



# **Rob Stokes MP**

**Minister for the Environment**  
**Minister for Heritage**  
**Minister for the Central Coast**  
Assistant Minister for Planning

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **TOUGHEST PENALTIES IN AUSTRALIA FOR POLLUTERS**

The NSW Government today announced a range of new measures that will strengthen the state's environment watchdog, including a proposed ten-fold increase in penalties for companies that breach environment protection licenses.

Environment Minister Rob Stokes said the changes will provide the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) with the toughest regulatory powers in Australia, which can be used against industries that pose the greatest risk to communities.

The proposed changes include:

- Increasing fines for the ten most serious environmental offences from \$1500 to \$15,000 for a corporation and from \$750 up to \$7,500 for an individual; and
- The introduction of risk-based licencing from 1 July 2015.

"The fees for environment protection licences, which are needed in order to operate, will be linked to good environmental performance, creating an additional incentive for industry to boost environmental performance," Rob Stokes said.

"In addition to increased penalties, poor environmental performance will now cost companies more through increase costs for their environmental licenses.

"The changes will give the EPA access to the highest penalties of any environmental regulator in Australia along with increased powers to bring polluters to justice.

Further measures include:

- Giving the Land and Environment Court alternative approaches to sentences, including the ability to set restorative justice actions which would benefit the environment and the victims of environmental incidents;
- Changes to the law that will close the liability loophole for operators looking to avoid penalties; and
- Proposed changes to the state's waste regulations to reduce the licensing thresholds for waste recycling and storage activities (currently 2,500 tonnes at any one time proposed down to 1,000 tonnes) to stop stockpiling.

“For too long the EPA has been operating under conditions that make it difficult for them to effectively regulate operators who continually do the wrong thing, with penalties that are simply not significant enough to change poor behaviour.

“The changes will shift the balance of power back in favour of the regulator rather than the polluter, allowing the EPA to operate more effectively, while better reflecting community expectations around environmental crimes.”

CEO and Chair of the EPA, Barry Buffier, welcomed the changes saying they reflected community expectations.

“These changes will give the EPA more firepower when it comes to dealing with serious environmental crimes and serial offenders,” Mr Buffier.

“Each of these changes on their own are significant but when combined they will greatly increase the powers and effectiveness of the EPA, allowing us to better focus regulatory efforts on the most serious offenders.”