

Victorian Liberal Party environment policy comparison

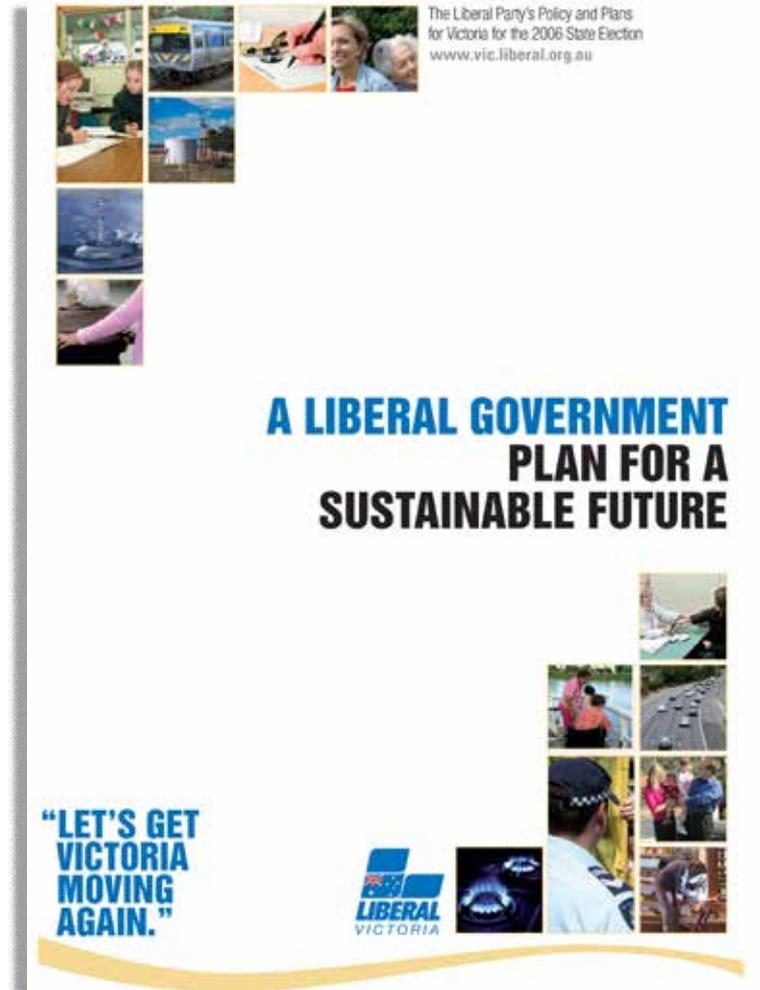
The Victorian Coalition's most recent pre-election environment policy was released in 2006, 615 weeks ago. It states the Liberal Party would "lower greenhouse gas emissions" as "there is no doubt that climate change poses a significant threat to our natural environment".

*"The Liberal Party is determined to act to reduce Victoria's reliance on greenhouse gas emissions and we are committed to acting swiftly to reduce the impact of climate change."*¹

However, since 2006, the Victorian Coalition has retreated from this aspiration. It opposed many of these articulated policy goals while in government and has actively worked against them in Opposition.

This position looks increasingly irresponsible as the science of climate change has become universally accepted, the impacts have intensified and the opportunities to reduce emissions are now more affordable, accessible and exciting.

This document compares the Coalition's 2006 policy with its actions in government and Opposition. While there have been some unfortunate backwards steps, there is still a strong basis to forge policies across the political spectrum that can cut greenhouse gas pollution, create jobs and protect our natural environment.





COMMITMENTS MADE IN THE LIBERAL PARTY'S 2006 POLICY

SITUATION IN 2018

Recognised that brown coal is "the most polluting form of energy production" and that Victoria "must play our role in greenhouse gas reduction". The key policy to reduce these emissions was to invest "\$670m to create a \$2 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to foster investment in low emissions technologies".²

The current Liberal Party has promised to implement a number of policies that will entrench coal in Victoria:

- Leader Matthew Guy has pledged to 'scrap' the Victorian Renewable Energy Target³ if elected, which would halt new investment in renewables.
- He has also committed to retain Victoria's aging coal-burning power stations, saying he "will not allow our coal resources to be wasted, I will not allow such economic advantages to Victoria to be kept in the ground for the sake of ideology".⁴
- Liberal Candidate for Morwell Dale Harriman is actively encouraging the construction of a new coal-fired power station in the Latrobe Valley.⁵

Intended to use money from Brown Coal Royalties to invest in projects that demonstrate "long-term commercial viability and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions".⁶

In 2016 the Coalition voted against the first increases to brown coal mining royalties in a decade and promised to reverse this increase if elected, making it cheaper to mine and burn coal.

Saw solar power as "one of the most promising sources of renewable energy" and would "invest \$10m dedicated solely to promoting and developing solar energy projects", with a focus on adapting technologies to Victorian Homes and Industry.⁷

Voted against an increase to the Solar Feed-in-Tariff and said that "solar will be taken up without the ongoing subsidy".⁸ The Opposition have also dismissed the recently announced Solar Homes policy as "Pink Batts mark 2".⁹

Pledged to create a \$50m Sustainable Victoria Fund to promote energy efficiency across Victoria. This program would have involved "businesses, industry and private houses invited to tender for funding to retrofit existing infrastructure or build new sustainable, energy efficiency infrastructure".¹⁰ As part of this, the Coalition pledged to provide \$8m over four years to support "the development of plans by industry, professionals and other associations" to reduce energy consumption.

The Baillieu/Napthine Government prematurely closed the Environment and Resource Efficiency Plans (EREP) program 18 months before its scheduled completion. This successful program required large energy and water-using sites (those that used 100 TJ of energy or 120 ML of water per year) to identify and implement efficiency programs. This program was not replaced.¹¹

There has not been any announcement of a policy of similar scale or size to reduce emissions since.

When last in government, the Coalition also attempted to scrap the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target. However, it didn't have the numbers in the Parliament because independent Geoff Shaw supported the scheme, due to the jobs it was creating in his Frankston electorate.

Committed to a plan to "Protect our current parks and reserves and add to strength and size of national park and reserve network". In particular, they pledged to "protect additional areas of mature forest and rainforest" by retiring areas of "Goolengook and State Forests in East Gippsland and linking the Errinundra, Snowy and Alpine National Parks".¹²

In 2016 moved a motion in Parliament to impose a five-year moratorium on establishing national parks in Victoria's Central Highlands and has consistently voted against the establishment of any new national park, including the Great Forest National park.¹³

Planned to implement a Container Deposit scheme, drawing on the successful model used in South Australia.

Voted with Labor¹⁴ to oppose the establishment of a container deposit scheme.¹⁵

Wanted to increase the "independence and enforcement power of the Environment Protection Authority", requiring the body to "exercise its powers to their fullest capacity", to report monthly on "the number of prosecutions," to publish the names of those polluting and appoint independent board members.¹⁶

Voted against the most comprehensive reforms of the EPA, which have given the agency greater enforcement powers, more resources to prosecute polluters and establish an independent board to ensure the agency can operate effectively.¹⁷

Vowed to protect Victoria's biodiversity by reviewing and strengthening the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, developing regional biodiversity plan and pledged to provide an additional \$4m to the Trust for Nature, with a focus on assisting green wedge holders to convert land of significance to the state's biodiversity.¹⁸

Have yet to clarify if they will support amendments coming out of a review of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act and have not indicated whether the Coalition would support the Trust for Nature.¹⁹

Believed that the 5 star energy rating of households was "inadequate" and did "not promote the highest possible standards of sustainable development and energy efficiency" that they would "implement a 10 star energy rating system to replace the outdated 5 star system".²⁰

Briefly considered cutting 6 star mandatory energy efficiency standards in 2012 to be replaced by a voluntary scheme, but backed down in the face of public pressure.²¹

Wanted to upgrade the performance of government buildings to improve water and energy efficiency by providing "loans through the Sustainable Victoria Fund to government departments to implement energy and water efficiency measures with a four year pay-back period".²²

The Baillieu/Napthine Government discontinued the Greener Government Program, which was driving efficiency and reducing costs across government buildings. Since then, the Guy Opposition has made one-off announcements such as supporting solar PV and energy efficiency for Ballarat High School, but has not released a comprehensive plan for government buildings.²³

Conclusion

Recent research shows the overwhelming majority of Victorians support clean energy and want to live in a state that is leading the way on climate change.

The November election can be fought on the basis of good policy that guarantees a successful future for renewables and increases efforts to cut greenhouse gas pollution. That's why Environment Victoria is calling on all parties to release policies that recognise both the great challenges and the opportunities we have before us.

With less than three months until the next election, the Coalition must release a credible, effective and comprehensive environment and climate policy that will reduce greenhouse gas pollution, protect Victoria's precious environment and ensure our state's long-term prosperity. The Coalition's policy released in 2006 demonstrates there is potential for all sides of politics to release strong environmental policy.

Endnotes

¹A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.1

²A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.4

³<https://vic.liberal.org.au/news/2017-02-13/liberal-nationals-will-scrap-victorian-renewable-energy-target>

⁴<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/mining-energy/matthew-guy-pledges-to-keep-coal-power-stations/news-story/8f09b2bac4d0d0a31e18c883ea753230>

⁵<http://www.latrobevalleyexpress.com.au/story/5595474/companies-keen-to-build-power-station-harriman/>

⁶A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.5

⁷A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.8

⁸https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/daily-hansard/Assembly_2017/Assembly_Daily_Extract_Tuesday_19_September_2017_from_Book_12.pdf

⁹<https://www.matthewguy.com.au/media-release/southwick-daniel-andrews-own-sequel-to-kevin-rudds-pink-batts-disaster/>

¹⁰A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.8

¹¹<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/our-work/programs/past-programs/erep-program>

¹²A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.17

¹³<https://vic.liberal.org.au/news/2016-12-07/great-forest-national-park>

¹⁴https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/daily-hansard/Council_2018/Council_Daily_Extract_Wednesday_8_August_2018_from_Book_11.pdf

¹⁵<https://vic.liberal.org.au/News/2018-08-08/container-deposit-scheme>

¹⁶A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.24

¹⁷https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/daily-hansard/Assembly_2018/Assembly_Daily_Extract_Thursday_26_July_2018_from_Book_9.pdf

¹⁸A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.27

¹⁹https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/daily-hansard/Assembly_2018/Assembly_Daily_Extract_Tuesday_19_June_2018_from_Book_8.pdf

²⁰A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.10

²¹<https://www.domain.com.au/news/green-rating-backflip-20120416-1x2ew/>

²²A Liberal Government Plan for a Sustainable Future, 2006, p.5

²³<http://www.davidsouthwick.com.au/2018/08/16/solar-and-energy-smart-upgrades-for-ballarat-high-school/>