



The Hon Andrew Stoner MP
Deputy Premier of NSW
Minister for Trade and Investment
Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 12 April 2012

**RED TAPE REMOVED FROM
PERPETUAL LEASE CONVERSIONS**

The NSW Government will streamline the perpetual lease conversion process, which will slash red tape while protecting lands that possess high conservation values, Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner, Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson and Minister for the Environment Robyn Parker announced today.

Mr Stoner said the changes to the perpetual lease conversion process will remove many of the regulatory burdens placed on farmers.

“This reform is about making it easier for farmers to manage their land without the burden of unnecessary red tape,” Mr Stoner said.

“With key environmental protection outcomes now covered by the Native Vegetation Act and the Threatened Species Conservation Act, the time has come to remove the duplication of regulatory instruments which have restricted productive use of farmer’s land.”

Ms Hodgkinson said that since 2004 the former Labor Government had converted almost 9,000 perpetual leases to freehold and many had land management covenants attached to title.

“Unlike Labor, the NSW Liberals & Nationals have confidence in our primary producers as competent, professional land managers and are rewarding their efforts through greater flexibility and reduced regulatory imposts,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“It is now more appropriate to encourage incentive-based arrangements, such as conservation agreements, rather than enforcement of covenants.

“In future, covenants to protect native vegetation will not be generally placed on leases converted to freehold unless the land has been assessed as having high conservation values,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

Department of Primary Industries data demonstrates there are around 1,030 remaining leases where covenants will now not generally be required on conversion.

Ms Parker said as leases are converted to freehold the environmental safeguards will be provided by the Native Vegetation Act and the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

“There are some 342 leases that are on particularly sensitive land, typically land adjacent to national park or wilderness areas,” Ms Parker said.

“In these cases, conversion to freehold will be considered on a case by case basis with covenants still likely to be applied.”

Ms Hodgkinson said holders of perpetual leases are encouraged to continue applying to convert to freehold and all new applications will be considered against the new agreement.

“The perpetual lease conversion program was introduced by the previous government in recognition that leaseholders owned the majority equity in the land while the Crown retained minimal equity,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

Ms Parker said the Government had made \$2 million funding available through the NSW Environmental Trust to support landholders committed to conservation on private land.

“While our national parks system is vital, the NSW Government believes it’s just as important to work with landholders and the community to protect and improve habitat on private land,” Ms Parker said.

“These funds do just that, and will help fund more landholders to improve and conserve the environment on their own land.”