WWF-AUSTRALIA’S POLICIES FOR THE 2017 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ELECTION

PROTECTING WA’S UNIQUE WILDLIFE AND THE PLACES WE LOVE
Western Australia boasts a wealth of environmental wonders, unique wildlife, and bountiful natural resources. The south west, revered internationally for its biodiversity, is a sanctuary for many threatened and unique species. The Kimberley is one of the Earth’s great natural and cultural treasures, featuring some of the most extraordinary landscapes and wildlife in Australia.

The next WA Government should commit to protecting our unique biodiversity, the ecosystems that provide support for all Western Australians and the places we love, so that we leave a healthy, diverse, clean environment for future generations.

WWF-Australia is calling on all candidates and political parties contesting the 2017 Western Australian state election to stand up and save our species and safeguard our natural environment by committing to the following policies.
1. PROTECTING OUR PRECIOUS WILDLIFE AND HABITAT
Over the past 100 years, 11 native mammals have become extinct in Western Australia. More than 30 species are currently at serious risk of extinction. These include some of Western Australia’s most iconic species, such as the numbat, chuditch, quokka, western ground parrot, Gilbert’s potoroo, Carnaby’s cockatoo, Baudin’s black cockatoo, black-flanked rock-wallaby, golden bandicoot, and woylie. Habitat loss and introduced predators such as foxes and feral cats are the major reasons for the decline of native mammals, birds and reptiles. Those most at risk are small and medium sized animals. Further extinctions seem inevitable unless we properly address these threats.

**To reverse this extinction decline, the next West Australian Government should:**

1) **Upscale Western Shield by committing to a $50 million program over four years and provide additional funding for species reintroduction, targeted scientific research and broad scale implementation of feral cat control.**

Western Shield has been recognised nationally and internationally as an effective conservation program, saving an estimated 800,000 threatened mammals, birds and reptiles and ensuring the ongoing survival of at least 53 species. The program is comprised of scientific research, species translocation and targeted baiting. A number of species, such as the woylie and numbat once widely distributed across Australia now continue to survive in the southwest due to the Western Shield program.

2) **Implement existing threatened species recovery plans with the commitment of $50 million over four years to fully implement the numbat, chuditch, quokka, western ground parrot, Gilbert’s potoroo, Carnaby’s cockatoo, Baudin’s black cockatoo, black-flanked rock-wallaby, golden bandicoot and woylie recovery plans by 2021.**

The Department of Parks and Wildlife have prepared ‘recovery plans’ which identify the practical and achievable management actions necessary to stop them becoming extinct, such as controlling predators, reintroductions and protection and management of key habitat. The recovery plans for ten of the state’s most threatened, iconic species should be fully implemented.
1. PROTECTING OUR PRECIOUS WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

Establish a Western Australian Indigenous Ranger program

The next WA Government should:
Commit $50 million to establish a Western Australian community-based Indigenous ranger program, with an initial focus on the Kimberley and south west Western Australia, by 2021.

The next WA Government has the opportunity to establish a state-based Indigenous ranger program to complement the existing Working on Country Indigenous Ranger program - a stand-out success for conservation and Indigenous community development and wellbeing.

Establishing a WA community-based Indigenous Ranger program would:
- Ensure ongoing and meaningful employment for Indigenous people in remote and regional WA;
- Provide support for the interests of Indigenous people in caring for Country;
- Continue the delivery of environmental services of benefit to the state, including the management of cultural sites, fire regimes, biodiversity, feral animals, weeds, poaching and illegal trade, pollution and climate change impacts.

Protect the Swan Coastal Plain

The next WA Government should:
1) Create a minimum of 200,000 Ha networks of new nature reserves across and surrounding the Perth and Peel regions to protect its unique flora and fauna and provide amenity and recreation to residents, and commit $30 million per annum to fund the management of these reserves.

1) Identify, protect and manage all significant remnants of Endangered Banksia Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain ecological community (as defined by the listing under the EPBC Act).

The Swan Coastal Plain supports significant biodiversity, including the Endangered Banksia Woodland community. This landscape has been heavily cleared and modified for urban and agricultural development and much of the remaining biodiversity occurs in small and heavily fragmented patches. The greatest threat currently is clearing for an expanding city. Key to protecting biodiversity on the coastal plain is strategic and sustainable urban planning.
2. STRONG LAWS TO PROTECT THE WILDLIFE AND PLACES WE LOVE
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WA needs laws that provide a strong emphasis on protection and enhancement of biodiversity

Biodiversity Conservation Act does not achieve this. West Australians want more protection for their unique biodiversity, not less. While WWF acknowledges the Government’s attempts to modernise the old and outdated biodiversity laws, the new Biodiversity Conservation Act should be urgently amended to bring it in line with contemporary biodiversity conservation legislation.

**The next WA Government should implement the following amendments to the Biodiversity Conservation Act:**

1) Improve the objects of the Act by clearly assigning obligation and responsibility to the Minister and those charged with its administration to promote and advance biodiversity conservation in the State and prevent human-induced extinctions.

2) Mandate for the preparation and regular review of a State Biodiversity Conservation Strategy that is binding on all government agencies.

3) Establish a statutory independent Scientific Advisory Committee to advise the Minister on listing. The listing process should be time bound and all recommendations on listings should be made public once the Minister has made a decision. Third party appeal should be available.

4) Require periodic evaluation and public reporting on trends in the state and condition of WA’s biodiversity and effectiveness of management interventions every five years.

5) Removal of the provision in the Act that allows for the Minister to approve the ‘taking’ of a threatened species (even if it results in it becoming extinct).

6) Improved transparency by restricting the extent of Ministerial and CEO discretion to only essential circumstances.

7) Adopt all IUCN categories and assessment guidelines and ensure that the sole criteria for listing should be the threatened status of the species.

8) Remove static penalties and replace with indexed-linked penalty-units; include corporate penalties and criminal penalties.

9) Jail terms should be included in the penalties for violations and the Act should be made binding on the Crown.

10) In addition, the relationship between the new Biodiversity Conservation Act, the Conservation and Land Management Act, and the Environmental Protection Act needs to be explicitly provided for under all three Acts. If not, there is a risk of inconsistent administration and a failure to protect the environment.
3. INCREASED MARINE PROTECTION WITHIN THE GREAT KIMBERLEY MARINE PARK
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**Establishing a Great Kimberley Marine Park with Indigenous joint management would create a global icon in the far north, of equal status to Ningaloo Reef and the Great Barrier Reef**

More than 20,000 humpback whales migrate to the Kimberley’s near-pristine waters from Antarctica each year to calve, and six of the world’s seven species of marine turtle call this region home. Only about five per cent of the Kimberley marine environment is currently safeguarded from the threats of fishing and damage from industrial development such as oil and gas drilling.

**The next WA Government should:**

1) Complete the 2009 recommendation by the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority to urgently protect the Kimberley through the establishment of marine parks over the whole of State waters in the Kimberley.

2) Ensure world class protection within the Great Kimberley Marine Park through a network of sanctuary zones comparable to those at the Great Barrier Reef and at Ningaloo Reef. Consistent with this standard, at least 30% of the Great Kimberley Marine Park should be sanctuary zones.

3) Achieve this by working in partnership with Traditional Owners to expand and complete creation of a Great Kimberley Marine Park within State waters - by completing the existing proposed Great Kimberley Marine Park and extending it to include:

- The islands and coral reefs of the Buccaneer Archipelago
- Important mangrove areas in King Sound and the Cambridge Gulf
- The pristine offshore reefs of Adele Island, Beagle and Mavis Reefs and Scott Reef. These are currently surrounded by Commonwealth Marine Parks.
- The waters of Lagrange and the Lacepede Islands.

4) Ensure a marine sanctuary zone within the Yawuru Nagulagun Roebuck Bay Marine Park, including a review of the marine park if required.

5) Ensure that the rights, aspirations and opportunities for Traditional Owners are respected through:

- Committing that all marine parks will be jointly managed with Traditional Owners.
- Ensuring Traditional Owners are afforded the opportunity with funding to run their own community based consultation and planning processes in parallel with the Government planning process.
- Ensure joint management prioritises the opportunity for Traditional Owners to plan and undertake operational management through their Indigenous Ranger programs.
- Creating the opportunity for joint vesting of marine parks.
- Seeking broad input from Traditional Owners on marine parks policy.
Why we are here
To stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
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