



## **Our Mission**

Biodiversity underpins sustainable environments and economies. It is vital for productivity, human health and human wellbeing. In this International Year of Biodiversity, it is crucial that all political parties develop strong policies and commitment to address the ongoing loss of Australian species and the degradation of our ecosystems.

The Boobook Declaration has been signed by all of Australia's leading environmental organisations who represent over 200,000 supporters in Australia.

<http://www.boobook.org.au/declaration.htm>

## **Questions from Supporters**

Earlier this year the Boobook Declaration Steering Committee invited your party to send a representative to a biodiversity policy forum to present your party's policy commitments for the next term of government. As spokespeople were not able to settle on a date for the forum, we have instead compiled a list of questions from supporter organisations. As a group, we ask that you respond to questions put by signatories to this declaration, and commit to strong and decisive action to conserve species and ecosystems through the term of the next Australian Government.

In recognition that Australia has one of the worst records on biodiversity loss (including the highest rate of mammal extinctions), and that all indicators show that Australian biodiversity is in crisis, we are keen to hear how your party plans to address Australia's biodiversity crisis.

Our questions are as follows:

## **Biodiversity Strategies and Funding**

1. Will you sign the Boobook Declaration? Please outline the reasons behind your decision.
2. Given that a poll conducted by WWF and ACF showed 3 out of 4 people support increasing the share of the nation's budget currently spent on nature conservation, what plans does your party have to expand programs such as Caring for Our Country, and what percentage of the Federal budget do you think needs to be committed to biodiversity conservation?
3. How would your party ensure that the responsibility for biodiversity is clearly defined between the three levels of government, that the management of the biodiversity crisis is well coordinated, and that performance against objectives are clearly defined and monitored over the long term?

And how would your government recognise and support the contribution of the community, including environmental organisations, in advocacy for better protection of biodiversity through reform of laws, policies and programs

## **Effective National Environment Legislation**

4. Is your party committed to acting on the reforms recommended by Dr Alan Hawke's review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, including improvements to crucial elements of public interest participation, better protection for critical habitats and strong fisheries assessment processes? Will your party commit to establishing "Ecosystems of National Significance" as a new protected matter under the EPBC, and also ensure vulnerable ecological communities trigger the Act? Will you commit appropriate investment to fast track the establishment of accurate National Environmental Accounts?
5. Can your party ensure more effective assessments of the impacts of all major, natural resource-based projects on biodiversity? For example, how would you ensure a comprehensive assessment is undertaken for a project burning woodchips for energy production at both Eden and Orbst?
6. Evidence has shown that state regulations and laws are often inadequate for protecting of biodiversity, for example in the case of Victoria's Brown Mountain. How will you ensure the states protect our endangered species and will you intervene in cases where there is likely to be long-term environmental damage as a result of state mismanagement?

## **Supporting Biodiversity in a Changing Climate**

7. There are a plethora of international reports including the World Bank Report "Convenient solutions to an Inconvenient Truth" substantiating the critical role of large intact natural systems in climate change mitigation AND adaptation. Substantial reports exist on the sequestration capabilities of Australia's forests and outback. To date this issue been completely absent from climate responses, will your party take up the issue of how nature conservation can positively contribute to Australia's carbon reduction as well as assist in building ecosystem and species resilience? What plans does your party have to provide pathways for climate adaptation for Australia's threatened species, and how much funding will your party commit to providing avenues for climate adaptation?
8. Connectivity Conservation or landscape scale conservation is an internationally endorsed approach to address habitat fragmentation and provide species the best chance of adaptation. It is also an inclusive approach to conservation, which can cross many land tenures and involve all components of Australian society. Will your party promote the concept and provide adequate funding for the major community effort required to realise large scale biodiversity 'corridors'?

## **Threatened Species Recovery**

9. Do you support fully funding recovery plans for all legally recognised threatened species and ecosystems? If not, how would you ensure recovery of threatened species? Do you support threat abatement plans for all legally recognised threatened species and ecosystems? If not, how would you manage threats such as land clearing, invasive plants and animals and long-line fishing?
10. Will your party commit to improve the status threatened species through adequate funding of on-ground community action, research and monitoring?

## **Conserving Our Native Forests**

11. Do you accept that continuing land clearing and logging of Australian native forests makes a substantial contribution to our greenhouse gas emissions? Given that a halt of these activities could reduce our greenhouse emissions by about 16% , will you move to control these activities in the next term of the Australian Government?
12. Will you commit to finalising the transition of the logging industry out of publicly owned native forests and into the plantation estate before the end of 2011? Will you revise the decision to allow the burning of native forests to be classed as renewable energy and thereby gaining RECs and competing with sustainable renewable energy sources?

## **Action on Key Environmental Issues**

13. Australia is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and has signed on to the target of all nations to the establishment and maintenance by 2010 for terrestrial and by 2012 for marine areas of comprehensive, effectively managed, and ecologically representative national and regional systems of protected areas. How do you plan to honour this global undertaking? The National Reserve System is our principal mechanism to ensure adequate sanctuaries for nature conservation and at the same time support other values such as water catchments, tourism and recreation. Will your party continue to support this vital program, and given its centrality, at what level of funding?
14. If elected, what will you do to stop state governments driving development and population growth into acknowledged environmentally sensitive areas, especially urban fringe areas such as Macedon Ranges in Victoria and the Swan Coastal Plain around Perth? Where development in these areas compromises high biodiversity and conservation values, or increases the risks associated with development of fire-prone areas, what will you do to provide protection for such areas at Federal level?

15. With (i) invasive species a major and growing threat to biodiversity, (ii) the recognition by the Beale review of Australian quarantine that environmental biosecurity capacity lags well behind that of business-focused biosecurity and (iii) the finding by the Hawke review of the EPBC Act that there are major gaps in laws regulating invasive species, what would your government do in terms of law reform and program funding to reduce the invasive species threat to biodiversity?
16. Empirical evidence has shown that indigenous involvement, including real jobs, in land and sea management not only has major environmental benefits in Australia but has very significant social and health benefits such as less substance abuse, domestic violence, crime and higher school attendance and general health and well being. It is a landscape of hope and a genuine good news story. Will your government continue support of this important program and at what level?

Please send your answers to [info@boobook.org.au](mailto:info@boobook.org.au) or contact Samantha on 0447 484 067. We look forward to receiving your responses by COB Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> of August so that they may be posted on our website and circulated to supporters.

Kind Regards,

Samantha Vine,  
*On behalf of the Boobook Declaration Steering Committee*