



Election 2010.

Australian Biodiversity Policies - Commitments for the next term of government

Biodiversity underpins sustainable environments and economies.

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 over 70 groups, including all of Australia's leading environmental organisations, representing over 200,000 supporters in Australia <http://www.boobook.org.au/declaration.htm>.

In the lead up to the 2010 Federal Election we asked the major political parties to respond to questions put by signatories to the Boobook declaration, and commit to strong and decisive action to conserve species and ecosystems. Summaries of the major parties' responses are given below.

| Boobook Supporter Questions* | Labor response * | Greens response* | Coalition response* |
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| Biodiversity Strategies and Funding | | | |
| 1. Will you sign the Boobook Declaration? Please outline the reasons behind your decision. | <p>Acknowledge threats faced & support the intent of improving Australia's response</p> <p>Have introduced a range of policies and programs that give biodiversity the attention it deserves including;</p> | <p>Have put full support behind the Boobook declaration.</p> <p>Senators Bob Brown and Rachel Siewert moved that the Senate:</p> <p>(a) recognises 2010 as the United Nations' International Year of Biodiversity;</p> | <p>Plan to focus on practical outcomes rather than grand gestures</p> <p>Proud of legacy protecting threatened species</p> <p>Put in place recovery plans for</p> |

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| | <p>The \$2 billion investment in Caring for our Country. The \$180 million investment in the National Reserve System program. The \$20 million per annum in the National Environment Research Program which will focus exclusively on biodiversity research. The revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy. The recently announced National Green Corridors Plan.</p> <p>Considers existing policies appropriate responses to the issue. Consequently, Labor does not support the specific funding arrangements in the Boobook Declaration, nor the specific institutional arrangements it proposes.</p> | <p>(b) supports the Boobook Declaration, which has been written by an alliance of 40 environment groups to highlight Australia's worsening biodiversity crisis; and (c) notes the Boobook Declaration's call on the Australian Government [see declaration]</p> <p>Both the ALP and Coalition opposed the motion</p> | <p>threatened marine species (whales, seabirds, seals, turtles, sharks)</p> <p>In the interest of fiscal rectitude, can not commit to immediately pursue new initiatives as outlined in the declaration</p> |
| <p>2. 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?</p> | <p>Caring for our Country (CfoC) budget more than \$2 billion to 2013.</p> <p>Ensured it is an ongoing program</p> <p>Funding reviewed through the</p> | <p>Recognise we need a significant increase in research capacity</p> <p>Caring for our Country has devastated regional capacity and undermined community engagement</p> | |

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| | annual budget process with future years_ funding identified in the forward estimates. | Support the urgent call to action in the Boobook Declaration, and have called on the Government to act upon the recommendations in the Declaration. | |
| 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? how would your government recognise and support the contribution of the community, in advocating for better protection of biodiversity. | <p>Through implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy.</p> <p>Value the role of community organisations in advocacy for better biodiversity protection.</p> <p>Provides support to community organisations for their basic costs through a program of Grants for Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations.</p> <p>Have significantly increased total funding and exclusion of advocacy activities for this program.</p> | | <p>Established Federal environment legislation for the first time in Australia's history</p> <p>Will continue to give highest priority commitment to protect threatened species at domestic, regional and International levels</p> |
| 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? Will your party commit to | <p>Will consider the recommendations of the Hawke review carefully, including those regarding Ecosystems of National Significance.</p> <p>\$18 million over four years to</p> | <p>Have a strong record of advocating for changes to the EPBC Act to strengthen its objectives and mechanisms</p> <p>Support implementing the recommendations of the Hawke</p> | <p>Previous Coalition Government introduced the EPBC Act, establishing Federal environment legislation for the first time in Australia's history</p> |

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| <p>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?</p> | <p>establish a National Plan for Environmental Information - first step toward long term reform of Australia’s environmental information base, and sets us on the path for a system of credible national environmental accounts.</p> | <p>review that will meet our clearly stated concerns, including ensuring vulnerable ecological communities as a trigger .</p> <p>Greens’ Senator Rachel Siewert initiated a Senate Inquiry into the operation of the EPBC Act which also made a number of recommendations to strengthen the Act.</p> | <p>Will require peer-review scientific evidence of threats to biodiversity hotspots and make available to affected communities before making decisions about development.</p> |
| <p>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?</p> | <p>The Australian Government’s role is confined to the protection of matters of ‘national environmental significance’.</p> <p>A project involving the burning of woodchips for energy production would only fall within Australian Government jurisdiction if it was likely to have a significant impact on matters protected by the EPBC.</p> <p>Federal Labor’s record demonstrates all proposals within federal jurisdiction are rigorously assessed and specific advice, including all public comments, is provided to the</p> | <p>The Greens are strong advocates for more effective assessment of the impacts on biodiversity of natural resource--based projects. We oppose the burning of woodchips for energy production.</p> <p>Senator Bob Brown, in court for the judgment in the Brown Mountain case, called the judgment "breakthrough territory for the whole nation" and “a green letter day for the forests</p> <p>Support the EPBC Act being used to protect endangered species</p> | |

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| | Minister. | when state governments fail to act. | |
| 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? | Will ensure that it always administers Commonwealth laws and responsibilities with diligence and rigour. In cases where impacts on endangered species are considered under Commonwealth law, Federal Labor will maintain a high standard of regulatory protection, as it has to date. | | Will work cooperatively with impacted communities through Bioregional advisory panels to develop socio-economic impact statements for relevant biodiversity hotspots |

Supporting Biodiversity in a Changing Climate

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| 7. 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 | <p>A re-elected Labor Government will invest \$10 million in a National Green Corridors plan, to build the resilience of our environment to a changing climate.</p> <p>Will work with 56 regional natural resource management groups to develop a National Green Corridors plan to prepare for climate change</p> <p>Farmers will be encouraged to</p> | <p>First and most importantly seek to minimise further climate change by Australia reducing emissions by 40% relative to 1990, by 2020, as part of a global agreement to try to constrain global temperature increases to less than 2 degrees.</p> <p>If, globally, we fail to constrain global warming, there is a high risk that all the efforts we now make to protect habitat,</p> | <p>The Coalition's Direct Action policy is ready to be implemented with a detailed & costed plan to reduce emissions by 5 per cent by 2020</p> <p>Will fund standing Green Army of 15,000 people (supplemented by volunteers) to tackle local & regional environmental priorities</p> <p>Funding of emissions abatement through carbon sequestration and</p> |
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| adaptation? | participate on a voluntary basis through incentives such as stewardship payments, capital grants | reduce fragmentation and remove existing threats, will have been in vain. We are disappointed that the BooBook Declaration does not clearly make this critical and obvious point. | planting of 20 million trees |
| <p>8. Connectivity Conservation or landscape scale conservation is an internationally endorsed approach to address habitat fragmentation and provide species the best chance of adaptation. Will your party promote the concept and provide adequate funding for the major community effort required to realise large scale biodiversity 'corridors'?</p> | <p>Will work in consultation with the community, through regional natural resource management groups, to develop the climate change adaptation plan on a continental scale.</p> <p>National Green Corridors Plan - developed by an advisory group - will consider climate change impacts and identify critical linkages in the landscape to allow the migration of species and will also aim to protect natural stores of carbon in native ecosystems to minimise our greenhouse gas emissions.</p> | <p>Want to end native forest logging and broadscale land clearing provide incentives ensure that new carbon sink forests are established in ways which maximise biodiversity conservation co-benefits mitigate the existing drivers of biodiversity</p> | <p>Support 85 million tonnes per annum abatement of CO2 through soil carbons by 2020</p> <p>Once in a century rejuvenation of soils & farmland through Emissions Reduction Fund</p> <p>The fund will possibly support forestry projects, estimated potential of 12-15 million tonnes CO2 annual abatement from long rotation plantations & wood waste by 2020</p> |
| Threatened Species Recovery | | | |
| <p>9. Do you support fully funding recovery plans for all legally recognised threatened species and ecosystems? If not, how would you ensure recovery</p> | <p>The Gillard Labor Government remains committed to the development and implementation of recovery plans as</p> | <p>The Greens' Biological Diversity policy specifically calls for the funding and enforcing of recovery plans for threatened and</p> | <p>The previous Coalition Government set up Natural Heritage Trust in 1997 to help restore the natural environment &</p> |

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| <p>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?</p> | <p>recommended by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC)</p> <p>Will continue to work to implement threat abatement plans and to proactively work to identify and respond to key threats to our precious biodiversity.</p> | <p>endangered species and ecological communities.</p> <p>Know flora and fauna need protection from processes such as land-clearing, inappropriate development, disease and feral plants and animals.</p> <p>\$130 million Plan to tackle Northern Australia's mammal extinction crisis by establishing a Northern Australia Mammal Protection Program within DEWHA</p> | <p>fund community projects at a local level.</p> <p>\$5.1 billion invested</p> <p>Pests & weeds controlled over 15 million hectares</p> <p>8 million hectares of wetlands protected</p> <p>Supported 800,000 volunteers</p> <p>Helped protect 1.4 million hectares of threatened species habitat</p> |
| <p>10. Will your party commit to improve the status threatened species through adequate funding of on-ground community action, research and monitoring?</p> | <p>Provides funding for action to protect threatened species and their habitat through Caring for our Country.</p> <p>Biodiversity research is the focus of the newly established National Environment Research Program, which is funded to approximately \$20 million per annum.</p> | <p>Deeply committed to adequate funding of on-ground community action, research and monitoring</p> <p>Have been highly critical of Caring for Our Country program-fear it will undo much of the progress made over the last three decades in conservation and natural resource management</p> | <p>Proud of legacy and will continue commitment to protect threatened species</p> |

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?

Recognises both the environmental importance of our native forest resources.

Believe in a balanced and sustainable approach to native forest management - includes conservation and sustainable management of Australia's forest resources, as well as maintaining support for forest industries and jobs into the future.

Recognise the essential role played by mature forest ecosystems in the wildlife habitat, carbon storage and water supply.

Greens policy calls for an end to the destruction of old-growth forests and other forests of high conservation value.

Previous Coalition Government: Protected more than 2.9 million hectares of forest under Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs)

Honored 2004 election commitment to increase reserves of Tasmania's old growth forests while preserving jobs timber workers

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?

Remain highly supportive of Regional Forest Agreements and will continue to strongly support them.

Treatment of wood-fired generation under the enhanced RET is unchanged from the previous Mandatory Renewable Energy Target - wood waste and energy crops (which includes plantation biomass) are eligible renewable energy sources under the enhanced RET scheme.

Want to see assistance for workers and companies to shift from unsustainable native forest logging to plantation based forestry.

Policy is to prohibit the use of native forests for electricity generation and we have consistently opposed the burning of native forests to be allowed to be classed as renewable energy. Senator Bob Brown has been a tireless campaigner for our forests.

Announced Tasmanian Community Forest agreement in 2005 to supplement RFA adding 170,000 hectares of old growth to reserves (totaling over 1 million hectares) & established a Forest Conservation Fund and protected 45,600 hectares of old- including giant trees in the Styx & Florentine.

New Coalition will continue commitment to protect environmentally significant land

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?

Since coming to Government have added 3.4 million hectares to Australia's conservation estate, including the two million hectare Warddeken and Djelk Indigenous Protected Areas in Arnhem Land. The National Reserve System program has \$180 million committed to it over five years to 2013.

Committed to establishing a representative system of marine protected areas in Commonwealth waters by 2012.

Will release a draft plan for the South West Marine Bioregion, and finalise the remainder of the marine bioregional plans -North, Northwest and East - by December 2011.

Have released a Marine Reserves policy which commits to ensuring: a minimum of 30% of the marine reserves established through bio- regional planning are determined 'no take' zones, that is, no extractive uses, such as petroleum exploration or operations and fishing;;

identification of the "no take" areas must be based on science and representative of essential ecosystems;; and accelerated establishment of large-scale marine reserves, such as the Coral Sea

Previous Coalitions Governments \$ 3.1 billion investment provided real & tangible protection to our unique landscape. And supported over 800,000 volunteers & thousands of NHT projects.

Treated more than 400,000 hectares of soil for salinity, erosion & acidity

8 million hectares of wetlands protected

Helped protect 1.4 million hectares of threatened species habitat

In the interest of fiscal rectitude, can not commit to immediately pursue new initiatives

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| <p>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 values, or increases the risks associated with fire-prone areas?</p> | <p>Actively promoting a shift from a traditional project-by-project approval regime, which is essentially reactive, to a more strategic approach to biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>Strategic assessments have been initiated to respond to urban growth pressures in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, and discussions are now underway with other States and Territories for further strategic assessments. Strategic assessments were never used by the Coalition when in government.</p> | <p>Believe in a sustainable population that needs to be managed so as to not have a detrimental impact on our environment.</p> <p>Believe that the sensitivity of the environment needs to be a factor in population size and urban development.</p> | |
| <p>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</p> | <p>The Government will respond to the recommendations of the Hawke Review this year.</p> <p>Funding for reducing the ecological impact of invasive species is available under Caring for our Country. The largest single investment under this program has been a \$19 million contribution to reducing the ecological impact of feral camels in Central Australia.</p> | <p>Senator Rachel Siewert has been active in the parliament raising concerns about invasive species.</p> <p>Recognise gaps in the laws and will work to implement the recommendations of the various reviews to ensure we have a more robust legal framework to reduce invasive species threat to biodiversity.</p> <p>Understand adequate funding</p> | <p>Pests & weeds controlled over 15 million hectares under previous Coalition government</p> |

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| <p>regulating invasive species, what would your government do in terms of law reform and program funding to reduce the invasive species threat to biodiversity?</p> | | <p>must be provided and will continue to advocate for increased funding in this area.</p> | |
| <p>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?</p> | <p>Programs that will continue under a re-elected Labor Government:</p> <p>Over \$160 million of Caring for our Country funds the following Indigenous specific programs over five years:</p> <p>Working on Country - \$90 million.</p> <p>Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) - \$50 million.</p> <p>Indigenous Emissions Trading (IET) - \$10 million.</p> <p>Traditional Marine Resource Uses in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) - \$10 million.</p> | <p>Committed to enhancing the involvement of Indigenous people in land management.</p> <p>Believe Indigenous understanding of land management is unparalleled - there is all the expertise there and we need to value it properly and we need to put more money into supporting development and training.</p> <p>Understand the value to the land and to communities of land management programs</p> | <p>Strongly supported declaration of the Kalka-Pipyatjara Indigenous Protected Area in April 2010 - a testament to the coalition's value of Indigenous Land Management</p> <p>Believe IPAs are an excellent example of how practical land management can deliver social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits</p> <p>Strongly believe conservation initiatives incorporating Indigenous lands should ensure proper consultation of affected communities - do not want repeat of Queensland's Wild Rivers legislation that 'would have severely restricted the capacity of Indigenous communities in the Wild Rivers area to use, develop and control their land'.</p> |

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| | <p>Specific achievements since Labor came to power :</p> <p>14 Indigenous Protected Areas covering 3,021,089 ha added to the National Reserve System.</p> <p>66 Working on Country projects approved across Australia.</p> <p>Approximately 630 Indigenous ranger positions approved - double Labor's 2007 election commitment.</p> <p>\$10 million over five years to facilitate participation of Indigenous land managers in carbon markets (Indigenous Fire Management in Northern Australia & Indigenous Carbon Market Participation)</p> | | <p>Previous Coalition committed to fund Indigenous rangers in three remote communities - will strongly support endeavors to increase Indigenous employment in and around land conservation opportunities.</p> <p>Committed to increasing opportunities for Indigenous communities to engage in the real economy & address social issues consistent with the objective of Closing the Gap.</p> |
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* This table provides a summary of party responses. To see the full party response and Boobook supporter questions visit www.boobook.org.au/whats_new.htm