





Chapter 10 : Our natural resources

MINERAL RESOURCES

10.1 Labor supports the development of mineral and petroleum resources, and downstream processing, understanding successful development projects need the support of local communities in which they are to be located.

Mineral and petroleum production and extractive industries for gravel and stone are becoming an increasingly important part of the Victorian economy, with a value of more than \$5 billion a year, mostly in regional Victoria.

Labor will:

- Develop industry sector strategies for various minerals;
- Support geological survey work through Geoscience Victoria and targeted exploration by companies in prospective regions of the State, and
- Support new technology initiatives including legislation where necessary.

FORESTRY

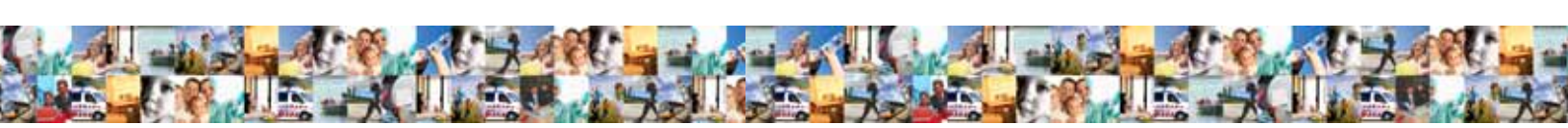
10.2 Labor is committed to the sustainable management of Victoria's forests through the maintenance of a comprehensive and representative system of reserves.

Labor recognises the ecological, social, economic and cultural importance of our native forests and the need for the preservation of a wide range of forest types within a system of protected parks and reserves.

Labor believes that public forests should be kept in public ownership. It will promote a range of uses that includes tourism, recreation and forest products, and will raise community awareness of environmental values, wilderness, threatened species, national estate values and world heritage values through community education programs.

To ensure the important ecosystems in our forests are protected, Labor will:

- Protect all rare, old growth forests, and at least 90% of high quality wilderness;
- Protect biodiversity through the conservation of habitats of native flora and fauna;
- Protect soils and water quality throughout catchments;
- Promote sustainable tourism opportunities compatible with environmental values, and
- Identify changes to the protected reserve system through an open, participatory process that uses up to date scientific information.



A PRODUCTIVE & SUSTAINABLE FOREST & FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

10.3 Labor is committed to manage our native forests for the long term based on ecologically sustainable practices.

Labor will thus ensure that the primary purpose of timber harvested from native forests is to meet the greatest social, economic, and ecological dividend this activity can result in. Labor also recognises the vital role sustainably managed forests play in the mitigation of the effects of climate change.

To ensure the sustainable management of our forests, Labor will:

- Implement a moratorium on the introduction of any further national parks or reserve areas from timber harvesting in Victoria;
- As consistent with election commitments and recent announcements that Labor's national parks agenda in eastern Victoria has now been finalised;
- Ensuring the practicalities of the 'no net resource loss' and 'no net job loss' philosophy is adequately met;
- In response to modern thinking regarding climate change, acknowledging that a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fibre or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit;
- Ensure that Victoria fulfils obligations in regards to its forest management practices under the relevant international agreements which have been ratified by Australia and which represent the highest international standards of environmental protection and sustainable forest management;
- In order to compliment native forest harvesting, provide encouragement and support to the private sector to establish and grow private forests and plantations that can provide raw materials for the timber industry by treating aforestation equitably, fairly and consistently with other land users including in regards to land allocation, water allocation and chemical use;
- In recognition that sustainable forest management of native forests cannot substitute for this resource, particularly support the establishment and reestablishment of softwood plantations, and
- Support investment in timber processing that will create value and jobs in regional communities including through regulatory reform to remove impediments to investment in bioenergy and biomass which produces renewable energy and utilises material including that which is currently wasted.

Labor will ensure that timber harvested from native forests will meet the greatest balance of social, economic, and ecological values. Labor also recognises the vital role sustainably managed forests play in the mitigation of the effects of climate change.

To ensure the sustainable management of our forests, Labor will:

- Ensure that any additions to Victorian reserve systems are implemented in accordance with agreed employment protection principles consistent with previous election commitments and seek to maintain the overall resource to the industry from all sources;
- Ensure that Victoria fulfils obligations in regards to its forest management practices under the relevant international agreements which have been ratified by Australia and which represent the highest international standards of environmental protection and sustainable forest



management;

- Compliment native forest harvesting, provide encouragement and support to the private sector to establish and grow private forests and plantations that can provide raw materials for the timber industry by treating afforestation equitably, fairly and consistently with other land users including in regards to land allocation, water allocation and chemical use, and
- Support investment in timber processing that will create value and jobs in regional communities including through regulatory reform to remove impediments to investment in biomass which produces renewable energy and utilises material including that which is currently wasted.

To ensure that forest management practices reflect the values of the community Labor will:

- Reaffirm Commonwealth-Victorian Regional Forests Agreements as being the most stakeholder intensive consultative process of forest management to appropriately underpin the sustainable management of public native forests, and
- Ensure that workers in the forest and forest products industry enjoy the same standards of OH&S as other employees, recognising that the rate of workplace injury and fatality is disproportionately high for workers in the harvesting sector against the state average.

TRANSPARENCY OF THE INDUSTRY

10.4 Labor will ensure that decision making and data relating to native forests, multiple use forests and the timber industry is open, transparent and accessible

Victoria is well placed to defend its record on sustainable harvesting practices. Victoria's industry has higher standards of environmental protection, better labour standards and more transparent governance than any competitor. Labor will ensure full OH&S protection for workers in the forestry sector.

To maintain transparency, Labor will:

- Maintain the separation of Ministerial roles so that the Minister responsible for forests conservation is not the Minister responsible for the timber industry;
- Fulfil Victoria's obligations under the relevant international agreements, and
- Foster community understanding and support for ecologically sustainable forest management through community education programs.

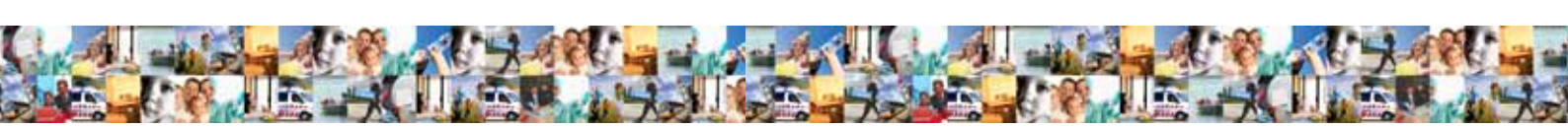
A PRODUCTIVE & SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Victoria's rich natural resources, skilled workforce and ready access to new technologies means the agriculture sector is well placed to deal with challenges such as climate change, commodity prices and advances in scientific research.

A COMPETITIVE, HEALTHY FARMING SECTOR

10.5 Labor will support farming businesses and their communities to ensure our agricultural sector remains one of the most advanced and efficient in the world.

Labor believes that many consumers of agricultural produce, both foreign and domestic, choose products based on price and quality rather than place of origin. Labor is therefore committed to working with farmers to further build real productivity advantages.



Labor rejects direct agricultural production subsidies that merely encourage Victorian producers to lose their competitive edge and risk competitors gaining a productivity advantage over them. With the right productivity tools, Victorian farmers will continue to be world competitive in producing quality agricultural produce.

Labor will work to make these industries more sustainable and use the opportunities of forest and soil sequestration of carbon to provide new income for these sectors under a national carbon price..

FARMS OF THE FUTURE

10.6 Labor will focus on technology and other means of assisting farmers to become more efficient producers of higher quality products whilst providing support to farming communities going through significant change.

The *Future Farming* statement sets out the challenges for farmers from the need to adopt new technologies, climate change, demographic shift and the changing structure of the agricultural sector

Labor will:

- Lead nationally on research and development, biosecurity and other critical policy reform areas and ensure that farm businesses are consulted in policy development;
- Complete the implementation of the *Future Farming* statement;
- Assist industry sectors gain access to new and emerging export markets, and
- Develop programs and services that build resilience, flexibility and adaptability in agricultural enterprises and the communities they serve.

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

10.7 Labor will manage our existing fisheries and support the opening of new fisheries within sustainable limits.

Labor will:

- Work with the Commonwealth to develop seamless integration between State and Commonwealth fisheries management agencies to reduce regulatory costs and maximise sustainability of the fishery;
- Ensure the proper resourcing of the vital protection, compliance and regulation of fisheries and resources, and
- Work with the aquaculture industry to remove unnecessary red tape in establishing new aquaculture investments.