MEDIA RELEASE

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LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

The NSW Government today announced new measures to strengthen environmental penalties and further empower the Environment Protection Authority with the introduction of the Protection of the Environment Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.

Environment Minister Rob Stokes said the legislation will remove legal loopholes that have frustrated the state’s environmental regulator and provide additional power to effectively protect the environment.

“For far too long it has been difficult to effectively regulate operators who continually do the wrong thing and the changes announced today will shift the balance of power back in favour of the regulator rather than the polluter,” Mr Stokes said.

The legislation includes:

- Clearer, stronger and more consistent penalties for offences under the POEO Act to deter contamination and radiation offences;

- Increased penalties for the Contaminated Land Management Act for corporations responsible for contamination who fail to comply with an EPA direction. Current maximum: $137,500 Proposed maximum: $1,000,000;

- Power to strengthen the EPA’s arm against companies who flagrantly breach environment protection licence conditions. The EPA will not be required to issue licensees with notice of intention to revoke or suspend a licence. Such notices delayed the EPA’s ability to take action against licensees where there were risks to the community or the environment;

- Increasing the ability of the EPA to prevent and respond to pollution incidents. For example, there will now be a duty to report odour incidents that cause, or have the potential to cause, material harm to the environment; and

- The EPA will be able to require problem waste transporters to install a GPS tracking advice. This will act as a strong deterrent against illegal dumping.

“The NSW Government will continue to empower the EPA with the tools necessary to be an effective environmental regulator.”