



Reform and Action ... Strengthening Environmental Protection and Sustainability in NSW



Update

2010 ended as a year of significant reforms and major milestones to improve environmental regulation, management and conservation for years to come, including:

- ▶ new laws to help councils and coastal dwellers better manage the impacts of coastal erosion, improve energy efficiency in the commercial building sector, provide for industry contributions for environmental monitoring, and to address radiation safety
- ▶ increased funding for fire prevention and management in the face of climate change
- ▶ exciting developments for national parks and nature conservation, reaching seven million hectares of land protected in NSW, including over 170,000 hectares of river red gums, and western cypress and woodlands
- ▶ more than 300,000 people have now 'greened' their home with the help of NSW programs.



Managing coastal erosion

In October 2010, important legislation was passed to strengthen the management of coastal erosion in NSW. The Coastal Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act commenced on 1 January 2011, accompanied by three new sets of guidelines to support its implementation.

The new laws were developed and amended through extensive consultation with coastal councils and local communities. They recognise the value the community places on our beautiful coast and beaches, while providing practical avenues for responding to the impacts of erosion.

► The new laws will:

- modernise the way coastal erosion is managed
- increase the options available to councils when dealing with coastal erosion and unauthorised coastal protection works
- clarify what landowners can do to protect their own properties, particularly in emergencies
- ensure that action by landowners has minimal impact on our beaches.

Monitoring air quality in the Upper Hunter

In response to community concerns about the cumulative health effects of dust and particles associated with coal mining and power generation on regional communities in the Upper Hunter, the NSW Government is providing a new 14-station ambient monitoring network in the region.

The first two air quality monitoring stations of the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network began operating in December 2010. The monitoring stations at Bowman Park in Muswellbrook and Civic Avenue in Singleton are part of the NSW Government's strategy to manage, monitor and minimise dust from coal mining.

Singleton and Muswellbrook residents now have access to real-time air quality data, 24 hours a day. Wind direction and speed measured at the two sites form part of the NSW Regional Air Quality Index, providing residents with credible, reliable and relevant information.

A boost to environmental monitoring

Amendments to the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* allow the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water to set up, and require industry to pay for, strategic monitoring programs in areas where a cluster of industries may have a significant impact on residents and the environment.

The monitoring programs collect information on the cumulative impacts from industry, and provide information to design appropriate responses to protect human health and the environment. Industry and the affected community will also be consulted about the design of these programs.

Managing dust from coal mines

In August 2010, NSW undertook compliance audit programs to assess coal mine compliance with dust management requirements, and to encourage better environmental performance. A total of nine coal mines were audited by the Departments of Environment, Climate Change and Water, Planning, and Industry & Investment NSW.

The *Environmental compliance and performance report – Management of dust from coal mines* shows how coal mines can reduce dust from their operations and improve air quality through an integrated dust management system.

The report is available at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/coalmining/coalmineecpr.htm. In addition, the international benchmarking study by Katestone Environmental into NSW coal mining defines the international best practice measures to prevent dust from coal mining. It can be found at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/air/KE1006953coalminebmpreport.pdf.

Protecting cypress and woodland forests in western NSW

In November 2010, the NSW Government passed legislation to protect more than 71,000 hectares of land in western NSW, comprising cypress and woodland forests on the western slopes and tablelands. This included important Aboriginal cultural heritage areas added to Mungo National Park within the Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area which had not previously been protected in national parks and reserves. The legislation commenced on 1 January 2011.



\$9 million for Riverina red gum towns

In December 2010, the NSW Government announced funding of almost \$9.5 million for 41 new projects in Riverina red gum towns from the Riverina Red Gum Regional Employment and Community Development Fund. The projects have the potential to create over 100 direct and sustainable jobs with a further 120 indirect jobs.

► Some of the projects include:

- \$1 million to Deniliquin Shire towards construction of a medical centre to assist in the retention and attraction of general practitioners
- \$800,000 for the consolidation and expansion of Mid Murray Fire Protection Services in Moama
- \$350,000 for the establishment at Darlington Point of a mulch processing operation using waste from former mills.

18,000 hectares of wilderness declared

In November 2010, the Government declared 18,000 hectares of wilderness, bringing the total area of wilderness in NSW to over two million hectares. The wilderness declarations included pristine land in Oxley Wild Rivers, Washpool, Blue Mountains and Wollemi national parks. These declarations are in addition to the 4000 hectares of wilderness declared in Morton National Park in August.

The declaration of wilderness acknowledges the conservation and aesthetic significance of these areas, which are the last of our wild, untamed places, and provides the most secure form of protection.

Funding for fire management in the face of climate change

In response to the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission report, NSW announced a new funding package for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to manage fires in parks and reserves in the face of climate change. The package will deliver an additional \$62.5 million over five years from July 2011. This will be used to double the hazard reduction effort in parks and reserves, introduce extra rapid response teams to respond to remote area fires before they spread, and increase resources to fight large fires predicted under all climate change scenarios.

This package will see the employment and training of more than 100 additional fire fighters and dedicated hazard reduction crews across NSW.

Aboriginal law reform working party announced

NSW is a step closer to stand-alone legislation to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage with the announcement of a working party to advise the Government on what should be included in the new legislation.

The changes will be a huge reform for NSW. Laws relating to Aboriginal cultural heritage are currently contained within the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. While recent legislative amendments have strengthened provisions for the protection of Aboriginal artefacts and objects, Aboriginal community members are clear in their desire for their own stand-alone legislation.

Protecting consumers from tanning unit radiation

New Australian research shows that younger people might be more susceptible to the carcinogenic effects of ultra violet (UV) radiation from solariums. In November 2010, proposed measures were announced to tighten controls around the use of UV tanning units, to mitigate the potential harm of solarium radiation.

► Under the proposed changes, the range of restrictions will extend to people:

- with Skin Photo Type 2 (skin that burns easily and tans minimally) – from 1 April 2011
- aged under 25 – from 1 April 2011
- aged under 30 years – from 1 August 2011.

Improving strategies to reduce waste

The draft *Strategic Directions and Implementation Plan 2011 to 2015* was developed in response to the findings of a comprehensive review of the waste strategy and policy in NSW conducted in 2010.

► The draft Implementation Plan focuses on:

- making it easier for householders and business to manage their waste
- facilitating investment in waste infrastructure
- reducing litter and combating illegal dumping.

The draft Implementation Plan is on public consultation until 2 February 2011 and is available at: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/warr.



Improving environmental performance of buildings

In November 2010, legislation was passed to accelerate investment in environmental performance improvements for commercial, industrial and large multi-unit residential buildings.

Investment in energy efficiency measures for commercial buildings alone could save the NSW economy over \$560 million each year, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly six million tonnes per year by 2020. This could drive down energy bills for all customers by reducing demand on the power grid.

► The new legislation overcomes major barriers that face building owners wishing to invest in energy efficiency measures. The new laws will enable owners, lenders and councils to come to a voluntary arrangement under an Environmental Upgrade Agreement by:

- allowing the debt to be tied to the land rather than the owner, giving the lender surety, and therefore improving the owner's access to finance
- allowing the owner to choose the works, as long as they improve energy, water or environmental efficiency/sustainability
- protecting tenants – no tenant can be required to pay more than they would have, had the agreement not been in place, unless they agree
- putting downward pressure on occupancy costs for tenants and downward pressure on bills for all energy customers.



Energy saving achievements

Home saver rebates exceed 300,000

Almost one in 10 households have taken advantage of NSW Government rebates to make their homes more water and energy efficient.

NSW households have taken up more than 300,000 rebates for sustainability improvements like solar water heating, rainwater tanks, toilet retrofits, and hot water recirculators, saving \$50.5 million on water and energy bills each year, around 425,000 tonnes of carbon pollution and around four billion litres of water.

Over 10,000 power assessments for low-income households

Since the launch of the Home Power Savings Program in May 2010, more than 10,000 pensioners and families on a low income have taken part in this free program.

By using their free Power Savings Kit and following the Action Plan provided by the energy expert after their home assessment, these householders are expected to save up to 20 percent on their power usage.



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Footers: p.2 – Coal dust control water truck (J. Pope/DoP); Mungo National Park (DECCW); Hazard reduction burn (M. Lauder/DECCW); p.3 – Solarium tanning unit (C. Lambertson/DECCW); River red gums (P. Childs/DECCW); Hand stencils at Mutawintji NP (P. Laughton/DECCW).

p.4 – Solar panel installation (P. Sherratt/DECCW); NPWS sustainable office in Narooma (S. Cohen/DECCW).

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