for employment for people with disability. A national Jobs Plan would be a welcome initiative, but it needs to be supported by action at a state level."

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\$60 million for major redevelopment of Mudgee Hospital

20 FEB: Deputy Premier Troy Grant and Orange MP Andrew Gee announced a re-elected Baird- Grant Government will invest \$60 million in the major upgrade of Mudgee Hospital. Mr Grant said the \$60 million commitment will fund an expansion and reconfiguration of inpatient and ambulatory care services at Mudgee Hospital. "The investment a re-elected Baird-Grant Government will make in Mudgee Hospital is unprecedented," Mr Grant said. "Mudgee Hospital is a wonderful facility which delivers compassionate care for its community but it is in need of TLC and I'm pleased we are committing to deliver it if re-elected on 28 March."

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Industrial Relations

Baird Government announces new era of inclusion for people with disability

27 FEB: Minister for Disability Services John Ajaka launched the Baird Government's NSW Disability Inclusion Plan - a huge step forward in the inclusion of people with disability in the community - whilst speaking at the launch of the Sydney Opera House's 2015 Access Program. The Plan is central to the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, the Government's landmark legislation which enshrines the rights of people with disability into NSW law during and

beyond the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). "We are proud that NSW was the first state to sign up to the NDIS," Mr Ajaka said.

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Greens support electrical workers right to strike

25 FEB: Greens MP and Industrial Relations Spokesperson David Shoebridge said the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) has been hauled before the Fair Work Commission in an attempt to terminate lawfully protected industrial action as workers fight to secure their jobs in the face of the imminent privatisation of the electricity network. The NSW Treasurer has joined with state-owned power distributors Ausgrid and Endeavour Energy in applying to stop a planned 4-hour stoppage on 3 March 2015, even though the union has promised its members will still respond to all power outages, interruptions to supply, and emergency situations.

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Local Government

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Planning and Infrastructure

Construction starts at Green Square Town Centre

25 FEB: UrbanGrowth NSW said construction at Green Square Town Centre officially started with a ground breaking ceremony for Ebsworth, the Centre's first residential building. UrbanGrowth NSW, the State Government's urban transformation delivery organisation, is the landowner and Mirvac is the developer for the 174 apartment building. UrbanGrowth NSW Chief Executive David Pitchford said the ground breaking represents a significant milestone for Green Square Town Centre and UrbanGrowth NSW. "The start of construction marks the start of the Green Square Town Centre, and shows UrbanGrowth NSW's commitment and capability to drive urban transformation that will increase the supply of housing and jobs.

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Labor will provide \$1 billion for Western Sydney light rail - without privatising the electricity network

20 FEB: Opposition Leader Luke Foley said a Labor Government will provide \$1 billion for the construction of a Western Sydney Light Rail line. Labor confirmed it will not privatise the state's electricity network to deliver funding for the project. The funding for Western Sydney Light Rail is included within Labor's plan for infrastructure - A Better Way - which unlocks an additional \$10.055 billion of infrastructure investment over the next ten years. Labor's additional \$10 billion for infrastructure is on top of recurrent capital expenditure contained within the budget - valued at \$15 billion per year.

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Police and Emergency Services

Telco Upgrade Delivers Connections, Cost Savings For Emergency Services

26 FEB: Minister for Finance and Services Dominic Perrottet and Minister for Police and Emergency Services Stuart Ayres announced \$2.8 million to upgrade the Government Radio Network (GRN) with state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment for emergency services. The upgrade allows multiple carriers to connect the network sites together, providing better coverage and a faster network with less disruption. A sophisticated backup system will give the GRN the flexibility to switch between carriers when necessary. Optus and Digital Distribution Australia (DDA) are the first carriers to sign on to provide services to the network.

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Disaster assistance for Bega, Bombala and Eurobodalla following December storms

26 FEB: Mr Ayres and Commonwealth Minister for Justice Michael Keenan announced that disaster assistance has been activated in the local government areas of Bega Valley, Bombala and Eurobodalla following the storm and associated flooding that occurred on 8 December 2014. Mr Keenan said the assistance is being provided through the jointly-funded Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). "The Australian and New South Wales governments are committed to working together to assist communities affected by natural disasters," Mr Keenan said.

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Baird government to improve police oversight

25 FEB: Premier Mike Baird and Mr Ayres announced the Baird Government will streamline oversight of the NSW Police Force. "Every day, police face difficult choices and challenging circumstances where they must often make quick decisions with serious consequences," Mr Baird said. "We trust the police with protecting public safety and upholding the rule of law, and they do an outstanding job. "However, the current system for reviewing complaints against police officers is complex and unsatisfactory, with overlapping responsibilities, duplication and a lack of clarity over responsibility for police oversight."

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Primary Industries

No improvement for NSW Murray and Murrumbidgee general security water allocations

02 MAR: Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Deputy Director General Water Gavin Hanlon announced that as a result of dry conditions no further water will be allocated for general security users in the NSW Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys. "Rainfall has been patchy across catchments over the last two weeks and temperatures have remained high," Mr Hanlon said. "There has been little runoff into storages and there is insufficient improvement in water availability to make a further allocation to general security water users at this time."

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Watermark Project - time for balanced discussion based on facts

27 FEB: NSW Mining said claims by some opposing the job-creating Shenhua Watermark mine are not supported by facts. According to the NSW Government's Strategic Regional Land Use Plan for the region, mining operations use less than 0.1% of land in the region, compared to around 70% used by agriculture, a ratio that will hardly be affected by this project. Similarly in relation to water use, in the high quality, high yielding aquifers in the region, around 80% of the water rights are held for irrigation, followed by stock and domestic use, town water supply, and finally industrial and mining use with around 1% of rights.

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Water NSW meets with Cranky Rock landholders

27 FEB: Water NSW representatives met with around 30 Cranky Rock landholders potentially impacted by the Water Security for Regions Belubula and Lachlan River Dam Investigation, at an information session. The session aimed to inform landholders about the process for the next stage of investigations, the anticipated timeframes for the project and how the consultation would be run. Water NSW Basin Planning Manager Dan Berry said this was the start of a long process and project team would be working with landholders as the investigations progressed. The next stage of investigations involve in-situ studies to assess the engineering feasibility, preliminary environmental assessments, a cost-benefit analysis and community consultation.

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Pulses bring life to farming systems

25 FEB: Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson has visited the Yanco Agricultural Institute to launch a new guide for farmers and farm advisers, which highlights the benefits of integrating pulse crops in southern NSW farming systems. "Using farmer case studies, Pulses - putting life into farming systems, outlines the valuable role pulses play as break crops and shows how they have been used in mixed farming systems," Ms Hodgkinson said. "Southern NSW farming systems are unique, with acidic soils under a mixed farming system, which includes pastures, livestock and cereals."

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New rainfall tool to test for water rebate eligibility

25 FEB: Ms Hodgkinson said drought-affected farmers applying for funding under the Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate (EWIR) Scheme can now use a unique tool designed to test their eligibility for the program. "Farmers can now test their eligibility for the scheme by using the Rainfall Deficiency Analyser - a calculator developed by the Bureau of Meteorology," said Ms Hodgkinson. "For farmers dealing with the short-term challenge of providing water to livestock, the EWIR helps farms better manage long-term risks and be more prepared for future droughts. The NSW Government committed an extra \$20 million to the EWIR program last month as part of our recently announced Drought Strategy."

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Widespread rainfall good start to year

20 FEB: The DPI seasonal conditions report shows that storms and rainfall across the State in early to mid January resulted in above average rainfall across most of NSW for the month. However, DPI Seasonal Conditions Coordinator Ian McGowen said that while the rain was widespread, some areas most in need had limited falls. "The good news is that most of the State received 50-200 mm during January," Mr McGowen said. "Unfortunately the rainfall distribution was variable in some areas, and generally below average (25mm or less) across areas of the north west, particularly to the north west of Walgett where good rain is desperately needed."

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Regional Infrastructure and Services

None this edition

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Resources and Energy

Operate machinery safely near powerlines

26 FEB: Essential Energy is urging truck drivers and operators of farm machinery, construction equipment and heavy plant to take care when working near, or travelling under, overhead electrical infrastructure following continuing electrical incidents involving these industries. Public safety programs coordinator, Paul Thomas, said machinery higher than 4.6 metres is at greater risk of encroaching minimum clearance distances so drivers are advised to closely monitor equipment and powerlines. Essential Energy recommends drivers visually check all powerlines before passing underneath - looking for damaged or low wires and being aware that service lines often decrease in height where they cross roads and connect to houses.

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NSW government taking action to safely secure gas supplies

25 FEB: Minister for Resources and Energy Anthony Roberts said the NSW Government is taking action through the

NSW Gas Plan to safely secure the State's energy needs. The NSW Gas Plan is the Government's clear strategy to deliver world's best practice regulation of the State's gas industry, that commits to implementing all 16 of the Chief Scientist & Engineer's recommendations, while securing vital gas supplies for NSW from a variety of sources. Under the NSW Gas Plan, we have the toughest controls for CSG in the country - based on the best available science.

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Small Business

Meet the Minister for Small Business

23 FEB: Minister for Small Business John Barilaro came to Australia from Italy in 1966. "Running the family business in Queanbeyan for 20 years, gave me a first-hand experience of the problems confronting small businesses," Mr Barilaro said. "I've lived the daily pressures of owning a business." Mr Barilaro encourages small businesses to take advantage of the services that are on offer in NSW. The Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner offers access to support at every stage of the business cycle, from start-up to succession planning and every step in between, including straightening out complex matters that could leave small business operators feeling isolated.

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Sport and Recreation

Minister for Ageing congratulates Senior Australian of the Year

26 FEB: Minister for Ageing John Ajaka congratulated renowned NSW author Jackie French for being named Senior Australian of the Year 2015. "I am proud this year's senior of the year is from NSW. Ms French is an inspiration to all older Australians with her many literary achievements and commitment to wildlife preservation," Mr Ajaka said. "With more than a hundred books to her name winning numerous national and international literary awards, Ms French is an amazing storyteller who has delighted readers over the years." Most well-known for her children's books, Ms French has also written on wildlife, gardening and adult fiction.

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Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality, Gaming and Racing

Regional tourism continues to showcase spectacular landscape

22 FEB: Minister for Regional Tourism John Barilaro said travel show *Sydney Weekender* will showcase the Snowy Mountains this weekend following a NSW Government initiative to promote short breaks across Regional NSW. Mr Barilaro said the episode will encourage families from across the State to plan their next school holiday. "The episode will feature the South Coast, the Murray and our Snowy Mountains, all of which are great short breaks and school holiday getaways," Mr Barilaro said. "This *Sydney Weekender* episode will feature the Snowy Mountains and uncover some of the superb experiences available in the region, including mountain biking in Kosciuszko National Park and an overnight stay at Lake Crackenback Resort."

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Travel website for Sydney and NSW launched in China

20 FEB: NSW Trade and Investment said a new tourism website promoting Sydney and NSW to Chinese travellers has been launched by Destination NSW. Rather than translating Sydney.com from English to Mandarin, the dedicated website, hosted in China, is specifically designed with the needs, visual preferences and interests of Chinese travellers in mind. The new website Sydney.cn allows faster download speeds and is available in traditional and simplified Chinese as well as English. The site features more than 150 iconic experiences, events and destinations in Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Hunter Valley, Central Coast, Byron Bay, Port Macquarie, Port Stephens and Coffs Harbour.

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Warning to bottleshops after breaches detected

NSW Trade and Investment Office of Liquor, Gaming & Racing (OLGR) warned bottle shops about the need to close by 10pm and thoroughly check identification to ensure alcohol is not sold to minors following a series of concerning breaches. On February 6, OLGR inspectors detected sales of takeaway alcohol after 10pm at a Darling Harbour bottle shop. CCTV records also revealed sales after 10.45pm on three previous weekends. The matter is still under investigation. A statewide 10pm limit on the sale of takeaway alcohol was introduced in February 2014 to reduce excessive availability of alcohol late at night and continue to drive down alcohol-related harm across the state.

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Trade and Investment

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Transport, Roads and Ports

Licensing of heavy vehicles

27 FEB: Minister for Fair Trading Matthew Mason-Cox said repairers of heavy vehicles will continue to be regulated by the *Motor Dealers and Repairers Act 2013*. This means that any NSW trader that does heavy vehicle repairs will require a motor vehicle repairer's licence and tradespeople who perform repair work will need a valid tradesperson certificate. Motor vehicles with a mass of more than 4.5 tonnes are regulated by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and Roads and Maritime Services to ensure that heavy vehicles comply with the national heavy vehicle standards through registration and inspections by authorised examiners.

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Labor announces \$241 million for Central Coast including Pacific Highway upgrade - not dependent on privatising electricity

25 FEB: Opposition Leader Luke Foley has announced that a Labor Government will invest \$241 million in Central Coast infrastructure - including \$100 million to upgrade the Pacific Highway - to support local jobs and build the small and medium projects that for too long have been overlooked for government funding. Mr Foley announced the funding as part of Labor's statewide infrastructure funding plan - A Better Way - which unlocks funding for the Central Coast without needing to privatise the electricity network.

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Planning approval for CBD and South East light rail improvements

23 FEB: Minister for Transport Gladys Berejiklian announced improvements to the CBD and South East Light Rail project have been given the final tick of approval from the Department of Planning and Environment. Ms Berejiklian said the CBD and South East Light Rail network will transform public transport in Sydney by providing modern and reliable services for customers, boosting the economy and cutting crippling congestion in the city. "The green light from planning means we can roll out longer light rail vehicles with more seats for customers and 50 per cent more capacity, allowing us to move up to 13,500 passengers every hour," Ms Berejiklian said.

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Road Rules Awareness Week kicks off - tell us your local issue

23 FEB: Transport for NSW urged everyone to brush up on their road rules. "Knowing the road rules is an essential part of everyone's role in keeping our roads safe, and Road Rules Awareness Week helps us update our knowledge and answer some of the questions we are asking ourselves," said Centre for Road Safety General Manager Marg Prendergast. "If you're unsure about any road rule, pick up the phone and call 13 22 13 or find the NSW Road Users' Handbook and our Top 10 Misunderstood Road Rules animations at roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au."

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Labor will provide \$1 billion for Western Sydney light rail - without privatising the electricity network

20 FEB: Mr Foley said a Labor Government will provide \$1 billion for the construction of a Western Sydney Light Rail line. Labor confirmed it will not privatise the state's electricity network to deliver funding for the project. The funding for Western Sydney Light Rail is included within Labor's plan for infrastructure - A Better Way - which unlocks an additional \$10.055 billion of infrastructure investment over the next ten years. Labor's additional \$10 billion for infrastructure is on top of recurrent capital expenditure contained within the budget - valued at \$15 billion per year.

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Treasury

Wetherill Park One-Stop Shop Opens Its Doors

25 FEB: Minister for Finance and Services Dominic Perrottet and the Member for Smithfield Andrew Rohan officially opened the Service NSW one-stop shop in Wetherill Park - delivering on the NSW Government's commitment to improve services to the residents and businesses of Sydney's west. "Since opening the doors in December, the fantastic team at Wetherill Park have already served more than 33,000 customers," Mr Perrottet said. "With customer satisfaction scores of 98 per cent, this centre is setting new standards for service delivery for the residents and businesses in Sydney's west." Andrew Rohan said the new centre would be a boost for the community.

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Scam Warning: No Government Finance Department Will Call Offering Cash

25 FEB: The Office of Finance and Service warned the public to hang up on scam calls and report incidents to Scamwatch on 1300 795 995. "The NSW Office of State Revenue has received reports from concerned consumers about scammers who claim the fictitious finance department is a state and federal agency," he said. "The scammers offer to repay the money via cheque or payment into a bank account. "No government finance department will cold call offering money and asking for your personal details. Unfortunately Australians are very trusting and some unsuspecting people fall for scams when they think they are dealing with legitimate government agencies."

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Launch Of Australian First In Asset Management

25 FEB: The Office of Finance and Services said in a national first, the NSW Government has launched a comprehensive set of end- to-end business processes for Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) aligned with the International Asset Management Standards (ISO 55000) series. EAM is the management of an organisation's assets across departments, facilities, business units and geographical locations to produce the services required by customers. Office of Finance and Services Chief Executive Simon Smith said the new EAM processes were designed and developed by the Office of Finance and Services with support from the NSW Treasury and in collaboration with industry through and endorsed by the Asset Management Council.

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Reports

Financial Audit - Volume One 2015 - Areas of focus from 2014

Audit Office of NSW

This report focuses on key observations and recommendations from financial and performance audits in 2014. The observations and recommendations have been reported to Parliament and other stakeholders, including relevant Ministers and those charged with the governance of individual agencies. The findings have been broadly classified into four themes, which will continue to inform and shape the focus of financial and performance audits in 2015: financial reporting; financial controls; governance; and service delivery. The 2014 audits identified issues in the area of governance and gaps in performance information and reporting across the sector, which suggest Chief Financial Officers should have a stronger role and be more involved in matters that go beyond financial efficiency.

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Create in NSW - NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework

Department of Trade and Investment, Arts NSW

Create in NSW is a ten year framework for contemporary New South Wales. It draws on the strengths and ambitions of our residents, artists, cultural workers and arts organisations across the diverse communities of Metropolitan Sydney, Western Sydney and Regional NSW. Key actions include collaborating with local governments in Regional NSW, with a focus on opportunities for creative hubs and cultural precincts and enhancing performing arts touring by developing a Regional Partnerships and Touring Framework for the State Cultural Institutions.

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Wambelong Fire - Report 41

NSW Parliament Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

The Committee's recommendations highlight that the NSW Government must ensure that in future disasters, sufficient support services including those for mental health are provided for an adequate length of time after a fire. The government must now act quickly to enable the people of Coonabarabran to move forward from this awful chapter of their lives. The Committee believes that the NSW Government has a moral obligation to expedite the process of establishing any legal liability for the losses incurred by property owners as a result of the fire, and in the event that it is found liable, to expedite the process of paying compensation claims.

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Paving the Pathway - Addressing Post Year 10 Education

NSW Business Chamber

This report provides practical recommendations to deliver secondary schooling more effectively in NSW, including: 1. Conduct a root and branch review of post-Year 10 education and training in NSW; 2. Raise the bar on Vocational Education and Training (VET) delivered to secondary students; 3. Give young people robust "real world" careers advice; 4. Provide more opportunities for learning in the workplace; 5. Explore and implement mechanisms to boost school leavers' language, literacy and numeracy; 6. Allocate resources on the basis of need with a focus on students in regional areas; 7. Better help young people earn and learn; and 8. Commit to a longer term strategy to support young people transition from school to work.

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Committees - Inquiries and Submissions

Citizen's Right of Reply

Legislative Council Privileges Committee

The inquiry was conducted in accordance with standing orders 202 and 203. Standing orders 202 and 203 of the Legislative Council provide a mechanism for a person who has been adversely referred to by a member of the Legislative Council in proceedings of the House to seek a right of reply through the incorporation of a response in Hansard or in the Minutes of Proceedings. The committee recommends that a response by Dr McIntosh, in the terms specified at Appendix 1, as agreed to by Dr McIntosh and the committee, be incorporated in Hansard.

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Ministerial Propriety in New South Wales

Select Committee on Ministerial Propriety in New South Wales

The Committee was tasked with examining conflicts of interest between Government minister's public duties, their loyalty to the political party to which they belong, and their own financial and commercial activities. The ongoing efficacy of the law surrounding lobbying of Government officials is also examined. The report makes three recommendations: 1) the Government should introduce a Commissioner for Standards, as recommended by ICAC; 2) the Government should require the publication of ministerial diaries online at least monthly; 3) the Electoral Commission should monitor the implementation of the lobbyist register, the implementation of conflict-of-interest legislation, and undertake further reviews in 2016.

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