

What our politicians plan to do for Heritage and the Environment

As the State reels under the impact of the worst drought in living memory; as the effects of greenhouse gases become increasingly hard to ignore – and as Sydney grows to bursting point while country towns fade, environmental and planning issues are higher on the agenda for the coming NSW Parliamentary elections, than ever before.

The leading political parties in New South Wales present their visions for the future.

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From the NSW Labour Party



*The Hon Morris Iemma
Premier of New South Wales*

NSW is home to some of the nation's most significant natural and cultural heritage – a priceless inheritance that belongs to every Australian.

From our historic urban precincts like Macquarie Street and Glebe to towns such as Berrima, Hartley and Braidwood, successive governments have been able to preserve much of our precious built environment from the wrecking ball.

Since 1999 alone, the NSW Government has listed more than 1,500 places and objects on the State Heritage Register.

And when it comes to natural heritage, NSW boasts one of the world's richest and most extensive national park estates.

In just 12 years – 1995 to 2007 – we have created 350 new national parks and six marine parks, protecting 8% of the State's landmass and 34% of its waters.

All of those achievements have not happened by magic. They are the cumulative result of years of activism by local communities and conservation

groups, including – I'm proud to say – the National Trust.

It's true the National Trust and the NSW Government have not always seen eye to eye. And perhaps that is a good thing because it reflects the Trust's determination to be a fearless and independent voice in our public discourse.

It also reflects the contest of ideas that surround the way we shape our cities and towns. There will, for example, always be legitimate demands for development, especially in a place like Sydney which is an international financial centre and a prime immigration destination.

A city can never be frozen in time. Rather the challenge is to develop in a way that truly respects the past and responds to the needs of the future.

In the 60s that balance was totally skewed, with historic houses such as *Subiaco* and *St Malo* wantonly destroyed, and so much of inner and middle Sydney carpeted with ugly three-storey red brick flats.

Although there is still a long way to go, we've learned to do better. We've become especially expert at adaptive re-use because most heritage buildings are living structures and must be sensitively reshaped to suit current and future needs.

The Conservatorium of Music and Walsh Bay are outstanding examples in Sydney – projects I was privileged to be involved with as Minister for Public Works. Good regional case studies include the Peberdy Building in Tenterfield and the Central Mine Manger's residence in Broken Hill.

As I said earlier, none of this happens by magic. It is the result of sustained efforts

by government, our NGO partners and the community.

And while the NGO sector rightly prizes its autonomy, the NSW Government is happy to provide assistance such as the Heritage Incentives Program, which is worth \$2.73 million between 2006-2008.

Funding under the program includes \$50,000 for National Trust conservation projects including the Jack Haynes Cottage on the Saumarez Homestead site at Armidale and the Shepherd's Cottage at Yass.

A \$10,000 grant has also been approved to assist the National Trust (NSW) establish a Group Training Company to employ heritage conservation apprentices and trainees and enhance the skills and knowledge of tradespersons in city and regional areas.

As the NSW Government has discovered with our own stonework program, heritage trades can only survive if we train a new generation of craftspeople.

I'm proud to say we've trained around 200 stonemasons, which has ensured our ability to undertake authentic restoration work on such historic buildings as the Australian Museum, Government House, Sydney Observatory, the Art Gallery of NSW, East Sydney TAFE and the old Supreme Court.

But we must never forget that so much of the conservation and promotion of community-owned heritage buildings is undertaken by volunteers. One of the distinctive features of the National Trust is, in fact, the loyalty, dedication and excellence of its volunteers.

Since 2002, annual Heritage Volunteers Awards have been presented by the Minister for Planning, and National Trust

volunteers are always prominent among the recipients.

That so many fellow Australians freely dedicate their time and efforts to the often thankless and controversial cause of conservation is not only a testament to their selflessness and good citizenship. Nor is it simply a mark of the esteem in which the National Trust is held.

It is a reminder that governments, councils and developers need to be

held to account by those with high ideals and deep convictions – because transparency and scrutiny are fundamental, if sometimes annoying, ingredients of a healthy democracy.

In a place like NSW and Sydney where our urban and natural environments are under such relentless pressure, we are tremendously well served by conservation bodies such as the National Trust.

Some politicians might be tempted to think things would be better without such gadflies to contend with. But my view is rather different.

I believe there is only one thing worse than having such bold and articulate advocates around – and that is not having them around.

The National Trust and its sister groups are an indispensable part of our civic conversation. Long may they petition and protest, lobby and cajole!

From the NSW Greens



Sylvia Hale – Greens spokesperson on planning

The Greens believe that our planning laws should be designed to deliver sustainable development, residential amenity, protection of our heritage and empowerment of the community.

The NSW Labor Government has gutted the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Environmental protections have been reduced, community involvement has been curtailed and the Minister for Planning now has virtually unfettered powers to call in any development and make himself the consent authority, unencumbered by pre-existing zonings or environmental protection instruments.

As a result of these changes the planning system is driven by the large profits that can be made in the development of land and, in particular, residential and tourist development and large scale infrastructure which is often developed

by the government in partnership with large private development interests, with government acting as both developer and consent authority.

While increased urban densities afford potential environmental, economic and affordability benefits, current policies of urban consolidation have failed to produce quality living spaces for residents and have damaged the quality of existing neighbourhoods, the amenity of surrounding communities and the character of many urban areas.

The planning process has fallen into public disrepute because both the Government and Opposition parties accept millions of dollars in donations from property developers. The public no longer has faith that the planning process is conducted fairly and transparently.

Heritage is viewed by many developers and some planners as an obstacle to the planning process. The demolition industry exerts significant political power and often facilitates destruction of existing buildings, where adaptive reuse may lead to better outcomes. The value of existing materials is rarely measured and environmental costs in energy use, transport, land fill, ground disturbance, damage to neighbouring buildings, noise and dust are often overlooked.

The adverse impacts of the government's policies on the environment, heritage, and the amenity of many local areas and their community have been severe and will get worse.

A balance is required between prescriptive planning (eg controls for floor space ratios and height, which gives the community certainty) and performance based planning (such as design principles or character/place based statements), which encourages innovation and best practice design.

The Greens' policy is to reform the planning system by:

- limiting the power of the Planning Minister to override councils and environmental protections,
- facilitating community involvement in planning decisions,
- limiting the scope for rezoning that is detrimental to the environment or community amenity,
- broadening the understanding and application of heritage in shaping the built environment,
- requiring developers to conserve and adaptively re-use heritage structures and
- establishing Ecologically Sustainable Development as the guiding principle in building design and construction standards.

The Greens do not accept donations from property developers and have consistently campaigned for the banning of political donations by developer interests. We believe that this is an essential prerequisite to improving the planning system by freeing it from the excessive influence of the commercial interests who currently dominate planning policy in NSW.

From the Liberal National Coalition

Our Environment: A priceless heritage for our future



*Peter Debnam
Leader of the NSW Opposition*

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Conserving our natural and built environments has become increasingly important to the people of NSW. Climate change and biodiversity loss, waste management, the quality of our air and our waterways and how we manage our future population growth have a major impact on the quality of life of NSW residents.

The most pressing environmental issue facing our nation today is climate change. The CSIRO estimates that by 2070 Australia will be between one and six degrees warmer than it is today, with a significant decrease in annual rainfall in NSW, and a reduction in flow in the Murray-Darling system of 35-45 per cent. The key challenge for governments is to provide good environmental outcomes without impacting adversely on the economy.

More than 36 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in NSW come from electricity generation. Labor has burnt almost 8 million tonnes more black coal to generate electricity for NSW than when Labor came to power in 1995. Renewable energy (excluding hydro) accounts for less than two per cent of power produced in this State.

A Liberal/Nationals Coalition Government will stabilise, then reduce, greenhouse gas emissions from energy use while providing a secure, reliable, competitive supply of electricity for New South Wales. We will achieve this by encouraging renewable energy development as well as clean coal technology, and reducing

consumption through demand management strategies.

As a society, we must learn to live sustainably. The Coalition believes waste should be seen as a resource, not as something to be disposed of. We will establish an Infrastructure Support Program with money distributed to both industry and local councils for projects that increase recycling rates and reduce waste going to landfill.

The biggest threats to biodiversity in NSW are land clearing, weeds and feral animals, and uncontrolled wildfires. The Coalition and most farmers agree there should be an end to broadscale land clearing of protected vegetation in NSW. We believe that sustainable, profitable farming and protecting the environment are not mutually exclusive. The Labor Party, on the other hand, believes that to protect the environment you have to destroy farming. Returning farms to the wild is not the answer.

Our National Parks are overstretched, undermanned and under-resourced. According to the recent State of The Parks report, less than half the park system has proper weeds programs in place, meets fire management objectives, and has programs to counter pest animals.

A Coalition Government will commit significant resources to improving pest species management in our National Parks, and work with the CSIRO to develop prescribed ecological burning guides for every forest type in the State.

During Labor's term in Government, Sydney's waterways have become the most polluted they have ever been. The dioxin poisoning of fish in Sydney Harbour has resulted in commercial fishing bans and an extensive restriction on recreational fishing.

A Coalition Government will fast-track the remediation of Sydney's waterways and our harbour, including reducing the level of dioxin in Homebush Bay to make it safe to eat fish from the Harbour again.

The Hawkesbury River is more stressed than at any time since Europeans arrived in Australia 218 years ago and the NSW Government is sucking the Shoalhaven River dry to solve Sydney's water needs. A Coalition Government will use recycled water to restore environmental flows to the Hawkesbury-Nepean and reduce the demand on the Shoalhaven.

A recent national report showed Sydney's smog levels were 10 times worse than any other city. A Coalition Government will make it safe to breathe again in Sydney. We will improve air quality monitoring, filter the M5 and Lane Cove tunnels, promote ethanol as an alternative fuel and restore confidence in public transport.

The built environment has always been important to the Coalition. In 2006, we introduced a Bill to preserve the Manly Quarantine Station as part of a future North Head Sanctuary. In Government, we will place a heritage order on the union-owned Currawong holiday camp on Pittwater, pending restoration and eventual incorporation into Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. We will place increased emphasis on European heritage in our National Parks.

The lemma Government is destroying our urban environment by forcing every council in Sydney to increase densities or be stripped of their planning powers. Planning Minister Frank Sartor is removing more and more authority from local councils. Coupled with Labor's mistaken belief that a compact city is of necessity a more sustainable one, this is resulting in a significant loss of neighbourhood character and community spirit. The suburbs we are building in New South Wales encourage neither the building of relationships nor ecological sustainability.

We should develop Australian solutions for NSW cities and towns, which combine the best of our heritage with environmental sustainability. We look forward to your support on 24 March 2007, in our efforts to support better environmental and heritage outcomes.