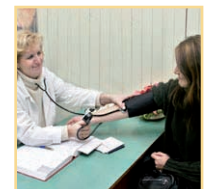




The Liberal Party's Policy and Plans
for Victoria for the 2006 State Election
www.vic.liberal.org.au

A LIBERAL GOVERNMENT PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

**“LET’S GET
VICTORIA
MOVING
AGAIN.”**



A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future

Background

The Liberal Party has a strongly held tradition of providing sustainable, long-term plans for Victoria's environment.

Leadership from the Hamer Government 25 years ago has set the foundation for the protection of Victoria's environment for decades.

This tradition has not been upheld over the past seven years.

Victoria now spends less per hectare and per capita on the management of our parks than any other State or Territory in Australia.

The quality and integrity of our national parks and reserves are suffering.

We are faced with one of the longest spells of drought in Victorian history, yet in seven years there has been no real action to build on alternative water sources and savings – for the sake of both the environment and the population.

We are in the midst of a growing international push to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, yet Labor has a policy which deliberately impairs the development of many clean energy generators.

We universally support the environmental value of our food growing regions, yet Labor proposes a toxic waste dump in the middle of the Sunraysia region.

The past seven years have been full of contradictions for the Victorian environment – a lot of spin, glossy brochures and media opportunities, but when it comes to the decisions which really define our environmental future, the Victorian environment has been left without any representation or meaningful action.

Policy objectives

A Liberal Government's Plan for a Sustainable Future will address the issues that face Victoria now and in the future.

This policy will provide the incentives and directions necessary for Victoria to answer some of the most pressing environmental issues of our time.

We recognise that good environmental policy is more than rhetoric – it is fundamentally linked to a sustainable future for Victoria. What is the position of Victoria's environment in 50 years, 100 years and beyond?

A Liberal Government will ensure that Victoria is economically competitive but environmentally responsible.

We will lower greenhouse gas emissions – but still ensure the viability of our economy.

We will protect our forests – but provide for a high-quality and sustainable forestry industry.

We will provide for state-wide use of recycled water – but preserve the safety and health of each and every Victorian.

Most of all, we will instil in each Victorian, the knowledge that we are following the best path – one based on knowledge, vision and stability.

Labor Failings

- **Failed Deputy Premier** – Environment Minister and Deputy Premier John Thwaites has consistently failed to exercise any sway over Labor decision-making in big environmental decisions. On water – he has comprehensively failed to do anything for 7 years – preferring to rely on cobbled together pipe dreams. On greenhouse gas, he has failed to secure reduced emissions through the Victorian Renewable Energy Target – preferring to rely on an arbitrary, inefficient target for generators. When it comes to competing interests in the Labor Party room, John Thwaites has proved to be ineffective at advocating for the environment
- **Failure to secure our water future** - Melbourne water catchments are now at their lowest level in nine years. Labor has claimed that there is 22% less water use since they were elected – the truth is that figure is from the mid 1990's. On October 8 2006, the Liberal Party announced our policy to include third pipe technology in all new large estates. Labor is again playing catch-up through City West Water's announcement that third pipe will be implemented in December this year
- **Failure of transparency** – Labor's solution to the water crisis is the transfer of recycled water to the Latrobe Valley to be used by industry – but they have failed to release the study which shows Victorians how feasible the plan would actually be
- **Failure to keep promises** – In 2002 Labor promised to upgrade the Eastern Treatment Plant – before being delayed indefinitely. Now, just weeks before an election, Labor have again promised to upgrade the Eastern Treatment Plant as part of the Eastern Water Recycling Proposal
- **Dumping sewerage into the ocean** - Gunnamatta sewerage outfall discharges 430 million litres of partially treated sewerage each day (42% of Melbourne's sewerage flow) into the ocean near Rye, leading to an unsightly brown algae plume and unacceptable levels of bacteria and organisms
- **Ignoring our national parks** – While Labor has declared new national parks, they have comprehensively failed to maintain the integrity and pristine nature of existing national parks, with many being overrun by weeds and pests, posing an increased fire danger and threatening surrounding private and public land
- **Failing to secure water for the environment** – Labor has released numerous reports, reviews and plans for Victoria's water supply. However they have failed to make any real moves to secure a sustainable, long-term water supply and flows. Environment Victoria has found that despite Labor's claims to have returned 66,000ML of water to Melbourne's rivers, the actual amount is less than one sixth the amount
- **Failure to take real action of climate change** – Labor's programs have failed to take real action on climate change. Victoria's greenhouse gas output has increased since Labor was elected. In 1999 greenhouse gas emissions were 119Mt of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas – by 2004 this had increased to 123Mt. Labor's recently announced renewable energy program risks failing to deliver actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

- **Failure to promote energy efficiency** – Labor’s focus on meeting arbitrary reporting standards rather than achieving outcomes has lead to an ineffective five star energy efficiency rating, which is inflexible, subjective and provides little incentive for innovation and new techniques for energy efficiency
- **Filthy Yarra River** - Melbourne Water data for July 2006 found that the Yarra river at South Melbourne has *e.coli* levels up to 20 times higher than the recommended safe level. At the Kew *e.coli* levels were 40 times higher and at Warrandyte up to 70 times higher than the recommended safe level

Under Liberal Government Leadership

Tackle climate change through new technology and greater responsibility for energy use

There is no doubt that climate change poses a significant threat to our natural environment. There is a significant threat to both flora and fauna biodiversity.

The Liberal Party is determined to act to reduce Victoria's reliance on greenhouse gas emissions and we are committed to acting swiftly to reduce the impact of climate change.

Liberal Leader Ted Baillieu recently said *"Our challenge is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions directly and if we are going to reduce emissions then we have to focus on the emitters, that has been our long-held position and it is no good pretending that we are making reductions; present levels aren't sustainable - but we have to do so without crippling our own economy."*

Many talk of a 50 to 60 percent reduction by 2050, if we can reach that goal, great, but if we can make it quicker better still.

But we will only get there with a genuine partnership between industry, community and government protecting our economy along the way and our goal, our goal is to get the best and brightest and develop and adopt world's best practice.

Generation technology will be as important, if not more important, to our future than bio-technology".

A Liberal Government will:

1. Invest \$670m in the development of new, cleaner energy sources for Victoria

The historic basis of Victoria's manufacturing and productive economy is cheap and plentiful brown coal.

97% of Victoria's electricity is currently supplied by brown coal and the Latrobe Valley alone contains 89% of Australia's brown coal reserves.

Brown coal represents one of the greatest resources at Victoria's disposal.

However, brown coal is also the most polluting form of energy production, releasing anywhere up to 1.55 tonnes of carbon dioxide per mega-watt hour.

Victoria must play our role in greenhouse gas reduction.

The Liberal Party recognises that while brown coal is essential for Victoria's future and will continue to form the mainstay of our energy production, in the foreseeable future there is considerable work to be done to develop alternative technologies to reduce Victoria's footprint on the environment.

A Liberal Government will use its \$670m investment to create a \$2 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to foster investment in low emission technologies

The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (the Fund) will be used to invest in developing renewable and clean energy sources as a commercially viable alternative energy source.

The Fund will receive money from the Brown Coal Royalty from 2011 onwards. The Fund will be distributed to investors in the same manner as the Federal Government's Low Emissions Technology Development Fund and will be open to any new technology or process which can demonstrate its long-term commercial viability and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

The Fund will place a particular emphasis on investing in the development of clean coal technology to recognise the integral part that clean coal must play in the future of Victoria's economy if we are to remain competitive.

The Liberal Party recognises that cheap, clean power is essential for the future of Victoria's economy.

A Liberal Government will make the investment now which ensures that Victoria can make the most of its natural resources for the State's economic future.

2. Create a \$50 million *Sustainable Victoria Fund* to promote energy efficiency across Victoria

A Liberal Government will promote a reduction in demand for energy, particularly at peak periods.

Investment in sustainable infrastructure, through the \$50 million *Sustainable Victoria Fund*, will promote new investments and innovations in creating energy efficient infrastructure.

Business, industry and private houses will be invited to tender for funding to retrofit existing infrastructure or build new sustainable, energy efficient infrastructure.

Projects to be considered for funding may include mechanisms to reduce peak-load demand, increase whole-of-operation energy efficiency or increase on-site generation capacity such as solar panels and fuel cells.

Funding to businesses, government departments and residents can be given in the form of low interest loans for projects with a four year pay-back to include energy saving measures in existing and new infrastructure.

Funding will also be available for the development and implementation of rebate schemes for energy efficiency measures such as insulation and draught-proofing, efficient water heaters, gas heaters and energy efficient household appliances.

3. Ensure greater consumer responsibility for energy use

Demand management represents one of the best tools at Victoria's disposal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It is currently estimated that demand for electricity will double in the next 30 years without demand management.

The Liberal Party believes that considerable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions can be made through the conscious decisions of consumers, energy distributors and generators.

A Liberal Government will invest in demand management techniques through tenders to the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and the Sustainable Victoria Fund.

Demand management (DM) techniques are commonly directed towards influencing the quantity of energy required by end-users.

However, DM can be used to stimulate actions and responses from generators and retailers, reduce the burden on the electricity grid at peak periods and fund further advances in clean technology.

The benefits of successful DM strategies can include lower greenhouse gas emissions; greater efficiency of energy generation, transmission and distribution; greater network capacity and increased system reliability. It also has the potential to reduce the need to invest in new generation capacity.

Under a Liberal Government investment into the development and feasibility of numerous DM strategies and their appropriateness for Victoria, may include:

- *Peak power demand reduction:* by providing incentives for consumers to divert energy demand away from peak periods to ensure stability and surety of supply and reduce the pressures for new energy generation and distribution capacity
- *Marketing and public information campaigns:* improved labelling of greenhouse friendly products such as air conditioners and refrigerators and public information services regarding product manufacturing and production techniques
- *Reducing transmission losses:* increase efficiency by addressing lost energy through the transferral of energy between source and consumption point by focusing on supporting localised energy sources to reduce transmission losses associated with generation in the Latrobe Valley

A Liberal Government's demand management strategies will be funded either through tenders to the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund for new technologies and processes or through the \$50 million *Sustainable Victoria Fund*.

A Liberal Government will also ensure the roll out of energy metering, with minimum mandated technology, to Victorian energy consumers by energy distributors.

The roll-out will include the mandating and monitoring through licenses of all interval meters to ensure that they are capable of providing routine read, special read, and connect/disconnect functions controlled remotely.

4. Promote greater industry responsibility for energy use

The Liberal Party will support the efforts of industries to reduce their demand for greenhouse gas intensive energy.

In addition to incentives out of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and the *Sustainable Victoria Fund*, a Liberal Government will fund the development of industry specific efficiency plans.

\$8 million over four years will be allocated to support the development of plans by industry, professional and other associations, including energy retailers, to reduce energy consumption.

Funding will be allocated where matching contributions are made by these associations through an expression of interest process.

The funding would assist in the dispersal of techniques and systems, often industry specific to, reduce energy consumption, including peak demand consumption levels.

The voluntary program would involve an officer employed by an industry or professional association visiting individual firm sites to make suggestions on how an individual firm or workplace could improve its energy efficiency.

This program will enable industry associations to work with government and energy retailers for mutually advantageous outcomes.

This program will assist the competitiveness of Victorian services and industry by reducing energy costs.

5. Support gas powered fuel cell technology

Gas powered fuel cells are already positioned to make an important contribution to a distributed electricity and energy system.

By generating electricity from gas close to the source of its consumption fuel cells are able to reduce transmission losses as well as assist with peak demand of electricity.

Victoria is well placed to roll out fuel cell technologies in a range of specific locations because of our large gas distribution network.

A Liberal Government will encourage the uptake of these technologies and in particular support the role of these technologies in co-generation.

A Liberal Government will explore the options for embedding generation capacity in new buildings, houses and in some cases in new estates. By 2010 we will have in place one demonstration 'Gas Sustainability Estate'.

A Liberal Government will examine ways to use the electricity generation capacity of gas driven fuel cells to assist in the further extension of reticulated gas to Victorian country towns and cities. In some cases the incorporation of fuel cell usage of gas may make reticulated gas extensions more viable and improve the consistency of supply.

Under a Liberal Government state government bodies would be encouraged to invest in fuel cell generation for appropriate locations where supply security can be enhanced and peak load power generated economically.

A Liberal Government would seek to have three of these projects in place by 2010.

6. Place the current tax arrangements that disadvantage gas fired electricity generation on the Council of Australian Governments agenda for a meeting in 2007

Natural Gas-based generation has been disadvantaged by the fact that federal taxes apply to resources off the Victorian Coast. State government imposts are much smaller than the federal taxes embedded in offshore gas used in gas fired electricity generation.

The high costs placed on gas used for power generation make it less competitive compared to coal generation. This means that there is more coal generation of electricity in Victoria than there would otherwise be and less gas fired generation.

A Liberal Government will seek to open the issue for debate with COAG to ensure that gas is not adversely disadvantaged compared to coal resources.

Gas fired power generation has half the greenhouse gas emission profile of Coal. Federal imposts on offshore gas make it uncompetitive for baseload power generation compared to coal.

By addressing that impost we open the way for Gas fired power generation to take its place in our baseload power make up and reduce overall emissions.

7. Develop geothermal energy initiatives

Despite “huge potential for expanding and further utilising the geothermal resources of Portland and of the Otway Basin in general” (Sinclair Knight Merz), Labor has allowed Victoria’s only geothermal energy system to be shut down.

There is currently no geothermal power generation in Victoria, despite the fact that much of south-west Victoria and the Gippsland region sit on geothermal aquifers, and Labor has no plans to harness this valuable renewable and environmentally friendly resource.

A Liberal Government will allocate \$1 million to foster geothermal power initiatives through the development of generation technologies and commercialisation.

8. Developing the potential of solar energy

The Liberal Party believes that solar energy is one of the most promising sources of renewable energy and deserves additional support.

Solar energy is well placed to make a contribution to the delivery of peak load power as high solar intensity days coincide closely with days of peak demand on hot summer days.

A Liberal Government invest \$10 million over four years dedicated solely to promoting and developing solar energy projects. This support will be focussed on adapting relevant solar technologies to Victorian homes and industry.

The Liberal Party will also convene an interdepartmental working party comprised of officers from Departments of Premier and Cabinet, Sustainability and Environment, Infrastructure, The Building Commission and other relevant agencies to report to Cabinet within six months of coming to government ways to maximise the economically and socially acceptable use of solar energy in Victoria.

This working party would recommend changes to legislation, regulation and the removal of impediments to the expansion of solar energy usage. It would also report on the use of solar energy in government buildings.

There will also be additional initiatives to support solar energy as the Liberal Party moves to a ten star energy rating system to replace the outdated five star system.

A Liberal Party will ensure that the Solar Systems solar technology demonstration plant in Victoria's North West will continue as planned.

Promote and foster sustainability and energy efficiency in Victorian infrastructure

A Liberal Government will:

1. Implement a 10 star energy rating system to replace the outdated 5 star system

The Liberal Party believes that the current five star energy rating system is inadequate. There is significant evidence that the current five star scheme is overly prescriptive and therefore only requires benchmarks. It does not promote the highest possible standards of sustainable development and energy efficiency.

A Liberal Government will introduce a 10 star energy efficiency rating to accurately measure the energy efficiency and sustainability of new business and residential developments.

The new 10 star rating system will provide additional energy ratings for stormwater and greywater recycling, waste collection and recycling, energy efficiency of appliances and landscaping.

This rating will be developed to ensure that timber is not penalised as a building product for energy efficient housing construction.

A separate and applicable rating will be developed for both residential and commercial properties.

All new public sector developments will comply with the 10 star energy rating over the course of its introduction.

The new 10 star rating system will operate through a similar on-line based scheme as the NSW BASIX system.

2. Enforce water and energy efficiency requirements for public infrastructure

A Liberal Government will lead the nation in environmental standards for public infrastructure, by requiring all new pieces of public infrastructure conform to an environmental code.

We will require public authorities to undertake regular 'water audits' of all public infrastructure.

Governments must not only mandate and regulate but they must also lead.

This requirement will include the offices of the Parliament of Victoria, beginning with new electorate offices. As new electorate office leases are signed these requirements for high environmental performance will be mandated.

We will also give preference to innovative environmental designs as a key performance requirement for public building tenders.

A Liberal Government will provide loans through the *Sustainable Victoria Fund* to government departments to implement energy and water efficiency measures with a four year pay-back period.

After repaying the loan from the State Government, Departments will be allowed to retain the savings made through water and energy efficiency measures, to be expended on further energy efficiency programs through the Department.

A Liberal Government will also achieve substantial water and energy savings through the negotiation of a single, managed contract for electricity and gas for government premises and major government-funded public facilities.

Taking the Next Step - ensuring a reliable water supply for Victoria through retention, recycling, treatment, storage and re-use

A Liberal Government will:

1. Develop a state-wide plan for the treatment and use of recycled water

It is clear that access to water is one of the greatest challenges facing Victoria. From metropolitan and regional consumers to farmers and irrigators, water is the critical issue.

Labor has stumbled its way through some the worst years of drought in recent Victorian history – and has failed to provide any long lasting solutions or plans.

Labor has failed to tackle water recycling as the one key option to deal with the state's water crisis.

In metropolitan Melbourne less than one percent on water is recycled.

Labor cannot be blamed for the drought facing Victoria at present but it can be held responsible for the failure to prepare. A substantial water recycling program would have stretched Melbourne's capacity much further.

Victorians face significant water restrictions. If present trends continue, these restrictions will impact harshly on industry, individuals, families, and our gardens.

There are fears that industry may face water restrictions in the near future.

The Bracks Government has barely begun the task of making water go further by preventing waste and using water more wisely.

Victoria needs a plan that will provide a secure water supply not only now, but in coming years when population and demand will necessarily increase.

A Liberal Government will commit to developing a state-wide plan for the utilisation of recycled and treated water to provide a safe and secure water supply through the treatment and recycling of waste water, stormwater and better water storage.

We believe that treated and recycled water is a considerable untapped resource for gardens, toilets, irrigation and other non-potable uses.

A Liberal Government will commit to ensuring that the infrastructure and facilities are in place to provide for the increased use of treated and recycled waste water, stormwater and water storage.

The use of recycled water under the liberal plan will free up potable water for those purposes, including drinking, for which it is properly suited. Meanwhile the recycled water that is available under the Liberal plan will find uses in industry, parks and gardens and through third pipe systems resource.

2. Implement 'third pipe' technology in new and existing developments

Victoria's water crisis has left Melbourne residents with an increasing potable and non-potable water shortages.

'Third pipe' technology allows for an additional source of non-potable water to piped in along side inflowing potable water and out flowing sewerage pipes.

The non-potable water supply can be used for gardening and toilet flushing to ease demand on the potable water supply.

A Liberal Government will create building and development guidelines to include third pipe technologies as a mandatory element on any new large housing development where suitable recycled water is available.

A Liberal Government will also investigate the implementation of third pipe technology in existing housing estates and neighbourhoods with local small-scale treatment plants.

We will amend the planning regulations to facilitate and encourage the use of local recycling system whilst maintaining high standards of amenity and water quality.

Treated water may be sourced either from local 'grey water' systems or treatment systems, or from the Eastern Treatment Plant.

The Liberal Party will support the development of guidelines and the facilitation of local recycling systems in appropriate settings, including certain new estates.

Third pipe estates will be in a position to offer much greater security of water supply for gardens and parks and hence may well be in a position to market their estates as having 'drought proof' gardens.

A Liberal Government will invest \$10 million in the Victorian Water Trust to provide subsidies building third pipe infrastructure and small scale water treatment systems in existing housing developments.

3. Build Victoria's first desalination plant

The desalination plant will substantially ease the pressure on Melbourne's water supply.

It will deliver 145 million litres of fresh drinking water a day – one-tenth of Melbourne's average consumption.

The project is a key element of a Liberal Government's plan to guarantee a secure water supply for the city and surrounding areas served by the metropolitan water retail companies.

The desalination plant will deploy the latest world class technology to remove salt and impurities from sea water and provide a supply of fresh water into the Melbourne distribution network via either Cardinia Reservoir or western reservoirs.

The plant will cost approximately \$400 million to build and \$20 million a year to operate. It will add around \$15 a year to average household water bills.

The environmental impact assessment panel will be instructed to consider suitable sites on either vacant industrial land at Hastings or in Werribee.

These two areas will be designated a priority for evaluation.

A site of 10 hectares would be required, although ideally a larger site will be selected in the event it becomes necessary to build a further desalination plant in the future.

Desalination technology has advanced significantly in the past decade. The latest development is reverse osmosis technology, which forces sea water through a membrane at high pressure to remove salt and any impurities.

A reverse osmosis plant takes in about two megalitres of sea water to produce one megalitre of fresh water. The remainder – with a 6.8% salt content, compared with 3.7% for sea water – is returned and diffused into the sea without causing any salt build up.

Depending on the chosen option water from the desalination plant will be either piped some 35 kilometres north from Hastings to Cardinia Reservoir (which has a storage capacity of 275,000 megalitres) or from Werribee to western reservoirs.

From these points it will be distributed throughout the Melbourne water system to add to our potable water supplies.

Waste water from this desalination plant will not be released into sensitive estuaries or bays.

The Liberal Party will ensure a role for renewable energy, such as wind energy, in the operation of Victoria's first desalination plant and will ensure a role for renewable energy for pumping of the desalinated water produced.

4. Include rain water tanks in new and existing homes

There is scope to further improve water retention through rain water tanks.

A Liberal Government will provide a rainwater tank rebate of up to \$500 (600 litre minimum)

This rebate will be paid to city and country homeowners at the rate of \$100 per annum off their water bills for 5 years.

We will also require all new houses in Melbourne to have a rainwater tank

The new homeowner will be eligible for a rebate of up to \$500 paid at the rate of \$100 per annum off their water bills for 5 years.

A rainwater tank will not be required for new housing that includes third pipe technology however all of these homes will be able to choose to have a rainwater tank installed and be eligible for the rebate.

- Funding for building third pipe infrastructure and small scale water treatment systems in existing housing developments will be subsidised through applications to the \$10 million investment in the Victorian Water Trust.

5. Upgrade the Eastern Treatment Plant

The Eastern Treatment Plant is at Carrum in Melbourne's south-east and treats roughly half of Melbourne's wastewater before discharging into Bass Strait at Boags Rocks on the Mornington Peninsula. This discharge may well be causing significant health issues for marine life and beach users at Gunnamatta and St Andrews beaches.

Labor has proposed to solve this by extending the pipeline, but this simply pushes the problem further away.

A Liberal Government will:

- **Scrap Labor's planned extension of the pipeline**
- **Upgrade the Eastern Treatment Plant to produce Class A water, a much higher quality of water than currently released, and close the Gunnamatta sewerage outfall by 2015**

The Class A water produced by the Eastern Treatment Plant will be sold for use in industry, agriculture, for the irrigation of golf courses and for use in third-pipe systems in housing developments in the east and south-east of Melbourne.

6. Undertake a feasibility study into the connection of the Eastern Treatment Plant to the Western Treatment Plant

Water treated at the Western Treatment Plant currently has particularly high levels of salinity which make it inappropriate for many options for re-use.

A Liberal Government will undertake a feasibility study into a pipe under Port Philip Bay to transfer highly treated water with significantly lower salinity levels from the Eastern Treatment Plant to the Western Region.

The study will also investigate the cost effectiveness of the proposal as compared to an upgrade of the Western Treatment Plant to reduce salinity levels on-site.

Protecting Victoria's Flora, Fauna, National Parks and Reserves

A Liberal Government will:

1. Ensure better national park and reserve management

Labor has failed in their duty to properly management and control Victorian national parks. Noxious weeds spread unhindered and often cross the border between state owned land and private land.

Poorly managed and controlled land is also particularly susceptible to out of control bushfires.

Whilst Labor has many programs to control weeds and management state land, none of them are effective.

The Liberal Party believes that the state government has a duty to maintain state owned land and the impact it can have on surrounding land owners.

A Liberal Government will commit to annual audits of the environmental and ecological state of Victorian national parks and enforce strict performance measures against the Department of Sustainability and Environment for maintaining the environmental significance of our national parks.

A Liberal Government will commit \$10 million over five years to improve weed management in identified areas of poor quality.

This funding will also include a 1.5 kilometre extension of the Pt Nepean – London Bridge walking track from London Bridge to the Quarantine Station within the Point Nepean National Park

This money will be spent in National, State and other parks managed under the National Parks Act.

Labor has to often declared national parks without providing appropriate funding to manage these parks. The Liberal Party will amend the Victorian Environment Assessment Council legislation to ensure that VEAC must make specific recommendations as to the funding required to implement its proposals.

2. Retain the Frankston Reservoir

A Liberal Government will provide \$1 million to create a 98-hectare public conservation and recreation park at the Frankston reservoir site.

The reservoir is due to be decommissioned by Melbourne Water at the end of this year.

Under the plan, an initial \$500,000 will be allocated for the immediate restoration of the reservoir. An additional \$100,000 a year for five years will be provided for maintenance and improvements.

3. Create a conservation park at Devilbend Reservoir

The Devilbend Reservoir is home to at least 128 different varieties of birds and a range of animals, which the conservation park will provide a sanctuary for, in their own habitat.

This land is currently publicly owned and managed by Melbourne Water and contains the Devilbend Reservoir, the Bittern Reservoir, a small public reserve, a public picnic area and hundreds of hectares of native vegetation.

40 hectares of the Reservoir is due to be sold by Labor.

A Liberal Government will turn all of the 1057 hectares of public land around the Devilbend Reservoir into a conservation park and sanctuary to protect the less than five per cent of Mornington Peninsula's original bush land habitat that remains.

4. Protect and create new national parks

A Liberal Government will protect our current parks and reserves and add to strength and size of national park and reserve network.

A Liberal Government will protect additional areas of mature forest and rainforest along with threatened species habitat by retiring 10,000 cubic metres of annual resource over the next three years; including Goolengook and State Forests in East Gippsland and linking the Errinundra, Snowy and Alpine National Parks.

We will also ask the Victorian Environment Assessment Council to investigate the capacity to link and protect important areas of forest. This would include an examination of corridors for fauna movement and significant vegetation.

- A Liberal Government will immediately release the review into old growth forests, upon coming to Government, which Labor has been deliberately withholding from public scrutiny

5. Preserve environmentally significant land and endangered flora and fauna from degradation.

The proposed site was originally intended for protection with the environmental value of the land recognised by the Land Conservation Council.

Declaration of the area as protected is consistent with the recommendation of the Land Conservation Council in its Mallee Area Review.

A Liberal Government will refer the Hattah-Nowingi site to the Victorian Environment Assessment Council for further investigation and recommendation on site protection.

This will preserve a total of:

- 135 indigenous plant species, including five of State significance
- 55 bird species
- Seven mammal species
- 16 reptile species

Five of these animal species are listed as threatened under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999, including the endangered Mallee Emu

Wren. The land around the proposed toxic waste dump site is regarded as a stronghold of the Mallee Emu Wren.

Key groups like Birds Australia have said, *“Birds Australia is strongly opposed to siting the Long Term Containment Facility at Nowingi.the site is exceptionally important for birds in that it contains, or has contained in the recent past and may still contain, 14 species on the Advisory List of Threatened Fauna in Victoria – 2003, 9 of which are listed as threatened taxa under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and 5 are listed as Endangered or Vulnerable under the Commonwealth EPBC Act 1999). Twelve of these species are included in The Action Plan for Australian Birds (2000)”*.

The Sunset Hattah-Kulkyne area is specifically acknowledged by the State Government as an area where rehabilitation of vegetation is encouraged. The site is regarded as of very high significance under the Native Vegetation Management Framework.

The Government’s own Native Vegetation Management Framework establishes a three tiered approach which avoids clearing in areas of high conservation significance except in exceptional circumstances. It is a specific objective of the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy (1996) to rehabilitate previously grazed landscapes in the Sunset and Hattah-Kulkyne region.

The Government’s own report concedes:

“The vegetation is generally in good to very good condition and forms part of a much larger contiguous area of mallee vegetation.”¹

The report also says, “The diversity and abundance of fauna species and general absence of introduced species indicates that the study area supports an intact faunal assemblage as part of a functioning ecological community.”²

In describing the region, one key submission said, “The site is adjacent to Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, and part of an important habitat corridor connecting Hattah-Kulkyne National Park and The Murray Sunset National Park. Other environmentally significant areas nearby include the RAAK Plain and the RAMSAR listed Hattah Lakes. The corridor actually has higher quality habitat than sections of the adjacent National Parkland.”³

“The area should have been made a part of the National Park network when this was first accepted in 1989 (but never promulgated). The site was better conserved, with higher value habitat than sections of the highly valued Hattah-Kulkyne and Sunset National Parks, between which it forms a corridor.”⁴

A Liberal Government will protect Hattah-Nowingi’s environmental significance and the endangered flora and fauna, as well as the integrity of the surrounding Hattah-Kulkyne and Murray Sunset National Parks.

Currently the area proposed for the toxic waste dump is classified as unreserved Crown land, but managed as if a State forest by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

¹ Flora and fauna of area proposed for the Long Term Containment Facility, 1

² Ibid, 15

³ EES submission: Western Region Environment Centre, page 18

⁴ Ibid, 19

6. Recognise the creation of a further national park in south west Victoria to be known as the Cobboboonee National Park which will adjoin the Glenelg National Park

Cobboboonee State Forest is 27,000 ha of forest near Portland under Department of Sustainability and Environment management.

Cobboboonee is home to the Red-Tailed Black Cockatoo, the Melbourne Commonwealth Games mascot and which is listed as 'endangered' under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

A Liberal Government will recognise the creation of the Cobboboonee National Park adjoining the Glenelg National Park.

7. Await the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) recommendations to be announced regarding the River Red Gum Forests Investigation

The Barmah-Millewa forests are situated on the Murray River between Echuca and Cobram, and are home to one of the largest remaining river red gum forests in the world.

The future of the River Red Gums Forest is currently under review by VEAC and a Liberal Government will await the recommendations of the review.

8. Promote environmentally friendly plantation management

A Liberal Government will investigate the feasibility of a ban aerial spraying of pesticides in domestic water supply catchments and ban all spraying in one kilometre buffer zones around schools.

Cleaning up Labor's Waste

A Liberal Government will:

1. Stop dumping sewage into our oceans

The Gunnamatta outfall alone discharges 430 million litres of partially treated sewerage each day (42% of Melbourne's sewerage flow) into the ocean near Rye. This sewerage is classified as 'C Class' and is lightly treated at the Eastern Treatment Plant at Carrum Downs.

This outfall is discharged through a pipeline which extends 25 meters into the ocean. In 2002, Labor planned to extend the Gunnamatta outfall by a further 2km into the ocean.

A Liberal Government will scrap the 2km planned extension of the Gunnamatta sewerage outfall pipe and close Gunnamatta outfall by 2015.

A Liberal Government will also commit to closing Victoria's 18 sewage outfalls by 2025.

As a preliminary step the Liberal Party will begin a comprehensive water testing program at each of these ocean outfalls and will report the results at each of the ocean outfalls as soon as they becomes available. The testing will continue until each ocean sewerage outfall is closed.

2. Say No to a Toxic Waste Dump at Hattah-Nowingi

- No toxic waste dump at Hattah-Nowingi
- Preserve environmentally significant land and endangered flora and fauna from degradation
- Protect Sunraysia's economic prosperity
- Deliver better, more effective waste management alternatives, focussing the money that was to be spent on tendering, building and operating the Toxic Dump into alternative waste reduction and disposal options
- Reduce the amount of toxic waste including avoidance re-use, and re-cycling strategies
- Accept South Australia's Labor Government invitation to collaborate and reduce toxic waste production
- Introduce EPA initiatives that work with local manufacturers and producers to adopt best practice technologies and processes

3. Enact Container Deposit Legislation

In 1975, the South Australian Government implemented Container Deposit Legislation (CDL) to provide greater incentives for recycling.

As a result of the legislation up to 85 per cent of containers are being recycled in South Australia. Industry has estimated that other Australian States' rates of recycling would be as much as 20 per cent lower.

In South Australia, studies into consumer sentiment on CDL found that 95% of consumers supported the scheme.

Studies by Newspoll in Western Australia have found support for the introduction of the scheme of over 90%

A Liberal Government will enact Container Deposit Legislation to create a 5 cent deposit for plastic and glass bottles, aluminium cans and flavoured milk and juice cartons of up to 1 litre. This will not apply to glass or plastic bottles of any size that carried plain milk.

The Liberal Government's scheme will be consistent with South Australia and other states choosing to adopt Container Deposit Legislation.

Any changes to the legislation will be implemented on the basis that it will achieve harmonisation with South Australia and any other State utilising CDL.

Consumers will pay a 5 cent deposit and a container handling fee on purchase and receive a 5 cent deposit when it is recycled at a recycling depot.

A Liberal Government will consult with packaging companies and interest groups on the best way to phase in the legislation.

As part of the implementation process the Liberal Party will also consult with industry and consumer groups to ensure that the scheme's impact on consumers is neutral.

Unlike Labor's tax on plastic bags, which does nothing to promote recycling, the Liberal Government's scheme will encourage and reward Victorians for good waste management.

Initial clean up will be an important focus of the Liberal Party policy. There are hundreds of thousands of cans, bottles and cartons throughout our environment. This will be dealt with in the initial cleanup.

A Liberal Government will allocate up to a maximum of \$1 million to fund the clean up of existing bottles, cans and cartons in the first year of government.

4. Provide a better system of waste management

All Victorians share the responsibility for the products we use and consume and for the waste produced. Successive governments have made an effort to manage waste products in a better and more sustainable way.

There are many opportunities for Victoria to learn from other countries and states to solve the challenge of different waste streams.

There must be a system of waste management in place that is focussed on the minimisation of waste creation and the strategies of reuse, recycling and waste minimisation for a sustainable community.

The Parliament of Victoria has recently passed laws that establish a new system of municipal waste management through a Melbourne Metropolitan Waste Management Group. This group will centralise the management of municipal waste for all metropolitan councils.

A Liberal Government will assess the performance of the Metropolitan Waste Management Group during the term of the next Parliament to

establish whether this body is operating at international best practice levels.

A Liberal Government will seek to establish a number of codes of good practice developed in collaboration with specific industry sectors. These codes would draw on the co-operation of industry and would envisage the establishment of key infrastructure in the longer term.

A Liberal Government will commit to an examination of the principle of extended producer responsibility by producing a green paper to discuss with industry and the community.

The green paper will examine the role of extended product and producer responsibility and the best ways to incorporate appropriate aspects of this principle into our activities with the lowest cost.

Reform the processes to make environmental decisions

A Liberal Government will:

1. Create better mechanisms to protect our land and environment

Labor has weakened the checks, balances and protections that existed to protect our environment. It has also weakened critical checks in the planning system that previously had the capacity to prevent a change in land use where this was not in the interests of the community and/or the environment.

Key mechanisms of public and community scrutiny have been removed or weakened to the point where they no longer provide the protections they should.

Many of the important bodies in a position to protect the environment have not been prepared to undertake their responsibilities to the full.

Parliamentary scrutiny on the Bracks Government has weakened following the Bracks Government gaining control of both houses of parliament.

The EPA has become a weaker and less imposing body than it once was. There is now little confidence that the EPA will enforce the law and protect the environment in a way that is consistent with statute.

2. Reform of the Environmental Effects Process

Labor has failed to bring the Environmental Effects Statements (EES) process into the modern era.

Certainty and predictability are demanded by industry and high standard processes are sought by the Victorian community.

The improvement of the EES process and associated planning panel processes has the capacity to improve both speed and the quality of outcomes.

Labor has comprehensively botched the EES process on two recent critical cases – the Hattah-Nowingi Toxic Dump ESS and the Channel Deepening EES process. Both of these EES processes have failed to satisfy anyone with delays, massive costs and poor quality information becoming hallmarks of the process.

Despite statements made by John Thwaites in 2001 and subsequent reviews of the EES process there has still not been any comprehensive reform of what has become a cumbersome process.

A Liberal Government will put out a discussion paper that examines the options for reforming Victoria's EES process. This paper will be available for community comment.

The paper will examine practical ways to improve the speed, quality and reliability of the EES process.

It is critical for Victoria's economy and the protection of our environment that the EES process is strengthened.

3. Increase the independence and enforcement power of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA)

The EPA is tasked with implementing and enforcing legislation relating to the polluting of the Yarra. However neither Labor nor the EPA takes enforcement of the regulation seriously.

A Liberal Government will increase the independence of the EPA by appointing four board members through Parliament.

This will improve the board's ability to operate independently of the Minister, and any political considerations, and improve their responsiveness to the issues which concern the entire Parliament.

The EPA will be expected to exercise their powers to their fullest capacity in relation to monitoring, detection and enforcement. This will include the requirement that the EPA report monthly, in writing, on their progress in exercising their legislative powers, including the number of prosecutions undertaken.

Further, the EPA will be required to publicise online the names and details of those individuals, companies and government bodies found guilty of polluting activities.

4. Make the disposal of public land more transparent

Legislation is necessary to make the process of disposing of, or otherwise alienating, public land more transparent, to introduce a mechanism to enable direct community involvement, and to put a sensible brake on the alienation of high community value sites.

A Liberal Government will model its legislation on the NSW Liberals' Public Lands Protection Bill 2004 and will enshrine the principles of:

- a State register of significant public lands,
- a transparent process for the assessment of significance,
- public ownership and control of and public access to significant assets,
- a requirement for management plans setting out the key purposes of that land,
- for leases for periods over ten years to require the consent of Parliament.

Under the plan Ministers will still be able to sell land in the public interest but will be required to explain in a formal public statement why they are doing so.

We will create a framework for government and community to assess and retain public lands

We will create a coherent and consistent framework through which government and the community can assess and advocate for the retention of significant public lands, one that will guard the social, historical and environmental values of the land of which we are custodians, not just for this generation or this government, but also for future generations.

We will also protect green wedge public land and Melbourne's future parks

Metropolitan Melbourne is growing. Rapid development in outer metropolitan areas means new communities that will last for generations are being built right now.

Melbourne 2030, Labor's "plan" for metropolitan development has been chopped, changed and discredited since its inception. None the less, Victoria needs a plan to develop and protect public park land in its newest metropolitan communities before rapid development makes it impossible to create new parks.

A Liberal Government will:

- Develop a network of public land and high conservation green belts in Green Wedge land to be protected for public use.
- Thoroughly assess all of Melbourne's future park and other public land needs within the Green Wedges in order to create and implement a plan for our future public land needs.

5. Work in tandem with Catchment Management Authorities (CMA)

The Liberal Party supports the model of CMA in operation in Victoria – an authority with responsibility across an entire water catchment. The CMAs have a critical role in protecting Victoria's catchments and land. They particularly play a central role in protecting biodiversity.

The Liberal Party will seek ways in Government to ensure that the Victorian communities achieve best outcomes and best value for taxpayers spending.

Protecting Our Rivers and Flora and Fauna

A Liberal Government will:

1. Clean-up the Yarra River

The Yarra has a significant impact of Port Phillip Bay with a freshwater flow from the total Yarra catchment of 887,000 ml or 56% of total flows into the Bay.

The disastrous state of the Yarra River and the risks this poses to Melbourne residents and the Bay has been known for some time. For years, Labor has been faced with reports of Yarra users suffering skin rashes, allergic reactions or even being hospitalised after contact with Yarra River water.

A Liberal Government will restore the Yarra to a condition Victorians are proud of.

By 2015, under a Liberal Government, the Yarra River will be a healthy river from its beginning to Port Philip Bay. It will be safe and suitable for all recreational uses from rowing and kayaking to swimming. By 2015, the growth of the Yarra River and tributaries ecosystem and the marine ecosystem in Port Philip Bay will not be compromised.

The stewardship of local communities, schools, interest groups and local councils of the Yarra and its surrounds will be recognised, nurtured and celebrated. This policy will provide money now, to fix the solution now – it is more than Labor's empty promises and illusionary funding.

A Liberal Government will:

1. Create a single, responsible authority for the management, monitoring and quality of the Yarra River
2. Accelerate the completion of the Port Philip and Westernport Regional River Health Strategy to July 2007
3. Commit \$5 million for riparian re-vegetation in the Yarra catchment
4. Create a working group, under the newly formed Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers Protection Authority, to address septic tank management in the Yarra Catchment
5. Accelerate the elimination of Yarra Valley Water's septic tank backlog by 35 years without raising water tariffs
6. Undertake a 'Yarra River Week' public information campaign
7. Install state-of-the-art filtering technology on all stormwater drains discharging into the Yarra Catchment
8. Improve monitoring and data collection to pin-point pollution hotspots and provide an on-line warning system
9. Increase the independence and enforcement power of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
10. Create the Yarra River Law Enforcement Taskforce
11. Investigate a range of options for increasing environmental flows in the Yarra
12. Minimise the polluting effect of flooding through water sensitive urban design.

2. Protecting Victoria's biodiversity

Victoria's native plants, animals and ecosystems are in worse health than that of any other state or territory in Australia, with about 44% of our native plants and 30% of our native animals extinct or threatened.

The Liberal Party believe that we need to protect and improve Victoria's biodiversity, particularly in light of the lack of scientific understanding of biodiversity and the likely impact of climate change.

A Liberal Government will review the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act with the intention of strengthening the provisions to protect our endangered vegetation and fauna, under our national and international obligations.

A Liberal Government will provide \$4 million towards the development of four regional biodiversity plans in central Victoria and the Mornington and Bellarine peninsulas and the Dandenong Ranges.

These regional biodiversity plans will compliment existing work and address public lands and work collaboratively with private land holders. Grants will be made available to assist green wedge land holders to contribute to the regional biodiversity plans.

Regional biodiversity plans will be developed in conjunction with LandCare and Land support groups, Councils and other stake-holders.

An additional \$4 million will be provided to the Trust for Nature, with \$1 million to be focussed on assisting green wedge land holders to covenant land of significance to regional and state biodiversity.

- A Liberal Government will support proper controls of native vegetation removal.
- We will also release a biodiversity whitepaper to ensure Victoria has an encompassing plan to ensure our biodiversity is protected into the future.

We will commit to reviewing the Bushbroker and Bushtender programs during the four year term to examine whether they are meeting their objectives.

Policy Cost

Recurrent Initiatives

	Unit	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Total
Sustainable Victoria Fund	\$M	-	15.0	15.0	10.0	10.0	50.0
Industry Sector Demand Management	\$M	-	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	8.0
Geothermal Power Initiatives	\$M	-	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	1.0
Solar Energy Initiatives	\$M	-	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10.0
Frankston Reservoir	\$M	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	1.0
National Park Management	\$M	-	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10.0
Rainwater Tank Rebate	\$M	-	3.0	5.5	8.0	10.5	27.0
Victorian Water Trust	\$M	-	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	10.0
Victoria's First Desalination Plant	\$M	7.1	2.9	-	-	-	10.0
Container Deposit	\$M	-	1.0	-	-	-	1.0
Regional Biodiversity Plans	\$M	-	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	4.0
Trust for Nature	\$M	-	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	5.0
Total	\$M	7.7	34.75	32.35	29.85	32.35	137.0



Liberal Plans for the future

This policy and all other announcements can
be viewed at www.vic.liberal.org.au