

## Chapter 9: Environment

*"I like to talk about a 'climate of opportunity'. An opportunity to position ourselves at the forefront of a new, green economy... and that means new, green jobs. We can actually do more than just avoid future environmental problems. We can live better now. We can live cleaner now. We can be healthier now."*

JOHN BRUMBY, PREMIER OF VICTORIA

### TAKING ACTION ON VICTORIA'S CLIMATE

Labor is the only major party to accept the reality of climate change. We recognise that it is a moral and a political imperative to act now to mitigate the effects of a changing climate. Labor has ratified the Kyoto Protocol and acted domestically to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. We recognise that there is much more to be done. Labor believes in a comprehensive approach to our environment, and we know that there is no one easy solution.

Victoria was the first State to introduce a mandatory renewable energy target, the first to set a five star standard for new homes and the first to introduce an obligation on electricity retailers to help their customers improve their energy efficiency.

Despite this the challenge before us all is formidable. But taking action on climate also presents an enormous opportunity for new investments and prosperity. In partnership with the Commonwealth Government Victoria is ready to take further action.

Improvements in public transport will reduce Victorians' reliance on their cars, creating jobs for Victorians who build our trains and buses. New technologies, like hybrid and electric cars, will secure the future of our local automotive industries. Both actions will reduce emissions.

Labor will encourage local community responses to the challenges of climate change and help Victorian families and businesses to become more energy efficient, and move to a new, low carbon economy. This transition is not simply as a challenge to be overcome, but as an opportunity to be grasped: an opportunity for Victoria to lead the way as the world adapts to the new realities of climate change and a green economy. Policies need to clearly focus on the equity implications of higher energy costs and the problems disadvantaged Victorians have in adapting to change

Labor will encourage innovation in sustainable buildings, products and services. We will support more research and innovation in the field of renewable energy. We firmly oppose the use of nuclear power for energy generation.

Labor will protect our natural environment. We believe that Victorians want to live in such a way as to pass on a clean and healthy world to their children and grandchildren. That's why we believe in protecting our biodiversity and taking a holistic approach to the management of our ecosystems.

Labor will manage our water supply to balance the needs of the city and the country, the present and the future, the health of the environment and the needs of Victorians to know they have a secure supply of water, now and into the future.



## CREATING A LOW CARBON ECONOMY

### 9.1 Labor will take advantage of the economic opportunities that will flow from the introduction of a carbon price and a global shift to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Labor has identified the enormous opportunity to reduce greenhouse emissions through improved energy and water efficiency in buildings, transport and appliances. Labor believes nationally consistent approaches are the most effective way to drive change.

Labor will:

- Build on the *Jobs for the Future Economy* statement to make Victoria home to new industries that will prosper in a lower carbon economy, and
- Drive the development of new skills including in energy technologies, design, carbon auditing and accounting, construction and water management.
- Build on its Climate Communities initiative to create a network of community groups, local government and businesses to support voluntary action on climate change.

## REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

### 9.2 Labor will implement a comprehensive approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all sections of society.

National action to reduce emissions and introduce a price on carbon is essential to tackle climate change. Labor supports the Commonwealth Government goal to reduce Australia's emissions by 80 per cent of 2000 levels by 2050. Labor believes a well designed national emission trading scheme is the most efficient mechanism to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Labor will take early action to implement change to:

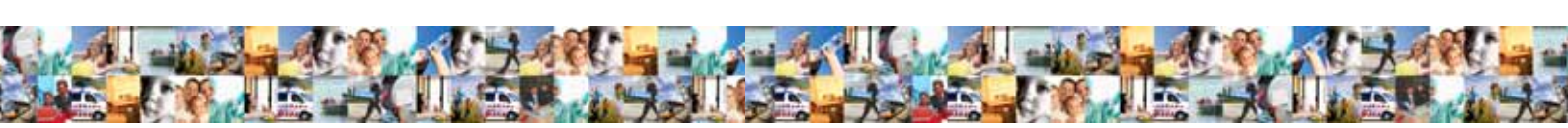
- Drive emissions reduction in areas that are complementary to national climate actions, or any national emissions trading scheme;
- Encourage the use of forestry and soil capture of carbon to reduce our emissions;
- Clean up our energy supply and support new technology through the *Energy Technology Innovation Strategy*, including renewable energy, carbon capture and storage technology, and other low emission coal technologies;
- Support the introduction of a price on carbon emissions to generate incentives to develop cleaner, greener industries, and
- Assist local government to reduce Victoria's carbon emissions by over 1.5 million tonnes by installing energy efficient street lighting and ensure that the regulatory system does not present an undue barrier to their installation.

## ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

### 9.3 Labor will identify priority industry and agriculture sectors particularly vulnerable to climate change and develop adaptation plans to ensure jobs in these industries thrive.

Labor will:

- Take early action to reduce the costs of adaptation to climate change with a view to delivering significant social and environmental benefits, smoothing the transition and reducing the impacts;



- Use an evidenced based approach to identify and prepare for climate change by adapting Government services such as health and emergency services, and public assets, and
- Provide information to families, businesses and communities so they can prepare.

## **PLANNING FOR FUTURE ENERGY SUPPLY**

### **9.4 Labor will plan for future energy needs to ensure continuity of supply for electricity and gas and ensure the transition to a low carbon economy happens in a planned way that does not create uncertainty or damage the strength of the economy.**

Victoria presently generates about 95 per cent of its electricity from coal fired generation but the latest projections indicate that Victoria is on track to reduce its dependence on coal to around 75 per cent in 2020, as other cleaner forms of energy generation come online.

A national carbon trading scheme and other actions by the Commonwealth and State Government can drive this change significantly further. However the closure of major coal fired power stations needs to occur in a planned way with alternative supplies in place to ensure security of supply.

Labor will work to ensure the continued meaningful employment of those currently employed in carbon intensive industries that are likely to require alternative employment as we transition to a low carbon economy. Support will include subsidized training, incentives for the location of new industries into affected areas and assistance with potential relocation expenses of impacted workers.

## **ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

### **9.5 Labor will help Victorian families and businesses prepare for a carbon price and improve their energy efficiency.**

Labor will work with industry and households to:

- Support improvements in housing design and upgrades through retrofits;
- Increase access for low income and concession card holding Victorians to energy and water efficiency programs and assistance including scaled-up household audit and rebate programs;
- Help businesses save money by improving their energy efficiency and assisting businesses through regulatory frameworks;
- Deliver world leading energy efficiency education and behaviour change programs, and
- Phase out the use of inefficient 80 watt MV street lights in Victoria in line with the COAG National Strategy on Energy Efficiency.

## **RENEWABLE ENERGY**

### **9.6 Labor will accelerate development of renewable energy technologies and industries across Victoria to make Victoria a leader in renewable energy development.**

Renewable and low emissions energy supply is essential to Victoria's future prosperity. Following the success of our Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET), the national 20 per cent by 2020 Renewable Energy Target (RET) will now be the key policy driver for investment in the renewable energy industry.



To achieve this, Labor will:

- Invest more in pilot scale and large scale research and development to accelerate the development of new technologies and opportunities for investment in Victoria;
- Remove regulatory and grid connection barriers to streamline investment in Victoria;
- Achieve the government's target of 25 per cent of our own electricity consumption from renewable energy and natural gas sources;
- Provide strong incentives for government, industry and households to become more energy efficient including by expanding the existing Victorian Energy Efficiency Target;
- Encourage families who can, to purchase Green power for their homes and businesses, and
- The government will review the premium solar feed in tariff legislation in all its aspects by June 2012.

## **ALTERNATIVE AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

### **9.7 Labor will promote investment and innovation in low emissions vehicles that meet consumer needs for both domestic and export markets and make the Victorian automotive industry a world leader in the design and production of these cars.**

Labor will require government agencies to lead by example in adopting purchasing and management strategies that minimise environmental impacts.

The Federal Government's *New Car Plan for a Greener Future* provides a \$6.2 billion investment to reshape Australia's automotive industry and improve its competitiveness.

To complement the *New Car Plan for a Greener Future* the Brumby Government has released its *Victorian Automotive Manufacturing Action Plan (VAMAP)*, designed to assist local automotive manufacturers embrace change within the industry.

Labor recognises that investment must be targeted strategically to develop the capabilities which underpin the opportunities provided by the *New Car Plan for a Greener Future* and *VAMAP*. These opportunities must be ones where the industry can develop a truly competitive edge at a global level.

Labor will focus on investments in capability that address significant global market opportunities and build on areas where Australia has real capability for development and exploitation.

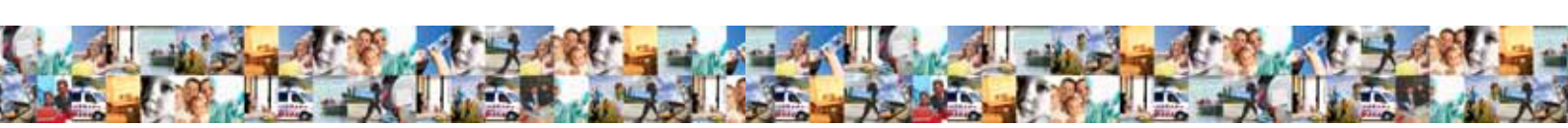
Labor will support the Australian automotive industry's move to low emissions vehicles in government fleets to encourage Australian automotive manufacturing and to lower costs. Already the government has ordered 2,000 Toyota Camry's hybrids being built in Melbourne.

Labor will ensure the regulatory system does not present an undue barrier to the installation and development of infrastructure to support sustainable, alternative transport options.

## **NUCLEAR-FREE VICTORIA**

### **9.8 Labor is strongly committed to retaining a nuclear-free Victoria.**

Labor will pursue clean energy sources and a sustainable future for Victorians without recourse to nuclear energy or uranium mining. Appropriate medical, scientific and industrial uses of nuclear materials will be regulated in line with the Nuclear Free Victoria Act 1983.



# PROTECTING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

## BUILDING A STRONGER NATIONAL PARKS & MARINE PARKS SYSTEM

### 9.9 Labor will protect our network of national parks and conservation reserves.

Labor has created a world class system of national and marine parks, and will invest in these parks and expand where appropriate. We recognise that they provide economic benefits for our regions, recreational opportunities for Victorians and visitors and preserve our unique ecosystems.

Labor will:

- Invest in parks and reserves to protect ecosystems and habitats;
- Promote sustainable, nature-based tourism opportunities within our parks and natural areas to build greater community appreciation of our parks and deliver economic benefits to neighbouring communities;
- Ensure sufficient resources are provided for the conservation, management and maintenance of park infrastructure, including maintaining tracks and controlling weeds;
- Ensure adequate environmental watering of protected areas;
- Expand the involvement of indigenous people in the management of national parks, and include cultural and heritage aspects in visitor interpretation services;
- Consider any further reserves or parks in the context of having finalised the reserve system in East Gippsland, and
- Modernise Victoria's parks legislation and improve understanding of the many natural assets preserved and the activities available in them.

## PRESERVING OUR BIODIVERSITY

### 9.10 Labor will protect threatened species and reduce habitat loss by taking a holistic approach to biodiversity management.

Labor will:

- Modernise threatened species protection to adopt world's best practice;
- Give priority to restoring habitat via landscape scale projects that benefit the widest range of species and ecosystems;
- Work with local Councils and landowners to fight weeds and pests in our parks to protect biodiversity and better manage public and private land;
- Strengthen efforts to manage risks from wild dogs and foxes, through bounties and other measures, and
- Adopt a more targeted approach for high risk species not benefiting from other action.

## OUR COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

### 9.11 Labor will implement the Victorian Coastal Strategy to protect our coastal environments for the benefit of the whole community.

Labor will:

- Improve our recently established network of Marine National Parks and Sanctuaries;
- Support local foreshore committees to achieve environmentally positive outcomes, and



- Invest further in storm water management to reduce litter, pollutants and sediments entering Port Phillip Bay and other coastal waters.

## **SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT**

### **9.12 Labor will encourage sustainable land management practices that will support ecosystem services such as salinity mitigation, carbon sequestration and biodiversity enhancement that underpin key industries in rural Victoria such as agriculture, horticulture and tourism.**

Labor will:

- Continue work on establishing an ecosystem services framework through market-based instruments and stewardship arrangements, so that farmers can receive financial reward for the production of these services creating benefits for rural communities and the environment

## **FIRE MITIGATION ON PUBLIC LAND**

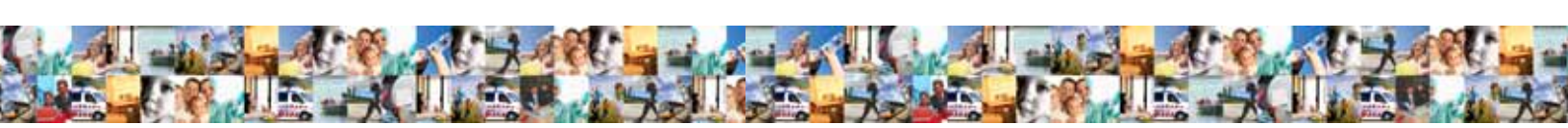
### **9.13 Labor will give fire-fighting crews the resources required to reduce the risk of fires on public land, protecting both lives and property.**

Victoria has recently endured the tragic consequences of the Black Saturday bushfires, reinforcing the dangers from a hotter and drier landscape as a result of climate change.

Labor will build on the record funding provided this year of \$700m – almost tripling the resources available a decade ago – with more staff, new equipment and a commitment to the maximum preparation allowed by environmental conditions.

Labor will consider the findings of the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission when allocating additional resources including:

- Increase the amount of fuel reduction burning – focusing particularly on the protection of human life;
- Further improve emergency services communications systems and the information available to the public during the course of major bushfires;
- Buy new heavy vehicles to assist with fuel reduction and fire fighting efforts;
- Employ more permanent and seasonal fire-fighters to enable the increased activity;
- Increase funding for equipment and training to ensure that Victorian fire-fighters are in the best possible position to safely and effectively perform their role, and
- Further collaboration with the forest and forest products industry's harvesting workers in rural and regional areas and the industry's union, utilizing their first hand awareness and institutional understanding about the environment including knowledge encompassing topography, vegetation and access routes.



# WATER

## LEADERSHIP ON WATER

### **9.14 Labor will diversify and secure Victoria's water sources for the future by implementing *Our Water, Our Future – The Next Stage of the Government's Water Plan*.**

Labor will:

- Modernise inefficient irrigation systems to save water for towns, agriculture and the environment;
- Maximise recycling and stormwater re-use, including using pricing and market mechanisms to promote sustainable and efficient use and reuse of water;
- Promote and support industry and household water conservation, including expanding education and communication to promote awareness and understanding about water resource issues;
- Build Australia's largest desalination plant- and power it by renewable energy;
- Expand the Water Grid so that water can be better shared between communities in need;
- Increase the volumes of water in the legally protected environmental water reserve;
- Implement sustainable water diversion limits in the Murray Darling Basin as part of the national agreement, and
- Support fair water pricing through the Essential Services Commission.

## HEALTHY RIVERS, CATCHMENTS & URBAN WATERWAYS

### **9.15 Labor will deliver increased environmental flows to our major stressed rivers, including the Snowy, Murray, Wimmera and Thomson, and create an independent Environmental Water Holder to manage the environmental water reserve.**

Labor will implement the recommendations of the *Water White Paper* and the *Victorian River Health Strategy*. Specifically, Labor will:

- Require all new dams in rural residential areas to be registered, and develop guidelines defining 'reasonable' stock and domestic use;
- Sustainably allocate and manage ground water, in a way which is fair and equitable for all users and potential users taking into account social, economic and environmental dividends for the water use;
- Progressively rectify urban and rural pollution sources, and
- Work with local communities and Catchment Management Authorities to ensure urban waterways are maintained and, where possible, rehabilitated as special riparian environments.



## **RECREATIONAL USES OF WATERWAYS & WETLANDS**

### **9.16 Labor will take an integrated approach to river, wetland and estuary health and develop a Victorian strategy which will protect high biological diversity.**

Water-based recreational activities provide great value to Victoria. At the same time wetlands are a significant part of healthy catchments.

Labor will:

- Increase protection for recreational and leisure uses of waterways and wetlands;
- Take into account recreational in water management decisions;
- Support the conservation, repair and sustainable use of our wetlands;
- Develop a nature-based tourism strategy for suitable wetlands, and
- Foster community understanding and support for ecologically sustainable wetlands.

## **BETTER SEWAGE TREATMENT**

### **9.17 Labor will invest in improved sewage treatment and recycling of treated wastewater, in recognition of the benefits to public health and the environment.**

Labor will:

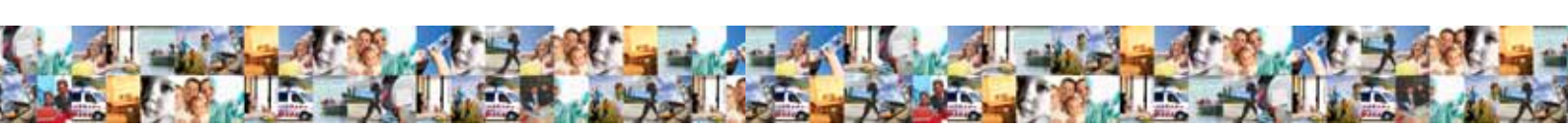
- Provide grants on a needs basis in for sewage schemes in rural and regional centres;
- Enforce strong environmental guidelines for water and waste water services, and
- Investigate appropriate water reuse and recycling options for use on sporting facilities, parks and reserves, and in industry and agriculture, particularly in urban fringe areas.

## **EFFICIENT WATER USE**

### **9.18 Labor will support programs to promote on-farm water efficiency and environmental sustainability and reduce the total water required for irrigation and its impact on the natural environment through piping and irrigation modernisation programs.**

Labor will:

- Support the development and implementation of technologies that expand the use of recycled water;
- Extend rebates and appliance exchange programs to help households reduce their water consumption;
- Support business and industry initiatives to reduce water consumption, and
- Support water authorities to diversify their water supplies and make more use harvest and re-use of stormwater and recycling opportunities.



## **STRENGTHENING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY**

### **9.19 Labor will ensure the Environment Protection Authority, Victoria's environmental guardian, has the clout and independence to properly carry out its mission.**

The EPA has been given a greater role and responsibility not only as the protector of the environment but also as an advocate of best practice environmental management.

Labor will:

- Strengthen the EPA and its monitoring and enforcement powers covering air and water discharge quality and other environmental performance standards to ensure the community is protected, and
- Utilise the EPA's Sustainability Covenants program to reduce the impact of commercial activity on the environment.

## **THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION OF HERITAGE VALUES AND ASSETS**

### **9.20 Labor will improve the coordination of heritage protection and ensure development guidelines set the right balance between sustainable development and heritage conservation.**

To support Heritage Victoria Labor will:

- Clearly define its powers to protect State's heritage values and assets;
- Develop state-wide policies to protect important heritage - such as the goldfields, and
- Assess the heritage values of public assets prior to any disposal or redevelopment.

## **BUILDINGS & BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

### **9.21 Labor will work with industry and the community to improve the sustainability of our homes, towns and cities.**

Water and energy efficient homes and buildings improve our quality of life and reduce energy and water bills and lessen our environmental impact.

Sustainable construction and design presents a significant new economic opportunity for Victoria as demand grows for building design and construction that withstands climate change.

Labor will:

- Deliver a comprehensive energy and water retrofit program targeting concession-card holding and low-income homes over the next 5 years; and
- Support precinct scale approaches to sustainable planning, where shared infrastructure for stormwater and distributed energy can best be rolled out.

## **ALPINE RESORTS**

### **9.22 Labor will promote environmentally sustainable development in our alpine resorts and keep them in full public ownership.**

Requiring careful public management, Victoria's alpine resorts are located on crown land in sensitive alpine environments and provide important broad benefits for regional Victoria.



To secure the long-term viability of these resorts, Labor will:

- Build on its *Alpine Resorts 2020* strategy, and monitor each resort's environment management system, and
- Encourage further investment by private sector interests to develop our alpine resorts for sustainable patronage all year round.

## **ARTIFICIAL LIGHT POLLUTION**

### **9.23 Labor will reduce light pollution and achieve energy savings in street lighting.**

Labor will:

- Investigate the introduction of Australian Lighting Standards;
- Improve efficiency of lighting by encouraging the introduction of full cut off lighting in all residential, commercial and industrial developments;
- Set a timeline for the replacement of current outdoor lighting with full cut off lighting, and
- Investigate the effects of light pollution on social and environmental issues.

## **IMPROVING VICTORIA'S AIR QUALITY**

### **9.24 Labor will work to reduce all forms of air pollution to safe levels.**

Labor is committed to implement strategies so Victorians have clean air to breathe.

Labor will:

- Strengthen the EPA's capacity for monitoring and enforcement of air quality, and
- Promote lower emissions forms of private and commercial vehicle transport to reduce greenhouse and other pollution, as well as noise in residential areas.

## **URBAN OPEN SPACE**

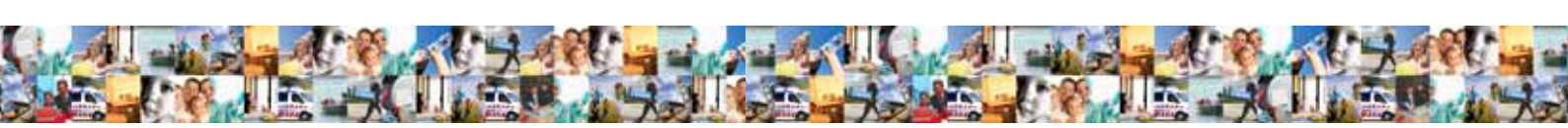
### **9.25 Labor will expand Victoria's great open spaces to increase recreational opportunities and provide important habitat links through urban areas.**

Our parks and open spaces are priceless assets that provide the widest possible range of recreational use and passive enjoyment opportunities for the whole community.

Labor has already made an unprecedented investment in the quality and distribution of parks and open spaces throughout the greater Melbourne area and will work with local councils on similar strategies for regional cities and towns.

Labor will:

- Implement *Linking People and Spaces* to develop parks and open spaces throughout the greater Melbourne area over the next 20 years, including the new growth corridors;
- Protect passive open space from urbanisation;
- Allocate the metropolitan parks levy equitably to reduce the current imbalances in accessible parklands, and
- Extend the principal metropolitan bicycle network and encourage more local paths.



# RESOURCE USE & RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

## WASTE MINIMISATION & RECYCLING

### **9.26 Labor is strongly committed to greater efficiency in resource usage, including a strong emphasis on recycling of household and commercial wastes.**

To implement the Towards Zero Waste strategy, Labor will:

- Build sustainable markets for recovered resources and recycled materials, including strong incentives to stop particular waste streams being disposed to landfill;
- Encourage new technologies to generate energy from waste;
- Reduce the amount of green waste being disposed to landfill by 80 per cent;
- Promote the recycling of products that pose environmental risks such as computers and mobile phones, and ban these products from landfill once there is a national Extended Producer Responsibility scheme in place;
- Recycle more wastes going to landfill, including building materials and scrap timber;
- Build on our litter prevention and control frameworks;
- Use EPA powers to require brand owners and industry members to take back packaging and other waste if agreed targets are not met, and
- Reduce waste production and energy use by industry by linking the reduction of greenhouse emissions to EPA approvals.

## RESOURCE RECOVERY FROM HAZARDOUS WASTES

### **9.27 Labor will work with industry to minimise waste to landfill and drive the development of new recovery and recycling technologies.**

Prescribed industrial wastes contain valuable resources which can be recovered and reused. Recovering these resources, rather than sending them to landfill creates economic opportunity for the state, as well as reducing environmental impact.

Labor will:

- Use landfill levies to provide incentives to reduce, reuse and recover wastes;
- Reinvest to drive the development of new technologies and waste diversion opportunities, and
- Maximise diversion using policy and regulation, while ensuring the safety of the community.

## LANDCARE

### **9.28 Labor will strengthen and support Landcare and community conservation networks.**

Labor understands that collective community participation through Landcare groups is vital to achieving sustainable resource management.

Labor will:

- Develop Landcare Networks to ensure knowledge and information exchange occurs between Landcare groups, and



- Work in partnership with complimentary initiatives, such as Climate Communities and Landcare to improve sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Labor recognises that protecting the environment would be impossible without the dedication and commitment of local community groups across Victoria. Labor will work with and support voluntary action to reduce our impact on the natural environment.

## **RURAL PROOFING CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY**

### **TURNING CHALLENGE INTO OPPORTUNITY**

#### **9.29 Labor will help local rural communities assess how climate change will affect them and how they might take up opportunities such as renewable energy, protection of biodiversity, sequestration of carbon dioxide and reduction in salinity**

A low carbon economy will present significant challenges for some regions – such as the Latrobe Valley, but at the same time create opportunities. Many rural communities have great potential as the home of renewable energy development while new approaches to land management and carbon sequestration present opportunities for farmers to create new income streams from changes to their past practices.

Labor will:

- Ensure all of regional Victoria is able to take advantage through regional economic planning and support of new low carbon industries and opportunities;
- Expand opportunities for rural landowners to profit from positive environmental management of their land by building on the EcoMarkets initiative
- Seek a fair share of funding from national climate change adjustment funds to enable a smooth transition in Victoria's regions, particularly the Latrobe Valley, and
- Ensure that regional cities and small towns have secure and safe water supplies to meet current and future needs for human consumption, economic growth, recreational opportunities and good environmental health.