

NATURAL ADVANTAGE

A 2011 NSW STATE ELECTION AGENDA FOR SAFEGUARDING THE BENEFITS OF NATURE



Founded in 1955, the **Nature Conservation Council of NSW** is the peak environment organisation for NSW, representing more than 100 community environment groups across the state. www.nccnsw.org.au



The **National Parks Association of NSW** is a not-for-profit conservation charity formed in 1957, seeking to protect, connect and restore the integrity and diversity of natural systems in NSW. NPA includes a network of 18 branches and more than 5,000 supporters. www.npansw.org.au



The **Total Environment Centre** was established in 1972 as an action and information centre. It has run more than 100 successful campaigns across city and country, protecting the environment and improving urban sustainability. It alerts society about environmental problems, provides solutions and works with the community, business and government on an independent and informed basis. www.tec.org.au



Established in 1976, The **Wilderness Society** is a national, community-based, not-for-profit environmental advocacy organisation whose purpose is to protect, promote and restore wilderness and natural processes across Australia for the survival and ongoing evolution of life on Earth. www.wilderness.org.au



The **Blue Mountains Conservation Society** is a voluntary organisation with approximately 900 members working to conserve the environment of the Blue Mountains since 1961. The Society runs conservation programs, a nursery, a bushcare group and a bushwalk programme. www.bluemountains.org.au



The **Colong Foundation** works to ensure all wilderness and large natural areas in Australia are protected, well managed and held in high public regard. The Foundation's campaigns have secured more than a million hectares of national parks, most of which is wilderness. www.colongwilderness.org.au

Authorised by Pepe Clarke, CEO, Nature Conservation Council of NSW
Level 2, 5 Wilson Street Newtown 2042

Printed on 100% recycled paper

NATURAL ADVANTAGE

The 2011 NSW election provides exciting opportunities for visionary environmental leadership.

There is broad and enduring public support for action to protect the environment. Government research consistently demonstrates that the public consider protection of the environment and sound management of natural resources to be a top priority for attention by the NSW government.¹

Our unique environment underpins the social and economic fabric of this state. Healthy ecosystems provide billions of dollars of goods and services essential for the wellbeing of local communities and businesses. Protecting and enhancing these services is pivotal to the future prosperity of NSW.

The advantages we enjoy from our wild places, agricultural lands, fresh air and clean water are under threat from extractive and polluting industries, climate change and unsustainable development. The NSW government has a critical leadership role to play in reducing carbon pollution, investing in natural infrastructure and restoring our environment to health.

This election platform draws on far reaching experience from across NSW to offer our vision for the state that sees the bold and necessary steps to safeguard the benefits we receive from nature. Government, business and the broader community are encouraged to take advantage of the extensive community consultation and independent research presented within this document.

NSW environmental groups have worked independently over past decades to identify the key areas where environmental, social and economic gains can be made and where opportunities lie for strategic investment, improved planning and positive environmental outcomes that will benefit our state now and into the future.

The leading environment groups of NSW call on all parties contesting the 2011 state election to:

1. Cut the NSW contribution to climate change and act on opportunities to **slash greenhouse pollution**.
2. **Invest in the benefits of nature** and build ecological resilience by protecting conservation corridors across the state.
3. Move out of native forest logging into sustainable plantations and **rule out burning our native forests for electricity**.
4. Secure and **restore long-term health to the rivers**, wetlands and catchments of NSW. Oppose the Tillegra Dam proposal.
5. **Expand marine sanctuaries** in poorly protected bioregions and manage fisheries to ensure sustainable fish stocks.
6. **Control pests and weeds to protect the rural environment** and the economy.
7. **Stop mining and gas expansion** until an environmental strategy is developed with full community and scientific input.
8. **Restore balance, integrity and legitimacy to the NSW planning and development process**.
9. **Reduce pollution and waste** through strong targets and best practice systems.
10. **Make our urban areas liveable and sustainable** by increasing energy and water savings, and expanding active and public transport amenities.

1. CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a serious threat to our environment and the economy. The NSW government must take real action to dramatically decrease greenhouse gas pollution. Taking action to reduce carbon pollution offers exciting opportunities for modernising the energy sector, by encouraging innovative technology development, new investment and the realisation of future-thinking energy supply and demand options. Importantly, lower emission fossil fuels, namely gas, should only be treated as short-term transition fuels and extraction locations and methods subject to rigorous public and environmental scrutiny.

Despite the adoption of a long-term emissions reduction target, action by the NSW government has, to date, proven inadequate. NSW carbon pollution continues to climb. Current proposals to approve two new polluting power stations and to establish a state-run coal mine to provide heavily subsidised coal for polluting power stations are both reckless and hypocritical. Calls by BHP Billiton to 'look beyond coal' provide a timely reminder for NSW to demonstrate international leadership in the transition away from polluting power sources.

NSW can supply reliable power while reducing its reliance on fossil fuels and staving off steep power prices hikes. A robust and secure energy future need not involve unnecessary spending of public money on additional coal-fired energy generation and subsidies to the coal industry. However, strategic investment is needed now to meet future demand through energy efficiency measures, new demand management policies and renewable energy generation to eventually replace coal power.

.....

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1.1. Prohibit new coal-fired power stations. | 1.6. Replace fossil fuel powered energy. Become a key partner to construct a 50 megawatt concentrated solar thermal plant within three years in the Central West of NSW - a site identified in the Beyond Zero Emissions plan. ² |
| 1.2. Commit to a 50% reduction in carbon emissions from 1990 levels by 2020 and develop a ten year plan to achieve this target. The plan, prepared by late 2011, will include annual milestones for emissions reductions, measurable actions and sufficient funding. | 1.7. Support growth and investment in renewable energy by reinstating an effective gross feed-in tariff and extend this tariff to commercial and industrial premises, public buildings and large-scale renewables for a further 10 years. |
| 1.3. Commit to a timetable for phasing out our most polluting power stations , consistent with the 50% emissions reduction target and milestones. | 1.8. Drive improvements in energy efficiency by supporting the increase of minimum performance standards on all new appliances, buildings and industrial processes, and extend the energy savings target program to electricity distributors. |
| 1.4. Review subsidies for fossil fuel use by June 2011 and redirect subsidies from polluting activities to non-polluting activities from the 2011-2012 budget onwards. Rule out the establishment of a state-run coal mine at Cobbora and immediately suspend any coal supply agreement that distorts energy markets by artificially reducing the price of coal. | 1.9. Strongly support reform of the National Electricity Market as recommended by the Energy Efficiency Taskforce. |
| 1.5. Encourage an economy wide application of renewable energy, increasing the state renewable energy target to 40% by 2020. | 1.10. Reduce emissions from the transport sector by adopting a minimum vehicle efficiency standard of 5 litres per 100 kilometres (130g CO ₂ /100km) for all new cars sold in NSW by 2015. Apply to government fleets within the next term of government. |

2. SPECIES, ECOSYSTEMS AND PROTECTED AREAS

One of the best investments NSW can make is in the protection of nature. Healthy, natural ecosystems provide billions of dollars worth of goods and services essential for the wellbeing of local communities and businesses in NSW. From erosion control and flood mitigation to clean water and fresh fish, natural ecosystems underpin the social and economic fabric of this state.

The environment is consistently rated by NSW residents to be of huge importance. Failure to invest in sound management of land and natural resources imposes huge costs on local communities, particularly in rural areas, and increases vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change. Wilderness areas in particular are essential storehouses of ecological integrity and resilience.

The NSW government has overseen the continuing decline of the state's natural environment and biodiversity for too long. There is an urgent need for the implementation of on-ground plans to restore the full range of services provided by our natural ecosystems, protect remaining wilderness and connect wildlife corridors across the state. This will significantly enhance resilience to the predicted impacts of climate change and will enrich our natural assets into the future.

.....

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>2.1. Invest in nature, by increasing public expenditure on nature conservation, restoration and park management to 5% of the NSW Budget.</p> <p>2.2. Ban development within threatened species habitat and endangered ecological communities under the <i>Threatened Species Conservation Act</i>.</p> <p>2.3. Continue to build a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system by establishing new protected areas in accordance with the NSW National Parks Establishment Plan, as well as reserving Gardens of Stone (Stage 2), and converting Dharawal Conservation Area to National Park. Seek World Heritage Area inscription of the NSW eucalyptus diversity hotspots.</p> <p>2.4. Retain the <i>Wilderness Act 1987</i>, protect remaining threatened wilderness on the east coast, particularly in the Deua Valley and all Dunphy Wilderness Fund lands. Progress protection of wilderness in the Pilliga, the Western Division and through the voluntary acquisition of 75,000 hectares of wilderness.</p> <p>2.5. Allocate \$60 million to the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water for the purchase and secure protection of the very highest conservation value leases.</p> | <p>2.6. Prohibit recreational hunting in State Forests and Crown lands to protect native fauna and visitor safety. Abolish the Game Council and redirect these public funds towards licensing and scientifically credible feral animal control programs within a government agency.</p> <p>2.7. Preserve National Parks Estate by prohibiting inappropriate tourism developments and firewood collection. Guarantee mining, logging and grazing will not be allowed in National Parks.</p> <p>2.8. Facilitate establishment of indigenous protected areas and support indigenous co-management of National Parks.</p> <p>2.9. Enhance natural resilience to climate change by supporting large-scale conservation initiatives to protect and restore natural connectivity in the landscape, using voluntary private conservation, reservation and land use planning (e.g. Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, travelling stock routes).</p> <p>2.10. Facilitate conservation on private land by rewarding landowners for voluntary private conservation by providing ongoing support for revolving funds and extending rates exemptions to all land covered by perpetual conservation covenants.</p> |
|--|--|

3. FORESTS AND NATIVE VEGETATION

The native forest industry in Australia is on the verge of massive change. A collapse in markets, brought on by the global financial crisis, and a market shift towards sustainably sourced products is changing the way that Australia thinks about and manages its native forests. Australia's largest woodchipping company, Gunns Limited, has recently signed an agreement to rapidly exit native forest logging, and is in talks with conservationists and government about a transition to a sustainable forest future.

Dean Sewell

In NSW, an overwhelming majority of logged native forest ends up as low-value woodchips, with small amounts of value adding and high levels of controversy. Native forests provide far greater value for their ecosystem services and long-term carbon storage. As we move towards a low carbon economy, our naturally carbon dense native forests will become increasingly valuable.

Following a collapse in the woodchip market, chippers globally are looking to 'biomass' electricity generation – burning forests for power – as a business opportunity. Analysis has shown this process produces significantly more carbon pollution than coal-fired power plants, releasing vast amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere and exacerbating the costs of climate change.

This is the time for NSW to commit to ending native forest logging, reject proposals to burn native forests for power and protect and restore the state's once great forest corridors. In taking these steps, NSW can realise the benefits of its forests and their role as vital habitat for native plants and wildlife, in storing carbon and in reducing the impacts of flood and drought on local communities.

.....

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- 3.1. **End native forest logging**, with a rapid transition to plantation sourced timber, with the exception of high value speciality timbers and the cutting of timber by landowners for non-commercial use on their own land. Deliver a structural adjustment package for industries and communities dependent upon native forest logging.
- 3.2. **Prohibit burning of native forests for electricity**, immediately halting any plans for the Eden native forest biomass plant.
- 3.3. **Support further development of plantations on a socially acceptable and ecologically sustainable basis**, ensuring plantation establishment does not result in the destruction or conversion of natural ecosystems or prime agricultural land.
- 3.4. Place an **immediate moratorium on further private native forestry approvals** and review the management practises of those currently in place, including a logging prohibition on all slopes above 18 degrees, within stream buffer areas and in old growth and rainforest areas.
- 3.5. **Address systemic compliance failures in logging industry** by improving resources for compliance.
- 3.6. **Protect native forests on public land** and manage these areas for conservation.
- 3.7. Ensure that the management of **private native forestry** remains the responsibility of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.
- 3.8. **Maintain existing controls on broad scale land clearing** contained in the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* and ensure these controls apply to large lot residential zoning. Reduce 'routine agricultural management' loopholes especially for rural residential and other small peri-urban coastal lots.
- 3.9. **Prevent illegal land clearing** through strengthened compliance powers and increased investment in monitoring and enforcement.
- 3.10. Maintain the independence and statutory roles and functions of the **Natural Resources Commission**, responsible to the Premier.

4. RIVERS, WETLANDS AND CATCHMENTS

Rivers and wetlands in NSW are under critical stress due to a history of unsustainable water extraction. The Murray Darling Basin has lost 90% of its wetlands and native fish populations, and 80% of its waterbird populations and River Red Gums. In light of this, the Murray Darling Basin Plan provides an opportunity to secure the long-term future health of the Basin through reducing consumptive water use in the Murray Darling Basin. The NSW government has an important implementation role and must cooperate with the Federal government to achieve a healthy river system for its dependant communities and environment.

Coal and gas extraction are increasingly posing threats to surface and groundwater flows in rural and regional NSW. The impact of climate change will only further exacerbate the situation and increase the degradation. Commitment to water reform in NSW is necessary to conserve ecosystem health and the biodiversity of our rivers and wetlands in the face of new and emerging threats.

The NSW community is looking to move past archaic forms of water management. This is exemplified through the breadth and depth of community and industry opposition to the Tillegra Dam proposal – a dam that threatens to destroy the Williams River, the internationally recognised Hunter Estuary wetlands and the flow-dependant local fishing and prawning industries.

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 4.1. Cooperate with the Federal Government to implement the Murray Darling Basin Plan , restoring health to the rivers and wetlands of the basin by ensuring environmental water is an allocation priority. | 4.6. Publicly oppose the construction of the Tillegra Dam , cease any related planning process and advocate for the development of a sustainable water management plan for the Lower Hunter. |
| 4.2. Reform the Water Management Act 2000 and Water Sharing Plans to ensure allocation to environmental flows are prioritised and restore river health. | 4.7. Maintain and strengthen the Coastal Wetlands (SEPP 14) , protecting wetlands from clearing, draining, filling and levee construction. |
| 4.3. Provide appropriate resources for enforcement to ensure protection of floodwaters to replenish rivers and wetlands through the implementation of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy. | 4.8. Expand the NSW coastal wetland reserve establishment program by increasing the acquisition target to 10,000 ha per year for 10 years, ensuring a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve network for protecting wetland and estuarine biodiversity and fish breeding habitat. |
| 4.4. Support strategic purchases of land and water licences in key environmental asset sites within the Murray Darling Basin . | 4.9. Protect coastal lakes from pollution through the removal of stormwater runoff drains and sewerage flows. |
| 4.5. Address the urgent need for improved wetland mapping – including vegetation, threatened species, native fish habitat and protected areas. | 4.10. Increase investment in catchment restoration , including funding for Catchment Management Authorities. |

5. MARINE CONSERVATION

The NSW marine environment is home to thousands of different species of aquatic plants and wildlife. A unique mixing of coastal currents means that about 80% of these marine plants and animals are found only in Australian waters. But these plants and animals are under threat. Overfishing, pollution, climate change, introduced marine pests, emerging diseases, inappropriate development and lack of adequate protection are all putting our marine wildlife at risk. With only 6.7% of NSW marine waters completely protected in sanctuary zones, there is an urgent need to improve the protection of marine species and ecosystems, particularly in the poorly represented Hawkesbury Shelf bioregion between Newcastle and Wollongong.

Sharks are under particular threat. The shark take in NSW is still significantly higher than historical averages, despite knowledge of the vulnerability of sharks to overfishing. A recent independent review of shark fishing in the NSW Ocean Trap and Line fishery found that "neither the registered 2008/09 nor the potential 2008/09 catch can be considered as precautionary".

The benefits of implementing sustainable fishing practices reach much further than shark and marine protection. Only by ensuring fisheries and the marine environment are managed in an ecologically sustainable manner will NSW be able to enjoy a socially and economically sustainable commercial seafood industry and a thriving recreational fishing sector into the future.

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 5.1. Expand sanctuary zones in existing marine parks , including the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay Marine Parks. | 5.7. Create a 1,500 metre radius sanctuary zone at all critical habitat and aggregation areas for grey nurse sharks , including Fish Rock/Green Island, Mermaid Reef, Magic Point and Bass Point. |
| 5.2. Establish large marine sanctuaries in the poorly protected Hawkesbury Shelf bioregion . | 5.8. Establish a framework and timeframe to move towards true ecosystem-based and precautionary fisheries management to prevent any further decline in marine ecosystems and promote their recovery. |
| 5.3. Double current investment in protection and restoration of estuarine and coastal fisheries habitat. | 5.9. Prepare an environmental impact statement and fishery management strategy for the NSW recreational fishery to ensure fisheries management decisions are made on an informed basis and the state's recreational fishery moves towards sustainability. |
| 5.4. Double current investment in marine conservation science and public education programs . | 5.10. Commit to quantifying by-catch in all commercial fisheries , including this in fishery assessments and fisheries status reports. Develop a clear strategy and timeframe for continued reduction of by-catch to minimal levels. |
| 5.5. End trawling in marine parks . | |
| 5.6. Reduce pressure on declining shark populations by prohibiting targeted shark fishing . | |

6. RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT

Since prickly pear forced farmers off their land in the nineteenth century, the list of invasive alien plants in Australia has grown to more than 2700, a figure that climbs by at least 10 new species every year. Weeds displace native species and transform ecosystems. Almost half the state's threatened species are being further jeopardised by weed invasion, while the damage bill faced by Australian agriculture alone has been put at \$4 billion a year.

Despite posing a huge threat to both our economy and our natural environment, most invasive plants in Australia are not regulated and continue to be planted and introduced to new areas. With more cyclones, droughts, fires and floods under climate change, and native species under stress, weed invasions are likely to get much worse. A much stronger focus on prevention is required as many of Australia's weeds are in a very early stage of invasion or not yet spreading. NSW needs to control weeds in a prioritised way, protecting the economy and biodiversity³.

Feral animals have wreaked massive environmental damage on Australia's unique mammals. Rabbits, foxes and cats are ranked as Australia's worst pests, wild pigs have become major agricultural and environmental problems, and deer escaping from poorly-managed or failed deer farms are out of control in NSW. Recreational hunting is proving not to be an effective pest control method, and changes are needed ensure control is based on science, not hunting seasons.

The *Pesticides Act* is a key tool in reducing spray drift affecting farms and people, providing public accountability and up-skilling operators. With the emergence of a substantial and increasing organics industry, rural land management must be regulated within this Act, as the risks to export trade from contamination of cattle, risks to clean organic certification and natural ecosystems are at stake.

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 6.1. Restrict new plant introductions to those assessed as low risk. | 6.7. Administer recreational hunting in a cost effective manner by abolishing the Game Council and administer the licensing system using a government agency, ensuring licenses are issued according to correct procedures and standards. |
| 6.2. Double funding to respond to key invasive threats and fund cross agency implementation of scientifically credible weed and feral animal control programs. | 6.8. Increase resources available for the implementation of the <i>Pesticides Act</i> , its associated educational programs and compliance regime. |
| 6.3. Identify priority outcomes, and establish and resource regional authorities to implement weed plans . | 6.9. Raise the profile of sustainable fire management practices within the existing legislative framework by developing management targets that advance biodiversity conservation outcomes. |
| 6.4. Increase investment in research and educational programs for ecologically sound eradication of invasive species. | 6.10. Develop and fund a native grasslands stewardship program through training and information on and support for best practice native pasture management. |
| 6.5. Implement the recommendations made by the Invasive Species Council to make weed management 'core business' with standardised weed mapping, reporting systems, and a cross agency approach. | |
| 6.6. Declare and control deer as a pest species to protect the environment. | |

7. MINING AND GAS

Opposition to mining and gas extraction in NSW is growing as the industry expands and its impacts are better understood. NSW residents are watching new mining and gas extraction projects being approved at an increasing rate across the state, and are increasingly confronted with threats to water quality and availability, air quality, health, food production and other productive industries. Mining creates permanent, destructive changes to natural systems, contributing to significant levels of vegetation clearing, land degradation, biodiversity fragmentation, loss of groundwater-dependent ecosystems and the break down of communities.

Expansion of coal mining and exploration for coal seam methane (CSM) are limiting safe and sustainable jobs and reducing revenue from other more sustainable industries. The short-term profits and substantial revenue delivered from mining does not justify the harm to natural resources and ecosystems that provide essential services to our growing communities, such as safe clean drinking water and productive agricultural land.

BHP recently decided to indefinitely delay longwall mining operations in the Dharawal Conservation Area due to environmental and community concerns. This demonstrates industry leadership, and highlights an area where government can lift the bar and strengthen legislation on mining developments in line with environmental and community interests.

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- 7.1. **Establish areas in NSW that are off limits to open cut and longwall mining** and CSM extraction based on environmental, water supply and agricultural values.
- 7.2. Ensure **mining operations accessing water** are required to obtain an existing water licence from the affected water resource area.
- 7.3. **Protect the health of residents** living in coal affected regions, by introducing and enforcing standards for fine particulate pollution (PM_{2.5}) based on the best available science and with consideration of the cumulative health impacts from multiple emission sources.
- 7.4. Mandate a **safety zone of at least one kilometre around all rivers**, wetlands and significant swamp clusters in the state, to protect them from further permanent damage through the effects of mining under, or too close to, water courses.
- 7.5. **Impose a moratorium on CSM extraction** while an environmental strategy for CSM is developed with full community and independent scientific input.
- 7.6. **Prohibit CSM extraction in Sydney's drinking water catchment and State Conservation Areas** across NSW.
- 7.7. Make mining proposals and activities subject to the provisions of the ***Native Vegetation Act 2003***.
- 7.8. Ensure comprehensive **environmental assessment and restore public participation and accountability** by exclude mining proposals from Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and reforming the *Mining and Petroleum Act*.
- 7.9. Act to **reduce carbon emissions** by immediately ceasing to approve any coal mines and coal exports, and undertake the development of alternative industries within a just transitions package for coal-dependent communities.
- 7.10. Negotiate **mining industry funded rehabilitation for derelict mines** in NSW.

8. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

It is time to restore balance, integrity and legitimacy into the NSW planning process. Time and time again, the process is shown to favour financial outcomes for private development, to close out meaningful community participation in decision making, and to use environmental assessments with discretion. The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) is demonstrably failing the community on the largest public infrastructure projects with the greatest impacts.

NSW is struggling to respect the state's commitment to the principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD), where present development needs are met without compromising future generations, and where environmental, economic and social considerations are integrated within decision making. There are vast opportunities and benefits to be realised from a whole of government approach where all development approvals satisfy the guiding principle of ESD across all departments for a sustainable and well-planned NSW.

An improved regime for assessing major public infrastructure, with early engagement and input from local communities, will improve decision-making processes and local community acceptance of proposals. Comprehensive assessment and consideration of climate change contributions into strategic planning would vastly improve sustainable outcomes, as would the introduction of best practice criteria to be met in order for developments to proceed.

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- 8.1. **Reform planning legislation** to ensure strategic planning and development outcomes are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.
- 8.2. Mandate **genuine, open and early public consultation** both on strategic planning processes and development assessment processes.
- 8.3. **Mandate minimum requirements for environmental assessment** to ensure all assessments under the EP&A Act are comprehensive, objective and conducted by independent accredited experts.
- 8.4. **Restore public participation and accountability** to the planning system by replacing Part 3A with a transparent, accountable and sustainable process for comprehensively assessing the impacts of major public infrastructure projects.
- 8.5. Conduct an **independent review** the EP&A Act every five years to assess the effective implementation of ESD, with significant stakeholder and community consultation.
- 8.6. Develop **landscape-scale environmental assessment methodologies** designed for assessment and planning decisions based on robust and objective scientific criteria consistent with the objects of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act*.
- 8.7. Amend the EP&A Act to make ESD its primary objective, and explicitly require the Minister to **consider climate change mitigation and adaptation** when assessing major projects. Climate change considerations must also inform strategic and local planning.
- 8.8. **Restore the concurrence role of state agencies in planning decisions**, including the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.
- 8.9. **Ensure appropriate judicial oversight** of planning decisions, and expand third party appeal rights.

9. POLLUTION AND WASTE

NSW could move rapidly towards becoming a waste free society, where waste products are effectively collected and re-used to produce other necessary goods. Many residents are eager to dispose of waste products ethically and to know they are contributing to a solution rather than a problem. There is also increasing consumer demand for products made from recycled materials.

However, the volume of waste being produced in NSW is increasing, while the diversion of waste from landfill is only growing slowly, representing a growth in pollution, and wasted resources and energy. Demands for unsustainable landfill space grow, while strong policies for recycling facilities are comparatively non-existent. And while no-one wants our environment to be treated as one big garbage tip, pollution continues to pour into the air and waterways, and urban run-off continues to degrade natural assets.

There are opportunities for NSW to move against the pollution trends and towards the waste-free vision, building on successes and combating current limitations. For example, the significant advances in the construction and demolition area highlight the need for improvement in dealing with commercial and organic municipal wastes. The market signal of the landfill levy has not worked well for more complex products such as e-waste, or where the financial incentive is thinly spread within the municipal and commercial sectors. A second tier of recycling drop-off centres could reduce contamination of paper and plastic recyclables and maximise recovery of problem products by receiving beverage containers, e-waste, gas bottles and batteries.

.....

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 9.1. Adopt international best practice for vehicle emissions standards for all new cars sold in NSW by 2015. | cause potentially recyclable wastes to be sent landfill. |
| 9.2. Advance pollution reduction plans for industrial precincts through major reviews of pollution licences and the imposition of advanced practice. | 9.6. Separate clean organics for compost, or energy production from residual organics. |
| 9.3. Rapidly expand product stewardship programs either at the state level or pressed at the national level via the Environment Protection and Heritage Council, recovering and recycling products in an environmentally sound manner. | 9.7. Encourage new commercial waste recovery operations for packaging and organics. |
| 9.4. Introduce a modern container deposit system led by NSW at the state level to support hundreds of convenient waste product drop-off centres. | 9.8. Increase existing state wide targets for reducing waste to 80% by 2020. |
| 9.5. Remove from kerbside collected waste key contaminating materials such as glass, batteries and gas bottles/canisters which | 9.9. Direct all revenue from the waste levy to environmental purposes, including establishment of recycling infrastructure. |
| | 9.10. Set licence limits for all pollutants emitted from facilities holding pollution licenses, reflecting the sensitivity of the receiving environment and established environmental standards such as ANZECC guidelines. |

10. URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

There is an urgent need for a coordinated strategy for urban land use, building design, transport planning, and public transport infrastructure in NSW. Moving towards urban sustainability will ensure a fair share of fresh air, clean water, well-designed infrastructure, recreational parks, people friendly places, good health and future opportunities. It can inspire innovative places of the future to include rooftop gardens, car free suburbs, water recycling and six-star buildings.

In NSW, road building is the most expensive option per passenger kilometre travelled, and leads to inner city health risks and environmental harm. Alternatively, investing in public and active transport makes good economic sense and has positive flow-on outcomes for welfare and health budgets. Increasing access to adequate public transport services and safe walking and cycling will make our urban areas more liveable, cut petrochemical smog, provide jobs and reduce social exclusion.

The urban commercial and residential building sectors offer significant potential for achieving necessary deep cuts in carbon pollution, reducing energy demand and increasing the energy efficiency of buildings. Policy frameworks and incentives must be established to facilitate innovation in building design and to encourage the alteration, retrofitting and rebuilding of our current building stock to achieve more sustainable outcomes.

We call on all parties contesting the 2011 NSW election to take action in the next term of government to:

- 10.1. **Secure a significant increase in energy and water savings** by extending the 40 % reduction required under the Building Sustainability Index (BASIX) scheme to new commercial, high rise residential and industrial buildings, including the use of co and tri-generation to achieve six-star buildings. Remove 'appliance' loopholes.
- 10.2. Reform the basis of rates, charges and levies imposed on residential and commercial building owners to **encourage retrofitting and investment in energy efficient buildings** to meet high environmental standards.
- 10.3. **Guarantee desalination will not be used to meet Sydney's water supply needs when water storage levels are above 30%**, recognising it is a costly and energy intensive source of urban water supply.
- 10.4. **Reduce unnecessary water consumption** by reinstating water wise rules and significantly expanding the recycling target.
- 10.5. Commit to an **urgent rebalancing of the transport budget**, combining it with the roads budget and ensuring two thirds are spent on public and active transport and one third spent on roads.
- 10.6. Produce a **10 year plan** in 2011 to double the number of trips taken on public transport, triple the number of cycling trips and quadruple the number of walking trips, meeting annual targets.
- 10.7. Commit, within a **planned roll out of public transport projects** for Sydney, to prioritise the construction of the Northwest rail line and several light rail lines, including Barangaroo to Green Square and Central to University of New South Wales.
- 10.8. Recognise the essential ecosystem services provided through biodiverse urban spaces and plan for the reservation and enhancement of appropriate **urban bushland spaces** within dense areas.
- 10.9. Commit funds **for new urban design research**, exploring potential to minimise the further expansion of urban areas by increasing density, amenity and public transport in existing areas.

ENDNOTES

¹ Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (2010) *Who cares about the environment?* URL: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/community/201056_WhoCares09.pdf, accessed 1 November 2010.

² Beyond Zero Emissions Zero Carbon Australia Stationary Energy Plan, URL: http://media.beyondzeroemissions.org/ZCA2020_Stationary_Energy_Report_v1.pdf, accessed 3 October 2010.

³ Invasive Species Council (2010) *Stop NSW's Creeping Peril: A community call for action on weeds* URL: <http://www.invasives.org.au/page.php?nameIdentifier=reportstoppingnswcreepingperil>, accessed 3 October 2010.