



The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP
Member for Willoughby
NSW Premier



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Ms Stephanie Clark
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Dear Ms Clark,

Thank you for the invitation to attend the *Forum on Environmental Issues* on Tuesday 19 February 2019.

Unfortunately I am unable to attend the Forum due to a longstanding prior commitment.

However, I am pleased to have my responses to the questions you have provided distributed to the audience.

Yours faithfully,

Gladys Berejiklian MP
Member for Willoughby
NSW Premier

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What is your position and/or that of your party on the Northern Beaches and Western Harbour Tunnel projects?

A NSW Liberals & Nationals Government will proceed with the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link projects. Congestion costs our economy around \$6.1 billion a year, and by 2030 this is expected to hit \$12.6 billion a year.

Over 250,000 vehicles use the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Harbour Tunnel every day, and they are near capacity. The Western Harbour Tunnel will take pressure off the existing Bridge and Tunnel, critical pieces of road infrastructure that Willoughby commuters use every day.

The Western Harbour Tunnel will save 10 minutes for drivers travelling to Rozelle, 13 minutes to Olympic Park, and 21 minutes to the Airport.

The Beaches Link will provide a motorway class link to the Northern Beaches for the first time. It will allow drivers to avoid stop-start traffic on the surface, bypassing 19 sets of traffic lights.

Beaches Link will take significant amounts of traffic off local roads – including roads across Willoughby. An estimated 40% of traffic across the Spit Bridge, 25% of traffic on Roseville Bridge, 35% of traffic on Eastern Valley Way, and 15 % of traffic on Military Road will move into the tunnel. This is a massive win for our communities on the lower North Shore, and it has been a project that many on our side of The Spit have campaigned for, to achieve this traffic outcome.

It's also important to remember, the Government is investing a record amount in new public transport. Since 2011, the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government have spent nearly \$41 billion on public transport in NSW.

Will you support the call for a redeveloped business case to be released for public comment?

A business case will be finalised for the project, as is normal practice for the NSW Government. At present, the Government has just undertaken an extensive round of community consultation, and the project team are reviewing the feedback from the community. The project design will be refined to take community input into consideration, and then costs will need to be updated to reflect the revised design.

The business case will be reviewed and assured independently of the government by experts assigned by Infrastructure NSW. It is standard practice for Infrastructure NSW to release a summary of the business case, together with its views, on the Infrastructure NSW website after the document has been finalised and approved.

The next step in the community consultation process will be release of a detailed Environmental Impact Statement. This will include further details on the project, including outcomes of environmental and traffic modelling that is being undertaken. It will address key factors both during construction and after opening, and will be subject to an extensive community feedback period that will be overseen by the Department of Planning & Environment. I expect this will occur later in 2019 and take up to 12 months.

Will you support measures to ensure that all transport tunnel ventilation stacks in NSW include best practice ventilation?

The NSW Government is already committed to best practice ventilation.

In fact, in February 2018 I announced that stronger measures would apply on emissions from motorway tunnels. Under these reforms, the ventilation outlets of all current and future

operating motorway tunnels in NSW will be regulated by the NSW Environment Protection Authority. The EPA will require tunnel operators to meet air quality limits and undertake air quality monitoring.

On the issue of tunnel ventilation air quality, the Government takes its advice from the Advisory Committee on Tunnel Air Quality. The Committee is chaired by the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer and includes senior representatives from the NSW Ministry of Health (NSW Chief Health Officer), as well as an independent air quality expert, Dr Ian Longley from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (New Zealand).

The NSW Environment Protection Authority, the Department of Planning and Environment and the Office of Environment and Heritage are members on the Committee. Professor Peter Sturm, Institute for Internal Combustion Engines and Thermodynamics, Graz University of Technology, Austria is a technical advisor to the Committee.

Prior to the release of the Environmental Impact Statement to the public, it is our policy that:

- o The Advisory Committee coordinate a scientific review of the project's air emissions from ventilation outlets, advice that will be published with the Environmental Impact Statement.
- o NSW Chief Health Officer releases a statement on the potential health impacts of emissions from the tunnel's ventilation outlets.
- o Minister for Planning not approve a motorway tunnel project until the Advisory Committee's scientific review is considered.

Issue Two: Expand and Protect Our National Parks and Wilderness

How will your party protect our existing National Parks and wilderness areas and expand this ecologically important parks network?

This NSW Government is committed to building a robust network of open space, wilderness and cultural treasures. Protecting land in a range of reserve categories across the national parks system is the cornerstone of our commitment to biodiversity conservation.

This work is supported by a commitment of \$50 million over five years to purchase high-priority land for addition to the national parks estate, under the Environmental Trust's Land Acquisition Program. This funding effectively doubles the amount NSW spends on purchasing conservation land over the next five years.

This investment in land acquisition for national parks, combined with our conservation efforts on private land, demonstrates the government's commitment to improve environmental outcomes for NSW.

Will you support increasing the NPWS budget by 2022?

In 2018-19, the NSW Government has increased funding to \$1.9 billion to enable a valued and protected environment and heritage including \$632.3 million (\$2.5 billion over four years) for national parks, walking trails, public parklands and gardens to increase tourism and improve liveability and sustainability.

The budget increases the amount government spends to purchase conservation land over five years, improving protection for a vast range of habitats, ecosystems, plants and animals.

On 4 February 2019, the NSW Government announced a major new \$150 million package that will improve access to existing national parks. The investment includes:

- More access – significant upgrade to the 13.6 kilometre Grand Cliff Top Walk from Wentworth Falls to Katoomba in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (\$10m).

Also, upgrading access to iconic lookout points to a mobility impaired access standard (\$9.9m);

- Improved park visitor infrastructure and facilities – expansion of picnic areas, BBQs, water provision, facilities (\$38.7m) and increased support for families and people with restricted mobility (\$45m); and
- Safe access – Investment in making our extensive network of walking tracks and trails safer and more accessible (\$36.4m); expansion of the ‘Think before you Trek’ safety program for bushwalkers and work with other agencies to deliver other priority safety programs like rock fishing and enhanced mobile connectivity in the parks (\$1m).

Will you oppose degazettal of MVNP and raising the Warragamba Dam?

We have no current plans to change the size of the Murray Valley National Park.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is committed to growing our national parks estate and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Since 2011, 11 new national parks and reserves have been created. This has added over 75,600 hectares to the national parks estate, with more than seven million hectares of NSW now managed and protected by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

We have also recently committed to the transfer of over 43,000 hectares of unproductive state forests to the national parks estate, which includes 24,000 hectares of new koala parks and reserves. In addition to these land transfers, the NSW Government has also committed \$20 million to purchase and permanently reserve land containing priority koala habitat.

In regards to the raising of Warragamba dam wall, the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has the highest flood risk in NSW, if not Australia. The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is taking action to address this risk and protect the lives and property of the 134,000 people of Penrith, the Hawkesbury, The Hills and Blacktown, who live in the Valley.

Under our Flood Strategy, we are developing a business case to raise Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres – a project which could reduce potential flood damages by up to 75%. The local community will have the opportunity to have their say during consultation on the project’s Environmental Impact Statement, which will be released in coming months. We have also allocated \$58 million to deliver the first phase of the Flood Strategy, which is contributing to environmental assessments, community consultation, and improving emergency and evacuation planning.

Issue Three: Great Koala National Park & Koalas

How do you propose to protect the koala population in SW Sydney? Will you stop the rezoning of Gilead for development? Will you invest in appropriate overhead crossings and under road tunnels for koalas?

The NSW Government is committed to protecting koalas and their habitat and is implementing a number of actions in south west Sydney. The NSW Koala Strategy commits \$20 million to purchase priority koala habitat so we can permanently conserve it in the national park estate. I am pleased to advise the first property purchased was 402 hectares of high quality koala habitat in Wollondilly that connects the Blue Mountains to wilderness areas of Morton National Park.

Conservation through community action is a key pillar of the Koala Strategy. Under the Koala Strategy more broadly, the NSW Government is identifying priority local koala

conservation actions to be delivered in partnership with local communities, including in South West Sydney.

The Greater Macarthur 2040 - an Interim Plan for the Greater Macarthur Growth Area is on exhibition until 8 February 2019. The plan includes a proposal to set aside a corridor on government lands east of Appin Road as a koala reserve. It also proposes installing protective fencing to ensure koalas can move safely through the local area and a \$1 million grant program to support koala friendly planning in the area.

Will you commit to gazetting the Great Koala National Park to secure the future of our most iconic species?

The NSW Government recognises the koala as an iconic species and is delivering koala conservation outcomes.

In May 2018, the NSW Government released the NSW Koala Strategy committing \$44.7 million towards securing the future of koalas in the wild. This is the biggest commitment by any state government to koalas and will support a range of conservation actions over three years.

The Koala Strategy will deliver:

- \$20 million from the NSW Environmental Trust to purchase and permanently conserve land that contains priority koala habitat in the national park estate
- \$3 million to build a new koala hospital at Port Stephens
- \$3.3 million to fix priority road-kill hotspots across NSW
- \$4.5 million to improve the care of sick or injured koalas
- \$6.9 million to improve our knowledge of koalas starting with the development of a state-wide koala habitat information base
- \$5 million to deliver local actions to protect koala populations, including through the Saving Our Species program
- \$2 million to research impacts of natural hazards and weather events on koalas

A centrepiece of the Koala Strategy is setting aside large areas of land where koalas can thrive, and new habitats can be created. Under the Koala Strategy, more than 24,000 hectares of state forest is being set aside for koalas. These koala parks and reserves will be actively managed to ensure prime koala habitat is conserved.

Issue Four: Logging of Public Native Forests

Will you support calls to end logging of public native forests over the next 3 years?

No. As detailed in the NSW Forestry Industry Roadmap, the NSW Government is committed to a sustainably managed forest estate that underpins a dynamic, economically efficient forestry industry and delivers social, economic and environmental benefits.

The NSW Government has undertaken extensive reform of the rules governing public native forestry, introducing a new Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval that delivers improved protections for environmental sustainability, biodiversity and threatened species while maintaining timber supply to industry.

The NSW Government has also introduced tougher penalties for non-compliance and those who do the wrong thing. Under new forestry reforms, on-the-spot fines for breaches increase from \$1,100 to \$15,000 and maximum penalties are up from \$110,000 to \$2 million. An

intentional breach that causes significant environmental harm can now lead to a penalty as high as \$5 million.

Do you support the NSW and Commonwealth governments' 20-year extension of RFAs? Why?

RFAs provide the framework for the establishment of our world-class national park and conservation reserve system and underpin the sustainable management of other native forest areas on both public and private land, including the provision of sustainable timber supplies to industry.

The renewed RFAs include improved protections for environmental sustainability, biodiversity and key threatened species.

The renewed agreements:

- o Continue the commitment to establishing and maintaining a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) Reserve System.
- o Support continued implementation of Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM) with strengthened commitments to adaptive management and continual improvement principles;
- o Provide greater transparency, outcomes-focused reporting and long-term sustainability.

Do you accept that there are other values of forests (like carbon and water storage) that are worth many times more than timber?

NSW forests are managed as multi-use resources that provide a range of benefits to the economy, communities, and the environment. NSW's comprehensive regulatory and compliance environment delivers on this and ensures a sustainable balance of resources, and underpinned by a triple bottom line framework and Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management principles.

Any production use of forests, including timber production and carbon storage, is carefully managed alongside other social and community uses and critical environmental protections for threatened species and other biodiversity outcomes.

Managed forests can also provide improved water catchment outcomes due to reduced soil erosion, and minimal nutrient and fertiliser usage.

Issue Five: Urban Health & Wellbeing

Will your party prioritise the protection and management of urban bushland, and will you value, expand and effectively manage urban greenspace? How will you do this?

The NSW Government is prioritising a healthy and sustainable urban environment. In 2018-19, the Government has increased funding to \$1.9 billion to enable a valued and protected environment and heritage including \$632.3 million (\$2.5 billion over four years) for national parks, walking trails, public parklands and gardens to increase tourism and improve liveability and sustainability.

On 3 February 2019, the NSW Government announced that NSW will for the first time have a Minister for Public Space who will identify and protect publicly owned land for use as parks and open space. We also committed \$150 million for new and improved parklands across urban areas.

The Minister for Public Spaces would have responsibility for enhancing and expanding the State's parks and gardens and open spaces, ensuring that there is sufficient open space across NSW, and that public spaces are made welcoming and attractive.

Issue Six: Climate Change

Do you agree with the urgency of dealing with this issue and with the necessary platform outlined in 'A Cleaner Greener NSW'?

What do you perceive to be the opportunities for action to ameliorate climate change at the State Government level?

How will you go about implementing strong action on CC?

The NSW Government's Climate Change Policy Framework sets out our aspirational long-term objectives to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 and to make NSW more resilient to a changing climate. The NSW Government is investing \$1.4bn through the Climate Change Fund to improve our energy security, place downward pressure on bills, and reduce emissions. We will be doing this by targeting energy efficiency, clean energy, and programs to help communities and businesses adapt to a changing climate.

Some of the projects we are funding through the Climate Change Fund include:

- \$24.5 million to upgrade more than 20,000 rental homes to enable low-income renters to save up to \$400 a year on their energy bills through energy efficient lighting, heating and hot water systems.
- A \$30 million program to enable communities across the State to build their own local clean energy projects.
- The \$55 million Emerging Energy program to help the private sector develop and accelerate clean energy technology, such as pumped hydro.

We will also take the pressure off household energy costs and lower emissions by supporting the rollout of up to 300,000 new solar energy and battery storage systems with no upfront costs through interest-free loans. This new initiative will help to unlock up to \$3.2 billion in clean energy investment over 10 years, helping to boost NSW's renewable energy and reduce emissions. The batteries will add up to 3,000MWh of storage when the program is fully rolled out.

We are also continuing to work with all governments to develop a sensible national plan to deliver secure, affordable and sustainable energy for households and businesses.