

Three years on: how is the state government tracking?

It's been three years of the Andrews Labor Government's term in office, and we are now 12 months out from the next state election.

Of the sixteen nature conservation commitments by the Andrews Government in their environment policy *Our Environment, Our Future*, ten (or 63 per cent) can be considered finished (at least in terms of election commitments) and six have been commenced in part.

The rating here looks at two aspects. Firstly, how well the commitment was delivered; considering issues of policy or program scope, strength, clarity etc. Secondly, the extent of the impact the policy has on conserving the natural environment.

On delivery, the Andrews Government scored 71 per cent due to some strong initiatives in the first few years in office. However, they scored only 48 per cent on impact due to the fact that some commitments, while important, are restricted in impact due to locality, scale or extent of change.

See over on page 10 for more analysis of the Andrews Government at the three-quarter mark. • PW

ANDREWS GOVERNMENT 2014 ELECTION COMMITMENT

COMMENTS

		Completion Status (has it been finished by the government?)	Delivery Rating (how well was it delivered?)	Impact on protecting the environment
Cattle Grazing in Alpine National Park 'Labor will, once again, ban cattle grazing in the Alpine and Red Gum National Park.'	Legislation passed in 2015 closed the loophole on 'scientific' cattle grazing, hopefully once and for all.	✓		
Privatising National Parks '...we will not allow large scale private development in our national parks and will remove the Government's ability to grant 99 year leases'.	Legislation passed in 2015 removed the capacity for 99 leases in two-thirds of the parks estate. There remains inappropriate commercial development pressure in some important national parks.	✓		
State of the Bays Report 'An Andrews Labor Government will undertake a five-yearly State of the Bay report to monitor the health of coasts, bays and waterways.'	Completed, first report done and released in December 2016. The report presents 50 assessments against 36 indicators across the themes of species including birds and fish, habitats including seagrass and rocky reefs, and critical ecosystem functions including nutrient cycling. Report is understood to have helped inform longer term monitoring priorities.	✓		
Waterways '...develop a strategy to improve our riparian land and river ways'.	Regional Riparian Action Plan completed and significant funds (\$25 million) invested to commence fencing of riparian land.	✓		
Anglesea Heathlands '...incorporate the Anglesea Heath into the Otway National Park'.	Legislation introduced to add over 6,000 hectares of the unique Anglesea Heathlands to the Great Otway National Park.	✓		
Protecting Nature '...institute a state wide biodiversity strategy to protect our habitats for future generations'.	Final strategy released in 2017 and \$86.3 million over four years allocated in the 2016/2017 state budget for much-needed nature protection and biodiversity work identified in the Biodiversity 2037. Implementation priorities still unclear.	✓		
Canadian Park '...establish a new Canadian State Park'.	The new 641 hectare regional park established on the outskirts of Ballarat in 2016. Now called Woowookarung Regional Park.	✓		
Yarra River Protection 'Labor will introduce a Yarra River Protection Act to guard the river corridor from inappropriate development'.	The Andrews Government is enshrining in law the protection of the Yarra River. The new legislation identifies the Yarra River and the many hundreds of parcels of land it flows through as one living, integrated natural entity and introduces stronger planning controls to protect against inappropriate development on the Yarra River, including mandatory height limits.	✓		
Private Development at Pt Nepean '...immediately review the lease to determine its legal status, look to use any powers of the Parliament to disallow it where possible'.	Lease over the Quarantine Station at Point Nepean National Park to a private developer lapsed.	✓		
National Parks Funding 'Labor will provide \$5 million to upgrade and provide new facilities in our parks and reserves across the state.'	Parks funding was at chronically low levels when the Andrews Government took office. Funding for the whole parks estate is less than one per cent of the total state budget. \$5 million delivered in 2015, with additional \$10 million+ funding in 2016 and further allocation from Parks & Reserves Trust. \$31.8 million increase in Parks Victoria funding in 2016-2017 budget, mostly over two years, with the bulk to be spent on much-needed core operations such as rangers. Parks funding back to levels similar to 2010, however there are increases in costs and significant threats such as feral animals and weeds which require urgent attention and a boost in resources.	✓		
Pt Nepean Management '...immediately review the lease to determine its legal status, look to use any powers of the Parliament to disallow it where possible'. 'Labor will, again, protect Point Nepean for all Victorians and seek to ensure it remains open to all Victorians.'	A new master plan commenced. A draft was released in December 2016. The final master plan is yet to be released and it is understood that it contains plans for a potentially damaging jetty into the adjacent dolphin sanctuary.	→		
Native Vegetation '...review the new native vegetation regulations so they can sensibly protect sensitive vegetation'.	A review of native vegetation clearing regulations established with an independent chair and public consultation in 2015 and 2016. New native vegetation regulation has made minor improvements. Final revised regulation still not released.	→		
Protecting Marine & Coasts 'We will establish a new Marine and Coastal Act, bringing together all management and protections under the one system'.	Expert panel appointed and discussion paper released for public comment in 2016. Draft legislation being prepared, which merges Coastal Boards with Catchment Management Authorities, reduces the role of the Victorian Coastal Council and reduces the role of the community. Fails to establish clear powers for marine bioregional planning. Final reform package is at best modest, and in some aspects reduces the role of the community, without significantly improving coastal management.	→		
Protecting Threatened Species '...will review the <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act</i> '.	Public consultation held in 2015 and 2016. Discussion paper released, but final package of reform not finished. Concerns from environmental groups that the reform does not resolve long standing problems.	→		
Forests Protection and the Great Forest National Park 'Labor strongly supports a consensus approach in the establishment of any new national parks ... A Labor Government will consider any reasonable recommendations and proposals reached by consensus of the major stakeholders through the Industry Task Force, but will not impose solutions.'	A Forest Industry Taskforce (FIT) was established and met between 2015 and 2016. It included representatives from conservation groups, timber industry and union (CFMEU Forestry Division). It produced a Statement of Intent in September 2016, which agreed that there should be new national parks established, and initiated two reports from Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC). The taskforce stalled and has not met in 2017, and was abandoned by the Andrews Government. The taskforce has failed to significantly slow logging of high conservation value forests, or commence any process for establishing new national parks and reserves. Instead the Andrews Government has purchased, with tax payers funds, the sawmill at Heyfield.	→		
Creating National Parks 'Labor has a long history of extending our national parks and reserves'	While technical correct that historically the ALP has a strong history of creating new national parks, the current Andrews Government has poorest record for creating new parks in the last 60 years (see pages 6-7).	✗		