

## Polling shows environment a key election issue for Gilmore

7<sup>th</sup> May 2019

By email to: [fiona.phillips@nswlabor.org.au](mailto:fiona.phillips@nswlabor.org.au)

Dear Ms Phillips,

We wish to draw your attention to polling that our groups conducted on voter attitudes to environmental issues in Gilmore, and to ask you to outline your position in light of the findings so that we may inform our members, supporters and the general public as they prepare to vote. The polling has received media attention throughout the electorate in both print and radio<sup>1</sup>.

The polling, conducted on 12 & 13 March 2019 (a copy of the results is enclosed), showed that:

- **88%** of voters are 'concerned about environmental degradation' across Australia;
- **73%** support creation of a 'new Federal Environment Protection Authority with strong powers';
- **51%** more likely to vote for a candidate with strong environment commitments;
- **82%** support for 'government investment in creating and managing national parks';
- **74%** support for protection of forests for wildlife, water, climate mitigation and recreation as 'best use of forests' compared to 19% support for logging and;
- **60%** support for ending native forest logging and 'using public funds to assist retraining and redeploying timber workers';
- **53%** support renewables and storage to supply our energy needs, compared to 24% for coal

We note that Labor on Saturday 4 May committed \$50 million to the creation of a new Federal Environment Act and the establishment of a Federal Environment Protection Authority. Our polling suggests that this is broadly supported in Gilmore, and we would like you to confirm that this is something you will actively work towards in the event you are elected.

It is our view that the strong public support for renewable energy over fossil fuels and for the protection of forests gives our society a clear pathway forward to dealing with the dual climate and nature crises<sup>2</sup>: a rapid transition to renewables and an end to industrialised logging will see emissions rapidly fall and carbon stores rapidly increase in forests, as well as providing room for wildlife populations to recover. This dual approach of maximising emissions reductions and carbon drawdown offers us the best possible chance of avoiding catastrophic impacts of climate change. The Australian National University has estimated that permitting logged forests in eastern Australia to realise their carbon storage potential would result in approximately 136 million tonnes of carbon sequestered annually for the next century<sup>3</sup>, and there is growing international realisation that 'restoring native forests is the best way to remove atmospheric carbon'<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. Kiama Independent, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. <https://www.kiamaindependent.com.au/story/6083708/polities-must-tackle-this-issue/?cs=12>  
<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/summary\\_for\\_policymakers\\_ipbes\\_global\\_assessment.pdf](https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/downloads/summary_for_policymakers_ipbes_global_assessment.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Mackey et. al. 2008. Green carbon: the role of natural forests in carbon storage. Part 1, a green carbon account of Australia's south-eastern Eucalypt forest, and policy implications. <http://press.anu.edu.au?p=56611>

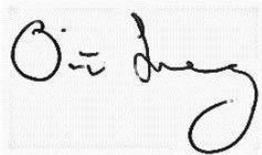
<sup>4</sup>Lewis et. al. 2019. Restoring natural forests is the best way to remove atmospheric carbon. Nature. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01026-8>

In this light, Joel Fitzgibbon's public support for another 20 years of Regional Forest Agreements is reckless and not in the public interest. This is particularly apparent when one considers that a logging industry-funded study on social attitudes to the logging of native forests closely mirrored our polling: a strong majority (approximately two thirds) of people oppose native forest logging<sup>5</sup>. This opposition is remarkably consistent across states, age groups and geographical location (urban and rural/regional). We seek to know your position on the logging and woodchipping of native forests in southern NSW.

We also draw your attention to the strong support in Gilmore for national parks. A crucial component of national park creation used to be the Commonwealth's National Reserve System (NRS) budget. This helped the states fund the acquisition of parcels of high conservation value land, thereby facilitating the states to protect nature. An example in Gilmore is the purchase of parcels of Jervis Bay National Park, most recently funding to purchase Lots in the 'Heritage Estates'. The NRS budget was scrapped under former Prime Minister Tony Abbott following the 2013 election, and has never been reinstated. We seek your commitment to work towards reinstating the NRS budget should you be elected.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via telephone should you wish to discuss this letter or the polling. We look forward to your prompt response to our letter, and we would like to take this opportunity to seek a meeting with you to discuss environmental matters in Gilmore should you be elected.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oisín Sweeney", is placed over a light grey grid background.

Dr Oisín Sweeney

President, Jervis Bay Regional Alliance

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/bush-turns-its-back-on-support-for-logging-native-forests-20181113-p50frc.html>