



# **Robyn Parker MP**

## **Minister for the Environment**

## **Minister for Heritage**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Sunday, 13 April 2014

#### **EXTINCT MAMMALS TO RETURN TO NSW NATIONAL PARKS**

Environment Minister Robyn Parker today announced the NSW Government's intention to return mammal species that have been extinct in the state for almost a century, to national parks.

"Today is about recognising that not enough has been done to turn back the tide of mammal extinction in NSW," Ms Parker said.

"Sadly, Australia has one of the worst mammal extinction records in the world, and NSW has been at the epicentre of this crisis. Allowing almost 1,000 species to become extinct or be threatened with extinction in the last century has been a failure of leadership.

"This initiative will mark the first time that mammals considered 'extinct' in NSW would be successfully returned to a national park. We are attempting to bring back up to eight mammal species – including the bilby, numbat, and bridled nail-tail wallaby.

"The reintroduction of these species is important to our environmental future, because I believe our children should know bilbies aren't just a chocolate alternative to the Easter bunny.

"This program will be delivered through an innovative partnership between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and non-government organisations.

"The initiative will feature the reintroduction of mammals into large feral-predator free areas protected by special conservation fences.

"This approach has been used on a smaller scale in other states. The creation of predator exclusion fences for threatened species restoration was recommended, with bi-partisan support, in the 2013 Australian Senate Committee Report "*Effectiveness of threatened species and ecological communities' protection in Australia*".

"We expect to trial three areas of approximately 4,000 hectares that will be embedded within 250,000 hectares of national parks. These will not be zoos, but very large areas and the animals are wild. Longer term, having secured wild mammal populations in these feral-free areas, we hope to establish populations across these national parks.

"This equates to less than 0.15 per cent of the approximately seven million hectares of national park estate in NSW.

“Central to this initiative is the construction of special conservation fencing that will protect the mammal population from foxes and feral cats. Conservative estimates consider over 15 million feral cats exist across the country.

“Last year we announced the *Saving our Species* initiative that aims to protect NSW’s most threatened species at risk of disappearing from the wild forever.

“A scientific review of previous efforts made clear that urgent improvements are required to prevent further species loss.

“This new initiative will also support our efforts to recover remaining threatened mammals through improving the effectiveness of feral cat control and providing additional highly protected areas for species like Mallee Fowl and Bolams Mouse.

“For decades the approach of Governments has been to add species to a threatened list and fund recovery actions however we are unable to quantify if previous actions over the past decade have been effective.

“By restoring some of Australia’s iconic mammals, we are focussed on restoring the systems which produce our fertile soils, purify our drinking water, pollinate our crops and maintain all of the other natural systems the rest of our economy relies upon.

“This is a tangible investment in the wellbeing of our state’s environment and will help restore the balance of ecosystems where these mammals they once lived.

“There are no quick fixes to these complex issues. This is a long term commitment with initial partnership agreements spanning at least the next decade and subject to rigorous ongoing scientific monitoring and evaluation.

“Additional funding will be made available for this program, on top of the extra \$4.8 million announced by the NSW Government in December for threatened species programs.

“The idea for this project came to the NSW Government directly from an unsolicited proposal by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. We are calling for all interested conservation organisations with the knowledge, experience and passion to join the government on this exciting program.

“There will be an open contestable process and the NSW Government will be looking for best value proposals from potential conservation partners.”

Applications will be assessed against established evaluation criteria and later in the year a short list of possible partners will be asked to provide more detailed proposals. It is hoped that finalised agreements will be in place before the end of 2014.

For further details visit: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/savingourspecies](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/savingourspecies).