



Our Environment, Our Future.

An assessment of the environmental policies of
Labor and the Liberal National Party in Queensland.

August 2011



Summary

Queensland is defined by its spectacular natural landscapes and fascinating wildlife, which contribute greatly to our unique way of life. But pressures are growing from population growth, rapid urban and coastal development, the acceleration of mining development across the state, and climate change. These all threaten what makes Queensland beautiful and special.

Queensland needs strong leadership and renewed action to protect our irreplaceable environment and manage these pressures. We need a government that is willing to be innovative and visionary in protecting nature; one capable of finding immediate and long-term solutions to environmental threats.

In the lead up to the next Queensland state election – due to be held sometime in the next 8 months– it is crucial to shine the spotlight on the environmental policies of the major parties and encourage them to do better on the environment for the benefit of all Queenslanders, including future generations.

This new report assesses the current positions of Labor and the Liberal National Party (LNP) against 16 priority environmental policy areas. We have used policy statements, public comments and correspondence with the parties to compile our assessment to the best of our abilities. Both parties were contacted about this report and given an opportunity to provide information into their position on our key policy areas.

Our assessment shows that Labor currently has a number of positive environmental programs, including controls on land clearing, protecting wild rivers and controlling farm chemical pollution going into the Great Barrier Reef, and is making progress in other areas. But on some issues, such as controlling dangerous coal seam gas and coal mining, and managing our fisheries sustainably, Labor is failing.

Our assessment of the LNP reveals a real lack of transparency, suggesting they trail Labor significantly in environmental policy terms. Despite giving the party an opportunity to provide information about their position in key environmental policy areas for this report, the LNP refused to respond. This is not a credible position for a modern political party and alternative government for Queensland to maintain.

It is critical that the LNP are upfront with the people of Queensland about their policies – they cannot continue to duck and weave on pressing environmental issues hoping that people will not notice. Campbell Newman has recently claimed that all LNP policies “null and void”, but has yet to replace them with anything. In the meantime, we only have past positions and statements to judge them on, which include the winding back of fundamental environmental laws, and are otherwise not very encouraging.

Summary Table of Policy Assessment

Priority Policies	Labor Score	LNP Score
1. Urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions	1/2	X
2. Build a renewable energy future	1/2	?
3. Control destructive mining	X	X
4. Legislative ban nuclear power and uranium mining	1/2	?
5. Protect rural lands from land clearing and logging	✓	?
6. Protect wild rivers	✓	X
7. World Heritage for Cape York Peninsula	1/2	?
8. Create more protected areas on land	1/2	?
9. Create more marine protected areas	1/2	?
10. Protect the Great Barrier Reef	✓	?
11. Make our fisheries sustainable	X	X
12. Make industries sustainable	1/2	?
13. Implement a waste strategy	✓	?
14. Strengthen urban and regional planning laws	1/2	?
15. Make our cities and towns sustainable	1/2	?
16. Make flood and storm recovery green	1/2	?

✓ Good policy 1/2 Weak policy X Currently negative policy ? Policy unclear

Priority Environmental Policies for Queensland

Our groups have identified the following 16 policy areas as the priorities to protect and restore Queensland's environment, and maintain our unique way of life:

1. Urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Australia must adopt a greenhouse reduction target that equitably contributes to stabilising global atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions and then reduces these to pre-industrial levels (280-300 ppm) as soon as possible. As the country's worst greenhouse polluter, Queensland must take a lead role in reducing emissions.

2. Build a renewable energy future

A clean energy revolution is critical to the future of our planet. The Queensland Government should require a 100% renewable energy target for Queensland. The Queensland Renewable Energy Plan must require specific targets for the uptake of solar, geothermal, wind, wave and other renewable energy sources by 2020.

3. Control destructive mining

Queensland is experiencing an unprecedented acceleration of destructive mining activities right across the state, particularly from the coal, coal seam gas, liquid natural gas, and bauxite industries. These industries need to be very tightly controlled, including a ban on new coal mines and a moratorium on any coal seam gas operations until or unless it is demonstrated that there are no adverse impacts on the environment.

4. Legislative ban on nuclear power and uranium mining

The nuclear industry is highly dangerous both in terms of its toxic threat to the environment and human health, and also nuclear weapons. The Queensland Government must maintain the Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Act 2007 that bans nuclear power and waste dumping and introduce a legislative ban on uranium mining and exploration in Queensland.

5. Protect rural lands from land clearing and logging

The Vegetation Management Act 1999 is a vital environmental law that prevents the problems of salinity, slaughtering of wildlife, and immense greenhouse gas emissions caused by land clearing. The Act should be strengthened to deal with perverse exemptions for activities of mining and extractive industries, forestry, and urban development. The agreed outcomes of the Statewide Forests Process should also be implemented as a matter of priority and the South East Queensland Forests Agreement honoured in good faith.

6. Protect wild rivers

The Wild Rivers Act 2005 fills a critical gap in Queensland's environmental regulatory system, regulating destructive development in our last free-flowing river systems. The government should declare the identified wild rivers on Cape York by mid-2012 and, following due process and Indigenous engagement and negotiation, declare Cooper Creek, and the Georgina and Diamantina Rivers.

7. World Heritage for Cape York Peninsula

Cape York Peninsula is a land of spectacular natural and cultural heritage and deserves World Heritage protection. By 2012, the government should conclude all work necessary at the state level, including extensive community engagement and consultation, towards the development of a Cape York World Heritage nomination (the nomination must include the free and informed consent of Traditional Owners).

8. Create more protected areas on land

Protected areas, including National Parks, are critical to the maintenance of Queensland's biodiversity and protection of our special natural and cultural places. The Queensland Government should commit to an enhanced and comprehensive protected area system so that at least 15% of the State is under strictly protected areas by 2020 with an annual 10% budget increment for monitoring and management, and a 'future fund' established to guarantee targeted acquisitions.

9. Create more marine protected areas

A border to border network of marine protected areas should be developed and adequately resourced to protect our marine life. Priority must be given to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Queensland Government should commit to creating marine protected areas that include comprehensive, adequate and representative green zones to protect all biodiversity values of Queensland's waters. The Moreton Bay Marine Park is vital to the health of Queensland's waters and must gain greater protection from threats.

10. Protect the Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef and its iconic species such as turtles and dugongs face numerous threats. The reef can be rescued by halving farm pollution, reforming fisheries and saving threatened species from extinction.

11. Make our fisheries sustainable

Sustainable fisheries are vital to the health of our marine environment and ecosystem based fisheries management is required to minimise the impacts of our fishing practices. Species such as sharks, dugongs and turtles need protection from commercial fishing. The government should apply the precautionary principle where fisheries cannot demonstrate sustainability, coupled with enhanced resourcing for compliance and data collection.

12. Make industries sustainable

Queensland's industry must adopt and take advantage of a green economic agenda and build a clean, alternative future. Our agricultural industries, and consequently our food supply system, need a healthy environment to be sustainable in the long-term. The government should ensure that initiatives like the Delbessie Agreement, water resource plans and enhanced management of the stock routes deliver sustainable outcomes.

13. Implement a waste strategy

Reducing our waste lightens our impact on the environment and natural resources. The Queensland Government should introduce a waste strategy to set waste and recycling targets with a zero waste goal. A waste levy to provide funding for protected area acquisitions, community and local government environment projects, and resource recovery initiatives, is an essential component of the strategy.

14. Strengthen urban and regional planning laws

Our urban bushland, coastal environments, rural landscapes and outback environment are threatened by poorly regulated development, particularly from major mining, industrial and urban development projects. Currently there are major exemptions for such projects, and cumulative impacts of development are rarely taken into account. The government should strengthen urban and regional planning laws to rectify these problems.

15. Make our cities and towns sustainable

Making our cities and towns green will not only reduce our ecological footprint and resource use, but will also enhance our quality of life. Government should be setting new benchmarks for energy, water, transport and local environment protection.

16. Make flood and storm recovery green

The tragedy and destruction of the recent Queensland floods and cyclones present an opportunity for the government to build Queensland back green and more resilient. The restoration of natural landscapes is the most cost effective means of delivering a better, safer and more resilient Queensland.

Assessment of Labor Environmental Policies

Priority Policies	Labor Score	Labor Policy	Relevant Quotes	Our Comments
Urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions	1/2	Committed to a 30% reduction target in household emissions by 2020.	"We stand to suffer the most of any state if we're not well prepared for and adapting to a future national emissions trading scheme, the urgent need to cut down on our emissions everywhere, more frequent and severe extreme weather events and sea level rises" - Premier Anna Bligh ⁱ	The ALP emissions target is aimed at households only. The major proportion of Queensland emissions are generated by heavy industry, however there is no target for emissions reductions for this sector. Queensland is Australia's largest greenhouse gas polluter so it is vital the ALP improves in this area.
Build a renewable energy future	1/2	Supports national renewable energy target of 20% by 2020 and aims to leverage \$3.5 billion in investment and generate 2500 MW of renewable energy by 2020.	"Renewable energies are the goldfields of the 21st century ... New jobs, new industries and new opportunities for economic growth" - Premier Anna Bligh ⁱⁱ	Queensland has enough renewable energy to provide 100% of its needs. However despite the rhetoric, the ALP is simply not taking advantage of this, preferring to support fossil fuel development.
Control destructive mining	X	Strongly backs coal, coal seam gas, LNG, bauxite and other destructive mining industries and has only offered retrospective action to address threats to cropping land, urban areas and groundwater.	"Growth [in coal exports] has been impressive - rising from 200,000 tonnes in 1960 to now where export capacity is about 200 million tonnes a year. This milestone expected to be hit in the next 18 months and there are forecasts it will hit 370 million tonnes in 20 years" - Premier Anna Bligh ⁱⁱⁱ	This is a major failing of the ALP. These industries are poorly regulated. Development is happening before long-term environmental impacts can be fully understood, or occurring even when there is full knowledge of the large environmental impacts.
Legislative ban on nuclear power and uranium mining	1/2	Committed to a prohibition on nuclear facilities, nuclear waste dumps, and uranium mining.	"[Uranium] is a material that is used for a range of very serious and violent purposes around the world" - Premier Anna Bligh ^{iv}	In 2007 the then Beattie Government passed the Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Act that covers much of these activities. The party has also banned uranium mining. However there remains strong pressure from some elements within the party to overturn these policies.
Protect rural lands from land clearing and logging	✓	Committed to maintaining land clearing laws, including controls of clearing of some regrowth vegetation. Also committed to the Statewide Forests Process to end native forest logging.	"If it was not for our laws bulldozers would still be ripping up the bush" - Premier Anna Bligh ^v	In 2005 the then Beattie Government amended the Vegetation Management Act 1999 to seriously strengthen Queensland's land clearing laws. The ALP should be acknowledged for this highly significant environmental reform, protecting nearly 20 million hectares of bush. However they are still to deliver in full on their forestry commitments.
Protect wild rivers	✓	Committed to protecting 12 wild river basins on top of the 10 already protected. Also committed to creating 100 Indigenous Wild River Ranger jobs to complement the program.	"Our Wild Rivers legislation is about protecting the most pristine and unique rivers in our state against inappropriate development and degradation." - Former Environment Minister Kate Jones ^{vi}	In 2005 the then Beattie Government introduced the Wild Rivers Act 2005 into the Queensland Parliament, with initial support from the Liberal Party. Since then 10 river systems have been protected, and 40 Indigenous Wild River Ranger jobs created. The ALP should be acknowledged for this world-leading river management initiative.
World Heritage for Cape York Peninsula	1/2	Committed to undertaking all work at the state level for a World Heritage nomination within this term of government, to enable a nomination to proceed with the consent of Traditional Owners within this term of the Commonwealth Government.	"Cape York has often been compared to the Congo and Serengeti Plains of Africa ... World Heritage listing of the area will help give it international recognition and further boost its cultural and eco-tourism values" - Premier Anna Bligh ^{vii}	While some initial groundwork and consultations have commenced, the Bligh Government has been slow delivering on this promise and will not meet their deadline.

Priority Policies	Labor Score	Labor Policy	Relevant Quotes	Our Comments
Create more protected areas on land	1/2	Committed to a 50% increase in National Parks by 2020 (to reach 7.5% of the State)	"National Parks are an essential part of our strategy to manage growth in Queensland. They ensure that the natural beauty and amazing fauna that Queensland is famous for is preserved to be enjoyed by future generations" - Premier Anna Bligh ^{viii}	This target is not nearly high enough to protect nature, and progress has been slow on park acquisition. There is also no solid commitment to ensure park management budget increases with park acquisition.
Create more marine protected areas	1/2	Committed to creating a border to border network of marine parks. Committed to maintaining 16% green zones in Moreton Bay.	"Moreton Bay is at risk of being loved to death. We want to make sure that by protecting the sensitive breeding grounds and habitat areas of the sea life of this precious environment that it will be there for the future" - Premier Anna Bligh ^{ix}	Progress has been slow on developing marine parks in currently unprotected areas despite an election promise in 2004 to do so. Currently some marine planning is underway in the Gulf of Carpentaria.
Protect the Great Barrier Reef	✓	Committed to cutting pesticide and fertiliser running off into the Reef by 50% by 2013. Also committed to protecting key wetlands in reef catchments, and regulating the clearing of regrowth vegetation near rivers in reef catchments.	"The time to act is now. Unless we take action now, the Reef will be dead within 40 years. We know the problem. We need to have the strength and will to put in place solutions" - Premier Anna Bligh ^x	The Bligh Government has invested \$50 million in Reef protection and has enacted new laws to cut pollution by 50% by 2013, protect 1 million hectares of wetlands, and protect regrowth vegetation near rivers.
Make our fisheries sustainable	X	Supports ecosystem based fisheries management in principle but has done little to deliver it.	"...snapper in Queensland is being harvested at unsustainable levels. We need to save our snapper now, to protect it for future generations" - Former Fisheries Minister Tim Mulherin MP ^{xi}	The Bligh Government has failed to adequately protect sharks, snapper and a number of species from commercial fishing, backing away from meaningful measures to recover stocks.
Make industries sustainable	1/2	Committed to implementing the State Rural Leasehold Land Strategy (Delbessie Agreement).	"We are third behind China and Russia in the amount of state owned land we have, but we want to be first in looking after our land" - Premier Anna Bligh ^{xii}	The Delbessie Agreement must be strengthened to protect biodiversity values as requirements for lease renewal and extension. Stock routes.
Implement a waste strategy	✓	Committed to the Queensland Waste Strategy, which aims to halve waste going to landfill by 50% by 2020.	"By dramatically increasing our recycling effort and helping business to be more sustainable we can create a great new green industry while also protecting our environment" - Former Environment Minister Kate Jones ^{xiii}	The Bligh Government is introducing a waste levy on the 1st of December 2011, which is an important milestone for delivering on the Queensland Waste Strategy. The ALP should be acknowledged for serious progress in this area.
Strengthen urban and regional planning laws	1/2	Committed to regional planning processes under a sustainability framework, and implementing the Queensland Coastal Plan. Have also established the Urban Land Development Authority to fast track greenfield developments.	"Predictions from climate scientists for more severe extreme weather events leave no room for complacency when planning for Queensland's long-term future so we must confront these challenges now - it's what any responsible government would do" - Former Environment Minister Kate Jones ^{xiv}	The ALP approach to urban and regional planning laws has significant flaws. Currently there are major planning and environmental exemptions for major mining, industrial and urban development projects from normal planning processes. There are also no carrying capacity assessments for regions to guide planning processes.
Make our cities and towns sustainable	1/2	Committed to a range of measures on housing sustainability. This includes Six Star energy ratings, solar hot water schemes and Sustainability Declarations. Water saving.	"Our Cleaner, Greener Buildings Policy will set a new standard for tackling climate change ... It will set the bar high and provide Queenslanders with the skills and knowledge to help make the jump" - Premier Anna Bligh ^{xv}	While the ALP continues to improve its policies and programs for sustainable towns and cities, the standards for new urban development are simply not ambitious enough.
Make flood and storm recovery green	1/2	Have established a Reconstruction Authority, and State Plan for flood recovery, but focus on making flood recovery green is yet unclear.	"These floods have been catastrophic and we have a post-war scale building task ahead of us" - Premier Anna Bligh ^{xvi}	Most lines of Reconstruction are failing to recognise the value of the environment in building safer communities. With severe weather projected to become more likely in the future, this is a significant flaw

✓ Good policy 1/2 Weak policy X Currently negative policy ? Policy unclear

Assessment of LNP Environmental Policies

Priority Policies	LNP Score	LNP Policy	Relevant Quotes	Our Comments
Urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions	X	Oppose the policy of a price on carbon – the most efficient and effective means of reducing emissions.	"I believe we are having an impact on the climate. But I have a positive, proactive way of dealing with this. I'm into tree planting" - LNP Leader Campbell Newman ^{xvii}	The emission reductions from so-called "direct action" policies such as tree planting are extremely small compared with the pollution from big industry. The LNP simply does not have a credible climate change policy, and the party is dominated by climate change deniers.
Build a renewable energy future	?	Previously committed to making Queensland the renewable capital of Australia, current policy unclear.	"... we were very determined to make Queensland the renewable energy capital of Australia by the year 2015" - Lawrence Springborg MP ^{xviii}	Despite the rhetoric there is very little substance in the LNP renewable energy policy, with no detail or costing of how they will make Queensland a renewable energy capital.
Control destructive mining	X	Strongly back coal, coal seam gas, LNG, bauxite and other destructive mining industries and has only offered retrospective action to address threats to cropping land, urban areas and groundwater.	"The LNP supports the expansion of the CSG industry and welcomes the major growth it will bring to the Queensland economy ..." - LNP Parliamentary Leader Jeff Seeney ^{xix}	The LNP does not have any credible policies for halting or strongly regulating the environmental destruction of these industries.
Legislative ban on nuclear power and uranium mining	?	Have previously strongly supported the uranium industry, current policy unclear.	"We should be looking at uranium mining projects in Queensland to get the economic benefits for the state, and also we should be doing that with the strictest safeguards ..." - LNP Parliamentary Leader Jeff Seeney ^{xx}	The LNP have previously backed uranium mining in Queensland and voted against the Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Act 2007, which bans nuclear power and other facilities.
Protect rural lands from land clearing and logging	?	Have previously strongly opposed laws controlling land clearing and logging, current policy unclear.	"This is the most repugnant law I've ever seen" - LNP Parliamentary Leader Jeff Seeney ^{xxi}	The Queensland Liberal Party originally supported land clearing laws but the National Party strongly opposed them – the LNP position is now very unclear.
Protect wild rivers	X	Federal Coalition of Liberals and Nationals committed to scrapping wild rivers laws.	"Wild Rivers laws will be scrapped" – Last known Liberal National Policy, #75 ^{xxii}	The Federal Coalition is vehemently opposed to wild river protection, with Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott leading a charge to overturn the laws, and the Queensland LNP appearing to fall in behind him.
World Heritage for Cape York Peninsula	?	Have previously supported legislation to establish a process for a World Heritage listing, but current policy is unclear and there is a high degree of public opposition from many LNP MPs.	"... this legislation could be the start of World Heritage listing of this part of the peninsula. That concerns me somewhat ... We saw what happened up in the tablelands area in far-north Queensland with the World Heritage listing of the Wet Tropics area where the timber industry ... was shut down" – Vaughan Johnson MP ^{xxiii}	The LNP voted in favour of the Cape York Peninsula Heritage Act 2007, which lays a path for World Heritage listing. However prominent federal LNP MPs and Senators have been extremely antagonistic towards a future listing, including Senator Ron Boswell and Warren Entsch MP.
Create more protected areas on land	?	Current policy unclear.	"The Beattie and Bligh governments have been playing games with environmental lobbyists through national parks policy throughout their terms in power ... How can we expect these new national parks to have rangers when the Bligh government is cutting funding each financial year?" – Jack Dempsey MP ^{xxiv}	The LNP have advocated for management plans for all National Parks, but have not stated what percentage of the state they will increase National Parks by (if at all), or how much they would increase funding by (if at all).

Priority Policies	LNP Score	LNP Policy	Relevant Quotes	Our Comments
Create more marine protected areas	?	Have previously committed to a "review" of green zones in Moreton Bay while allowing the recommencement of fishing in these areas. Current policy unclear	"Whilst the contribution that no-take zones can make to the resilience of ecosystems is theoretically sound, there needs to be the empirical evidence to support it" – David Gibson MP ^{xxv}	The claim by the LNP that there is no science to support green zones is nonsense. For example recent studies by the CSIRO are already showing that fish numbers are increasing in Moreton Bay thanks to the green zones.
Protect the Great Barrier Reef	?	Have previously opposed key regulations that aim to improve the quality of water entering the reef from adjoining river catchments and instead support voluntary schemes to reduce farm pollution. Current policy unclear	"This contention that if we do not do something within the next 10 to 15 years we will not have a Great Barrier Reef is absolute rubbish ... this idea that the nutrients from farmers are killing the Great Barrier Reef is a myth; it is a lie" – Ray Hopper MP ^{xxvi}	The LNP have voted against regulations that reduce farm chemicals run-off into the reef, as well as protection of re-growth vegetation on watercourses in reef catchments.
Make our fisheries sustainable	X	Have recently opposed fishing bans on snapper which is recognised as overfished in Queensland waters.	"The LNP will continue to press Mr Wallace and Labor to scrap the [snapper] ban and allow full and open debate on how best to sustainably manage the snapper fishery" – Ray Hopper MP ^{xxvii}	The LNP oppose controls of Snapper and other dwindling fish stocks.
Make industries sustainable	?	The LNP appear to support the state leasehold strategy (Delbessie Agreement) - they are advocates for voluntary schemes to improve agricultural sustainability as opposed to regulation, but this is unclear, as is their position on clean technology.	"Just as it is unlawful to consider applications to clear vegetation in areas mapped as remnant vegetation, so too should it be unlawful to consider applications for mining, urban development and gas production activity which adversely impact on good quality agricultural lands" – John Paul Langbroek MP ^{xxviii}	The LNP position is confusing. Public commentary suggests support for protection of agricultural lands but little is known about a proactive agenda.
Implement a waste strategy	?	Support the Bligh Government's Queensland Waste Strategy but oppose a levy and otherwise their policy is unclear.	"The LNP voted against the Levy when it slid through the Parliament and will step up its opposition in the lead-up to the July 2011 introduction date" – Jack Dempsey MP ^{xxix}	The LNP support a Waste Strategy but oppose a waste levy (and have no alternative options to a levy on the table).
Strengthen urban and regional planning laws	?	Current policy unclear.	"Implement strategic and visionary planning for the continued growth of the State and its regions" – LNP Platform Statement (Infrastructure) ^{xxx}	Despite the motherhood statement, the LNP have no credible or detailed policy to strengthen urban and regional planning laws and remove exemptions for major mining, industrial and urban development projects
Make our cities and towns sustainable	?	Current policy unclear.	"Position Queensland as the Australian leader in environmental sustainability with world best practice planning laws" – LNP Platform Statement (Environment) ^{xxxi}	Despite the motherhood statement, the LNP have no credible or detailed policy to make our cities and towns sustainable. Previously the LNP have supported population caps for South-East Queensland.
Make flood and storm recovery green	?	Current policy unclear.	"When it comes to rebuilding our communities, the LNP will not allow anyone to take their foot off the pedal" – John-Paul Langbroek MP ^{xxxii}	The LNP have not made any commitments in this area or indicated any desire to pursue the restoration of natural landscapes as a flood mitigation measure.

✓ Good policy 1/2 Weak policy X Currently negative policy ? Policy unclear

Endnotes

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