

Summary of questions and answers

6 August 2013, National Parks Association of NSW forum on National Parks
 “Conserving national parks for future generations”
 Theatre Room, NSW Parliament House

Q. Addressed to	Question
Q to Panel	1. What will your party do to ensure national parks will continue to protect nature for future generations?
Answer: Mehreen Faruqi, Spokesperson for the Environment, NSW Greens	Our national parks and wilderness areas are under attack from logging, shooting, grazing, horse riding and development. The Greens have a detailed plan to protect biodiversity in NSW. We look to provide a long-term preservation plan based on science, and not political deals. We have a commitment to increase the amount of protected areas in NSW.
Answer: Robyn Parker, NSW Minister for Environment and Heritage	NSW Government will improve on existing reserves and pass on an environment that future generations can enjoy. We are investing \$40m into parks management. So far we have added 11,600hectares to the reservation system including 3 new national parks and 7 new reserves and the funds to manage them. Logging in national parks is against the law and we have stated publicly that will not be allowing logging in national parks. There is less grazing now in national parks than there was under the previous ALP Government, and our trial is about looking at what impact grazing has so we can make informed decisions for the future. Trial horse riding and bike riding is about providing more diverse experiences for people in our national parks.
Answer: Luke Foley, NSW Shadow Minister for Environment	We would expand the size of the National Parks Estate and build on the legacy of the ALP. Bill McKell, against great opposition, declared the Kosciusko National Park. In its time, the Carr Government delivered 3 million hectares of land into the reservation system. A focus on adding parts of the west into the reserve system is politically controversial, but vital. The ALP will not allow timber cutting, amateur hunting or grazing.
Answer: Dianne Hiles, Greens candidates seat of Sydney	The Greens have a policy to have an overall policy for Australia wide protection.
Q to Panel Question from Robyn, Clarence.	<i>Background:</i> National Parks are some of the most publicly accessible public lands. Although they are essentially declared to protect natural values and increasingly threatened wildlife, national parks also allow all people, indiscriminately, to enjoy an experience or native flora and fauna. Q2. What is your party's position on opening up National Parks to developers, and developing tourist resorts that target the wealthy, compromise conservation values and exclude the majority from those developed areas?
Answer: Mehreen Faruqi	Labor paved the way for commercialisation, the Liberal's are taking that forward. The Greens do not want to commercialise national parks. The Barrenjoey Heads and community opposition are a recent example of this.
Answer: Robyn Parker	There are parts of our reserve system that are managed well, and some that aren't. We can enhance and improve management without impacting biodiversity. There are opportunities for enhancing and diversifying national park experiences without impacting biodiversity.
Answer: Luke Foley	National parks exist fundamentally to protect plants and animals fundamentally. There is a lot of development within parks that should never occur. It may be possible to have some low impact facilities to enhance tourism.

	Job losses from the protection of River Red Gums was promised to be replaced, over time, by tourism jobs. We would not allow tourist resorts, but we do see a place for eco-tourism.
Answer: Dianne Hiles	We need to think about what it is we are protecting when looking at answering this question. If we are talking wilderness, we're talking about creating a wilderness experience. There is no place for this. Tourism in national parks is all at the thin end of the wedge. Once you allow some development, down the track government will take license to allow more development.
Q: State politicians Question from Matt, Bathurst	<i>Background:</i> One positive outcome arising from the hunting in national parks issue was the level of improved community awareness around damage to national parks caused by feral animals. Changes to the Supplementary Pest Control Program from 4 July 2013 mean that the Government must revisit the Game and Feral animal Control Act. This presents a unique opportunity to depoliticise the issue of controlling pest animals and instead, to create strong legislation that addresses the limitations of current strategies.
	Q3. If elected in 2015 can each of the panellists outline their party's policy platform for a comprehensive, whole of government approach to tackling the issue of pest animal control.
Answer: Mehreen Faruqi	We have evidence that the piece meal approach has proven not to work. We must work together and look at the safe, most humane approach based upon science and achieving impacts on populations. There are opportunities for different parts of the Government to work together most closely.
Answer: Robyn Parker	The government is undertaking a review of NSW biosecurity starting at the end of this year to protect our biodiversity from pests and weeds. We should work with a 'tenure blind' approach, work with many strategies and work closely with other agencies. This responsibility will transfer to local land services when that model is created in February 2014. The managing authority for NSW biosecurity will transfer from Catchment Management Authorities and Livestock Health and Pest Authority in Feb 2014 to a new model, Local Land Services.
Answer: Luke Foley	We will be looking to the professionals from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to manage and control pest animals in national parks. We promised in June 2012 that we will not be allowing amateur, recreational hunters in national parks.
Q to Robyn Parker Question from Beth, Armidale	The Government has received recommendations from an Upper House Inquiry into the Management of Public Land that proposed allowing logging in national parks by means of tenure swaps of unlogged National Park land for logged State Forest land so as to ensure the viability of the timber industry.
	Q4. Will the Premier Mr O'Farrell and the Minister for the Environment Robyn Parker guarantee there will be no logging in the National Parks estate in the Pilliga?
Answer	We have ruled out tenure swaps and logging in national parks or tenure swapping. While the logging industry has some issues around sustainability, national parks will not provide the solution. There may be other aspects of the Upper House inquiry that the NSW Government will consider.
Q: State politicians Question from Bev, Gloucester	<i>Background:</i> Successive NSW Governments have recognised the vital need to build the national reserve system. The current 10year establishment plan has recently hit the halfway point and there has been significant progress. However, many bioregion priorities remain under represented in national parks and reserves. NSW has the third lowest percentage area of land in the national reserve system that meet IUCN

	standards, lagging behind all other states bar Queensland and the N.T. Q5. If elected into Government in 2015, would your Government commit to a zero revocation of existing national parks position and take appropriate action to reach national reserve targets and catch up to the rest of our nation? * Robyn Parker departs 6:45pm
Answer: Mehreen Faruqi	We are the only political party with a specific and detailed policy around national parks. We need more and more protected areas to help protect biodiversity against climate change. The current dedicated funds are not enough, we need much, much more. We have a zero revocation policy and in fact a policy to massively increase the amount of protected areas.
Answer: Robyn Parker	We are looking at connecting landscapes and managing them well. In some instances, the purchase of new land that we need to enhance biodiversity protection is expensive. What we will add to the system will add up in value and add up in quality.
Answer: Luke Foley	I will help the chair catch up on some time. My answer is Yes and Yes!
Q to Luke Foley Question from Andrew, Bega	<i>Background:</i> We've seen recent reductions to the size of the marine sanctuaries of NSW to satisfy the wishes of some fishers, despite their broader benefits of improving fish stocks. These are our national parks of the sea. Q6. Will you commit to expanding the network of marine sanctuaries and marine national parks in NSW, including creating a large marine park for Sydney from Wollongong to the Central Coast that has significant areas of marine sanctuaries?
Answer	The ALP delivered six marine parks and this cost us votes, it was controversial and we pushed back against the Shooters and Fishers Party desire to wind them back. The ALP fears marine park protection will get rolled back more and more under a conservative government. When the ALP returns to government, we will build on and seek to advance marine parks. Regarding a large marine park for Sydney, the majority of the community has been convinced about the values of forests, however it is not yet convinced about marine parks. While it would be easy for me to sit in Opposition and promise the marine park, I won't. Labor will look at the issues at the time.
Q to remaining state politicians Question from Keith, Newtown	<i>Background:</i> Horse riding is proposed in five declared wilderness areas. The environmental impacts of horse riding are well known, yet the NSW Government has decided to allow a trial without preparing and putting on public exhibition a detailed environmental impact assessment of these proposals. Q7. What is your party's policy on allowing horse riding in declared wilderness areas? Is a trial of horse riding appropriate under the management principles of the Wilderness Act? Is adaptive management appropriate in a wilderness where it is anticipated that there is a potential for environmental degradation under the trial activity?
Answer: Mehreen Faruqi	Why would we risk it to ruin and damage wilderness to placate a small number of users? We should not be 'trailing' to assess damage that gets done. Greens are against inappropriate horse riding in protected areas, especially wilderness areas. We have recently made several submissions to this effect to the Government.
Answer: Luke Foley	The ALP is against horse riding in national parks and wilderness areas. It is against the principles of the Wilderness Act. None of the principles contemplate people on horses through a wilderness area. While it is put forward as a NSW Government trial that has limits, it is also about honouring its relationships with minority groups that had while it spent years in opposition.

<p>Q to Diane Hiles</p> <p>Question from Jill, Ku-ring-gai</p>	<p><i>Background:</i> Sydney's population is projected to increase by more than 50% to over 7 million by the 2050's. NSWs' population is also expected to increase by more than 50%.</p> <p>Q8. What policy will your party put in place to ensure the effects of population growth and urban sprawl growth do not impact our national parks?</p>
<p>Answer</p>	<p>We need a very strong definition of urban development in order to deliver a robust urban planning policy.</p>
<p>Q to Mehreen Faruqi</p> <p>Question from Kathy, Illawarra.</p>	<p><i>Background:</i> NPWS is given degraded land in the Illawarra Region that is degraded, weed infested, ex-coal land, with no extra funding for staffing to look after such lands. These areas are difficult to manage and revive.</p> <p>Q9. Would you in your role as Minister implement decisions to turn these degraded land areas into public spaces that invite recreational activities that should be restricted from well maintained national parks such as mountain bike riding, trail bike riding, horse riding etc.?</p>
<p>Answer</p>	<p>There are no clear-cut solutions. The primary role of a national parks it to protect biodiversity. We must call for more funding to rehabilitate land and resist the expansion of mining and gas. It is imperative that we take steps to invest in and expand our reserve system.</p>
<p>Q to Dianne Hiles</p> <p>Question from Dorian, NSW</p>	<p><i>Background:</i> 1080 baiting has been used in Australia since 1952. Considered by many land managers to still be an effective feral animal control method, many others in our community believe 1080 to be inhumane and unethical. Greater investment needs to be made by Federal and State Governments to develop alternative and humane strategies to replace this controversial poison.</p> <p>Q10. What is your party's policy on pursuing alternate and more humane solutions to 1080 to help combat invasive species that impact our national parks?</p>
<p>Answer</p>	<p>It can take some species up to 40hours to die from this poison. We must dedicate adequate funding to develop more humane, non toxic and non lethal methods of controlling introduced animals. It is important that substantially more funding is also given to those who will deliver the solution.</p>