



# Luke Foley MP

NSW LABOR LEADER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION  
Shadow Minister for Western Sydney



27 July 2016

Dr Martin Predavec  
President  
Royal Zoological Society of NSW  
Via e-mail [president@rzsnsw.org.au](mailto:president@rzsnsw.org.au)

Dear Dr Predavec

Thank you for taking the time to write to the Leader of the Opposition regarding the very significant changes to biodiversity protection laws currently proposed by the Baird Government. The Leader of the Opposition has asked me to respond to you on his behalf.

NSW Labor is proud of its history on environmental protection. We are particularly proud of our history in implementing the *Native Vegetation Act* and the *Threatened Species Act*, which have been vital to protecting the beautiful environment and wildlife of NSW.

Evidence shows that since these laws were implemented broad-scale land clearing has dropped from 80,000 to 1,000 hectares per year, an 88% reduction. Animal deaths decreased by an estimated 14%, or 53,000 fewer deaths each year, and the laws also helped Australia meet its commitments on much-needed carbon emissions reductions.

Premier Baird and his Liberal and National Party colleagues have now revealed their plans to destroy this environmental legacy and take biodiversity in NSW backwards. The Baird Government's proposed *Biodiversity Conservation Act* is a disaster for environmental protection and conservation in NSW.

Rather than enhancing existing environmental and biodiversity legislation, the Baird Government is intent on creating a system that will wreak havoc over the protection of our natural environment and enable broad-scale land clearing and mass biodiversity destruction across the state.

The repeal of the Carr Labor Government's *Native Vegetation Act 2003* is of particular concern. Analysis by peak conservation bodies, such as the World Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservation Council have concluded that the Baird Government's proposals would:

- Add extinction pressures to the state's 1,000 already threatened species;
- Threaten clean, reliable water supplies and degrade fertile farmlands through erosion and salinity;
- Put landmark trees and bushland in towns and suburbs at greater risk of land clearing; and
- Limit efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

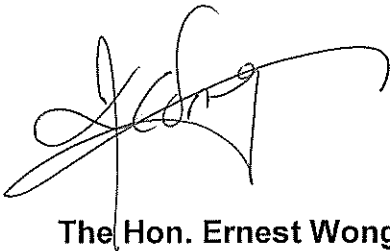
When similar protections were revoked in Queensland, there was a near doubling of remnant vegetation clearing between 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 and a drastic increase in carbon emissions.

Labor has no objection to the formation of a single Biodiversity Conservation Act; however, we will not tolerate the dilution and removal of critical environmental and biodiversity protections that underpin existing legislation. Labor will not support policies that weaken environmental laws.

NSW Labor will ensure that our legislative and regulatory regime provides robust protections for our natural environment.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me on this important issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ernest Wong', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

**The Hon. Ernest Wong MLC  
Parliamentary Secretary to Luke Foley MP  
NSW Leader of the Opposition**