

ELECTION 2016

A PLAN FOR GROWING CLEAN ENERGY, CUTTING POLLUTION AND RESTORING NATURE



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Environment Victoria is one of Australia's leading environment groups. We are independent and community-focused. For 47 years we've been holding governments to account to protect our environment.

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A RESPONSIBLE AND
FUTURE-THINKING
GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE
A CREDIBLE PLAN TO CUT
POLLUTION, BOOST CLEAN
ENERGY AND PROTECT
NATURE.

A RACE TO THE TOP FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

A strong and prosperous Australia depends on a healthy environment and a stable climate.

Australians are ready for solutions. There's growing conviction that our economy can be powered by clean energy. The overwhelming majority support cutting pollution and increasing renewable energy. In recent years our concern for global warming has grown along with our determination to stop it.¹

As we experience record-breaking heatwaves one after the other, extreme bushfire events and irreparable damage to iconic natural treasures, it is becoming even clearer that this is our 'do or die' moment. Now we need a federal government that will rise to the challenge.

A responsible and future-thinking government will have a credible plan to cut pollution, boost clean energy and protect nature. Election 2016 provides Australians with the opportunity to ensure that our next national government, whichever party gains power, does just that.

In the lead-up to the election, Environment Victoria will be working with communities across the state, but particularly in areas where the election will come down to the wire, to improve the environmental policies of all parties.

This document outlines our agenda for a race to the top for the environment and climate. We will support any political party that supports this agenda and highlight where any party falls short.

We're excited by the opportunity to create a fresh agenda for environmental leadership in this country and we look forward to working with you this federal election campaign.

¹ Lowy Institute (2014), http://www.lowyinstitute. org/news-and-media/press-releases/australianattitudes-heating-about-climate-change-2014lowy-institute-poll-finds



THE STORY SO FAR: A LACK OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Australia is home to some of the most important and spectacular natural environments in the world. Our coasts, forests, wetlands and rivers are unique and contain thousands of threatened plants and animals—some found nowhere else on earth. These special places—the Great Barrier Reef and our rivers, coasts and forests—are being damaged by global warming.

Left unchecked, global warming will destroy communities and economies. The government's own experts say there will be huge declines in agricultural production with regional communities faring worst. Droughts in the Murray Darling Basin, Australia's foodbowl, could occur twice as often as they do now. Higher temperature extremes will increase heat-related deaths across Australia, and more frequent and intense bushfires threaten our way of life.

Despite everything we know about the devastating impacts of global warming, the current federal government has consistently failed to take action to reduce pollution at a time when the rest of the world is acting decisively. They have destroyed investment in new renewable energy projects and created huge uncertainty in the clean energy sector. The result: loss of jobs and investment in communities, and increased pollution from burning more coal.

The Abbott/Turnbull Government has approved massive new coal mines and one of the world's largest coal ports near the Great Barrier Reef. They have also attempted to weaken national laws (introduced by the Howard Government) that protect Australia's unique threatened species and our natural environment.

Environment Victoria has been tracking the impact of the Abbott/Turnbull Government's decisions on our environment – both positive and negative – at our Envirotracker website.² Unfortunately, since 2013 there have been many more attacks on our environment than positive actions.

² http://environmentvictoria.org.au/envirotracker

CHAPTER 01

A continued lack of national leadership will affect every Victorian and Australian. The air we breathe, the forests we love, the rivers and coasts we treasure, and the very climate that supports our society, all depend on a credible national plan to reduce pollution and restore our environment.

MAKING OUR ENVIRONMENT MATTER THIS ELECTION

Australia has a proud history of acting in the national interest to protect our environment. In the 1980s the Australian government halted plans to dam the Franklin River in Tasmania; in the 1990s the Australian government established the Landcare program, a world first; and in 2007 there was bipartisan support for putting a price on pollution. Unfortunately the historic legislation to put a price on pollution was scrapped by the Coalition government.

We now urgently need a visionary, innovative plan for the future that rises to the challenges of global warming and the opportunities of a clean energy economy.

This year, all major political parties have the opportunity to provide strong environmental policies that rapidly transition Australia from being one of the most polluting developed nations on the planet to one of the cleanest. But this will require a clear plan to clean our air, grow clean energy jobs and protect nature.

So in the lead-up to the 2016 federal election, Environment Victoria will work to encourage all major political parties to develop the most ambitious national policies to protect nature, reduce pollution and make Australia a clean energy powerhouse. We will work with communities across Victoria and focus on key electorates to drive a race to the top for our environment and climate.

Environment Victoria is seeking commitments from all political parties ahead of the 2016 federal election to announce comprehensive policies in the following areas:

- 1. A plan to power Australia with clean energy
- 2. A plan for cutting pollution
- 3. A plan for protecting and restoring nature



THE OPPORTUNITY

COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD ARE MAKING THE SWITCH TO RENEWABLE ENERGY AND GROWING JOBS AND INVESTMENT.

Scotland is on track to produce 100 percent clean energy by 2020. In Germany an estimated 371,000 people were employed in clean energy in 2014, while in the USA, 250,000 people work in the solar and wind industries alone.³

2015 was a record year for global investment in renewable energy, with investment in clean energy projects (excluding large hydro-electric projects) reaching \$285.9 billion – double the total investment in coal, oil and gas globally in 2015.⁴

Australia has some of the best wind and solar resources in the world – more than enough clean energy resources to power all our energy needs.⁵

The transition to clean energy could be achieved faster and more cheaply if we also act to improve efficiency. Reducing energy waste in our homes by improving building quality and appliances would create thousands of jobs, reduce emissions and help households save up to 40 percent on their bills.⁶

Victoria is well placed to reap the benefits of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in investment that strong national policies on clean energy will bring. As the rest of the world rapidly shifts to clean energy, we need a federal government that will make Australia a clean energy leader.

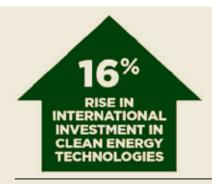
³ Environment Victoria (2015) *Six Steps to Climate Leadership*, http://environmentvictoria.org.au/six-steps-to-climate-leadership

⁴ http://rona.unep.org/news/2016/renewableenergy-investments-major-milestones-reachednew-world-record-set

⁵ https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/ staterenewables

⁶ Environment Victoria (2015) *Six Steps to Efficiency Leadership*, http://environmentvictoria.org.au/efficiency-leadership

CHAPTER 02 A PLAN TO POWER AUSTRALIA WITH CLEAN ENERGY



DROP IN
INVESTMENT
IN THE
LARGE-SCALE
RENEWABLE
ENERGY SECTOR
IN AUSTRALIA
IN 2014,
COMPARED
TO 2013

Figure 1. In 2014, while the rest of the world surged ahead, investment in Australian clean energy fell.

 $Source: CEC \ (2015), \textit{Clean Energy Australia Report 2014}, \\ \text{http://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/policy-advocacy/reports/clean-energy-australia-report.html}$

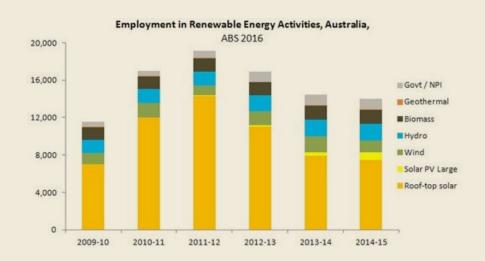


Figure 2. A quarter of clean energy jobs in Australia have been lost since 2012.

Source: ABS (2016) 4631.0 - Employment in Renewable Energy Activities, Australia, 2014-15



THE PROBLEM

IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE REST OF THE WORLD, AUSTRALIA HAS LOST OVER A QUARTER OF ITS CLEAN ENERGY JOBS IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS.

That's 5100 full time equivalent jobs lost.⁷ Investment in large-scale clean energy projects in Australia plummeted by 88 percent in 2014 compared with 2013, while the rest of the world increased investment by 16 percent to US\$310 billion (see Figure 1).

The Abbott/Turnbull government has stifled investment in clean energy by openly opposing wind farms and introducing laws to scrap the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

INVESTMENT IN LARGE-SCALE CLEAN ENERGY PROJECTS IN AUSTRALIA PLUMMETED BY 88 PERCENT IN 2014 COMPARED WITH 2013.

OUR SOLUTIONS

OUR NEXT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS A PLAN TO POWER AUSTRALIA WITH CLEAN ENERGY.

- **1.1** An ambitious renewable energy target. Commit to a renewable energy target of 100 percent, with a target of at least 50 percent by 2030.
- **1.2 Fund innovation in clean energy.** Retain the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, increase funding and reinstate its grant-making function. Significantly increase funding for large-scale renewable energy projects.
- **1.3** A national plan to save energy in homes and businesses. Introduce a national energy efficiency program in partnership with state and local governments to provide comprehensive energy and water efficiency retrofits for vulnerable and low income households. Ensure Greenhouse and Energy Minimum (GEM) Standards for appliances (that save households energy and water) keep pace with leading economies.
- **1.4** Acknowledge that global warming presents an emergency threat to Australia's environment, society and economy, and commit to a national plan to decarbonise the Australian economy at emergency speed.

⁷ ABS (2016) 4631.0 - Employment in Renewable Energy Activities, Australia, 2014-15, http://www. abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4631.0



THE OPPORTUNITY

AROUND THE GLOBE, COUNTRIES ARE ALREADY CLOSING POLLUTING POWER STATIONS AND REPLACING THEM WITH CLEAN ENERGY.

IN THE UNITED STATES 200 COAL-BURNING POWER STATIONS HAVE CLOSED SINCE 2010.

In the United States, 200 coal-burning power stations have closed since 2010.8 That's an average of one power station closure every 10 days. Countries and states around the world are moving to make polluters pay their way. China, the United Kingdom, European Union, California and Washington are just a few of the world's major economies to introduce a price on carbon to make big polluters pay and to reduce air pollution. Clean energy jobs and investment across the world are rapidly expanding as a result.

THE PROBLEM

IN AUSTRALIA WE ARE ALREADY FEELING THE IMPACTS OF GLOBAL WARMING FROM BURNING FOSSIL FUELS.

March 2016 was the hottest March in Victoria since records began, with February the hottest month on record globally. Victoria is already experiencing earlier and longer bushfire seasons and reduced rainfall, and the Great Barrier Reef is experiencing coral bleaching on a scale never before seen.

Coal is the single biggest contributor to global warming. In Victoria, over 80 percent of the state's electricity is generated by burning brown coal, making Victoria one of the most polluting states in one of the most polluting countries in the world. Our coal-burning power stations are dirty and old. Victoria is home to the four most polluting coal power stations in Australia, including the most polluting in the developed world – Hazelwood.

Hazelwood power station pumps out more than 16 million tonnes of pollution each year. That's almost 15 percent of Victoria's annual

⁸ http://dailycaller.com/2015/07/15/ environmentalists-epa-force-the-200th-us-coalplant-to-retire/



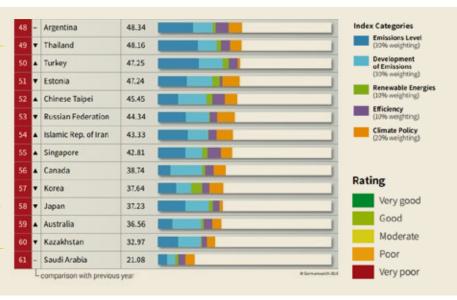
greenhouse gas emissions and 3 percent of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, all on its own.⁹

Our reliance on antiquated brown coal-burning power is responsible for over half of Victoria's carbon pollution every year. ¹⁰ It pollutes the air we breathe and causes global warming, and it urgently needs to stop.

The recent international Paris climate talks led to a global deal to reduce climate pollution and keep global warming to significantly less than 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels. So far, the federal Coalition government's commitments to do its part are all talk and no action. Despite the government's so-called direct action policy, greenhouse pollution has been rising rapidly since the repeal of Australia's carbon pricing laws.

Australia's government is joined at the hip with big polluters and big business interests that are profiting from polluting the air we breathe. Investment and growth in new, clean energy is being held back by polluting coal-burning power stations and the federal government's support for them.

THE CLIMATE CHANGE
PERFORMANCE INDEX FOR
2016 RATED AUSTRALIA
59TH OUT OF THE WORLD'S
61 BIGGEST CARBON
POLLUTING COUNTRIES.
ONLY KAZAKHSTAN AND
SAUDI ARABIA ARE RANKED
BELOW US.¹¹



⁹ Department of Environment (2015) *Australian National Greenhouse Accounts, State and Territory Inventories 2013.*

¹⁰ Environment Victoria (2015), Six Steps to Climate Leadership.

¹¹ The Climate Change Performance Index 2016, https://germanwatch.org/en/download/13626. pdf.

CHAPTER 03 A PLAN FOR CUTTING POLLUTION

IN AUSTRALIA CARBON POLLUTION CONTINUES TO RISE

A LACK OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS HAS ALLOWED POLLUTION TO INCREASE. URGENT ACTION AND STRONG POLICIES ARE NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER.

Carbon pollution is increasing in Australia since the Coalition government repealed our price on pollution.¹² Australians are already paying the price with a record-breaking heatwave this autumn.

- The government's own experts say that eight of the top ten largest polluters in Australia increased their greenhouse gas emissions during the past financial year.¹³
- In 2014-15 Australia's carbon pollution rose for the first time in almost a decade, and without intervention will keep rising beyond 2020. This trajectory would put Australia's absolute emissions growth among the highest for developed nations.¹⁴

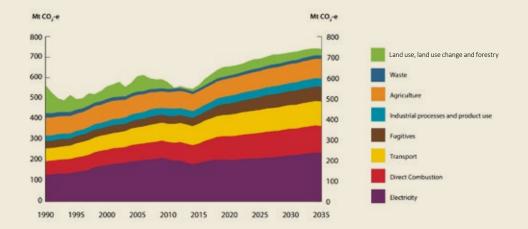


Figure 3. Domestic emissions 1990-2035.

Source: Department of the Environment (2015) Australia's emissions projections 2014-15, https://www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/publications/emissions-projections-2014-15

http://reneweconomy.com.au/2015/ one-year-on-from-the-carbon-priceaustralias-emissions-rebound-isclear-65643

¹³ http://www.smh.com.au/ environment/greenhouse-gasemissions-from-australias-biggestpolluters-on-the-rise-20160229gn6g8l.html

¹⁴ http://www.smh.com.au/ environment/australian-emissionsrising-towards-historical-highs-andwill-not-peak-before-2030-analysisfinds-20160131-gmhw7y.html



Federal government investment in rail projects has continued to fall while funding for roads continues to increase (see Figure 4). Around the world, national governments are investing in public transport projects in cities to ease traffic congestion, reduce air pollution and make cities better places to live and work.

The federal government should be playing a major role in cutting pollution by funding Victorian public transport projects. Good public transport defines liveable cities across the world.

Melbourne and regional communities deserve innovative public transport solutions that cut pollution and make our cities and towns better places to live and work.



Figure 4. Federal government investment in road versus rail.

Source: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/business-spectator/why-australia-needs-more-investment-in-rail/news-story/14ab567f95bb9e0653af192586fd68e1

OUR SOLUTIONS

OUR NEXT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS A PLAN TO CUT POLLUTION.

2.1 Work with Victoria to retire our oldest, dirtiest power stations.

Work with the Victorian government, electricity generators and communities in the Latrobe Valley to plan the orderly phase-out of our oldest and most polluting power stations like Hazelwood and Yallourn in the next term of government. Provide financial support to re-train affected workers and to help communities transition to new industries and opportunities. Develop a plan for the orderly phase-out of all other coal-burning power stations by 2030.

2.2 Re-join the world in pricing carbon to make big polluters pay their fair share. Introduce an emissions trading scheme (ETS) and join other

CHAPTER 03 A PLAN FOR CUTTING POLLUTION

countries like the United Kingdom, China, Canada, European Union and New Zealand in putting a price on pollution.

- **2.3 End climate pollution.** Australia needs a target for national emission reductions of at least 45-65 percent below 2005 levels by 2025, at least 65-80 percent by 2030, and net zero emissions by 2040-2050.
- **2.4 End fossil fuel subsidies, saving billions of dollars.** The Fuel Tax Credit Scheme subsidises almost nine percent of Australia's greenhouse pollution and costs the Australian public around \$7 billion every year. The scheme should be wound back with a cap on rebates of \$100,000 per recipient. This would not affect smaller diesel users like farmers, and would create incentives for fuel efficiency among large users, while generating approximately \$2 billion in savings to the federal budget every year.
- **2.5 Tougher national vehicle pollution standards to reduce air pollution.** Vehicle pollution standards in Australia lag well behind those in Europe and the USA. Australia needs tougher new standards that regulate vehicle emissions (including carbon dioxide) to reduce air pollution and transport emissions.
- **2.6** A national shift to public transport. The federal government should prioritise investment in major public transport projects over roads to cut pollution, reduce congestion and improve the liveability of our cities.
- **2.7** Introduce a ban on new coal and gas mines as the first step towards decarbonising the Australian economy. The first step towards reducing pollution is making sure new investments are fossil-fuel free. The time of building new coal and gas mines is over. The next Australian government should ban the construction of new coal and gas mines.



THE OPPORTUNITY

Australia's wildlife is unique – 87 percent of our mammals, 45 percent of our birds and over 90 percent of our reptiles and frogs are found nowhere else on earth. 15

Our forests, rivers, reefs and oceans provide us with clean air and water, and underpin our entire economy and way of life. Globally, the economic value of nature is virtually infinite, but recent estimates go into the hundreds of trillions of dollars. Victorians love our natural environment and recent independent economic modelling identified that nature-based outdoor activities add \$6.2 billion per year to Victoria's economy, supporting 71,000 jobs or two percent of Victoria's total workforce.

Our forests, rivers and reefs, and the unique native plants and animals they support, need a federal government determined to protect them and restore them to health. Such a nature leadership legacy will be remembered by future generations for all the right reasons.

OUR FORESTS, RIVERS, REEFS AND OCEANS PROVIDE US WITH CLEAN AIR AND WATER, AND UNDERPIN OUR ENTIRE ECONOMY AND WAY OF LIFE.

THE PROBLEM

AUSTRALIA IS FACING AN EXTINCTION CRISIS. WE ALREADY HAVE THE WORST EXTINCTION RATE FOR MAMMALS IN THE WORLD.

In Victoria we have destroyed more vegetation and tree cover than any other state. Seventy percent of Victorian forests no longer exist and 30 percent of species are listed as threatened with extinction. Our faunal emblem, the tiny Fairy (or Leadbeater's) Possum, is critically endangered. Our freshwater ecosystems are in decline with just 23 percent of Victoria's rivers in good condition.¹⁸

To make matters worse, the places we love like the Great Barrier Reef and our forests, rivers and coasts are at risk from global warming caused by carbon pollution from burning coal and gas. But they are also at risk from federal government attacks.

The Abbott/Turnbull Government tried to weaken national environmental laws designed to protect threatened plants and animals and keep nature safe. They have undermined a national plan to return

¹⁵ http://www.australianwildlife.org/wildlife.aspx

http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/cost-theearth-sources

¹⁷ MJA (2016) Victoria's nature-based outdoor economy, Marsden Jacobs Associates. Prepared for Outdoors Victoria and Recreation Victoria.

¹⁸ Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria, 2013, State of the Environment Report, p. 137.

CHAPTER 04 A PLAN FOR PROTECTING AND RESTORING NATURE

the Murray and Darling rivers to health by capping water buybacks – the best method of returning vital water to the rivers – in favour of expensive and environmentally questionable infrastructure measures. ¹⁹ They have allowed logging in river red gum national parks and internationally important wetlands, and sought to revoke World Heritage listing for Tasmania's iconic forests.

Australians deserve a federal government that values and protects matters of national environmental significance and puts an end to policies and practices that destroy nature and threaten our native wildlife.

OUR SOLUTIONS

OUR NEXT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS A PLAN TO PROTECT NATURE.

We want our special places protected for future generations, and Australia needs stronger national environmental laws to protect the places we all love.

- **3.1 Protect nature with strong national safeguards.** Develop a new generation of strong national laws to protect threatened species and the places we all love like rivers, wetlands and forests.
- **3.2** Revitalise the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Fix the ailing national plan to save the Murray and Darling rivers by refocusing on recovering water for stressed rivers. Return the promised 3200 billion litres of actual water entitlements to the rivers of the Basin by 2024.
- **3.3 Protect Australia's iconic forests.** End logging of high conservation-value native forests. Abandon Regional Forest Agreements and replace them with a new system that protects and values biodiversity, threatened species and their carbon storage. Ensure the Leadbeater's possum, Victoria's animal emblem, is protected from logging.
- **3.4** Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs). Enable Traditional Owners to continue to manage some of Australia's most significant landscapes. Commit to double funding for Indigenous rangers and IPAs, secure long-term contracts and set a long-term target of 5000 Indigenous land and sea management jobs.
- **3.5** A world-class Federal National Reserve System (NRS). Adequately fund the NRS with a strategic national park and protected area acquisition of at least \$500 million over the next five years.
- **3.6 Protect Australia's oceans.** Ensure our oceans are protected from overfishing and the impacts of carbon pollution, including rising temperatures and acidification. Recognise the important role healthy oceans play in absorbing carbon dioxide and mitigating climate change.

¹⁹ "Coalition to legislate water buyback cap", media release http://www. environment.gov.au/minister/ hunt/2015/mr20150310.html



The last three years of the Abbott/Turnbull Government has seen unprecedented attacks on environmental charities working hard to protect the environment and reduce pollution. In addition to moves to strip environmental organisations of their charity status and their ability to receive tax deductible donations, the Abbott/Turnbull Government has cut funding for environment groups. The 'Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations' program, which had operated since 1973, was scrapped by Environment Minister Greg Hunt in 2014. Similarly, Attorney General George Brandis cut funding for Environment Defenders Offices across Australia. The Coalition government also sought to amend legislation to prevent environmental organisations from challenging projects under national environmental law.

Recent government cuts to CSIRO climate change monitoring and modelling programs have attracted international criticism. According to scientists, these cuts threaten Australia's response to climate change and may impact on international research efforts. Australia needs a government that supports community and scientific efforts to respond to environmental and climate challenges.

Our next Australian government needs to support community environmental interests and invest in science.

- **4.1 Support and fund community environmental organisations** and the rights of community members and groups to challenge projects that impact on matters of national environmental significance.
- **4.2** Reinstate Australia's climate change research capabilities and build strong science-based responses to reducing carbon pollution and protecting nature.

OUR NEXT AUSTRALIAN
GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO
SUPPORT COMMUNITY
ENVIRONMENTAL
INTERESTS AND INVEST IN
SCIENCE.



WITH HUNDREDS OF LOCAL VOLUNTEERS, WE'RE BUILDING SUPPORT FOR OUR PRECIOUS ENVIRONMENT. Environment Victoria, together with environment organisations across the country, is running a large-scale grassroots campaign to make the environment a key issue at the 2016 federal election.

We're working with communities in key electorates, bringing together people who care about clean energy, cutting pollution and protecting our beautiful natural places. With hundreds of local volunteers, we're building support for our precious environment and asking voters to pledge to use their vote for their environment and community.

We've created Promise Watch – a rolling list of the environment and climate change policy commitments of the major parties. Based on our 47 years of experience in environmental policy and campaigning, we will carefully scrutinise these promises and commitments and score the parties accordingly. Strictly non-partisan, we will highlight where parties are working to protect our environment and where any party falls short.

Our objective is to provide Victorians with factual, credible information to help them make an informed decision at this year's federal election.

The list of environment and climate related policies and promises from the parties can be viewed at our Promise Watch website:

www.environmentvictoria.org.au/election2016/promisewatch.

By publishing the commitments of the political parties on important issues like coal, renewable energy, sustainable homes and protecting our fragile rivers, we'll keep doing our job of increasing transparency and holding our elected leaders to account.

For more information or to find out how to get involved, visit **www.environmentvictoria.org.au/election2016** or call us on 9341 8100.

Visit our rolling list of policy commitments from the major parties:

www.environmentvictoria.org.au/election2016/promisewatch



