

Murrindindi Climate Change Network

I believe climate variability has been with us a long time. The Victorian Government recognises there are risks associated with a changing climate and a need to support national and global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Since 2011-12, the Victorian Government has invested \$3.1 billion in the Environment and Climate Change portfolio. This investment has involved the management of land, forests and parks, ambitious environmental programs, and fire and emergency management. While the size of our investment is impressive, it also reflects the Napthine Government's environmental priorities.

The Victorian Government acknowledges the risk posed by climate change and the need to support national and global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Victoria is indirectly supporting national emissions mitigation efforts through the Commonwealth's Direct Action Plan. We are actively preparing for a changing climate and have released Australia's most comprehensive adaptation plan to increase our resilience to fire, floods, drought, reduced snow fall and sea level rise.

Victoria is constantly improving its environmental performance and sustainability. Renewable and low emission technologies play an important part in Victoria's sustainable energy supply. The Victorian Government is committed to providing a safe, affordable, and reliable energy supply for Victoria and is undertaking practical and responsible action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector.

With a focus on practical action that has tangible results and delivers value for money, the Napthine Government will continue to invest in programs that improve sustainability outcomes.

I am proud to be part of a government that strongly supports renewable energy. Electricity production in Victoria from wind, hydro and other renewables is 12 per cent and growing. This was 7 per cent in 2009 under the former Labor Government.

We have made it clear that we strongly support the retention of the Commonwealth's Renewable Energy Target (RET). Maintaining the RET has clear benefits for employment, clean energy and diversity of energy supply.

In 2014 there are 3,700 jobs in the renewable energy sector in Victoria, in a construction, installation, operations or maintenance role. Small scale solar alone employs 2,060 people and includes hundreds of small businesses in Victoria. There are over 600 people employed in the wind sector. Many jobs are in regional and rural Victoria due to the nature of renewable projects.

With a focus on practical action that has tangible results and delivers value for money, the Napthine Government will continue to invest in programs that improve sustainability outcomes. We have spent \$42 million on sustainable energy initiatives in this term of Government. This includes \$19.3 million in grants have been awarded to research and development and pilot projects harnessing renewable resources including wave, solar, geothermal and biomass. Initiatives include wave energy funding, pilot demonstration funding for direct geothermal heating and cooling, an innovative printing solar cells manufacturing proposition, development of low cost roofing material integrated with solar photovoltaic cells and a grant for the conversion of algal biomass to a sustainable aviation fuel project.

The Napthine Government is focused on ensuring that all Victorians have access to a safe, reliable and affordable energy supply, while also growing and strengthening Victoria's economy. We want diversity in the mix of electricity generation and support development of renewable and low emission energy where practical.

Coal and related products make an important contribution to the Victorian economy, estimated to be worth around \$2 billion per annum, mostly from electricity generation. 85 per cent of Victoria's electricity generation comes from brown coal.

Victoria's coal sector is a significant contributor to regional employment creating highly paid, skilled jobs. There are around 3,000 people directly employed in the brown coal energy sector in Victoria, with about 700 people directly employed in the three mines in the Latrobe Valley, Gippsland.

Clearly, brown coal has a long history of providing benefits to all Victorians, delivering reliable and affordable power. While we do recognise that Victoria's brown coal faces some challenges, we remain optimistic about the future of this important resource. The Government is supporting the development of potential new brown coal industries through a number of programs using innovative technologies,

Victorian and Commonwealth governments are supporting industry research and development investment with \$75 million (on a 50:50 basis) allocated through the Advanced Lignite Demonstration Program (ALDP). The facilitation of new, commercial scale coal development projects in the Latrobe Valley will maximise the opportunities and economic benefits of Latrobe Valley coal to the state. These projects will see large-scale demonstration plants built at existing brown coal mine sites in the Latrobe Valley. They will bring employment and investment to the region, creating jobs in the construction and operation phases. These projects received bi-partisan support, including the former Rudd-Gillard Federal Labor Government.

I advocate the role of the individual in 'doing your bit' for our environment. Our house runs entirely on solar (we are not connected to the grid), relies on tank water and we have a worm farm waste system which is a sustainable and an effective organic waste system. I clean using bicarb of soda and vinegar and have done for some 25 years.

I support sustainable forestry. The native forest sector is the foundation of Victoria's timber industry, which generates around \$1.5 billion of activity for the State's economy each year. Native forestry activity supports 11,000 jobs in regional Victoria and contributes to vibrant, sustainable regional communities.

The Victorian Coalition Government promised to manage Victoria's public native timber resource responsibly and sustainably and we are delivering on that commitment. This was confirmed by the Auditor General in his report 'Managing Victoria's Native Forest Timber Resources'.

VicForests manage Victoria's public native forestry estate. The report also noted that VicForests' commercial performance is under pressure from "legal expenses caused by a marked increase in litigation by environmental groups"

The Victorian Coalition Government convened a Leadbeater's possum advisory group with the goal of finding ways to support the recovery of Leadbeater's Possum while also maintaining a sustainable timber industry. All 13 recommendations were fully supported, with \$11 million invested for the implementation of recommendations.

The Napthine Government has a good strong budget with a Triple-A status and Budget surpluses which means we can invest in key infrastructure – both road and rail. Major rail projects such as the Melbourne Rail Link, the airport rail link, the regional rail project, which is ahead of schedule are able to undertaken at the same time as the vital East West link. Due to our strong financial management Victorians do not have to choose between road and rail – they get both.