

11 March 2011

Ms Alison Peters
Director
Council of Social Service of New South Wales
66 Albion Street
SURRY HILLS NSW

Dear Ms Peters

Thank you for writing to the NSW Liberals and Nationals about the important issues and policies facing your members.

We are pleased to respond to your survey and the issues you have raised. Please find our response attached.

The NSW Liberals and Nationals have a clear goal - **Making NSW Number One Again.**

We have a strong Five Point Action Plan for government:

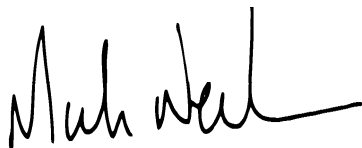
1. **Rebuilding the NSW economy:** through lower taxes and business growth;
2. **Returning quality services:** we will return quality services in areas such as health, transport, education and community safety;
3. **Renovating Infrastructure:** we will renovate the infrastructure that makes a difference to both our economy and people's lives;
4. **Restore accountability to government:** by giving people a say on issues that affect their lives; and
5. **Protect our local environment** and return planning powers to the community.

Throughout the election campaign we will be announcing further plans and policies to Make NSW Number One Again.

Find out more about our Action Plan at www.startthechange.com.au

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to outline our plans and policies.

Yours sincerely



Mark Neeham
Campaign Director - Liberals

Yours sincerely



Ben Franklin
Campaign Director – Nationals

Response to NCOSS

Thank you for your questionnaire to the NSW Liberals & Nationals. Please see our responses below.

1. **Aboriginal Self Determination**

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will focus on a set of clear, pragmatic and achievable initiatives to close the disparity gap and restore the departments standing in the eyes of the State's Aboriginal community.

Our integrated social policy approach is designed to rid the 'silo' mentality, and seek genuine community consultation and participation.

In 2010 the NSW Liberals & Nationals unanimously supported acknowledging and honouring the Aboriginal people as NSW's first people and the traditional custodians and occupants of the land in New South Wales in the NSW Constitution in the *Constitution Amendment (Recognition of Aboriginal People) Bill 2010*. From this, the NSW Liberals & Nationals also called and successfully included the Aboriginal Flag in the NSW Legislative Assembly.

2. Improved Child Well Being

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will significantly reform child protection services in NSW to better protect our most vulnerable children.

At over 16,000, NSW has the greatest number of children in out-of-home care (OOHC) in the nation with our rate of removal more than twice that of Victoria. This figure is horrifying given the *Wood Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW* found children entering OOHC have poorer outcomes than the average child or young person.

The current system for OOHC is simply not working. Of 16,000 children in out of home care, only 48 were adopted in 2010. In too many cases, the government treats the symptoms of child abuse, without significantly addressing the root causes. Thousands of other kids spend their childhood bouncing between multiple foster carers and back and forth to their family who have received little to no support to provide an improved environment for their child.

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is determined to improve these children's life circumstances through early intervention to prevent children having to go into care. Early intervention into the lives of vulnerable children is essential if we are to prevent a lifetime of poor life outcomes and break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.

As part of our reform process, a NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will:

- Commit to stopping the growth in the number of children placed in OOHC by 2015 and reduce the rate of removal from over 9 children per thousand children to no more than the current national average by 2019.
- In line with the Wood Inquiry recommendations and NSW Labor's response, commit to continuing the handover process of out-of-home care to non-government organisations.
- Put greater emphasis on increased early intervention mechanisms such as intensive family support and family preservation services to help prevent children most at risk from entering foster care.
- Support the NSW Ombudsman's role in independently reviewing child deaths in NSW by transferring responsibility for coordinating the Child Death Review Team from the Commission for Children and Young People to the Ombudsman's office.

The NSW Liberal & Nationals also strongly endorse the importance of integrated service delivery as we identified in our statement of social policy principles, *Smarter Stronger, Healthier, Safer* (SSHS). For too long, departments under the NSW Labor Government have worked in isolation from one another and from non-government organisations. A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is determined to address this and have identified a number of strategies for achieving service delivery integration.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe in a skilled workforce through delivering equity and excellence in education by ensuring all students receive a world-class education.

In government we will achieve this goal of a world class education through our \$250 million *Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan* that:

- recognises the importance of early childhood development to improved literacy and numeracy outcomes by moving responsibility for preschools from the Department of Community Services to the Department of Education;
- uses Kindergarten screening assessments, current internal school data, Best Start results and Australian Education Development Index information to identify K-2 students at risk of not meeting literacy and numeracy standards;
- expands and enhance the Reading Recovery Program by providing an additional 900 teachers, and revising the program to include both literacy and numeracy and targeting 'at risk' K-2 students;
- reallocates over 300 K-2 Support Teachers Learning Assistance (STLA) to provide more intensive support to students in Years 3-10 with a focus on upper primary and early secondary (Years 5-8);
- establishes a Ministerial Working Group comprising educational experts to report annually on the performance of our Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe that, with a strong focus on early intervention, no child with the ability to read and write will need to progress to high school without achieving minimum national benchmark standards in literacy and numeracy.

3. A Fair Go For People With Disability

In life we all want to make choices. We all want the opportunity to create valued relationships and the capability to build a safe and secure future for ourselves and those we love.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to a disability service system that increases 'choice, voice and control' for people with disability and their carers. The emphasis of quality of life 'outcomes' for people with disability is central to the NSW Liberals & Nationals plan.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals support an individualised funding approach to the delivery of disability services. This plan will offer choice between the current case management model and that of a more personalised service approach in which funding packages enable the individual to direct the services that they wish to have and when.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals do not subscribe to the 'one size fits all' approach that is supported by the NSW Labor Government when it comes to the delivery of services to people with disability. An individualised funding approach will restore choice, voice and control to people with disability, their carers and families to manage their own social care needs.

Our plan will be guided by six principles for reform and systemic change and will be informed by consultation with the disability sector:

1. Non-government organisation viability and sustainability: capacity building in the non-government sector that provides the services to people with disability is critical to addressing any gaps or duplication in service provision that exists across NSW. Addressing workforce development, infrastructure and service gaps will be key to the success of the roll out of individualised funding packages in NSW.
2. Building opportunities: support for the empowerment of individuals and families to enable them to get the most out of personalised service opportunities.
3. Outcomes led and evidence based: accurate data and information collection about the likely take up of individualised funding packages will be assessed prior to the programs implementation.
4. Comprehensive and transparent stakeholder engagement: a consultative process between service users, providers, peak sector bodies and government will be undertaken to guide the implementation.
5. Regional emphasis: funding ensures the ongoing sustainability of services, particularly in rural and regional areas where there are currently service gaps.
6. Clear political leadership and direction: reasonable and clear expectations about the pace of change will be provided to assist service providers and users to achieve a seamless transition to any new arrangements.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals have committed to the \$2 billion in growth funding to support the second five year period of the Stronger Together program.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals support the implementation of a national disability entitlements scheme.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals recognise the state system has and continues to fail people with disability, their carers and families. We intend on working with other State Governments through COAG on this issue.

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will make access to Community Transport a priority by providing an additional \$12 million to the Community Transport Program through the Ministry of Transport, as well as boosting funding for easy access upgrades by over 50 percent to make train travel for seniors and people with a disability more convenient. Further details are in "Active and Connected Old People".

4. Active and Connected Old People

In relation to preparing and planning for an ageing NSW population, it will be one of the top goals for a NSW Liberals & Nationals Government at a future Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe it is important to **address the moral and increasing urgent challenge of providing for our ageing population by simplifying Australia's labyrinthine aged care arrangements.**

We have already announced five real changes to make life easier and better for seniors in NSW:

1. Increasing funding for Community Transport and easy access upgrades;
2. Delivering free photo ID for self-funded retirees and pensioners;
3. Providing incentives to safe drivers;
4. Standardising retirement village contracts; and
5. Giving carers the recognition they deserve and a voice in government.

Community transport is vital for seniors, the ill, people with disability and people who live in isolated communities. A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will make access to Community Transport a priority by providing an additional \$12 million to the Community Transport Program through the Ministry of Transport; establishing a "one stop shop" for Community Transport providers within the Ministry of Transport to improve communication, efficiency and reduce unnecessary administration costs; and the establishment of an appropriate driver accreditation framework to ensure Community Transport providers can enhance their services and ensure utmost safety of volunteers, employees and clients.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will boost funding for easy access upgrades by over 50 percent to make train travel for seniors and people with a disability more convenient. Currently 184 CityRail train stations out of 307 are not wheelchair accessible – we want to change that so that's why we've committed to this 50 percent boost of an additional \$60 million in funding.

Many transactions in daily life require some form of photo identification (ID). People without photo ID can face stress and humiliations, extra costs, and sometimes miss out on entitlements. A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will waive the cost of photo identification cards for Seniors Card and Pensioner Concession Card holders; and make the free ID card available also to older people with a disability support pension.

In relation to incentives to safe drivers, a NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will introduce our Fair Go for Safe Drivers strategy, which takes a "carrot and stick" approach to road safety. Under a Fair Go for Safe Drivers, safe drivers who have a driving record free of an offence for at least five years will have their licence renewal fees cut by fifty per cent. This discount will apply whether the licence is renewed for 1, 3 or 5 years.

The decision to purchase a property in a retirement village can be a difficult one. There are standard contracts for the sale of a house, so why shouldn't there be standard contracts for the sale of property in a retirement village? In government the NSW Liberals & Nationals will develop standard contracts for retirement villages to use when selling property or occupation rights to consumers and establish a committee of experts to develop the standard contracts.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals have also announced a commitment to extend current transfer duty concession measures which currently apply to people aged over 65, to include people aged over 55. Downsizing benefits many seniors allowing them to move to properties that better meet their needs and are more manageable.

5. Strong Communities

Our homes and neighbourhoods are more than just 'places'. They are where we raise our children and make friends, where we volunteer and help those in need. We strive to make our streets safe and secure. It's time to give people back their sense of place and purpose and to make our neighbourhoods places of positive opportunities.

When communities have a real say on their local planning and environment, they are strongly motivated to take responsibility for other related issues that align with their preferences and local priorities.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals want to encourage this local energy and ownership – and will protect our local environment and return planning powers to the community. The NSW Liberals & Nationals will act to constrain politics in decision-making, including on environmental and planning issues and ensure our policy approaches on any issue are backed by evidence and are sustainable. We will return as much decision-making as possible to local communities and to the structures closest to the places affected by those decisions. The NSW Liberals & Nationals will rewrite the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*. More details are in 'Planning and Infrastructure'.

At a local level, interests range from planning issues, preservation of natural areas and the quality of the built environment and the value it adds to peoples' quality of life. Policies such as tackling graffiti crime will help give local communities the power to take control of the look and feel of their shopping centres, public facilities and neighbourhoods.

For this reason the NSW Liberals & Nationals will tackle graffiti in local communities with meaningful penalties and incentives to break a developing juvenile habit.

It will:

- require juvenile graffiti vandals to appear before the court for a graffiti offence;
- empower courts to suspend convicted graffiti vandals' drivers' licences or extend the time spent on Learners and Provisional licences;
- legislate for courts to impose Community Service Orders on offenders to make recompense and clean up the graffiti; and
- encourage the formation of voluntary graffiti removal squads in local areas, in partnerships with local government and local communities.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals have also committed to a 21st Century Neighbourhood Watch Program. While nothing can replace having Police on the beat, locals should be able to help in the fight against local crime by having a genuine partnership with our hardworking Police.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will re-establish, modernise and make Neighbourhood Watch relevant for communities today by:

- requiring every Police Local Area Command (LAC) to have at least one Neighbourhood Watch group;
- piloting ten Online Neighbourhood Watch Groups that allow people to discuss local crime trends and share information over the internet as well as allowing Police to issue real time warnings to members; and,
- create a specialist team of Community Intelligence Information Officers based at Police Assistance Line locations to analyse crime data for Local Area Commands and Neighbourhood Watch groups.

Together we can reduce and prevent crime in our neighbourhoods through engaging our communities, encouraging commonsense crime prevention, and supporting frontline Police.

On a broader level we will ensure that we are better able to assess and protect our valuable cultural heritage by giving heritage an independent advocate in Cabinet, separate from the Minister for Planning. Issues such as water management, air quality and waste management should be considered with community input and ideas.

On national and global environmental issues, we will lead by example where possible to promote and support innovations in transport-related emission technology, planning to encourage public transport and bicycle use and measures to encourage renewable and lower-carbon energy technologies.

6. Improving the Justice System

In relation to less young people held on remand, the NSW Liberals & Nationals consider that the number of young people held in remand is a disgrace. We intend to carry out a review of the Bail Act 1978, conducted by a retired Supreme Court Judge or someone of similar stature. There should be no need for children and young people who are granted bail to remain on remand due to a lack of accommodation options.

We will accordingly consider the suggestion of creation of a 'Residential Bail Support Service', in conjunction with appropriate NGO's, the Department of Housing and Community Services, to seek to ensure that suitable accommodation is available to all young people who require such accommodation whilst on bail.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe in access to appropriate legal assistance, representation and information. If elected we shall review Legal Aid services to ensure that such services are adequately funded for both Court services and staffing. Part of our review will necessarily involve Community Legal Centres and we will work towards ensuring that such Centres are adequately resourced.

It is clear that people with mental health issues are over-represented in our prison system and despite 16 years in office the State Government has failed to implement any meaningful reform to divert suspects with mental health issues from our prison system in NSW.

NSW has the worst recidivism rate of any Australian State. Sadly for many inmates the prison system is a revolving door with more than forty per cent of prisoners returning to prison under sentence within two years.

The human cost is just one dimension to the problem. It costs taxpayers \$270 a day to keep a prisoner in a secure prison. Every ex-prisoner who returns to gaol wastes taxpayers money that could have been spent on more hospital beds, better public transport or fixing our roads.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe every prisoner deserves an opportunity for rehabilitation. This is why we have a comprehensive plan with the goal of reducing the NSW recidivism rate to below the national average within ten years.

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will:

1. Establish a second Drug Court in the Sydney metropolitan area including detoxification facilities, drug testing, monitoring and treatment.
2. Create a specialist Metropolitan Drug Treatment Facility to ensure drug addicted prisoners get treatment and are given the opportunity to get off drugs.
3. Provide an additional \$20 million over four years for education and training programs in prison.
4. Encourage greater use of non-custodial punishment for less serious offenders and create availability and access to diversionary programs.

The people of NSW are fed up with a corrective services system which merely acts as a 'revolving door' for offenders as they transition through a life of crime. The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe community safety demands that every prisoner confronts their offending behaviour and is provided with the opportunity for rehabilitation.

Reducing recidivism simply makes sense. It reduces crime and makes our homes and neighbourhoods safer. It means taxpayers' dollars can be better spent.

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will shine the spotlight on women's issues including gender equality, health and domestic violence with initiatives to strengthen government services. We will expand the successful Staying Home Leaving Violence program to provide greater assistance to those women at risk of homelessness from fleeing domestic violence.

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will shine the spotlight on women's issues by:

1. Investing an additional \$2.5 million to expand the Staying Home Leaving Violence program to an estimated five new sites. The program focuses on keeping women and children safe in their own homes and safe from reoffending by aggressors.
2. Creating the Bureau of Women's Statistics (BOWS) within the Office for Women's Policy that will retain statistics on a broad range of issues involving women including female employment, health, education and domestic violence and making it available to the public.
3. Producing an annual report on the Status of Women in NSW using information from the Bureau of Women's Statistics and reporting on the work undertaken by the Office for Women.
4. Ensuring all domestic violence related deaths are reviewed by the Domestic Violence Death Review Team in line with the Domestic Violence Homicide Advisory Panel's 2009 report.

By creating a Bureau of Women's Statistics and ensuring a separate annual report is produced, the government and public will be better informed.

7. More Affordable Housing and Less Homelessness

The NSW Liberals & Nationals want home ownership to be more than a 'dream'. We want to make it easier for individuals and families to get into the Sydney housing market and reduce the pressure on household budgets from mortgage costs. We want to tackle Sydney's housing stress head on.

The NSW housing affordability crisis is a product of Labor's punishing development levies, paralysed planning system, high property taxes, and 'Sydney is full' mantra which has seen land supply down to a trickle – and this as a result impacts rents and rental availability.

Under the Keneally Labor Government, the housing waiting list has increased by 10 per cent from 39,484 in 2009 to 43,335 in 2010. The 10 per cent increase in the waiting list has come at a time when NSW has received unprecedented Federal Government funding to deliver additional social housing

The increasing list means more and more families are seeking emergency accommodation and some are finding themselves moving from place to place on a regular basis – this is not a good environment to raise a family.

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will target the release of 10,000 blocks by Landcom over four years to make it easier for families to buy a new home in the Illawarra.

The net proceeds raised from this land release will go into a *New Homes Infrastructure Trust* dedicated to local urban infrastructure like water, sewerage and roads. This *New Homes Infrastructure Trust* will not be siphoned off for other purposes by government. Unlike Labor these funds will not be used as a backdoor to prop up the budget bottom line.

We'll achieve the housing release aim by:

- accelerating the release of land currently in Landcom's inventory;
- promoting the faster release and sale of land through existing joint ventures with the private sector; and,
- seeking to work with small landholders to consolidate land parcels into larger developments.

The new initiatives complement the positive plans the NSW Liberals & Nationals have already announced to address the housing affordability crisis including:

- repealing NSW Labor's \$429 million 'Homebuyers Tax' on property purchases;
- providing a Regional Relocation Grant of \$7000 to encourage 'whole of NSW' growth and take the price pressure off Sydney's housing supply; and,
- extending stamp duty concessions to Empty Nesters who are over 55 years old.

8. Better Health and Wellbeing

Oral

The NSW Liberals & Nationals appreciate the policy input from NCOSS in relation to oral health. We will continue to consult with NCOSS on the development of our oral health policy.

Community Health

We are committed to community health programs and have announced \$10 million in funding for drug and alcohol programs, delivered through the government sector and community organisations.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals have also committed \$10 million to provide community and workplace health checks and improved management of chronic diseases through community pharmacies and other accredited providers.

This is expected to dramatically improve the health of those who live with, or are at risk of conditions such as diabetes, asthma, obesity and cardiovascular disease.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals is committed to support in the outstanding work Lifeline does in suicide prevention and counselling services by providing \$2 million in annual recurrent funding. Lifeline does an outstanding job in preventing suicide and providing counselling services for people with financial, gambling and substance problems. This funding will ensure each of the 15 Lifeline call centres in NSW receive assistance to support and train its counsellors to meet the growing demand for its services.

Access to health

The NSW Liberals & Nationals have responded to widespread community concern about supporting patients in isolated areas with transport and accommodation. In government, the NSW Liberals & Nationals will boost IPTAAS by 50%, increasing the travel and accommodation rate for the average claim by approximately \$100.

This represents an additional commitment of \$28 million over four years. We will review the charging of an administration fee, distance eligibility criteria (especially for patients with a chronic disease), parking arrangements and form complexity. We will also consider implementation of the recommendations from the Senate review of Patient Assisted Travel Schemes.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals in government will also increase funding for the Community Transport Program by \$12 million over 4 years. This represents a 100% increase in funding over the period and will make a real difference for many people who require transport to access health services.

Smoking

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to supporting public awareness and education programs to help drive down the rate of smoking in NSW. We will maintain the NSW Quit Campaign, coordinated by NSW Health, and work with the Cancer Institute NSW in an effort to further reduce smoking prevalence and minimise the significant harms associated with exposure to tobacco smoke.

This strategy will include careful consideration of the need to address smoking in some CALD communities, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, people with mental illnesses, young people and socially disadvantaged groups.

If elected to government, the NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to working closely with COAG and the Australian Health Ministers' Conference to reduce the prevalence of smoking. It is acknowledged that the reforms the Federal Government has indicated it will implement, such as the prohibition of tobacco advertising on the internet and the introduction of mandatory plain packaging, do not require the consent or cooperation of the States.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals in government intend to be an active partner in ensuring that a coordinated approach to tobacco control achieves the optimal population health outcomes for the people of NSW.

9. Fairness Concessions

In relation to fairer concessions, the NSW Liberals & Nationals have a believable and achievable plan for an affordable and sustainable energy industry.

In relation to fairer rebates for energy, individuals and families have been hard hit by rising electricity bills. They have been forced to cut spending on basic household items just so they can pay their electricity bills.

Families, pensioners and low income earners are the big winners from the NSW Liberals & Nationals' energy policy that will see increased rebates for 1.4 million households. We understand the impact power prices are having on people's hip pockets – that's why we've announced a responsible and believable plan to bring down electricity bills.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will establish two new rebates for families and low-income households:

- 800,000 households will be eligible for the Low Income Households Rebate of up to \$235;
- 400,000 families will be eligible for the Family Energy Rebate of up to \$150;
- 200,000 low-income families who are eligible for both rebates will receive a maximum amount of \$250.

In relation to transport concessions, the NSW Liberals & Nationals have no plans to change, and supports the current transport concession system – which includes school and tertiary students, jobseekers, apprentices, trainees, people with disabilities, certain ex-members of the Defence Forces, pensioners, NSW Seniors Card holders and war widow/ers.

In relation to Aboriginal people receiving concessions as per the Seniors card, the NSW Liberals & Nationals have noted this suggestion and will consider if successful in March 2011.

10. An Effective Transport System

An Integrated Transport Authority will be established under the NSW Liberals & Nationals to ensure that there is planning and co-ordination between passenger and freight services.

It will improve the delivery of public transport services by enabling more efficient delivery of major transport infrastructure projects and better co-ordinating different transport modes, such as our commitment to deliver a truly electronic integrated ticketing system.

The *Integrated Transport Authority* will be responsible for transport policy including planning, infrastructure, fares, ticketing and customer information. It will ensure that different transport modes work together, and that the interests of the travelling public are put first.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe providing information for all commuters in NSW is important in order to assist and encourage them in using and accessing public transport.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will increase funding for Community Transport. Community Transport is vital for seniors, the ill, people with disability and people who live in isolated communities. It provides non-emergency transport to members of the community who do not have access to transport. This includes assisting transport-isolated people to get to medical appointments, social and recreational activities, grocery shopping and access to social services.

Community transport groups estimate they refuse 90,000 requests for transport to health services every year.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will make access to Community Transport a priority.

In government we will:

- Provide an additional \$12 million to the Community Transport Program through the Ministry of Transport. This will extend services to thousands of transport-disadvantaged people.
- Establish a “one stop shop” for Community Transport providers within the Ministry of Transport to improve communication, efficiency and reduce unnecessary administration costs.
- Establish an appropriate driver accreditation framework to ensure Community Transport providers can enhance their services and ensure utmost safety of volunteers, employees and clients.

We will end Labor’s decade of neglect. The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe we owe it to those with disability, those in remote communities and our seniors the ability to get around.

11. Better Planning and Infrastructure

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are determined to get the politics out of infrastructure decision making. We will establish Infrastructure NSW to ensure infrastructure is delivered according to need, on time and on budget, and remove political interests from infrastructure decisions.

Infrastructure NSW is built on the successful *Infrastructure Australia*, *Partnerships UK* and *Partnerships Victoria* models and will:

- be overseen by an expert board, and independent Chair; with a highly qualified professional CEO (who is also the NSW Co-ordinator General), and executive staff drawn from the very best of the public and private sectors; and
- ensure infrastructure is delivered on the basis of need, expert advice and world best practice – not the political demands of marginal seats or a looming election.

Infrastructure NSW will:

- be accountable to the Premier;
- prepare a 20 year State Infrastructure Strategy (SIS), detailed 5 year Infrastructure Plans funded in Budget forward estimates and sectoral State Infrastructure Strategy Statements for approval by the Premier and Cabinet Infrastructure Committee. The SIS will be tabled in Parliament and debated;
- advise on project procurement, contractual arrangements, best practice, delivery and funding modes and create a project pipeline; and
- maximise NSW's funding opportunities from Infrastructure Australia.

The lack of a long-term strategic plan for infrastructure is the greatest infrastructure problem facing NSW. Without a clear, long-term strategy to address emerging bottlenecks, the impact of population growth and changes in land use and employment patterns, poor decisions will inevitably be made.

We will encourage the best ideas and solutions from the private sector and a greater level of private sector investment and participation in projects, with rigorous planning and costing to deliver the highest standards of public value – and confidence to investors and the community.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals have already outlined some ways we will deliver local power and responsibility to regions and local areas. We will push decision-making power as close as possible to the people those decisions affect those who will live with those decisions and who will benefit directly from those decisions.

Making 'localism' work is less about where the lines are drawn on a map and more about the capability of the people and systems in those areas - and it requires State Government to be clear about what objectives it expects local areas to meet and the standards people expect – especially in planning.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to working in partnership with Local Government to ensure the best planning outcomes for all NSW residents. The Department of Planning will be required to work mutually and constructively with

Local Government with particular emphasis on the regional offices in having a greater positive role and relationship between the Department and Local Government. In addition the NSW Liberals & Nationals will be seeking to engage other State agencies with Local Government in the planning processes and metropolitan and rural and regional strategies, including the State Plan.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will rewrite the State's planning laws. The *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* came into force more than 30 years ago. Since then it has become dysfunctional. The planning system does not provide the certainty that communities deserve and our economy needs. Most other Australian states have modernised their planning laws while ours have stagnated.

In recent years more and more approvals have been taken out of community view and decided by politicians – a recipe for collapse of public confidence in the system, and a blow to our reputation as a good place to invest.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to returning local planning powers to local communities (through their councils). We believe that local residents – through councils – are best placed to make local planning decisions affecting their suburbs. After all, it is local residents – not Macquarie Street planners – who have to live with the results of these planning decisions.

We will scrap 'Part 3A' – one of the wide-ranging powers NSW Labor has given its Planning Minister to override local communities and a factor that ICAC noted had contributed to corruption risks in the planning process.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will commence an overhaul of the planning system soon after March 2011. We will remove the politics from planning decisions. Our review will:

- ensure our planning system centres on merit and the public interest and re-empowers local communities on local planning issues;
- create a system that enjoys public support – with a state government that respects people;
- create a system that is modern, takes into account sustainability, gives certainty to investors and makes NSW competitive again, including a reserve power for genuinely state significant developments; and
- deliver certainty about planning rules and decision making processes that are made transparently and in a timely way.

The review will be conducted by an independent expert panel, with the aim of enacting legislation around the middle of our first term.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will unlock up to \$1 billion in funds for local councils to upgrade urban and economic infrastructure for roads, community halls, libraries, parks, sports grounds and water. In order to rebuild NSW and clear this infrastructure backlog, we recognise government needs to partner with councils who play such an important role in maintaining local amenities.

As part of our positive, practical plan a NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will provide Local Government with interest rate subsidies to encourage them to borrow sustainably to improve the State's neighbourhoods by:

- conduct a council-by-council audit of the local infrastructure backlog, so there is better information on where investment is needed;
- require NSW Treasury to provide an annual benchmark assessment of the appropriate gearing level for each council based on an audit of their finances;
- establish a Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme that will provide interest subsidies to local councils to assist in the cost of debt;
- require NSW Treasury to assess and approve applications for funding under the Scheme, including appropriate repayment schedules; and
- request grants or loan guarantees from the Commonwealth Government for those councils with existing moderate to high debt levels.

12. Strengthening the Community Sector

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will ensure government services are easier to access, simple and offer real time, up to date information for NSW residents through a Simpler Services Plan.

The Simpler Services Plan will ensure problems are handled fairly and efficiently, provide relevant, accurate information for users and reduce the number of hours wasted across the public service.

As part of the plan, there will be 16 pilot one-stop-shops across NSW where local residents will be able to access a broad range of services.

The NSW Government is arguably one of the most complex organisations in Australia and the NSW public are sick and tired of attempting to navigate their way through the numerous agencies.

In NSW there are 255 agencies, over 300 different customer information phone numbers, multiple shopfronts across different departments, hundreds of websites and thousands of 'contact us' email addresses.

It's no wonder families and residents across NSW find it difficult and time consuming to obtain basic information on government services or conduct a basic government transaction.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals believe accessing government services should be simple. Services should be designed with the customers' needs in mind, and in ways that are convenient for them.

Our Simpler Services Plan will overhaul the three significant customer access points:

- Internet: NSW Government 'apps' for mobile phones to enable users to obtain, free of charge, real time information on how to best access customer services;
- Telephone: Introduce a single NSW Government 24 hours, seven days a week, phone number providing callers with information about government services, help them resolve issues and complete a range of transactions over the phone; and
- Walk-in Centres: Pilot 16 one-stop-shops for federal, state and local government services across metropolitan and regional centres with the systems to offer a broader range of services.

At a one-stop-shop, services like renewing a driver's licence, renewing a fishing licence or registering a marriage will be available in the one location. The people of NSW work hard and they expect a government to match their efforts by providing services that are straightforward, simple and conducive to retrieving information and conducting transactions in a timely and convenient way.

The proliferation of technology including the internet, iphones and ipads means people want their information on an immediate basis and the Simpler Government Services plan maximises those technologies and ensures consumers can go about their business in an effective and productive way.

At the same time, telephone is still the most popular way for people to access NSW Government services information. So a 24 hour phone line will aid consumers in accessing information on a real time basis and combining this with the one-stop-shops, allowing face to face communications, will rejuvenate the government services industry.

People still desire face-to-face contact however they don't desire the long queues and the limitations in service delivery found at specific locations.

This plan will help businesses and families conveniently transact with government and build on existing facilities across the service industry.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals will restore trust and confidence in our public service, uphold the tenants of sound and accountable 'Westminster' government and rebuild the appeal and respect of a public service career.

In government the NSW Liberals & Nationals will establish a NSW Public Service Commission to improve the integrity, performance and accountability of the State's public sector workforce.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals value and respect the professionalism and service of dedicated public servants, and want to strengthen their ability to provide impartial and expert advice to the government of the day, respecting the best of our 'Westminster' traditions in public sector governance.