

PROTECT NATURE

OUR \$4 BILLION PLAN TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Nature in NSW is under attack. Land clearing and deforestation are out of control, koalas are on the brink of extinction and climate change threatens biodiversity. Our river systems are sick and our soils depleted. Urban expansion, mining and invasive species all add to the pressure on our ecosystems.

We need an historic investment to protect and enhance our natural environment for future generations. That is why the Greens have a plan to overhaul inadequate laws and spend \$4 billion over the next four years on biodiversity conservation. That's just 1% of government revenue.

The plan would be partly paid for through a 1% Environmental Levy on all building and construction work in the state worth more than \$1 million, including mines, infrastructure and new housing developments. This levy is expected to raise approximately \$500 million per year.

THE GREENS \$4 BILLION PLAN INCLUDES:

- A \$1.5 billion Land and Biodiversity Fund to end deforestation and reward farmers and land managers for protecting native vegetation
- \$2 billion for a historic expansion of protected areas, rebuilding the National Parks and Wildlife Service and end to public native forest logging
- \$300 million to promote the cultural management of country through expanding Aboriginal Land and Sea Ranger Programs
- \$200 million to tackle weeds, feral animals and other invasive species

\$1.5 BILLION LAND AND BIODIVERSITY FUND

TO END DEFORESTATION AND REWARD FARMERS AND LAND MANAGERS FOR PROTECTING NATIVE VEGETATION

1. Overhaul laws which have allowed out-of-control land clearing

The Liberal Party, led by the Nationals, have created legal loopholes and established exemptions that permit virtually unrestrained land-clearing, reversing decades of proven environmental protections for native bushland.

Land clearing has tripled since the laws were scrapped in 2017 and more than 10 million native animals are dying each year in NSW as a direct result of the bulldozing of forests and bushland. Land clearing risks 99% of

remaining koala habitat on private land and could increase annual tree loss across the state by up to 45%. These laws need to be immediately repealed.

2. Protect remnant vegetation in law

Our remnant vegetation and high conservation value regrowth must be protected against clearing for agriculture, urban development, infrastructure and mining, with genuine enforcement and meaningful penalties for non-compliance. This protection needs to be written into law so that it cannot be scrapped with the stroke of a pen by a future government.

The Greens will prioritise updated, rigorous and powerful legislation to protect existing native vegetation and biodiversity, impose a positive duty upon government to enhance biodiversity and ensure that any clearing is strictly limited to small-scale maintenance activities that have low ecological impacts. This cannot be achieved without the release of native vegetation mapping and the release of transparent and regular data. This data should be easily accessible and show the state of native vegetation across the state, including areas and types of clearing and regrowth and greenhouse gas emissions estimates.

As with all legislation, it will only be successful if there is adequate funding for compliance and enforcement. The Greens support increased funding for the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to this end.

3. Restrict code-base clearing and dodgy biodiversity offsetting

Self-assessed clearing approvals and permissive offsetting have made a mockery of our biodiversity laws. These policies are designed to allow mining companies, farmers and big property developers to clear precious, environmentally sensitive land quickly and cheaply. Biodiversity offsetting should only be available as a last resort, have clear environmental outcomes and areas of high conservation value should be off limits completely to clearing. Supplementary measures such as payments into the Biodiversity Trust when similar offsets can't be found are a blatant rort and must immediately be scrapped.

We will restore the checks and balances through a return to robust, evidence-based mandatory assessment.

4. Pay farmers and land managers to protect trees and restore the landscape.

Private landholders, under either freehold or Crown leasehold, manage over 85% of the land in NSW making conservation on private land one of the most important elements of biodiversity protection. Farmers also recognise the significant benefits that conservation

works, such as planting vegetation corridors and fencing off waterways, can have for the sustainability of their farm including preventing erosion and salinity and providing shelter for stock.

The Greens will dedicate funds to protect remnant vegetation, support conservation and back our farmers in carbon-farming projects. The flagship Land and Biodiversity Fund recognises the environmental stewardship of NSW farmers and landholders by funding best practice land management. \$1 billion over four years will be allocated to farmers for on-ground works, such as revegetation, landscape repair, protection of existing biodiversity, carbon-farming and sequestration initiatives and the prevention of the spread of invasive species.

We need to better recognise and resource farmers and land-holders as partners in environmental management, and provide funding to recovery projects for threatened species, support biodiversity conservation, and tackle invasive species. Innovative landscape conservation means secure, sustainable regional jobs in land restoration and carbon

5. Create jobs in land restoration and carbon sequestration.

The Land and Biodiversity Fund will dedicate a further \$500 million to priority conservation works on public and private lands, creating regional jobs and building local capacity in land restoration, carbon farming and landscape management. Investing in conservation management parks and reserves creates sustainable regional jobs and contributes skills, expertise and resilience to local economies.

6. Retain and conserve Crown land.

Crown land is dedicated in perpetuity to the people of NSW, and should be managed to protect and enhance its values for future generations. Significant Crown land estates contribute to the state's biodiversity and natural integrity, and must be retained to ensure this function is protected.

6. Do not raise the Warragamba Dam Wall

We will continue to oppose the current NSW Government plans to flood the magnificent Blue Mountains World Heritage Wilderness by raising the Warragamba Dam wall 14 metres. The resulting inundations of the Kowmung and surrounding rivers will decimate the ecological integrity of this wilderness and threatens the survival of 48 endangered plant and animal species.

\$2 BILLION FOR A HISTORIC EXPANSION OF PROTECTED AREAS,

REBUILDING THE NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE AND AN END TO NATIVE FOREST LOGGING

1. End to native forest logging on public land within 3 years and transfer all existing State Forests to the National Parks estate or into the care and control of Native Title holders.

We will ensure that the remaining public native forests achieve their highest value use in the shift from logging to conservation, recreation, tourism and education. Nature-based tourism brings an incredible 28.3 million visitors to NSW every year, who contribute \$19.6 billion in spending to the NSW economy. Rich and thriving ecosystems provide services critical to our wellbeing, including the physical, mental and spiritual health benefits of spending time in nature. We will manage the new parks as a mix of protected areas with categories for Aboriginal culture, conservation, recreation, education and ecotourism.

The end of native forest logging will also be accompanied by a fair adjustment package for affected forestry workers, including assistance for education and retraining to work in the new parks management and ecotourism roles that will open up from an expanded national park estate.

2. Increase National Parks and Wildlife Budget by \$150 million per annum.

Our network of national parks and reserves - once the envy of the world - has been decimated under the NSW Liberal Government. One in 3 frontline staff have been sacked, funding has been slashed by \$120 million per year, and declarations of new reserves have slowed to a crawl. This is a slow moving death for our precious, irreplaceable natural areas.

Frontline environmental managers have the local expertise and experience to properly manage our parks. The Greens will ensure a \$150 million per year addition to the existing National Parks and Wildlife service budget to restore the capacity of this agency. This is an important investment in sustainable regional jobs and resilient local economies, while improving everyone's access to thriving natural places. We will also restore the National Parks and Wildlife Services as a stand-alone agency.

3. Ban burning native forests for electricity, 30 metre riparian buffer for plantations and private forestry

Burning forests to generate electricity accelerates climate change. It reduces the valuable carbon sequestration of our forests and releases more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than burning coal. This is an ill-conceived and deeply destructive attempt to revive the declining economic viability of industrial logging of our native forests, when a shift in use is a clearly superior economic and environmental alternative.

4. Invest in a network of protected areas

The expansion of the National Parks estate has effectively stopped under the Coalition, with a 95% decline in annual additions. The Greens will invest in a network of protected areas linked by corridors, that is comprehensive, adequate and representative, and protects our state's biological diversity and natural heritage for future generations. We support a target of 17% of the state protected and funded by 2030. This would include:

- Protecting the world-renowned Gardens of Stone from coal mining.

This 39,000 hectare reserve will be a world-class conservation and eco-tourism development in an area in need of rapid economic diversification. The reserve will protect the incredibly rich landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage of this area, including the ancient and globally significant pagoda landscapes, and the habitat for its 84 threatened plant and animal species.

5. Achieve World Heritage Status for the Australian Alps.

The outstanding natural and cultural values of the Australian Alps and the eucalypt forests deserve to be recognised at a global level. This region has been nominated for possible World Heritage inclusion for 20 years, and this elevated status is long overdue.

6. Prohibit environmentally destructive activities in National Parks.

National Parks serve a critically important role in protecting our natural assets, but this can be compromised by inappropriate activities or uses of these areas. The Greens will categorically rule out inappropriate infrastructure developments, easements, logging, amateur hunting and grazing within NSW National Park boundaries. We will move to revoke the National Party's ridiculous bill that protects feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park which are destroying our precious and fragile alpine ecosystems.

\$300 MILLION TO PROMOTE THE CULTURAL MANAGEMENT OF COUNTRY

THROUGH EXPANDING ABORIGINAL LAND AND SEA RANGER PROGRAMS

Expanding First Nations Ranger Programs and Joint Management of Protected Area programs improves the health of our natural heritage and the lives, wellbeing and health of First Nations people. We will ensure the NSW Government matches the federal investment in Aboriginal Land and Sea Rangers, identifies new opportunities for joint management agreements, and actively promotes Aboriginal leadership in the management of the national parks and nature reserves. By embedding Aboriginal traditional knowledge, cultural values and custodial responsibilities to the land and waters in the way we manage national parks and reserves, we get tangible environmental benefits and better social, cultural and economic outcomes for First Nations people.

\$200 MILLION TO TACKLE INVASIVE SPECIES

Alongside climate change and habitat loss, one of the greatest threats to biodiversity is the rampant proliferation of invasive species. The Greens will launch our \$200 million Integrated Invasive Species program on 14 March. It includes:

- Repeal legislation protecting feral horses and implement a humane, professional cull of feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park.
- Comprehensive statewide mapping and clear targets for eradication or containment of feral animal populations and noxious weed incursions
- Investment in research into non-lethal feral animal control
- A dedicated \$5 million to a High Risk Incursion Response Fund
- Three yearly State of Biosecurity reporting
- A 'permitted list' approach to the sale of plants
- An Independent, statutory State Biosecurity Committee
- Joint responsibility for biosecurity between the Agriculture and Environment Ministers.