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# Test for green minister

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The new Minister for the Environment, Mr Hartcher, is facing a tough challenge and he knows it.

From his predecessor, Mr Tim Moore, he has inherited the dubious privilege of being figurehead for a proposed package of environmental legislation damned as pro-industry and anti-environment by conservationists, academics, scientists and even some national parks personnel.

The ALP has rejected it unequivocally, as have two Independents who warned the Premier that there would be "blood on the floor" if he pursued it.

On the other side is the pro-logging, pro-development lobby with a raft of politicians behind it — Wal Murray, Ian Causley, Garry West and Robert Webster — determined that preserving jobs, livelihoods and families comes first.

A month into his new portfolio, Mr Hartcher, 45, says he is not intimidated.

"I take the personal view that

resource security legislation is important and I don't walk away from that. People need jobs, they've got to eat, they've got families to look after ...

"But I also don't walk away from that it is essential that we ... protect as much as we can of old growth forests and I don't want to add to the world's list of endangered species.

"I made it clear when I was appointed minister that I would see myself as the one person in Cabinet to argue the environmental cause. That means that if everyone else is going to come at it from a different position ... it's up to me to put forward the green position.

"They [the pro-development ministers] don't intimidate me. The opposition to environmental protection being a significant priority doesn't intimidate me."

Mr Hartcher, who says he has the same philosophical position as Mr Moore, is proud of his environmental credentials.

His first public act, he said, was when he was 22 and he played an



Mr Hartcher ... "up to me".

active part in a campaign to save a red gum forest from sandmining at North Entrance — culminating 20 years later in its becoming part of the one national park proclaimed by the Greiner Government.

Mr Causley recently called the National Parks and Wildlife Service a "subversive" organisation trying to undermine government decisions. Does Mr Hartcher agree?

"Certainly not. I regard it as a good service and I'm determined to maintain its integrity ..."

But what about the fact that many in the service are unhappy with the proposed legislation?

"If he [the NPWS director, Mr Bill Gillooly] was to advise me of that ... that he regarded it as inconsistent with the running of the service, I'd take it to Cabinet. I'd be very interested to sit down with him and work out why ..."

The Government, he said, did not regard its package as "take it or leave it". It was still open to public comment, and it was possible that the life of the current endangered fauna legislation — introduced by the Opposition — could be extended beyond its December expiry date.

And what if jobs take prominence in NSW over the environment, how would he feel?

"I have a collective responsibility to the Government which everyone has. I'm not going to be a person who tries to bucket your own Government."