



Steven Miles
DEPUTY PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

WORKING TOGETHER FOR QUEENSLAND

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Dear Ms Plesman, Ms Pointon and Mr O’Gorman

Thank you for your joint letter of 28 September 2020 on behalf of The Wilderness Society, WWF-Australia and the Environmental Defenders Office regarding Labor’s policy commitments in the 2020 Queensland election, and your policy requests. The Palaszczuk Labor Government’s strong health response to the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that we can now start to deliver our plan for economic recovery. I’m pleased to outline the ways in which the Palaszczuk Labor Government will continue its strong track record in protecting the environment while supporting economic recovery and creating jobs.

Queenslanders will not forget the LNP’s disastrous record on the environment and threatened species. Under the previous LNP Government habitat loss quadrupled when they tore up Labor’s vegetation management laws in 2013. The Palaszczuk Labor Government is proud to have reinstated Queensland’s sustainable vegetation management laws. The laws we passed in 2018 were based on science and are designed to maintain biodiversity, reduce land degradation, protect water quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support the sustainable use of land.

Amongst the measures we introduced, the laws:

- ban broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation for agriculture;
- expand the “high value regrowth” that is protected from vegetation that hasn’t been cleared since the beginning of 1990 – 28 year-old trees – to 15-year-old trees, protecting an extra 232,000 ha of trees;
- increase the maximum penalties courts could impose for illegal clearing to more than half-a-million-dollars;
- give compliance officers more powers and enforcement tools; and
- require farmers to get approval to thin vegetation.

The LNP will reverse these vegetation management laws. Only a Palaszczuk Labor Government will ensure they remain in place.

We appreciate your support for the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020-2025 (the Strategy) and your contribution to finalising the Strategy through the Koala Advisory Council (KAC).

Our shared concern about the decline of the State's koala population led the Palaszczuk Labor Government to put in place the strongest koala habitat protections Queensland has ever seen through the introduction of koala priority areas and mapping of more than 716 000 hectares of koala habitat within SEQ.

The Strategy contains a commitment to work with the KAC and other partners to review the effectiveness of the Strategy including the new koala conservation protections. The mid-term review will analyse elements of the Strategy, such as the impacts of clearing controls, the effectiveness of habitat restoration and threat management efforts.

The Strategy and associated mapping is focused on South East Queensland (SEQ), as this region faces the greatest pressures from urban development. Focusing on SEQ provides an opportunity for the mapping methodology to be refined at a regional scale.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government also understands that national parks, state forests and the private protected area network provide refuge for our unique wildlife, including koalas. Since our election in 2015 we have grown the protected area estate by more than 1.2 million hectares and built on our long-term target of increasing protected areas to 17% of the state's land mass.

We also recognise and value the vital role of private landholders in protecting the State's unique biodiversity, and natural and cultural landscapes. Queensland's private protected area network is the largest in Australia and since 2015, new nature refuges have contributed a net increase of over 479 188 hectares to the protected area system. We have also established Special Wildlife Reserves to provide national park level protection for private land of exceptional natural and cultural value. We were delighted as a government to announce Pullen Pullen Reserve as Queensland's, and Australia's, first ever special wildlife reserve.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has fulfilled our commitment to release a protected area strategy for Queensland. The *Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020-2030: Protecting our world-class natural and cultural values* (the Strategy) establishes the strategic direction for protecting, growing and managing Queensland's protected areas.

The release of the Strategy is supported by an initial investment of \$60 million including:

- \$28 million for strategic land acquisitions to grow the public protected area estate;
- \$8 million to support landholders to establish and maintain nature refuges and special wildlife reserves on their land; and
- doubling the number of Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers to 200.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government will honour commitments under the 1999 South East Queensland Forest Agreement to transfer 20,000 hectares of high value conservation land to the Queensland national park estate by 2024. The first 6,000 hectares of this transfer will occur in the current financial year.

The LNP's record on protected areas was to cut over 60 ranger positions when they were in government, reducing capacity for the important work of caring for protected areas.

The Palaszczuk Governments Land Restoration Fund (LRF) made offers to 21 projects through its first investment round of \$93 million. This represents up to 1.8 million hectares of land in Queensland to be restored. While it was not a requirement to transfer Category X land to Category A or put it under a nature refuge agreement, the LRF does value those things if they are offered. Moreover,

the permanence obligations that are required provide a strong level of security to protect all of the lands restored through carbon farming.

In addition, the Government is undertaking an enhancement to the Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) program. Through an initial investment of \$4 million, Enhanced SLATS will produce a detailed baseline woody vegetation extent map for the State, develop regrowth monitoring approaches, transition SLATS from Landsat to higher resolution Sentinel-2 satellite imagery and develop a vegetation condition mapping framework.

This will significantly improve Queensland's scientific evidence base and monitoring capacity to inform a range of environment, natural resource and disaster management applications, including vegetation management.

Despite a considerable amount of work having been completed for the enhanced program prior to the onset of COVID-19, the ongoing disruption caused by COVID-19, and the involvement of key SLATS scientists in the bushfire response, has delayed the finalisation of the scientific enhancements to SLATS, and therefore the 2018-2019 Enhanced SLATS reporting.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government will release the 2018-2019 SLATS report in 2021.

Now is not the time to risk the LNP's cuts and environmental vandalism. Queensland's ongoing economic, environmental and health recovery requires leadership and stability, and Deb Frecklington and the LNP are a risk to our recovery and the environment.

I urge you to communicate this message with your members and supporters. Should the Palaszczuk Government be re-elected, we look forward to continuing to work with you for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

Yours sincerely



STEVEN MILES MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services