



ENVIROWATCH 2015: *One year in*

**An Audit of the Andrews Government's Delivery of its
Election Promises for our Environment**

November 2015

EnviroWatch 2015: One year in is published by Environment Victoria.
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Introduction

The Victorian government is responsible for ensuring a healthy environment for all Victorians to enjoy. The decisions they make today will create a legacy for Victorians into the future. State governments can decide whether to invest in clean energy or keep relying on polluting coal. They can regulate to ensure buildings are efficient, or consign us to an inefficient, expensive future. They can invest in public transport or lock us into pollution and congestion, and they can either provide water to the rivers we love or bleed them dry. They hold the power to unlock new green jobs or maintain our reliance on ancient and polluting technologies. State government are key stewards of our environment.

This report audits the Andrews Government's progress on implementing the ALP's pre-2014 election commitments on our environment. The report was compiled in November 2015 – one year after the 2014 Victorian election. An updated audit will be compiled each year on the anniversary of the Victorian election. The audit also considers environmental policy actions of significance (good and bad) that have been taken over the past 12 months that were not committed to prior to the 2014 election.

Envirowatch 2015 was compiled by Environment Victoria, the state's leading, independent environment group. Environment Victoria is nonpartisan and this report is not an endorsement of the Victorian government's election promises. It analyses significant environmental commitments only.

Since 1969 Environment Victoria has held state governments, of all political stripes, to account for their environmental decisions and actions. We hope that by doing this and providing ideas for a clean, sustainable Victoria, we will encourage the government to take action to restore, not undermine, our environment.

Our Expectations

The Andrews Government was elected at the most critical time in history for our environment. There has never been a more important time for strong environmental leadership from our elected officials. The actions of governments globally over the coming months and years will determine whether or not the world avoids the worst and most destructive impacts of global warming.

To meet their stated leadership ambitions and to be the environmental stewards Victorians expect, the Andrews Government needs to enact and fund strong policies on climate change, energy efficiency, renewable energy and restoring our natural environment early in this term of government.

On climate change, the Andrews Government must act with urgency and deliver a credible plan to decarbonise the Victorian economy, with a rapid transition from dirty coal to clean energy. This action should have already commenced in their first year of government as we have no time to lose. Our report *Six Steps to Climate Leadership*, released in July and available at <http://environmentvictoria.org.au/six-steps-to-climate-leadership>, lists the steps we believe the Andrews Government should take. This report sets out six ambitious yet achievable steps required for leadership on climate change in Victoria, including retiring our dirtiest power stations and greatly increasing our share of renewable energy.

On energy efficiency, Environment Victoria expects the Andrews Government to deliver a comprehensive plan for cutting carbon pollution and saving power in our homes and business with a focus on improving the efficiency

4 | ENVIRONMENT VICTORIA | ENVIROWATCH 2015: ONE YEAR IN

performance of one million homes occupied by low-income Victorians. Our report *Six Steps to Efficiency Leadership*, released in November and available at <http://environmentvictoria.org.au/efficiency-leadership>, contains more detail.

The Andrews government should also develop a plan for the rivers we love to ensure they get their fair share of water and are not damaged by livestock grazing. This will need to include stronger commitments to supporting the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in its efforts to water Victoria's Red Gum national parks and safeguard some of our biggest rivers. Recovering water through buybacks needs to be part of such a plan. Our report, *Six Steps to Water Leadership* will be released soon.

Finally, they should end logging in high-conservation value native forests and recognise the carbon value of natural ecosystems with a comprehensive plan to protect and restore Victoria's biodiversity.

Methodology

The Victorian ALP released a modest environment and climate change policy prior to the 2014 Victorian election. Many of the commitments promised reviews, without being clear about the environmental outcome. A list of the Victorian ALP's environment commitments made via public statements and policies was collated by Environment Victoria immediately prior to the election. It is these promises that are assessed in this report card. Significant additional actions taken by the Andrews Government since its election that were not promised prior to the election are also highlighted in this report card.

Environment Victoria assessed the delivery of each promise based on publicly available information. The following is a description of the assessment methodology:

Promise status	Description
Delivered	The promise has been delivered in full by the Andrews Government.
In progress	The promise has been partially delivered.
Not delivered	There is no publicly available information to suggest work has commenced on the promise.
Broken promise	The promise has been reversed by the Andrews Government.
Backwards step	The promise will harm rather than help protect our environment.
Forwards step	An action that was not promised but that will help protect our environment.

The assessment was forwarded to the Andrews Government on 18 November 2015 for any comment or to provide additional detail on commitments where there was no information in the public domain.



Clean up our power supply and reduce pollution

What Environment Victoria asked for	ALP Commitment	What progress has been made?	Delivery status
<p>1. Strengthen Victoria's Climate Change Act by reinstating scientifically based emissions reduction targets and empowering the Environmental Protection Authority to regulate CO2 emissions</p>	<p>Labor's <i>Our Environment Our Future</i> policy committed Labor in government to establishing a Victorian greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, although no target is set in the policy.¹</p>	<p>A legislated independent review of the Climate Change Act has commenced. This is scheduled for completion by the end of 2015, with the review to be tabled in early 2016.²</p> <p>The 2015-16 State Budget announced a \$12 million 'Climate Change Action package' which includes reviewing and strengthening the Climate Change Act and developing a Victorian Climate Change Action Plan.³</p>	<p>In progress</p>
	<p>Labor committed to a review of the Environmental Protection Authority.</p>	<p>The review of the EPA is underway.⁴ It is unclear whether or not this will deliver significant reform or if the EPA will be given enhanced powers to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>2. Develop a renewable energy investment and jobs plan to make Victoria the national leader in renewable energy. This should include fast tracking the development of solar and wind power, removing the 2 kilometre exclusion zone for new wind power and increasing current solar feed-in tariffs.</p>	<p>In February 2015 Labor announced it will develop a Renewable Energy Action Plan, which will outline a comprehensive set of measures to attract Victoria's share of the \$36 billion of investment in renewable energy forecast to occur in Australia by 2020.⁵</p>	<p>In August 2015 the state government released 'Victoria's Renewable Energy Roadmap'⁶ which proposed a Victorian target of at least 20 percent of the state's energy to come from renewable sources by 2020.</p> <p>Subsequent analysis suggests meeting a 20 percent target may involve little extra investment in renewables than is expected under business as usual.⁷</p> <p>In August the government announced that they would use their purchasing power to bring forward the building of 100 megawatts of new wind projects worth \$200 million.⁸</p>	<p>In progress*</p>

What Environment Victoria asked for	ALP Commitment	What progress has been made?	Delivery status
2. Cont...	Labor announced it will use \$20 million from its \$200 million Future Industries Fund for a New Energy Jobs Fund, offering up to \$1 million grants for renewable energy projects.	The Andrews Government first budget allocated \$20 million over four years to support renewable energy and energy storage projects. Grants are yet to start flowing. ⁹	Delivered
	Labor committed to reducing the 2 kilometre exclusion zone for new wind farms to 1 kilometre, and abolishing additional kilometre exclusion laws.	Labor has repealed the worst parts of the Baillieu Government's controversial wind farm restrictions. ¹⁰	Delivered
	Labor promised to fund \$100,000 towards the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group and provide \$200,000 to Newstead to become a 'solar town'.	Provided a grant of \$200,000 to help Newstead become Victoria's first 100 percent renewable town. A \$100,000 agreement between the state government and Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group has been signed. ¹¹	Delivered
	Labor has promised to ensure 'energy retailers cannot discriminate against rooftop solar customers by charging extra supply fees'.	New laws were introduced in September 2015 to prevent retailers offering different tariffs or discounts to customers who have rooftop solar. ¹²	Delivered
	Labor announced it will ask the Essential Services Commission to inquire into the true value to the grid of distributed energy.	Labor launched an investigation into the adequacy of current regulations for compensating Victorian households and businesses for generating solar power. It will also consider the environmental and social value of distributed generation. ¹³ This move was undermined however by the government allowing the Essential Services Commission to slash solar feed-in tariffs in July 2015. ¹⁴	In progress
	Labor announced it will ensure small renewable energy projects have 'fair access' to the grid.	The inquiry has been opened, but no further information is available. A draft report is being completed by November 2015, with a final report due February 2016.	In progress



What Environment Victoria asked for	ALP Commitment	What progress has been made?	Delivery status
<p>3. Phase out the state's most polluting power stations and protect communities from coal mining risks like the Hazelwood fire via the immediate rehabilitation of non-working parts of existing coal mines and a review of rehabilitation bonds for all mines.</p>	<p>Labor supported the installation of sulfur dioxide scrubbers at the Anglesea coal power plant. They proposed that this should be funded by the plant owner and the federal government, but no details were provided on what measures would be taken to require owners to install scrubbers.</p>	<p>Anglesea coal power station now closed.¹⁶ The Andrews Government appears to be working to achieve good rehabilitation outcomes at Anglesea mine and power station.</p>	<p>N/A given power station closure</p>
	<p>Labor said they would assess mine rehabilitation priorities. Labor committed to reopening the Inquiry into the Hazelwood mine fire with rehabilitation included in the terms of reference, and has committed to adjusting rehabilitation bonds following the Inquiry. Labor will require annual reporting on the progress of rehabilitation works on all coal mines.¹⁵</p>	<p>The Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry has re-opened, with hearings on rehabilitation taking place in December 2015. The scope of the inquiry has expanded to include the other coal mines, which is a welcome development.¹⁷</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>4. Categorically rule out any plans for new coal mines or a coal export industry, and maintain the moratorium on coal seam gas extraction.</p>	<p>The ALP has no policy on new or existing coal projects prior to the election.</p>	<p>In June 2015 the Andrews Government issued four new coal exploration licences in Gippsland.¹⁹</p>	<p>Backwards step*</p>
	<p>Labor supported the Parliamentary Inquiry into Unconventional Gas, which has consulted widely on the CSG moratorium. The Minister said that the moratorium "will remain in place until the science shows that it is safe and there is broad community support".¹⁸</p>	<p>The moratorium on coal-seam gas exploration and fracking has been temporarily maintained, but a final decision will not be made until after the completion of the Parliamentary Inquiry.²⁰</p>	<p>In progress</p>

Make our homes and communities efficient, affordable and sustainable

What Environment Victoria asked for	ALP Commitment	What progress has been made?	Delivery status
5. Improve the energy and water efficiency of Victoria's housing stock to meet an average 5 Star and 100 litre per person per day standard by 2025 and implement and resource a comprehensive retrofit program for low income households.	In March 2015 the ALP announced it would develop an "Energy Efficiency and Productivity Strategy". ²¹	In June Minister D'Ambrosio launched the <i>Energy Efficiency and Productivity Statement – Saving Energy, Growing Jobs</i> . ²² This was followed by a Summit. The Strategy, which was expected in 2014, is now expected in early 2015. It is unclear if it will include a comprehensive retrofit program for low income households.	In progress*
6. Lock in the recent savings in Victorian electricity demand with new energy efficiency programs, including extending the successful Victorian energy efficiency target scheme for the next 5 years and broaden the program to include additional activities such as insulation. Increase support for solar water heating including through program to include new products like insulation. Increase support for solar water heating including through reinstating the solar water heating rebate.	Labor committed to keeping and increasing the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target. The government committed to delivering a home efficiency rating tool – the Victorian Residential Efficiency Scorecard.	In August the government announced increased energy efficiency targets for the next five years under the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target (VEET) scheme. ²³ These targets were legislated in Parliament in November 2015. Consultation process on further reform of the scheme is underway. Labor launched an online energy price comparator tool, to assist households identify the lowest cost electricity, gas or solar offer and is developing the residential efficiency scorecard. ²⁴	Delivered In progress*



What Environment Victoria asked for	ALP Commitment	What progress has been made?	Delivery status
<p>7. Keep our cities livable and sustainable by investing in better public transport, scrapping the East-West Link and ensuring urban planning prevents urban sprawl and protects our green wedges and places.</p>	<p>Labor opposed the construction of the East-West Link.</p>	<p>Labor cancelled the contracts for the East-West Link.</p>	<p>Delivered</p>
	<p>Labor made a series of public transport commitments including removing 50 level crossings, 24-hour public transport at the weekend, extension of the South Morang train line, a commitment to build the Melbourne Metro Rail project and free trams in the CBD. The funding detail for many of these commitments has yet to be released.</p>	<p>Labor appears to be advancing most of these public transport commitments.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
	<p>Labor announced it will ban e-waste from landfill, and will work with local councils to ensure recycling services are available.²⁵</p>	<p>Labor has commenced a process aimed at banning e-waste from landfill.²⁶</p>	<p>In progress</p>

Protect and restore Victoria's natural environment

What Environment Victoria asked for	ALP Commitment	What progress has been made?	Delivery status
8. Protect and restore Victoria's rivers by strengthening the Victorian Water Act.	Labor did not announce a policy to strengthen the Victorian Water Act.	The Andrews Government has committed to a Victorian Water Plan, our impression to date is that it seems focused on infrastructure rather than the environmental health of rivers, but we remain optimistic about the potential for it to deliver significant environmental benefits. ²⁸	In progress*
Reduce livestock damage to waterways and riverbanks by ending direct stock access and transitioning crown water frontage licenses to Riparian conservation licenses to improve river protection and quality.	Labor's <i>Our Environment Our Future</i> policy commits a Labor government to working "with Environment Victoria, Catchment Management Authorities and Landcare groups to develop a strategy to improve our riparian land and riverways". ²⁷	The Andrews Government allocated an extra \$10 million for river bank restoration in 2015-16, and \$3 million for environmental water flows for the Thomson River. The ALP commenced a Regional Riparian Action Plan process with stakeholders, but the Plan is yet to be released. ²⁹	In progress
9. Recognise and build the links between a healthy environment and a healthy economy by implementing the recommendations of the Future Economy Group's Plan for Victoria.	In a statement, Labor's then shadow Treasurer committed to "exploring these ideas further" (the Future Economy Group Plan for Victoria) if Labor is elected. ³⁰	No significant developments on this commitment, though some conversations have commenced.	In progress
10. Establish the Great Forest National Park in the Central Highlands to protect habitat for the Leadbeater's possum and ensure our existing parks are well managed and protected.	Labor's <i>Our Environment Our Future</i> policy commits a Labor government to conducting five-yearly State of the Bay reports to monitor the health of coasts, bays and waterways. ³¹	First State of the Bay process initiated. ³⁵	In progress



What Environment Victoria asked for	ALP Commitment	What progress has been made?	Delivery status
10.Cont...	Labor has committed to creating a Marine and Coastal Act to combine all management and protections under a single act. ³²	Initial steps taken towards a new Marine and Coastal Act, with the establishment of a new Expert Panel. ³⁶	In progress
	Labor's <i>Our Environment Our Future</i> policy commits Labor to establishing an industry taskforce for the logging industry that will include forestry industry representatives, conservation groups and scientists among others. There are no additional details about the role or scope of the taskforce.	No public announcements on this since the election, very slow progress with unclear government position. ³⁷	In progress
	Labor has committed to incorporating Anglesea Heath into the Otway National Park. Additionally, Labor will establish a new Canadian State Park and add new protections to Hanging Rock. There are no details provided on these protections. It will provide \$5 million to upgrade facilities in parks and reserves. ³³	Discussions commenced on Anglesea Heath. Legislation introduced on Canadian State Park. Review commenced on Hanging Rock. ³⁸	In progress
	Labor has committed to removing cattle from the Alpine National Park and the River Red Gum National Park.	Minister Neville removed cattle from the Alpine National Park and legislated ending cattle grazing in the Alpine and River Red Gum national parks. ³⁹	Delivered

What Environment Victoria asked for	ALP Commitment	What progress has been made?	Delivery status
10.Cont...	Labor has committed to introducing a Yarra River Protection Act, and creating a new trust to standardise planning controls along the Yarra.	Process commenced with the Minister Neville promising a new Trust which will "...develop planning controls for the Yarra and work with agencies to promote the river's amenity and significance". ⁴⁰	In progress
	The ALP supports a new Port in Port Phillip Bay called Bay West which would likely have significant environmental impacts.*	No developments on this proposal.	
	Labor stated that if elected it would attempt to disallow the lease granted by the Coalition Government to a private 108 room hotel development in the Point Nepean National Park. More broadly, Labor announced it will remove the government's ability to grant 99 year leases in national parks. ³⁴	Point Nepean lease expired, and the Andrews Government successfully legislated against 99 year leases in national parks. ⁴¹	Delivered
	Labor has announced it will review the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act (FFG) and institute a "state-wide biodiversity strategy".	Review of the FFG Act commenced in conjunction with a stakeholder group developing a new Biodiversity Strategy. ⁴²	In progress
	Labor committed to a review of the Native Vegetation regulations.	The Victorian government has started a review into the native vegetation permitted clearing regulations. ⁴³	In progress

*Not a pre-election commitment



Election promise tally results analysing 25 significant pre-election environmental promises

Promise Status	Promise tally
Delivered	8
In progress	17
Not delivered	0
Broken promise	0
Backwards step	0
Forwards step	0



The following actions were not commitments made prior to the election but may cause significant environmental damage:

- Issued new coal exploration licences in Gippsland. In response to community concern, Energy Minister D'Ambrosio took personal control over new coal licence approvals and commenced an independent review of the Energy and Earth Resources branch of her department.⁴⁴
- Minister Neville has opposed further water buy-backs for Victoria's northern rivers, wetlands and River Red Gum National Parks as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan by supporting the Commonwealth government's cap on water buy-backs (Hansard 4 Aug 2015).⁴⁵ Additionally, Minister Neville has publicly supported changing legislation to limit the ability of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to trade water to deliver better environmental water outcomes as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.⁴⁶



The following actions were not commitments made prior to the election but are very welcome initiatives:

- The Andrews Government has announced a review of coal development programs and new coal policy, which will consider the economics, social and environmental factors. They also announced that one of the three Advanced Lignite Demonstration Program (ALDP) grants supported by the previous Victorian Coalition Government has been withdrawn.⁴⁷
 - The Andrews Government has established a new \$1.15 million grants program to support local councils to respond to the challenges of climate change.⁴⁸
 - Launched the \$5.2 million Threatened Species Protection Initiative to facilitate on-ground activities such as habitat creation and restoration and site protection.⁴⁹
 - Committed \$3.2 million to ensure the funding of Victoria's 68 Landcare facilitator positions for another four years.⁵⁰
 - Introduced new Environmental Upgrade Agreements so businesses can borrow money through an approved lender to pay for environmental upgrades to their building such as solar panels, double glazing and energy efficient lighting.⁵¹
 - Minister Neville responded swiftly to the independent investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw fire with the 5 percent burn target for public land to be replaced by a "risk reduction target".⁵²
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