



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Premier of Victoria

Monday 17 July, 2006

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks today launched *Our Environment, Our Future* – the State Government’s **\$200 million** Environmental Sustainability Action Statement.

Mr Bracks said *Our Environment, Our Future* was a landmark package of 150 priority sustainability initiatives to secure a sustainable state for future generations of Victorians.

“Ensuring that we protect our natural assets and reduce harm to the environment are crucial in securing a sustainable future for Victoria,” Mr Bracks said.

“This statement contains initiatives that will help put our water and energy consumption on a sustainable basis, reduce waste and combat greenhouse gas emissions that lead to climate change.

“Actions in the statement will save at least 3.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year – the environmental equivalent of taking 800,000 cars off Victoria’s roads.

“The Bracks Government is making Victoria a better place to live and raise a family and a key part of that strategy is ensuring we develop sustainable lifestyles and industries.”

Environment Minister John Thwaites, said *Our Environment, Our Future* said Victorians needed to reduce their environmental impact.

“Our ecological footprint is huge – if everyone lived like Victorians we would need four planets to sustain our lifestyles,” Mr Thwaites said.

“However as we’ve seen with our water supplies – Melburnians are using 22 per cent less water than in the 1990s – Victorians are capable of responding to environmental challenges.

“And that’s our goal to help Victorian families, communities, business and Government respond to the environmental challenges we face including climate change, reducing waste and reducing energy and water use.”

Key initiatives in *Our Environment Our Future* include:

- Introducing a Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET) which will require electricity retailers to purchase 10 per cent of their power from renewable sources such as wind and solar by 2016.

VRET will save 27 million tonnes of greenhouse gas up until 2030 – the environmental equivalent of taking all Victoria’s cars off the road for a period of two years.

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- Legislation to enable a ban of lightweight plastic bags, unless retailers charge a minimum fee of 10 cents per bag, from 1 January 2009, if voluntary measures don't successfully phase-out bags by then.

Exemptions to apply for biodegradable bags, small retailers and where bags are required for health and safety reasons.

Currently Victorians use 1.1 billion bags per year – at Bunnings a 10 cent fee has resulted in a 99 per cent reduction in plastic bag use.

- A legislated ban on dams in 18 heritage rivers in Victoria, including the Mitchell and Upper Yarra;
- Twelve new recycling centres across Victoria will be established to enable more Victorians to safely dispose of potentially harmful materials including computers, paint, batteries and household chemicals;
- An industrial scheme to help the State's 250 biggest energy and waste users reduce their impact on the environment. These companies will be required by law to do an energy, waste and water audit and implement subsequent cost effective environmental measures. Any initiative identified that will lead to an overall cost saving within three years must be implemented.

This initiative will save more than one million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year – the environmental equivalent of taking more than 230,000 cars off the road.

A list of further actions is available as an attachment:

More information regarding *Our Environment, Our Future*- Sustainability Action Statement 2006 is available at www.dse.vic.gov.au

Major Actions included in Our Environment, Our Future

1. Reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions

- Energy retailers will be required to buy 10% of their energy from renewable sources, guaranteeing a market for renewable energy in Victoria;
- \$12.5 million for renewable energy research and commercialisation;
- Victoria's biggest 250 energy and water users will be required to cut waste under new EPA laws;
- \$14.8 million for research to help communities across the State to better understand and prepare for the local impacts of climate change; and
- A roll out of "smart" energy meters to every electricity user across the State to help households and businesses reduce their energy use costs and greenhouse gas emissions.

2. Maintaining and restoring our natural assets

- \$21 million to provide economic incentives for landowners to participate in solving problems;
- New legislation to protect 18 heritage rivers including the Yarra and Mitchell from damming;
- \$6 million to improve water quality and reduce algal blooms in the Gippsland Lakes;
- \$4.5 million for a EPA Strike force to track illegal pollution sources into the Yarra; and
- A White Paper on protecting biodiversity and restoring land.

3. Using our resources more efficiently

- New legislation to enable a ban on free plastic shopping bags;
- \$4 million for 12 waste recovery centres for old paint, batteries, computers and other goods;
- A four-fold increase in land fill levies on hazardous industrial waste to fund waste reduction and reduce the volume of industrial hazardous waste going to landfill;
- \$15 million for industry grants to help businesses avoid waste;
- \$4 million to support the dairy industry to save water; and
- \$5 million to protect Victoria's State forests by limiting access to trail bikes and other recreational vehicles.

4. Reducing our everyday impacts

- \$4 million to roll-out the GreenHome program showing householders how to save water, energy and reduce waste;
- \$7.5 million for a community campaign to save energy and reduce waste in households;
- \$1.5 for new rebates to low income earners to encourage replacement of old fridges, heaters and air conditioners with 5 Star alternatives;
- \$5.9 million to help Victorians live more sustainably through community grants, incentives and local programs;
- \$1 million on equipping trades people to meet the growing demand for sustainable services; and
- \$10 for a new National Centre for Sustainability to teach environmental sustainability.

5. Government leadership - \$12.6 million to:

- \$4 million to upgrade all public housing to AAA shower heads and dual flush toilets;
- Green the Government car fleet by removing the restriction on the Government purchasing hybrid cars and requiring drivers of Government cars to use ethanol fuel where it is available;
- Introduce 5 Star minimum standards for new office accommodation
- \$7.2 million for hospitals and aged care facilities to be energy and water smart; and
- Mandatory Recycling or reuse all Government computers and support for suppliers who take back packaging.

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