



# **Robyn Parker MP**

## **Minister for the Environment**

## **Minister for Heritage**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Friday, 11 October 2013

#### **AUSTRALIAN PLANTBANK OPENS – HOPE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**

Environment Minister Robyn Parker said today's opening of the Australian PlantBank is an investment in hope for future generations.

Ms Parker was joined by Camden MP, Chris Patterson and Wollondilly MP, Jai Rowell at the historic opening by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO Governor of NSW, which precedes the first public open day on Saturday, 12 October 2013 (12noon- 4pm).

Ms Parker said she is excited that NSW will become a focal point for plant conservation in Australia because of the significance of the Australian PlantBank.

"The new facility situated at the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan provides an ever-evolving insight into our nation's flora and I encourage all Australian families and tourists to explore it," Ms Parker said.

"The Australian PlantBank will enthral visitors like never before; it will take visitors on a journey to understand the ins and outs of plants. It has the capacity to make learning about plants trendy."

Mr Patterson said the Australian PlantBank will eventually conserve 100 per cent of the State's flora. Its ultimate goal is to collect, store and study viable seeds or live tissue specimens of all plant species in Australia.

"Australia is ranked fifth in the world for its mega diversity of flora – our wealth includes 25,000 plant species," Mr Patterson said.

"There is a stark reminder at the facility though – the plant species that are extinct in NSW over the past 200 years are named and displayed on little grave markers.

"Australia is home to 14 per cent of threatened plant species globally and almost a quarter of that 14 per cent is in danger of becoming extinct. In NSW alone, 10 per cent of the 5,400 species of plants are threatened or endangered."

Mr Rowell said the Australian PlantBank can conserve plant material using cryo-storage techniques.

"This involves storing small sections of plant tissue long-term in liquid nitrogen which suspends a plant's metabolism and greatly increases the length of time it can be

stored. This also alleviates the problem where species do not produce seed or produce seed that cannot be stored effectively," Mr Rowell said.

"The Australian PlantBank will become a major centre of plant science for NSW, Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region and will give the public access to plant science and scientists at the forefront of conservation research."

Ms Parker said the Australian PlantBank will provide a valuable visitor learning experience for students.

"Connected to the school curriculum, children will learn about plants, conservation and plant related scientific research; while university students studying botany and plant-related sciences will be able to interact with scientists." Ms Parker said.

The building cost \$19.8 million with the NSW state government contributing \$15.5 million, the remainder being generously donated by the Foundation and Friends of the Botanic Gardens, the Ian Potter Foundation, HSBC Bank Australia, BHP Billiton Illawarra Coal, TransGrid, and many other donors.