

MEDIA RELEASE

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Environment lawyers congratulate new Ministers

The National Environmental Law Association has congratulated the new Minister for Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt and the new Minister for Industry the Hon Ian Macfarlane.

‘We look forward to working with both ministers who have longstanding experience with the issues in their portfolios,’ said NELA President Amanda Cornwall.

NELA’s priorities are meeting Australia’s internationally agreed targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the most cost effective action, strong federal laws to protect nationally significant biodiversity and cultural heritage, and a national integrated approach to managing ocean resources.

‘The conservative side of politics in Australia has a strong conservation track record on issues such as Australia’s Oceans Policy, introduced by former Liberal Minister for Environment Robert Hill. We urge the Abbott Government to add to that legacy,’ said Ms Cornwall.

The Coalition’s plan to delegate to the states its decision making powers under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act* is of particular interest. The Coalition’s policy is to deliver a one-stop-shop for environmental approvals so projects can commence as soon as possible but without compromising environmental standards.

‘We look forward to engaging with Minister Hunt on the policy to ensure it delivers the dual goals of reducing red tape while maintaining national environment standards,’ said Ms Cornwall.

‘It’s our experience that attempts at streamlining state and federal environment approvals can introduce new complications, cost and risk,’ she said.

‘Through our membership base NELA offers a wealth of experience in environment, resources and planning laws at state and federal level,’ she said. NELA’s members include senior lawyers in major law firms, leading academics, and government and corporate lawyers.

NELA also welcomed the Coalition’s promise of bi-partisan pollution reduction targets of 5 to 25 per cent below 2000 levels by 2020. ‘In light of developments in the rest of the world we urge the new government to move to the upper end of this target range,’ Ms Cornwall said.

NELA is the leading environmental law organisation in Australia

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