



Office of the Hon Gabrielle Upton MP
Minister for the Environment
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Heritage

MD19/615

Mr Mark Coure MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Infrastructure
Member for Oatley
24 Pitt Street
MORTDALE NSW 2223

By email: oatley@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Coure

I refer to your letter on behalf of Ms Elizabeth Cameron to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Gabrielle Upton MP, about the Society's environmental protection principles. The Minister appreciates you bringing the Society's concerns to her attention and has asked me to reply on her behalf.

I can assure Ms Cameron the NSW Government is delivering strong actions and reforms to ensure positive environmental outcomes for NSW. The *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, the *Local Land Services Amendment Act 2016* and supporting regulations provide an integrated approach to land management and biodiversity conservation and establishes strong offences and tougher penalties for illegal clearing and harming threatened species.

The framework is supported by an unprecedented investment of \$100 million over five years in the Saving our Species program, to secure the future in the wild for as many threatened species as possible. This is in addition to \$41.3 million on reintroducing locally extinct species to remote national parks. We have also committed to a new private land conservation program of \$240 million over five years to 2020-21, and \$70 million per annum beyond the first four years.

Long term ecologically sustainable management of NSW's forests is also a government priority. To achieve this, we have delivered a range of reforms to improve how native forestry is regulated. In 2018, Regional Forest Agreements were extended for 20 years, committing the NSW and Commonwealth governments to provide a comprehensive and representative reserve system, the ecologically sustainable management and use of forested areas, and long-term stability for forest-based industries.

In addition, the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval sets more efficient, effective and enforceable rules to better protect threatened plants, animals, habitat, soils and waterways as well as a range of other new or improved environmental protections. The *Forestry Legislation Amendment Act 2018* also increased penalties for breaking the rules and introduces other enforcement tools to drive compliance.

Like you, we recognise that strong action is needed to save our threatened koalas. That is why we released the NSW Koala Strategy in 2018, providing \$44.7 million in funding, the biggest commitment by any state government, to secure koalas in the wild.

More than 24,000 hectares of unproductive state forest is being set aside, while \$20 million is committed to purchase and permanently reserve properties containing priority koala habitat in the national park estate.

I am happy to advise that on 4 February 2019, the Premier and Minister Upton announced a new national park for NSW, providing another significant boost for the state's koala population. We have also secured 43 hectares of prime koala habitat on the Tweed Coast, which will improve the ecological viability of the existing Cudgera Creek Nature Reserve by increasing its size by almost 72 per cent.

We also recognise the natural and cultural features that make Kosciuszko National Park one of Australia's great national parks, including its wild horse heritage. A wild horse heritage plan of management will be prepared under the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018* to protect the park's wild horse heritage and environmental values. I encourage Ms Cameron to participate in public consultation when the draft plan is released.

We are committed to transitioning to a clean energy future under the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan. In 2017 almost 16 per cent of energy generation came from clean sources and over the past five years, wind and solar generation in NSW has tripled. In addition, we have committed \$30 million under the Climate Change Fund for regional community clean energy projects and \$50 million for an emerging generation fund.

We recognise that single-use plastics can negatively impact the environment. It is great to see the concerted efforts of the community and major retailers in NSW who have acted to reduce plastic bag use. The NSW Government supports industry in proactively and voluntarily introducing plastic reduction initiatives where feasible and considers regulatory interventions, such as legislative bans, a last resort.

I am also pleased to advise that all Australian environment ministers have agreed to develop a National Action Plan to address Australia's waste priorities, including reducing plastic pollution. This work will be progressed further in 2019.

Finally, the NSW Government is committed to protecting the NSW marine estate. In 2018, we released a 10-year Marine Estate Management Strategy and committed \$45.7 million to address threats to our marine environment, including pollution and litter. We have also consulted on a new marine park in the Hawkesbury Shelf marine bioregion and are considering the feedback received.

If Ms Cameron has any further questions about these issues, she can contact Michaela Friedman, Acting Director Ministerial Services Branch, on 9995 6238 or at michaela.friedman@environment.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Kevin Wilde
Chief of Staff
Office of the Hon Gabrielle Upton MP

25-2-19