

# LOOKING AFTER *Our* LAND

## LANDCARE AND NOXIOUS WEEDS

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**NSW Landcare groups have a great history of success in improving our natural landscape, enhancing agricultural productivity, protecting riparian corridors and protecting biodiversity. Importantly they have done it with largely volunteer labour bringing together primary producers, other landholders and community volunteers.**

But Landcare in NSW faces a crisis. The institutional frameworks that supported them have been gutted by Federal and State Coalition Governments. In NSW the Nationals and Liberals have abolished Catchment Management Authorities and we have seen the debacle of the introduction of the Local Lands Service. Natural Resource Management and Landcare funding have been slashed and local groups are wondering whether they have a future.

Labor salutes the members of Landcare who have done so much to restore biodiversity and shift farming onto a more sustainable footing in NSW over many years.

Our land is our future, without healthy land we will not have productive agriculture and we will lose our biodiversity.

Labor has already released policies that are critical to the future productivity of our land, our environment policies and the focus on the quality of our soil in our agriculture policies.

Looking after our land puts two more elements to that focus, revitalising land care and setting a better structure to tackle noxious weeds.

### LANDCARE

Labor will:

1. Support the locals who know the land best and are key partners in delivering outcomes, by putting Landcare in a central and formal role in delivering on-ground outcomes as identified by national, state and local plans. Landcare's relationship to Local Land Services will be defined and will be the key on-ground partner in delivery.
2. Provide \$20 million over 4 years to ensure Landcare has the organisational infrastructure it needs to support this task. This funding will allow Landcare to operate independently of Government agencies as a partner in natural resource management planning and delivery by working with the Natural Resources Commission and Government in defining state wide plans, a state wide representative and professional team, infrastructure to facilitate delivery such as professional development, policy, research, monitoring and evaluation as well as staff across the state to coordinate delivery at the local level. The funding will also facilitate Landcare's partnerships with Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal communities manage large amounts of land and its biodiversity across the state. NSW Labor will ensure they are supported in this task.

3. NSW Labor will work with Landcare over its first term of government to identify paths to reliable ongoing funding including exploring the options of establishing a Landcare Trust.
4. Reinvigorate the multi-stakeholder and multi-level approach to landscape wide planning and management in NSW. We will ensure investment is targeted and effective in delivering outcomes and that rural communities are given the tools and support to protect the assets they manage.
5. Deliver state wide planning and goals for natural resource management by restoring the Natural Resource Commission as a respected leader in scientifically based resource management and environmental protection. We will put a scientist at its head.
6. Deliver regional planning and accountability by restoring the integrity of Local Land Services as regional leaders in natural resource management. We will rebuild the strength of the governance model in which local plans and initiatives are embedded in state wide planning and reinstate a strong emphasis on community innovation and cooperation in relation to biodiversity protection.
7. Support local communities in driving protection by encouraging community level collaborations to drive outcomes. We will adopt the framework developed by the last Labor Federal Government to support community led proposals for corridor projects, integrating them into biodiversity planning. Adopted corridor projects will receive support on issues like governance and be priorities for funding. The NRC will lead these decisions.

The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative is a great example of a corridor that runs up the escarpment of eastern NSW and has brought together scientists, community and environment groups. Labor will continue the current Green Corridors funding including allocation to the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative.

### NOXIOUS WEEDS

Weeds have a significant impact on the Australian economy and our environment; they threaten endangered ecosystems and have a more than \$2.2 billion per annum impact on agricultural production. In NSW estimates are that weeds cost farmers more than \$1.2 billion per annum in control costs and lost production as well as threatening native animals and plants.

Without action, these weeds will become more erratic and harder to control – they will potentially get out of human control. The Baird Government has failed to live up to its 2011 election commitments to increase weeds funding with funds barely keeping up with inflation, they failed to agree to key recommendations of their own weeds review and failed to progress new biosecurity legislation through parliament.

Labor will:

### 1. Implement a “permitted list approach” to weeds

Labor will move to implement the recommendations of the NRC Weeds review to move from a prohibited list to a ‘permitted list’ approach to weeds in NSW.

Natural Resources Commission (NRC) Weeds review said:

*“Preventing the naturalisation of new species is accepted as the most cost effective weed management strategy. The naturalisation of new weed species in NSW is occurring at an estimated average rate of almost eight new species per year, and there are thousands of potentially invasive species already in Australia.”*

The NRC recommends taking a precautionary approach to managing this new incursion risk by creating a permitted list indicating the species that are permitted to be sold in NSW and prohibiting the sale of other species until their weed risk can be assessed. This approach will ensure that only low risk plants will be available for purchase in NSW.

### 2. Regional Weeds Committees

The Government’s own weeds report recommended the use of regional weeds committees. Labor will implement this recommendation. Responsibility for weeds control and issuing of weeds orders continues to remain primarily with local Government and it is only fair that local Government should be able to be represented on a regional weeds committee. The Liberal and Nationals Government has decided it will exclude local Government by replacing weeds committees with the LLS.

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