

2007 STATE ELECTION WATER POLICY PLATFORM

Water conservation and management is the defining challenge of our time. A clear plan for securing the state's water supply is essential to the future prosperity of our economy and maintaining our quality of life.

The NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition has a comprehensive, multi-faceted plan to address the water crisis and drought proof NSW. After 12 years of inaction under the NSW Labor Government, dramatic action is needed to address the water crisis. We will **declare a state of emergency on water** to cut through the bureaucracy and free up funding for much-needed water infrastructure.

We have announced a \$1 billion **Drought Proofing NSW Infrastructure Fund**, which would be partially funded by the sale of NSW Lotteries¹.

The **NSW Coalition's Drought Proofing NSW Fund** will provide funding for projects across NSW including:

- large scale recycling;
- stormwater harvesting;
- dam enhancement; and
- regional water plans, including repairing ageing infrastructure, pipelines and dam enhancements to create regional water grids.

Specifically, these projects include:

Large Scale Recycling

Recycled Water to Secure Sydney's Water Future

A NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition Government will guarantee Sydney's future environmental, industrial and drinking water supplies through the construction of a \$949 million world's best quality purified water recycling system for Sydney.

This infrastructure will produce almost twice as much drinking water for Sydney at half the cost of NSW Labor's \$1.9 billion desalination plant.

Our water recycling plan for Sydney involves the construction of a world-class membrane and reverse osmosis water recycling system, which will produce new, safe, clean, high quality purified drinking water. The NSW Coalition's first priority is to replace drinking-quality water currently being used by industrial, agricultural and environmental purposes with this purified recycled water.

¹ Debnam, Peter MP, 'Drought Proofing NSW Infrastructure Fund to be part funded by sale of NSW Lotteries', *Media Release*, 11 December 2007.

In the event that dam levels fall to below 20 per cent, we will have the option to 'flick the switch' on the water recycling system to blend the purified recycled water at low dilution via Prospect Reservoir to supplement Sydney's drinking supply.

Recycling Sydney's Ocean Outfalls

We will implement large scale recycling of the water currently being pumped through Sydney's ocean outfalls and use the water for industrial and agricultural use, as well as for environmental flows. We will recycle the output of at least one of Sydney's three, main ocean outfalls in our first term of Government.

The NSW Coalition's recycled water system will also reduce the volume of water being discharged through Sydney's ocean outfalls by up to 66 million litres.

Securing Water for the Future – The Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program (CTWSS Program)²

The NSW Coalition will clear the backlog of water supply and sewerage service projects of local communities within the first two terms of government, and fund new projects.

We will:

- Commit **\$100 million a year** to the CTWSS budget; and
- Make the CTWSS priority list publicly available and transparent.

Stormwater Harvesting

Rainwater Tanks Rebate – *Use It. Don't Lose It.*

The NSW Coalition will increase and expand rainwater tank rebates to encourage the installation of more rainwater tanks in NSW. The increase and restructuring of the Sydney Water rebate will provide an incentive for people to plumb rainwater tanks to their toilets and/or washing machines.

A \$1500 Rainwater Tank rebate will be provided for all households who purchase a rainwater tank with a capacity of 2,000 litres or greater and connect it to their toilet and/or washing machine

Regional Water Plans

In Government, the NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition will deliver a comprehensive Regional Water Plan which includes:

- Holding a three-day Country Water Summit in the NSW Legislative Assembly;

² NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition (2006), 'Securing Water for the Future- The Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program', *Policy Document*, 17 August 2006.

- A recycling target of 50 per cent for country NSW by 2015;
- In addition to the \$100 million per year commitment to clear the backlog of projects on the CTWSS, and additional \$12.5 million a year to fast track recycling projects;
- \$120 million over 6 years to enhance existing dams and investigate new dam sites;
- Introducing a rainwater tank rebate of \$1500 for tanks that are plumbed to toilets and/or washing machines; and
- Major new pipelines and regional water grids.

Specifically, these regional water plans include initiatives to:

Drought Proof the Central Coast – Our Central Coast Water Plan

In addition to the Tillegra Dam, the NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition will deliver a comprehensive \$132 million central Coast Water Plan to drought-proof the Central Coast within three years.

Southern Tablelands Water Plan – A Strong and Clear Plan for Goulburn and the Region

As one of the worst affected areas by the water crisis in NSW, the NSW Coalition will commit \$109 million to a regional water plan for Goulburn and the Southern Tablelands. This plan includes a \$60 million commitment towards the completion of a **Queanbeyan/Southern Tablelands Regional Water Grid** through the construction of a pipeline to connect the City of Goulburn to the Googong Dam via Queanbeyan.

Drought Proofing the North West

We will drought proof the North West with an Action Plan to secure water supplies for Tamworth, Gunnedah and the surrounding towns.

Drought Proofing Queanbeyan and Monaro

The NSW Coalition will secure the water supply for Queanbeyan and Monaro with a \$70 million action plan. Key initiatives of the plan include an upgrade of Braidwood's Sewage Treatment Plant and a major recycling plant at Bungendore.

Drought Proofing Broken Hill

The NSW Coalition will drought proof Broken Hill through upgrades to the Menindee Lakes.³ This strategy will include the construction of a new 9,000-megalitre/day regulator from Lake Menindee into Menindee Creek and the Darling River.

³ Stoner, Andrew MP, 'Stoner and Williams unveil Menindee water saving strategy', *Media Release*, 6 February 2007.

Labor's Failures

After 12 years, the NSW Labor Government has failed to secure NSW's water supply. Water savings that have been made are as a result of the efforts of the people of NSW rather than Labor Government initiatives.

Sydney Water neglected investment in infrastructure because it has been forced to pay more than \$700 million in dividends to the Labor Government in the last six years⁴.

Desalination Plant

A lack of planning to boost Sydney's water supply has seen the Labor Government commit to building the severely unpopular desalination plant at Kurnell costing taxpayers both financially and environmentally. The financial cost of the plant has blown out by \$600 million – up from the previous estimate of \$1.3 billion to \$1.9 billion, and will add up to \$2.50 a week to householders' water bills⁵. Having already spent \$120 million in preparations to enable the plant to be constructed if dam levels drop below 30 per cent – an increasing inevitability in the absence of other measures⁶.

Showing further contempt for the people of NSW, the Labor Government launched a taxpayer funded advertising campaign at a cost of \$1.4 million to try and convince the electorate of their unpopular desalination plant⁷.

Further evidence of the Labor Government's attempts to keep the reality of the desalination plant from Sydneysiders was recently revealed by *The Daily Telegraph*, which obtained documents detailing the two years of total chaos that the construction of the maze of pipes and tunnels to transfer water from the plant will cause⁸. The Labor Government has continued with their long-standing⁹ approach of not consulting residents and sought to keep the reality of construction plans from the people until after the election.

Labor continues to reject alternative water saving measures, including large scale recycling and storm water harvesting as proposed by the NSW Coalition meaning that under a NSW Labor Government the people of NSW will have an energy intensive desalination plant forced on them.

Every day reveals further inadequacies with the Labor Government's decision to build the desalination plant. To date, Labor has been caught out lying about its desalination plant – from its inability to meet its own green energy

⁴ Sydney Water Annual Reports 2000-2001 to 2005-2006.

⁵ McDougall, Bruce, '\$1.9bn desal plant to drain taxpayers', *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 February 2007, p. 7.

⁶ Frew, Wendy, 'Tide of policy sweeping towards desalination', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 January 2007 p. 6.

⁷ Pearlman, Jonathan, 'Ads selling desalination to cost \$1.4m', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 January 2007, p. 5.

⁸ Benson, Simon, 'Two Years of Total Chaos', *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 February 2007, p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 4.

targets¹⁰, impacts on the community and even doubts about its own 26 month timeframe for project delivery¹¹. In February 2006, after the Government heralded their decision to tap two aquifers, Morris lemma said, "The Government has decided that it will not proceed to construct a desalination plant at this stage"¹². However, a year later we have Morris lemma arguing, "Desal is an integral part of our plan to secure Sydney's water"¹³. Clearly, the NSW Labor Government has been caught out with no plan to secure water for NSW and has been forced to implement this expensive, unpopular and environmentally damaging plant.

Recycling and Ocean Outfalls

- Sydney Water recycles only 3.5 per cent of water during the year¹⁴. This only represents a 1.1 per cent increase on the previous year¹⁵. Each year, Sydney Water pumps almost 400 billion litres or 72 per cent of its wastewater discharge out to sea. Most of this is only primary treated (lowest level of treatment¹⁶) when discharged from the ocean outfalls at North Head, Bondi and Malabar¹⁷.
- Sydney Water's leakage rates are at 8.5 per cent, meaning the equivalent of 123 Olympic-sized swimming pools are lost through leaky pipes and mains every day¹⁸.
- Despite its supposed new emphasis on recycling, Labor is spending more than \$43 million on desalination in the 2006-2007 budget compared to just \$26.1 million on recycling projects¹⁹.

¹⁰ Benson, Simon, 'Desal plant to go ahead in weeks', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 January 2007, p. 1.

¹¹ Benson, Simon, 'New Desal Deal', *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 February 2007, pp. 1 & 4.

¹² McDougall, Bruce, '\$1.9bn desal plant to drain taxpayers', *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 February 2007, p. 7.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kibble, Gabrielle (Chairwoman), 'Sydney Water Annual Report 2006', Sydney, p. 4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Sydney Water Fact Sheets, 'What is wastewater?', retrieved 2 February 2007 from <http://www.sydneywater.com.au/Publications/Factsheets/WhatsWastewater.pdf#Page=1>

¹⁷ Hunt, Greg MP (Cwth), 'On World Ocean Day it's time to clean up Sydney's ocean outfalls Mr Carr', *Media Release*, 7 June 2005.

¹⁸ Kibble, Gabrielle (Chairwoman), 'Sydney Water Annual Report 2006', Sydney, pp. 4 and 6. Based on an Olympic sized swimming pool with a capacity of 1ML.

¹⁹ NSW Budget Papers 2006-2007, 'Infrastructure Statement', *NSW Treasury*, Budget Paper No. 4, p. 51.