



The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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PREMIER LEADS MISSION TO LEBANON AND THE UAE

Barry O'Farrell will be the first NSW Premier to visit Lebanon in 15 years when he arrives in Beirut this weekend.

Mr O'Farrell will tour parts of Lebanon and hold high level meetings with senior government and religious leaders before visiting the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to promote trade and investment in NSW.

It will be Mr O'Farrell's third visit to Lebanon but his first as Premier. The week-long mission follows a recent visit to Australia by the President of Lebanon.

"I am delighted to be taking this trip and to seeing those familiar features of Lebanon that every Australian of Lebanese heritage thinks of when they think of the country," Mr O'Farrell said.

"Business links between New South Wales and Lebanon are well established but I am keen to work with Lebanese Australians and their contacts in Lebanon, to grow them even further.

"The NSW Government is committed to strengthening our economy by building our trade and investment relationships with key markets, such as the UAE.

"My role as Premier is to promote NSW as a stable destination for investment and to help develop ties that will open markets for NSW companies and deliver economic benefit for our State.

"The UAE is an important market for NSW because of its continuing growth and our complementary economies.

"According to the International Monetary Fund, the UAE's real GDP growth reached 4.9 per cent in 2011, a positive result given global economic uncertainty.

"Our commercial relationship with the UAE has a solid basis – bilateral trade between the UAE and NSW was worth almost \$504 million dollars in 2010-11, an increase of just over 150 per cent from 2005-06.

"There are more opportunities for growth, especially in sectors where NSW has strengths and expertise that are sought in the UAE, such as building and construction, financial services and food product manufacturing.

“The Middle East is forecast to spend \$1 trillion on large infrastructure projects in the next five to 10 years.

“This visit, which complements the work done by the NSW Trade & Investment office in Abu Dhabi, follows my successful missions to China and India last year which are part of a strategic effort by the NSW Government to lead regular delegations to key markets to drive economic growth in NSW,” Mr O’Farrell said.

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