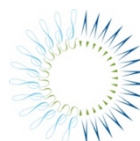




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**THE
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CHARITABLE TRUSTS

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, MP
Premier of New South Wales
Sent by email: office@premier.nsw.gov.au
Cc: armine.nalbandian@premier.nsw.gov.au

Thursday, 26 March 2020

Dear Premier,

COVID-19 economic stimulus proposal

On behalf of the undersigned farming and conservation organisations, we write to bring to your attention the potential for a significant jobs-rich investment into conservation and land management on public and private land as part of assisting the NSW Government to respond to the economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your staff to discuss this proposal in more detail.

The economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 virus will be deep and the road to recovery will be long. **Getting through this crisis will require each sector of society to contribute in its own way and we stand ready to help in any way we can.**

Right now, tens of thousands of workers have lost their job across the country and we write in the interest of assisting government to find ways to give these people security of employment over the next couple of years. An important part of that security is that they have confidence, both for their own mental health, and to quickly restore confidence in the economy when the health crisis passes.

It is in this spirit that we share these ideas on the role that the conservation and land management sector could play in immediate, medium and long-term economic stimulus efforts.

An investment in conservation and land management across the state would be a good fit for economic stimulus, while providing long term benefits to the environment, agriculture, health and tourism.

The sector is ready to be part of the 'bridge to recovery' and can take on an expanded workforce, both during the lock down and once social distancing measures are lifted. During the period of economic recovery, there is scope for tens of thousands of unskilled and semi-skilled workers to be employed by government in the conservation and land management sector in roles that are:

- practical and labour intensive;
- located in both regional and metropolitan areas;
- appropriate for repurposing existing workforces which are under pressure; and,
- will not create long-term structural commitments in the budget.

Such a program would be low risk, especially if the planning and investment occurs during the current 'lock down' as part of the stimulus measures. It would allow people to have meaningful and secure employment for at least 12 months as soon as the social distancing measures are lifted.

Developing this package early will contribute to giving a boost to economic confidence and security for people who are newly unemployed.

Areas of focus for such a program would include:

- **a surge in weed control efforts**, focussed on containment and preventing cross-tenure spread;
- **a program of catchment and river restoration**, including fencing and erosion control;
- **funding for farmers and other land managers** to undertake conservation and land management;
- **pest animal control**, including deer and pigs which impact on farming and threatened species;
- **bushfire recovery and resilience activities**, including infrastructure repairs and habitat restoration;
- **Landcare coordination and project funding**, to engage the community in conservation efforts.

In addition to providing employment to the newly unemployed, this investment would provide much needed income and economic confidence for bulldozer and other machine operators, weed-sprayers, shooting and trapping contractors, fencers, nursery growers, hardware suppliers, local and Indigenous land managers and bush regenerators. The jobs supported by this program would also have significant economic multipliers, especially in regional communities, with work generated for local suppliers and hospitality businesses.

Program design considerations

Developing this package early will allow for **good program design** and the opportunity to learn the lessons of past programs. If funding is committed, then the 'lock down' period is an opportunity to develop projects, seek partners and allow people to apply for positions, so that the program can hit the ground running. We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with government in designing this program.

The ratio between salary, operational and capital costs will vary by activity and location, but we estimate that investment in conservation land management would support about **1,000 full-time equivalent positions per \$100 million invested** (including salaries, on-costs, operational and capital expenditure).

While we recognise that any stimulus needs to be temporary in nature, we recommend that at least 40% of funding is spent in years two to four. This will allow the gains in any short-term stimulus program to be maintained and consolidated, both from an environmental perspective but also to ensure there are not large numbers of people losing jobs at one time. A particular focus should also be directed to areas where existing funding can be leveraged, including through ongoing government programs and donations from the recent bushfire disaster.

We also recommend that complementary funding is secured through the federal government's stimulus package and ask that you make representations to your federal colleagues seeking this.

If you have any questions or would like to organise a meeting, please contact Jack Gough, National Pastoral Conservation Manager at The Pew Charitable Trusts on 0427 713 101 or by email jgough@outback.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Gambian
CEO, Nature Conservation Council



Peter Arkle
CEO, NSW Farmers Association



Adrian Zammit
CEO, Landcare NSW



Pepe Clarke
Deputy Director, Outback to
Oceans, The Pew Charitable Trusts



Nerida Bradley
CEO, Australian Land
Conservation Alliance



Andrew Cox
CEO, Invasive Species Council



Brendan Foran
CEO, Greening Australia