

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Suburban Development



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WORLD LEADING ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION FOR VICTORIA

The Andrews Labor Government has passed new laws that strengthen the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) – giving the regulator the powers and tools it needs to stop pollution and protect Victoria's environment.

The Environment Protection Amendment Bill 2018, which passed the Victorian Parliament today, transforms environment protection laws to focus on prevention, rather than responding to pollution after it has occurred.

In an Australian first, the reforms introduce a criminally enforceable 'General Environmental Duty'. The Duty requires people conducting activities that pose a risk to human health and the environment from pollution and waste to take reasonable steps to eliminate or reduce them.

It means environment protection in Victoria will no longer be a waiting game – with people caught breaching the General Environmental Duty to face penalties and sanctions.

The Bill substantially increases maximum penalties to better reflect the seriousness of environmental offences.

In a boost for businesses, the reforms deliver greater clarity and flexibility, including reforms to EPA licencing and the environmental audit system.

The Bill also introduces a range of measures to boost EPA's ability to do its job, including strengthening powers for EPA Authorised Officers to enter premises and investigate suspected breaches of the law.

In a Victorian first, the Bill also gives community members the opportunity to seek civil remedies to enforce the Environment Protection Act and regulations.

The new laws will come into effect on 1 July 2020, which will allow time to develop the regulations and guidance required to support the new laws.

These instruments will be informed by close and sustained engagement with the Victorian community and industry.

The Labor Government has invested over \$180 million to transform the EPA into a modern regulator that will protect Victoria's environment now and into the future.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"These historic reforms were developed carefully over a number of years and will help protect Victoria's environment for generations to come."

"We're making sure Victoria's EPA is equipped with the people, powers and resources it needs to do its job and protect Victoria's environment."