



EnviroWatch 2011: One year in...

**AN AUDIT OF THE BAILLIEU GOVERNMENT'S DELIVERY
OF ITS ELECTION PROMISES ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

November 2011

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Environment Victoria mobilises people to safeguard our environment. As the state's leading non-profit environment group, we believe our future depends on all Victorians. That's why we're asking all 5 million of us to be part of looking after our environment. So what do you say? Are you in? Visit www.environmentvictoria.org.au today.

Authorised by Kelly O'Shanassy, CEO, Environment Victoria
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Cover image: Wilsons Promontory National Park



Introduction

This report audits the Baillieu Government’s progress on implementing the Victorian Coalition pre 2010 election promises on our environment. This report was compiled in November, 2011 – one year after the 2010 Victorian election. An updated audit will be compiled each year on the anniversary of the Victorian election. The audit also considers environmental policy actions of significance that have been taken over the past 12 months that were not committed to prior to the 2010 election.

This report was compiled by Environment Victoria, the state’s leading, independent environment group. Environment Victoria is non-partisan and this report is not an endorsement of the Victorian Coalition’s election promises.

The Baillieu Government is responsible for ensuring a healthy environment for all Victorians to enjoy. The decisions they make today will create a legacy for Victorians into the future.

The state government makes decisions on whether to invest in clean energy or a new coal plant. Whether to dig a new landfill or instead to build a recycling facility. Whether to build a road or a railway line. They make the regulations that can either provide water to our precious rivers or bleed them dry. And they hold the power to unlock new green jobs or maintain our reliance on ancient and polluting technologies. They are the stewards of our environment.

The Baillieu Government was elected at the most critical time in history for our environment. There has never been a more important time for strong environmental leadership from our elected officials.

For 40 years Environment Victoria has held state governments, of all political stripes, to account for their environmental decisions. We hope that by doing this and providing ideas for a clean, sustainable Victoria, we will encourage the government to take action for, not against our environment.

Methodology

The Victorian Coalition did not release an environment or climate change policy platform prior to the 2010 Victorian election, despite publicly promising to do so on numerous occasions. However a list of the Victorian Coalition’s environment commitments made via the Coalition’s public statements, and via the policies the Coalition did release, were collated by Environment Victoria immediately following the election. This list was provided to the Baillieu Government following the election. It is these promises that are assessed in this report card. Significant additional actions taken by the Baillieu Government since its election that were not promised prior to the election are also highlighted in this report card.

Environment Victoria assessed the delivery of each promise based on publicly available information. The following is a description of the assessment methodology:

Promise status	Description
Delivered	The promise has been delivered in full by the Baillieu Government.
Partial delivery	The promise has been partially delivered.
Not delivered	There is no publically available information to suggest work has commenced on the promise.
Broken promise	Promises that have been reversed by the Baillieu Government.
Backwards step	Promises that will harm rather than help our environment.
Forwards step	Actions that were not promised but that will help our environment.

The assessment was forwarded to the Baillieu Government on 15 November, 2011 for any comment or to provide additional detail on commitments where there was no information in the public domain. Responses from Minister Smith’s office were received and additional information incorporated into this audit.

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Commitment	Delivery status	Delivered?
Water and rivers		
1. Establish a Ministerial Advisory Council to report within 100 days of taking office on the planning, regulation, pricing, legislative changes and management required to improve the sustainability of Victoria's water use.	Living Victoria Task Force delivered a broad road map to improve water sustainability but it contained no specific recommendations as promised.	Partial delivery
2. Improve water pricing to increase financial rewards for water conservation efforts by making consumption account for 60 percent, rather than 30 percent of bill prices.	No visible progress.	Not delivered
3. Establish a \$50 million fund over four years to promote water sensitive urban design including a \$5 million Green Roofs program.	Funding provided in the 2011-12 budget for next four years. Money yet to be allocated.	Partial delivery
4. Increase water efficiency rebates by \$40 million and extend rebates to new products and small business.	Rebates were increased to \$40 million, but not by \$40 million. New products added were pool covers and washing machines. Rebates were also extended to small business.	Partial delivery
5. All government major projects will require rainwater capture and reuse.	No visible progress.	Not delivered
6. Wind back use of the north-south pipeline, returning environmental water the Labor Government intends to pump to Melbourne to stressed river systems.	Water delivery to Melbourne via the pipeline stopped in Spring, 2010. On 15 November 2011 Minister Walsh announced that water retailers could sell their pipeline allocation, breaking the promise that this water would be used to deliver environmental commitments in northern Victoria.	Broken promise

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7. Honour ALP Government commitments to deliver additional environmental flows in the Yarra, Thomson, Murray and Snowy Rivers.	Confirmation of additional 8 GL for Thomson River in 2012 through Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy which will see ALP's 18 GL environmental entitlement commitment met. ALP promised 20 GL environmental entitlement for Yarra, now have 17 GL entitlement, no discernible plan to deliver extra 3 GL. For Living Murray have had 202GL of promised 214 GL recovered. Snowy 282 GL target for 2012 looks like being met.	Partial delivery
8. Allocate \$10 million to improve health of Gippsland Lakes.	\$10 million commitment over four years reiterated through Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy, with a working group established to plan roll-out No detail on planned expenditure as yet.	Partial delivery
9. Substitute recycled water, rainwater and stormwater for Melbourne's potable water supplies by 110 billion litres by 2015 and 200 billion litres by 2030.	No significant visible progress.	Not delivered
10. Close the Gunnamatta outfall in their second term of parliament.	No significant visible progress. Will need considerable planning in this term of government if it is to be realized.	Not delivered
11. Ensure water entitlements held by the Environmental Water Holder are treated the same as other entitlement holders, and that the environment has the same rights as other users.	Victorian Environmental Water Holder established July 2011 to manage environmental entitlements. These entitlements are subject to the same conditions as other entitlements, but comprise only a small proportion of the Environmental Water Reserve. Three Commissioners to the Environmental Water Holder were also established.	Delivered
12. Ensure the independently audited savings from stage one of the Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal Program that are intended for the environment are placed in the control of the Environmental Water Holder.	No water shares have yet been allocated against NVIRP water savings. Environmental Water Holder currently receives supply by agreement.	Partial delivery

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13. Deliver a new set of minimum standards to make best practice on water use mandatory for all new developments and redevelopments.	No visible progress.	Not delivered
14. Encourage builders of new private buildings, and occupants of existing private buildings, to use water efficiently.	No change to existing regulatory regime for buildings with expected introduction of 6 star standard for new homes and renovations on 1 May 2011. Rebates provide some incentive but have been assessed elsewhere.	Partial delivery
15. Promised to retain catchment management authorities and coastal boards which were to be amalgamated.	Coalition have maintained these authorities and boards.	Delivered

The following election commitments may cause significant environmental damage:

16. Will not support the guide to the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP).	The Baillieu Government has consistently called for the current MDBP process to be delayed and for irrigator interests to be paramount.	Backwards step
17. Will not regulate to implement any MDBP recommendations earlier than 2019.	In response to campaigning from the Victorian Government, Commonwealth government and Basin states have agreed that Sustainable Diversion Limits will not come into force until 2019, weakening the Basin Plan.	Backwards step
18. Fund feasibility studies for a possible dam for the Lindenow Valley on the Mitchell River and for expanded dams at Lake William Hovell and Lake Buffalo.	Has invested \$1 million in Lindenow Valley Water Security Project to investigate water storage options.	Backwards step
19. Scrap water restrictions by 2012 regardless of status of water storages.	Reviewing framework for restrictions and permanent water savings rules to take more than dam levels into account	Backwards step

Commitment	Delivery status	Delivered?
Climate Change		
20. Direct the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission to inquire into and report on the design of a market-based gross feed-in tariff scheme for renewable energy.	No VCEC inquiry underway. The existing feed-in tariff was slashed from 60 cents/KWh to 25 c/KWh. This move was unannounced prior to the election and surprising given that the Victorian Coalition had worked to strengthen the Premium Feed-in tariff when in Opposition. It represents a broken promise given that the Coalition had committed to a VCEC review of feed-in tariffs, which is unlikely to take place until at least 2012, and yet acted to reduce support for solar ahead of the review.	Broken promise
21. Double the Energy Technology Innovation Strategy to \$82 million for pilot renewable energy projects and extend eligibility to fuel cells, cogeneration and trigeneration.	Funding provided in 2011-12 budget. No visible progress on extending the eligibility of energy technologies.	Partial delivery
22. Provide \$100 million to the TRUenergy Large Scale Solar Power station near Mildura, subject to federal funding.	Federal funding via Solar Cities is not yet forthcoming, however Mildura project could be supported by federal Clean Energy Finance Corporation, though the Federal Coalition have promised to abolish this body if elected.	Not delivered
23. Maintain energy efficiency rebate schemes, public housing and low income energy efficiency programs.	There was some energy efficiency funding in 2011-12 Budget for gas heaters and efficient white goods for low income households, however next year's Budget is the key budget when several rebate programs will need renewing.	Partial delivery
24. Implement \$20 million plan to replace inefficient street lights.	\$20 million provided in 2011-12 Budget. Implementation underway.	Partial delivery
25. Provide \$50,000 for Ballarat green waste project.	\$50,000 for a feasibility project was allocated in the 2011-12 Budget.	Delivered

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26. Review of subsidies for fossil fuels by June 2011 and encourage the re-balancing of Victoria's electricity generation portfolio to assist with meeting our accepted emission reduction target of 20 percent on 2000 levels by 2020.	No visible progress.	Not delivered
27. Support Victoria's legislated target to reduce greenhouse emissions by 20 percent by 2020.	Despite describing the target before the election as "our accepted emission reduction target of 20 percent on 2000 levels by 2020", and promising to release policy in this area ahead of the election, the Baillieu Government has since called the target aspirational and Treasurer Wells claimed the target was not legislated. In addition, by abandoning actions in the Climate Change White Paper such as beginning the replacement of Hazelwood power station, achieving the 20 percent target will be very difficult. The Coalition has no climate policy agenda that would deliver anything close to 20 percent emissions reductions. The 20 percent target and Victoria's Climate Change Act is now currently under a formal review triggered by the introduction of an emissions trading scheme by the federal government.	Broken promise
28. Transition all existing housing stock to meet an average of 5 star energy rating.	No progress beyond increasing the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target and proceeding with 6 star standard for new homes. There is no publicly available plan to achieve this commitment.	Not delivered
29. Secure 5 percent (2500 GWh) of Victoria's energy generation from solar by 2020.	No visible progress and reduction of Premium Solar Feed-in tariff makes achieving target more difficult.	Not delivered
30. Extend the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target to small and medium enterprises.	This target was doubled, more products were added to the scheme and the scheme extended to businesses.	Delivered
31. Support demand management measures to reduce peak power demand.	No visible progress although Victoria is participating in a national review of demand side management.	Not delivered

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32. Apply a 'climate test' to new government policies, programs, investments and future infrastructure decisions to ensure they do not increase greenhouse gas pollution and instead contribute to its reduction.	No visible progress, Government cites Climate Change Act as providing this test, however consideration of climate change under the Act falls short of this election commitment.	Not delivered
33. Develop a comprehensive strategy and investment package for engaging Victorians in sustainability, climate mitigation and adaptation programs as a part of meeting Victoria's emission reduction target.	No visible progress. The Baillieu Government has no clear, comprehensive plan for tackling climate change, despite promising to deliver such a plan ahead of the election, and it is unclear on its support for the Climate Change White Paper which is currently the only policy document that outlined a vision for beginning to cut emissions by 20 percent by 2020.	Not delivered
34. Develop, fund and implement a Climate Change Adaptation Plan by the end of 2011.	No visible progress, however Government states that work is underway to deliver a plan by Dec 2012, as specified in the Climate Change Act, but a year later than promised in election commitments.	Not delivered
35. Replace the Black Balloons program with a program to provide practical energy efficiency and emissions reduction advice for households and small business.	No visible progress in providing advice or community awareness programs, though some new rebates introduced.	Not delivered

The following election commitments may cause significant environmental damage:

36. Reject the Climate Change White Paper commitment to reduce emissions from brown coal electricity generation by up to \$4 million tonnes by 2014, to be achieved by closing one quarter of Hazelwood.	The Baillieu Government walked away from negotiations with International Power in early 2011, thereby leaving the fate of Hazelwood and any closure to be determined by the Federal Government.	Backwards step
37. Impose new planning conditions on the construction of wind farms to provide landholder right of veto to projects within 2 km of a residence.	The Baillieu Government changed the Victorian Planning and Environment Act to give right of veto over wind farms to property owners within 2 km of a proposed wind farm. These rights exist for no other type of industrial development. In addition, the Baillieu Government went further than its pre-election policy by declaring whole local government areas off limits to new wind farms.	Backwards step

<p>38. Support for the proposed HRL coal-fired power station.</p>	<p>Baillieu Government continues to support a new polluting power station for Victoria. The HRL Dual Gas Works approval was conditionally approved by the EPA in 2011. The Baillieu Government has started to provide a grant of \$50 million to HRL despite HRL missing key milestones in the funding agreement.</p>	<p>Backwards step</p>
<p>39. Support a 0.8 standard for new fossil fuel energy generation which allows coal-fired power plants to be built in Victoria which are significantly more polluting than combined cycle conventional gas and renewables.</p>	<p>This 0.8 standard has not yet been ratified in law. The lack of clarity on this standard has created significant uncertainty in relation to the new coal-fired power plant listed in commitment 38.</p>	<p>Backwards step</p>
<p>40. Will assess any applications for new coal allocation or brown coal exports based on legislative requirements.</p>	<p>While there have been no moves to initiate a coal allocation there has been a rapid expansion in the number of coal exploration licences that have been issued since December 2010, including to companies wanting to establish an export industry. Landholders opposing coal exploration in places like Deans Marsh and Bacchus Marsh have not been given the same rights to refuse development that have been granted to residents living near proposed wind farms.</p>	<p>Backwards step</p>

Commitment	Delivery status	Delivered?
Sustainability		
<p>41. Introduce Planning benchmarks to ensure that Victoria’s future growth and development does not adversely impact; Melbourne’s water demands; sewerage loads; nutrient loads into waterways; stormwater runoff; greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	<p>No visible progress.</p>	<p>Not delivered</p>

42. Develop a population strategy for Victoria.	No visible progress.	Not delivered
43. Develop a \$5 million Latrobe Valley industry and employment roadmap including a socio-economic impact study of any move to phase out Hazelwood power station.	No roadmap as yet, however some funding and new positions created to develop roadmap.	Partial delivery
44. Establish a new independent public transport authority – the Victorian Public Transport Development Authority – to integrate transport authorities and agencies. The agency will have \$10 million funding over four years.	Work has begun to establish the Public Transport Development Authority with enabling legislation passed and a Chair and CEO of Authority announced.	Partial delivery
45. Begin feasibility studies for Rowville and Doncaster Rail lines, Fast Rail project from Melbourne to Sydney, and planning for Melbourne Airport rail link and Avalon airport rail line.	Feasibility studies have begun on Rowville and Doncaster Rail lines and planning work has begun for Avalon Rail Link. Some early progress on Melbourne Airport Rail Link. Victoria contributing to Federal feasibility studies of Fast Rail project. Unclear if Victoria is conducting its own studies.	Partial delivery
46. Continue subsidies being provided for hybrid and electric vehicles as a part of their registration.	Continue to date though need a budget allocation for future years.	Partial delivery
47. Introduce a \$5 million Backing Green Business Plan accrediting green businesses.	Funding announced in 11-12 Budget, program yet to be publicly delivered.	Partial delivery

The following election commitments may cause significant environmental damage:

48. Call for new inclusions for addition to Melbourne’s Urban Growth Boundary.	Baillieu Government has commenced this action which could undermine Melbourne’s Green Wedges including high conservation value remnant grasslands.	Backwards step
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Commitment	Delivery status	Delivered?
Natural environment		
49. Establish a \$20 million green grants fund for projects which improve biodiversity, reduce and manage waste and clean up coasts and waterways.	This fund was established in the 2011-12 Budget and launched in October 2011. However \$106 million Climate Communities fund was cut at the same time and the new program guidelines exclude waste projects.	Partial delivery
50. Establish a \$4 million fund to plant 2 million trees.	No visible progress, though planning is underway.	Not delivered
51. Establish VEAC investigations into a) existing marine parks and any ongoing biodiversity threats and challenges, b) the condition and management alternatives for freshwater dependent ecosystems.	The investigation into marine parks has commenced with narrow terms of reference. The investigation into freshwater dependent ecosystems is yet to commence, instead a VEAC investigation into public land near the Yellingbo Conservation Reserve has been announced.	Partial delivery
52. Increase Landcare funding by \$12 million.	Funding provided for 60 new Landcare facilitators, however only \$50,000 provided for each position which may be inadequate to employ facilitators for many Landcare groups.	Delivered
The following election commitments may cause significant environmental damage:		
53. Reintroduce cattle grazing into alpine areas including the Alpine National Park.	Cattle introduced into Alpine National Parks in January 2011 for so-called 'scientific trials', despite widespread criticism from scientists. Victorian action blocked by Federal Environment Minister who moved regulations to the EPBC Act to disallow cattle grazing in National Parks.	Backwards step
54. No extension of the state's marine parks.	The Coalition continues to oppose the extension of the marine protected areas reserve.	Backwards step

55. 5 percent fuel reduction burning target across the State.	The large state-wide target encourages large burns in remote areas, and discourages strategic burns close to communities compromising planning for both biodiversity and public safety.	Backwards step
56. No reduction in native forest resource available to logging industry.	Coalition ruled out reducing forestry activity and has maintained this position.	Backwards step
57. Committed to reforming VicForests board	Announced four new directors in October 2011, with three of them having a forest industry background, leading to criticisms that the moves removed transparency and independence of VicForests.	Backwards step

The following actions were not commitments made prior to the election but may cause significant environmental damage:

Action	Impact	Status
1. Anglesea mine extension: renewing Alcoa’s lease at Anglesea mine for 50 years.	Mine lease extension will cause significant loss of high conservation value heathlands. Failed to require Alcoa to source any of their power needs from renewable energy was a lost opportunity. Residents not granted same rights to oppose expansion as residents near wind farms. Supposed ‘environmental protections’ incorporated into the decision were weak and don’t offer any additional environmental protection above what community would expect.	Backwards step
2. Cancelling the voluntary Target 155 water efficiency program.	Reduces awareness about water saving opportunities and increases pressure on Melbourne’s water sources. Is at odds with the Coalition’s reasonably strong water efficiency platform.	Backwards step

3. Returning duck hunting season to 12 weeks in 2011.	After shorter duck hunting seasons due to drought in recent years the season returned to 12 weeks in 2011, adding further pressure to duck populations.	Backwards step
4. Scrapping the Climate Communities program.	The Baillieu Government has scrapped the \$106 million Climate Communities program which supported local communities to take action to reduce emissions and prepare for climate change. Other important programs like Environment Victoria's Sustainable Transport work also had its funding cut.	Backwards step
5. Considering allowing forestry projects to be exempted from the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.	DSE is currently proposing to allow the exemption of logging projects from the requirements of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, which protects the state's endangered and threatened species. If this proposal is accepted it will represent a significant weakening of environmental protections for threatened species.	Backwards step
6. Abolished firewood permit system for collecting firewood from state forests.	Firewood permits had originally been established by the Bolte Government in 1958. This decision was made without consultation or any public process. It weakens environmental protections and undermines emerging private markets for firewood.	Backwards step
7. Amended National Parks Act to extend firewood collection in recently created Red Gum National Parks.	Undermines integrity of National Parks system and removes important habitat for some species.	Backwards step
8. Seeking federal funding to advance the East-West tunnel freeway proposal.	If the East-West tunnel was constructed it would lead to increased traffic and emissions via induced demand and starve genuinely sustainable transport projects of funding.	Backwards step

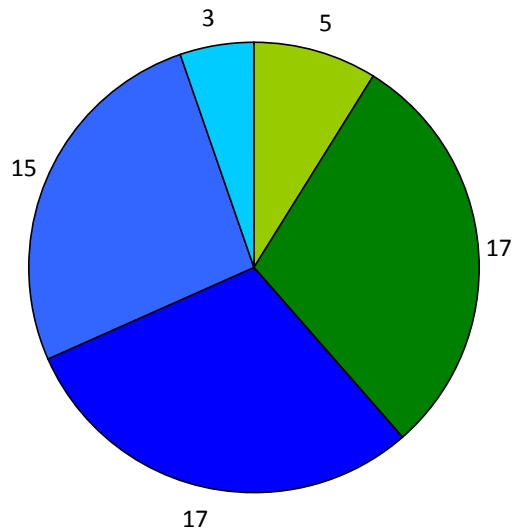
The following actions were not commitments made prior to the election but may deliver significant environmental benefit:

Action	Impact	Status
1. Increasing the landfill levy schedule.	The 2011-12 State Budget accelerated increases to the landfill levy which will support recycling businesses and jobs and reduce waste to landfill.	Forwards step
2. Additions to Victoria's protected areas network.	In October 2011 new state parks and extensions to existing parks were declared covering an area of over 10,000 hectares.	Forwards step
3. Made the EPA Pollution Response hotline a 24 hour service.	Extended service began on 1 July 2011.	Forwards step

Results

There were 57 environmental policy commitments of significance made ahead of the election. Of these:

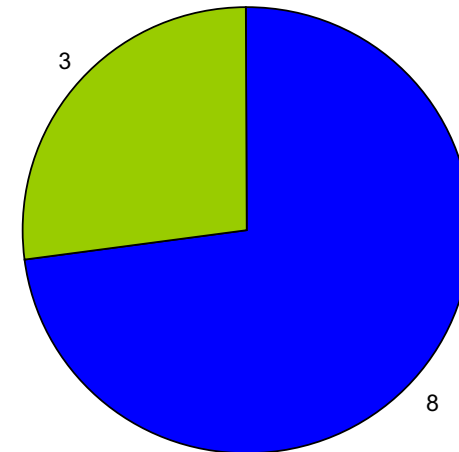
- 5 commitments have been delivered in full
- 17 commitments have been partially delivered
- 17 commitments have not yet been delivered
- 15 commitments represent a backwards step for our environment
- 3 promises that were made have been broken.



- Delivered in full
- Partially delivered
- Not delivered
- Backwards step for our environment
- Broken promise

Additionally there have been 11 significant actions taken with environmental consequences. Of these:

- 8 represent a backwards step for our environment
- 3 represent a forwards step for our environment.



- Backwards step for our environment
- Forwards step for our environment



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