

Annual Review 2022/23



**Wilderness
Society**

Life. Support.



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A walker admires an old growth mountain ash known as the Kalatha Giant
in Toolangi, Central Highlands, Victoria | Justin Cally





“

The Martuwarra River Keepers is, at its core, a transformative workforce development program. Our elders developed the program, which is built on a foundation of Indigenous science, conservation and the wellbeing economy. This is crucial work, not only for preserving the culture of the River and its natural beauty, but also for the communities in the region who will benefit greatly from the creation of a sustainable conservation economy.”

Chair of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council, Dr Anne Poelina

River Keepers Trinity and Jasmine at Mangkajarra | Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council

From the CEO

On 1 July 2023, we celebrated 40 years since the High Court enabled the federal government to uphold the World Heritage Convention. It effectively protected the Franklin and catalysed a growing environmental movement.

It's perhaps fitting that 40 years after the Franklin decision we had an outcome of similar scale, with the cessation of industrial native forest logging in Victoria announced from 2024. It's taken a multi-decade effort by this organisation and others, as well as individuals to achieve.

What struck me this past year was that power of people using the skills they have to do what they can for nature. There are the writers and illustrators who we recognise each year with the prestigious Environment Award For Children's Literature. In 2022 we added the Karajia Award, which celebrates children's books from First Nations authors and/or illustrators that honour a connection to Country.

Then there was marathon runner Erchana Murray-Bartlett, who ran from the tip of mainland Australia to the bottom, highlighting threats to biodiversity and calling for effective new nature laws along the way. She raised funds for our work on this front and smashed a World Record in the process.

The need for effective new nature laws was crystallised in July 2022 when Tanya Plibersek, the then new Environment Minister, released the long-delayed State of the Environment Report. It painted a grim picture.

Successive federal governments have overseen a succession of worsening reports. We are campaigning for this government to take the decisive action required to

reverse nature's decline. As you will see in this review, we are building more pressure than ever to deliver the strong nature laws so urgently required.

This past year has been one of reflection, of our long history as an organisation, but alongside the exciting development of things to come as we continue to innovate.

It's the backing of our supporters that enables us to develop new ways to secure a bright future for nature, like our web app Watch on Nature, allowing citizen scientists to monitor deforestation using satellite technology.

The Wilderness Society is in good hands with this new generation of strategic and passionate campaigners and activists. Forty years on from that landmark Franklin decision, we are proud of how our past strengths inform our work today, because more than ever nature needs a strong and independent voice.

Thanks for your support.

Matt Brennan
CEO, The Wilderness Society Ltd



It's not a **single** action for nature, it's **tens of thousands**



1,548 clearing events detected in our new people-powered platform Watch on Nature since launch



21 local teams held meetings with MPs on community rights in environmental decision-making



14,727 people emailed Minister Plibersek to let her know that nature law reforms are urgently needed



17,547 people asked supermarkets and fast-food chains to stand against forest and bushland destruction



241 community trainings, workshops, and events were held



13,563 of you asked Europe to stop financing Australia's deforestation

The Campaign agenda

As Australians prepare to head into another El Niño, it's poignant to reflect on the achievements of the past year—all thanks to your support, and to the grit and determination of Wilderness Society staff and volunteers across the continent.

We've been working alongside Traditional Owners to better protect the living cultural land and sea Country for which this continent is world-renowned. As the inaugural conservation partner for the Martuwarra River Keepers program, we are supporting work on Country to protect the precious flows of this river in the Kimberley, and the life and culture it sustains. We've been working closely with Mirning elders on the nomination for World Heritage listing for the marine life of the Bight and the cultural values of this sea Country and of the Nullarbor. This bid is advancing, and is now with state and federal governments, as is required by World Heritage processes.

We continue to engage with the Federal Parliament on the critical national nature law reform. After a year of the new government, and at the time of writing, draft bills of reformed nature laws are still to be released. We know tens of thousands of Wilderness Society supporters won't settle for anything that won't actually protect forests, rivers, deserts and oceans and the life they sustain. New laws need to 'turn the tide for nature', as Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek has promised.

In February 2023, Japanese paper giant Nippon finally announced closure of its white paper operation at the Maryvale Mill in Victoria's LaTrobe Valley. The facility has for decades been pulping critically endangered Mountain Ash forests. In this Annual Review you'll find a timeline of the Victoria's Forests campaign, taking us to the announcement this year of an end to industrial native forest logging in 2024.

I pay tribute to Richard Hughes, Senior Campaigner, who made an enormous contribution to Victorian forest campaigning over almost three decades. Richard was instrumental in the Cobboboonee, Wombat, and River Red Gum forest outcomes, while his GIS mapping skills, passion for grassroots organising and commitment to genuine dialogue with Traditional Owners contributed to the milestone achieved this past year. Sometimes it takes decades to secure protections for nature. The Wilderness Society knows how to be tenacious and stick with it to get an outcome.

This past year we have given particular focus to one of our organisation's five values: that of 'the power of people to make change'. We are working closely with dozens of local Wilderness Society community groups to uncover targeted tactics for both corporate and political mobilisations. This means working with people to exercise their power as consumers, as well as voters.

2022-23 has been an important year for the Wilderness Society to look back, and acknowledge and celebrate our origins. Origins that have underpinned our ambitious agenda—protecting and restoring large, intact, functioning ecosystems across the continent. Our longevity has enabled us to envision and deliver new systems changes in society—across parliaments, international regulation, and in corporate Australia—that will sustain the environments we all rely on now and into the future. With your support, we are prepared to secure ever more protections and better outcomes for nature.

Amelia Young

Amelia Young
National Campaigns Director



Highlights

Systems change

Raising awareness of Australia's deforestation in the EU

Australia is a global deforestation hotspot. And Europe is taking notice.

For 24 hours from 29 November 2022, thanks to our supporters the Wilderness Society was able to launch a takeover of the POLITICO EU homepage. The advertisements formed part of a strategic campaign to raise the profile of Australian deforestation in Europe.

"POLITICO is the number one most influential news source among EU decision-makers," says Corporate Campaigner, Adele Chasson. "The week after we ran this takeover of POLITICO, EU lawmakers got together to make important choices on the Deforestation Free Regulation banning products linked to deforestation from entering the EU market.

"With these ads, we let them know that their choices mattered for nature in Australia, which is a deforestation hotspot they might not have known about. They could either create strong laws that will actually protect iconic Australian animals and plants, or they could turn a blind eye to the destruction."

On 6 December 2022, EU countries and Members of the European Parliament then agreed to introduce a groundbreaking law to ban products linked to deforestation from entering the EU market.

"The EU's deforestation law is a world first, and a welcome step to help reverse biodiversity destruction. As a global standard-setter, the EU sends a strong signal to industries everywhere, including in Australia, which is a global deforestation front: 'in order to do business in Europe, you need to stop relying on industry practices that damage nature.'"



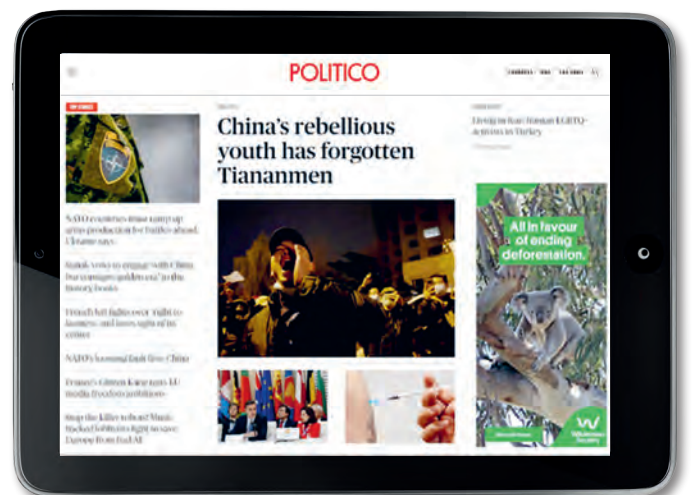
Nature Law reform

For the last decade the Wilderness Society and tens of thousands of supporters have been campaigning for strong and effective nature laws. New laws are needed to improve the status quo for Australia's globally significant environment and enshrine a fair say for First Nations and the public.

When the independent review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* began, Wilderness Society local teams hosted workshops to develop submission-writing skills in their communities. This resulted in hundreds of personal submissions and thousands of sign-ons to the Wilderness Society's own submissions to different inquiries and reviews. These submissions had a real impact. For instance, our advocacy on issues such as community rights and the deeply flawed Regional Forest Agreements tangibly influenced the findings and recommendations of the independent Samuel Review of the Act.

Reform of the federal environment laws are ongoing. In light of the government's commitment to rebuild public trust and confidence in environmental decision-making, we will be holding them to account to ensure integrity, accountability and community confidence throughout the process and enshrined within the new laws.

Together, we will hold the government to its ambitions and seek to counter the influence of vested interests—including by fighting for communities to have a fair say in environmental decision-making.



Community rights

For years, we have worked alongside communities that are overwhelmingly opposed to destructive projects, but those projects often go ahead because corporations have a more powerful voice in our system. In the Pilliga, for example, 98% of the 23,000 community submissions opposed the Narrabri gas project—but the NSW and federal governments approved it anyway.

On 22 November 2022 we released a report (based on legal analysis from the Environmental Defender's Office) exposing the root of the problem: environment and planning laws are failing to give communities a meaningful say in environmental decision-making.



The community wants laws that will give them a voice in environmental decisions, so they can effectively demand that the government take the serious and urgent action required to fix both the climate and biodiversity crises,”

says Wilderness Society Campaigner Victoria Jack.

Since the report's release, local groups have been meeting with their MPs about getting a fair say enshrined in the new federal nature laws. And we've already pressed the federal government to commit to community rights improvements through the EPBC reforms.



The Wilderness Society Northern Beaches group met up with Warringah representative Zali Steggall to discuss community rights in environmental decision-making.

Erchana's epic run for endangered wildlife

On 16 January 2023, after 6,200km and 150 marathons, Erchana Murray-Bartlett finished her World Record-breaking feat for nature. It's a challenge that began all the way back in August 2022: a series of marathons from the top of mainland Australia to the bottom to highlight the plight of endangered wildlife and call for strong new nature laws. She finished her 150th marathon crossing the finish line at the Tan, Melbourne's famous running track, joined by hundreds of supporting runners. Completing her epic feat, she raised \$133,180 for the Wilderness Society and became an Honorary Life Member to boot!

Protecting unique places

Big tree research and a first-ever criminal prosecution brought

Lutruwita / Tasmania is home to some of the most intact and biodiverse forests in the world. However, these forests are threatened by industrial-scale native forest logging, by the state-owned logging agency Forestry Tasmania.

“Citizen scientists are going out every week to document the high conservation values of threatened forests, such as large hollow-bearing trees,” says Campaigner Alice Hardinge.

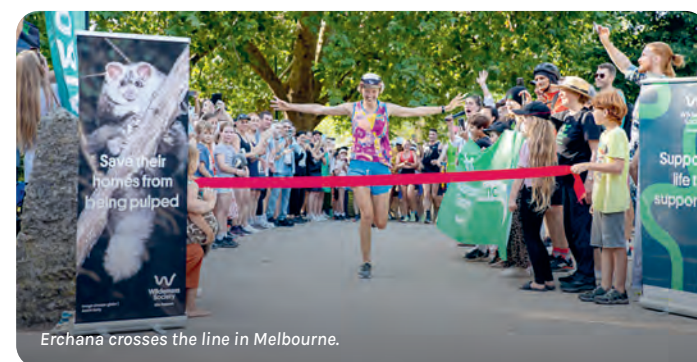
“Since April, over 30 volunteers have been trained up and have completed comprehensive surveys of 10 forested areas—walking hundreds of kilometres off track and discovering seven new giant trees, creating 21.7 hectares of reserves.



Campaigner Alice Hardinge on top of a giant, 14.74m-circumference stump in the Upper Florentine. | The Tree Projects



Cooks River and Inner West Sydney Wilderness Society groups engage the public about community rights.



Erchana crosses the line in Melbourne.



Survey reports have been submitted to the relevant regulator as well as the Natural Values Atlas. Forestry Tasmania says that it doesn't log giant trees. Yet every other week, Tasmanians see giant single-log loads on the back of trucks, and concerned citizens find giant stumps in public state forests.”

As a result of survey evidence gathered, criminal proceedings were initiated against Forestry Tasmania by Wilderness Society Tasmania in July. This is the first-ever private criminal prosecution of Forestry Tasmania.

NSW ad campaign: Stop the chop

In NSW earlier this year, contributions from supporters enabled us to display advertising at over 50 high-traffic locations around Sydney. These billboards and bus shelters shone a spotlight on spectacular forests in bushfire-affected areas that the government planned to log, which would wipe out thousands more hectares of threatened species habitat. The ads also built the political case for action by highlighting high levels of community support for forest protection (as demonstrated by polling commissioned by the Wilderness Society). The message was simple: ‘Stop the chop’—calling for an end to the ongoing destruction of NSW native forests, after two-thirds of NSW native forests burned during the Black Summer bushfires. This work has helped secure some impressive policy commitments, including NSW Labor's promise to create the Great Koala National Park.



Red-tailed black cockatoos | Laurie Boyle

Northern Jarrah Forests

Together with our supporters, we continue to oppose Alcoa's rampant exploitation of the Northern Jarrah Forests, with thousands of people signing our petition in the last year calling for an end to bauxite mining expansion in these magnificent forests.

Supporters also donated to help launch a legal case against Rio Tinto, to prevent new mining leases from being granted in WA's native forests. This case was lodged by the Wilderness Society, along with the WA Forest Alliance and over 150 other environmental organisations and individuals. There were 1,500 separate objections to Rio Tinto's applications. The pressure paid off. In June, Rio Tinto finally revealed that it is withdrawing its applications for exploration licences to mine precious jarrah forests, citing concerns raised by community members.

To raise the profile of the jarrah and karri forests nationally, we were proud to be an associate producer of *Black Cockatoo Crisis*, which premiered on 23 November 2022. The documentary has since been screening all over the country and won several awards. It's an urgent appeal to stem the decline of some of WA's most charismatic birds, which depend on the forests for survival.

Wollemi

By acting quickly, we were able to knock three coal lease areas earmarked for forest on the doorstep of Wollemi National Park on the head before they got to the stage of coal exploration. The last was ruled out by the NSW government in May 2022.

This third area, Ganguddy-Kelgoola—which holds significance to Wiradjuri people—is home to two state forests that are currently being assessed for addition to the National Heritage List, as a step towards inscribing them in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

We need to keep up pressure to protect them forever. Thanks to our supporters, we have made a submission to the Australia Heritage Council, as a first step towards expanding the World Heritage listing.



Queensland forests and bushland

In early 2023, Campaign Manager Hannah Schuch hit the road and headed out to regional Queensland on a deforestation field trip with a close colleague from Queensland Conservation Council (QCC). They heard from farmers and landholders, plus conservation groups seeking to end deforestation.

“This trip was such a fantastic opportunity to talk to regional Queenslanders who are living on the land and using different methods to manage it—for profit and/or nature.”

“The insights we’ve gained will help inform the next stage of our campaign to combat broadscale deforestation. Thank you for supporting this important work,” says Hannah.

In 2022, the Wilderness Society joined forces with Queensland Conservation Council (QCC), Australian Conservation Foundation and WWF-Australia to launch the Queensland Forests Alliance, with goals to protect and restore Queensland’s forests and ensure beef cattle production is 100% deforestation-free.

The situation is urgent, with the release of drone footage from our new Watch on Nature platform [see page 8] showing potential koala habitat in North Queensland being destroyed to make way for cattle.

In mid-December 2022, the Queensland government released the 2019-2020 Statewide Land and Tree Study data showing that ~418,656 hectares of land was impacted by land clearing and deforestation. Our analysis showed that at least 66% of this clearing was linked to beef cattle production. Our response was picked up by the media, where we called for stronger laws and corporate action to reverse deforestation. To that end, 17,547 people asked supermarkets and fast-food chains to stand against forest and bushland destruction. “With your continued support, we can stop Queensland’s rampant deforestation,” says Hannah.



Hannah Schuch on her field trip to regional Queensland.



Campaigner Tom Allen with the local community making their stance clear!



Logging paused at Tongatabu, Lutruwita

When local residents near Dover, this continent’s southernmost town, woke one day to discover their local forest at Mt Tongatabu was about to be logged, they were shocked, then angered and then resolved to protect it. “Working with them, we discovered anomalies in Forestry Tasmania’s paperwork,” says Tom Allen, Campaign Manager for Wilderness Society in Tasmania. “It’s yet another example of the dodgy self-regulatory logging regime that denies local communities a say, while trashing local forests.

“We went to court and the magistrate agreed there was a case to answer, so a pause was put on the logging. We’re now waiting for the court to decide if this logging was legal or not. Whatever happens, we will continue to support local communities, like the wonderful community around Tongatabu, and their right for a say in environmental decisions that affect them.”



Martuwarra River Keepers at Mangkajarra | Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council

Protecting large, intact ecosystems

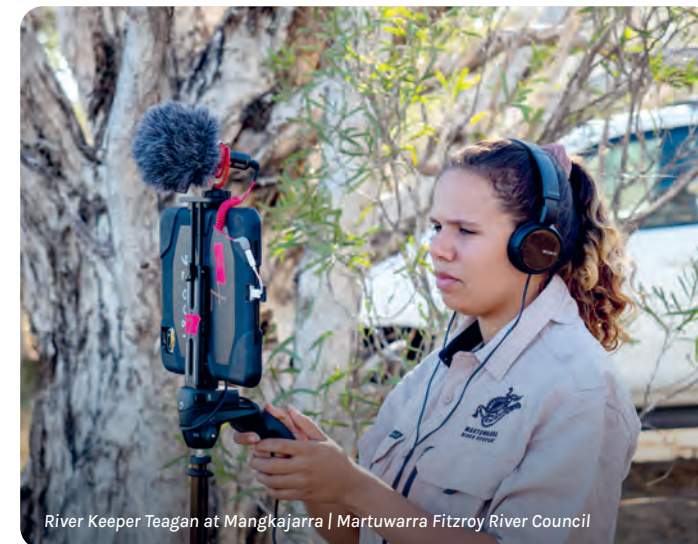
Martuwarra River Keepers

Thanks to your generous support, Wilderness Society is proud to be the inaugural partner of the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council’s River Keepers program, which launched in May 2023. The River Keepers are based along the Martuwarra (Fitzroy River) on Nyikina Country, 60 kilometres south of Derby in the Kimberley.

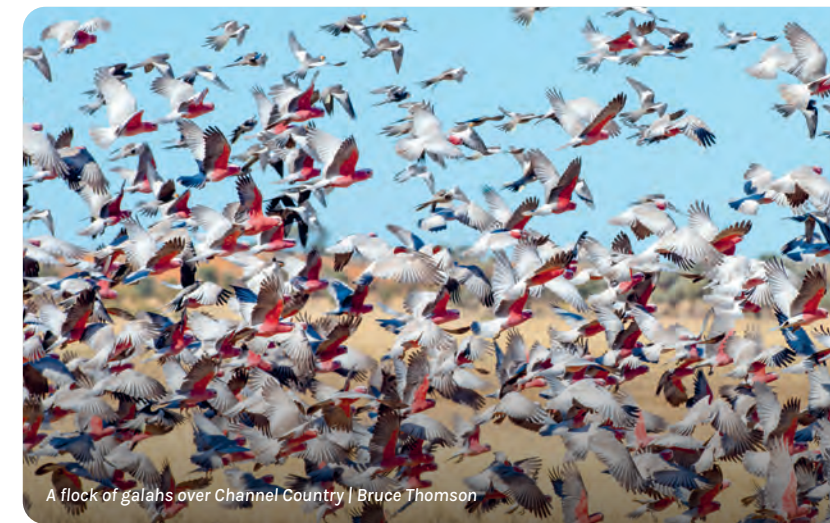
The program supports 12 River Keepers, with Elders and young Indigenous leaders from the communities of Yurmulun (Pandanus Park) and Balginjirr working on Country to map the Traditional Ecological Knowledge—the environment, cultural and spiritual knowledge—of Martuwarra, the National Heritage-listed river.

The Martuwarra River Keepers program is based on the principles of: Indigenous science, cultural capital and the conservation economy—focused on restoration and healing, not extraction.

The vision of this program is to see that regional Indigenous-led cultural conservation and tourism initiatives enshrine the cultural and ecosystem value of water and provide sustainable livelihoods for local Indigenous people.



River Keeper Teagan at Mangkajarra | Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council



A flock of galahs over Channel Country | Bruce Thomson

Channel Country

Last year was a busy time in the campaign to protect the Channel Country rivers and floodplains from oil and gas expansions. We worked closely with Traditional Owner, farming, and regional community allies to pressure the Queensland government to release the Qld Lake Eyre Basin Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS), which outlined various policy options for the future protection of the region’s sensitive rivers and floodplain.

“Through public pressure, including media coverage, MP meetings, and community engagement, together we sent a strong message to the Queensland government that it was essential to release the RIS to both give Queenslanders a fair say and as a means of getting on with the job of fulfilling their near decade-long commitment to protect the Channel Country,” says Queensland Campaign Manager, Hannah Schuch. “Together, after ensuring the release of this key statement, we pivoted to ensure supporters from across the country had an opportunity to make a submission. On the ground, we mobilised volunteers to engage their networks to make personalised submissions and ensure the Queensland government heard loud and clear that it is time to protect the Channel Country for good.”

Thanks to decades of support and action.

2023 |

Industrial native forest logging to end in Victoria
The Victorian government finally calls time on clearfell logging, bringing forward the planned 2030 exit by six years to 2024

Matt Landolfo—Victorian Campaigns Manager

So many people have given so much of their campaign smarts, their heart and soul to get us to this point today.

From blockading and running legal actions, to chatting with their friends and family and marching in the streets, right through to developing positive visions like the Great Forest National Park and the Emerald Link, and astutely persuading those with decision-making power.

In the short term it's a tremendous relief that these special, iconic natural wonders will shortly be safe from industrial scale logging, to be treasured by future generations.

That excitement is also tempered with determination however, as we turn our attention to the challenges still ahead.

With one major obstacle out of the way, we can finally focus on the enormous task of managing forests for all of their values: water, carbon, tourism and biodiversity; supporting the workers, families and communities impacted by economic diversification; and working alongside First Peoples to heal and care for Country.



2010 |

Second phase of Ethical Paper campaign starts

New phase in the campaign after decades of forest mismanagement and large bushfires. Regional groups and citizen scientists ramp up pre-logging surveys and legal avenues, while the Wilderness Society pursues markets and corporate campaigns—highlighting the risks for businesses of being associated with unsustainable and illegal logging practices

2009 |

Black Saturday bushfires

Significant loss of life, property and forests, the largest fire in Mountain Ash forests since 1939. Yet wood volumes are not reduced for almost a decade

2006

[logging halted]

to 2010

[forest protected!]

River Red Gums

New parks and reserves are created, including management arrangements with Traditional Owners, following a campaign by an alliance of conservation and First Nations groups



Luke Chamberlain—forest campaigner

As the clock ticks past midnight at the end of this year, when the chainsaws are planned to fall silent in Victoria's native forests, I will savour a quiet moment, and look to the east. It will mark nearly a quarter of a century since I threw my life up in the air to join the fight for Victoria's forests, much of that time spent volunteering and campaigning with the Wilderness Society.

Looking back, there are countless memories—of both celebration and loss—that changed my life for the better, none more so than friendships forged along the way. A silent shared nod of the head with the forest sentinel, Sarah Rees, comes to mind, amongst the crowd of people we've helped amass, standing between the chainsaws and the forest. And back at the beginning—shivering on the pedestrian bridge over the Eastern Freeway at 6am on a freezing cold morning. The giant 'Don't Log the Frog' banner unravelled below, far above the traffic. Richard Hughes and I looked at each other and laughed. We talked openly with each other, just the two of us, of why we were here, doing what we were doing. Wongungarra got saved from the chainsaws. The fight for me had just begun.



Luke Chamberlain gives a speech to supporters

2002

[logging halted]

to 2005

[forest protected!]

Otways

A new national park is created and the additional area excludes industrial logging, with a package to assist workers' transition to the plantation sector and tourism infrastructure supporting local jobs

2002

[woodchipping ends—sort of]

Wombat Forest

Woodchipping ends, however the forest remains unprotected (because of this, in 2022, logging recommences with so-called "salvage" of storm-impacted forests)



Amelia Young talks at a rally.

1994 |

RFA process begins in Victoria

Confusing and bureaucratic, the Regional Forestry Agreement process of forest assessment and ineffective reserve creation exempts logging from national environmental law and removes barriers to Commonwealth approval of woodchip exports

2022

Illegal logging

The Supreme Court rules that VicForests failed to properly survey for and protect two species of gliding possums



2020

Bunnings abandons Vic Forests

Bunnings discontinues sourcing wood from VicForests

2020

Black Summer bushfires

After decades of overlogging, vast areas are burnt

2019

Andrews government announces logging end date

The state government declares native forest logging will end in 2030, but we continue to lobby to bring this end date forward

2016

Officeworks moves away from Reflex copy paper

Influenced by our long-running Ethical Paper campaign, Officeworks joins a number of corporations that reject Reflex copy paper made from Victoria's native forests

2015

Forest Industry Taskforce begins

Wilderness Society leads conservation groups in engaging with industry and unions, forcing the Victorian government to acknowledge wood supply constraints for the first time

Geraldine Ryan—long-time volunteer

Deep in the action of a forest campaign it is the moments of heartbreak that renew your passion. I well remember in Easter Week, 1994 I think, standing beside the ruins of centuries-old trees felled in Hensleigh Creek, Far East Gippsland. Too big to load onto trucks, full of owl-size hollows, they were burning. And where were the greater gliders that sat on their branches during a survey we had conducted barely six months before?

Scientific surveys in the forests are often the most exciting campaign actions. I remember going on one such survey for spotted-tail quolls in East Gippsland. I woke just before sunlight. All was quiet. Then I hear it: high on the ridge, the unmistakable call of the sooty owl. Twice, three times it called, then was silent. I'll never forget that moment – the exhilaration of campaign learning and the power of nature.

It has been an immense privilege to volunteer with the Wilderness Society and, as well as the beauty of the forests, it is the wonderful people who will live on in my mind and heart.



Geraldine Ryan (left) at Tarerer Festival with volunteer Megan Roswell | Linda O'Hara

2006

[logging halted]

to 2008

[forest protected!]

Cobboboonee

A new national park is created with additional woodchipping exclusion area, following a campaign alongside Traditional Owners and local conservationists



2002

[logging halted]

to 2009

[forest protected!]

Goolengook & Yalmy

Following Australia's longest-running forest blockade, Goolengook is added to a new national park. Yalmy, one of the most intact forests in East Gippsland, is also protected

Early 2000s

Mass rallies in Naarm / Melbourne

Under Gavan McFadzean's campaign leadership, tens of thousands attended rallies for forest protections



Melbourne Rally, 4 June 2006 | Eli Greig

1999

[forest protected!]

Wongungarra

Despite ongoing logging and woodchipping across the state, this important conservation victory is secured. In alpine Victoria, the remote and rugged Wongungarra valley is finally protected from logging

Early 1990s

Campaigning intensifies

We bring national attention to the issue of export woodchipping, while we start working alongside local First Nations people



Melbourne forest rally, 1995 | Tony Furey

Late 1980s

Wilderness Society joins the fight

We become a key player in campaigns to protect Victoria's forests, providing grassroots support for the East Gippsland's forest campaign

Launch of Watch on Nature

Following a soft launch, this year we began rolling out our web-based platform, Watch on Nature.

Using the latest satellite imagery, Watch on Nature helps users identify deforestation, logging and fire events as they happen, and allows us to hold governments and companies to account—so together, we can protect the forests we have left for the future.

Since its launch, 1548 deforestation and logging events have been submitted through Watch on Nature, with a large number of verified instances raised with the regulators. Recently Watch on Nature won the 2023 Australian Good Design Award (Social Impact category) for Excellence in Design and Innovation!

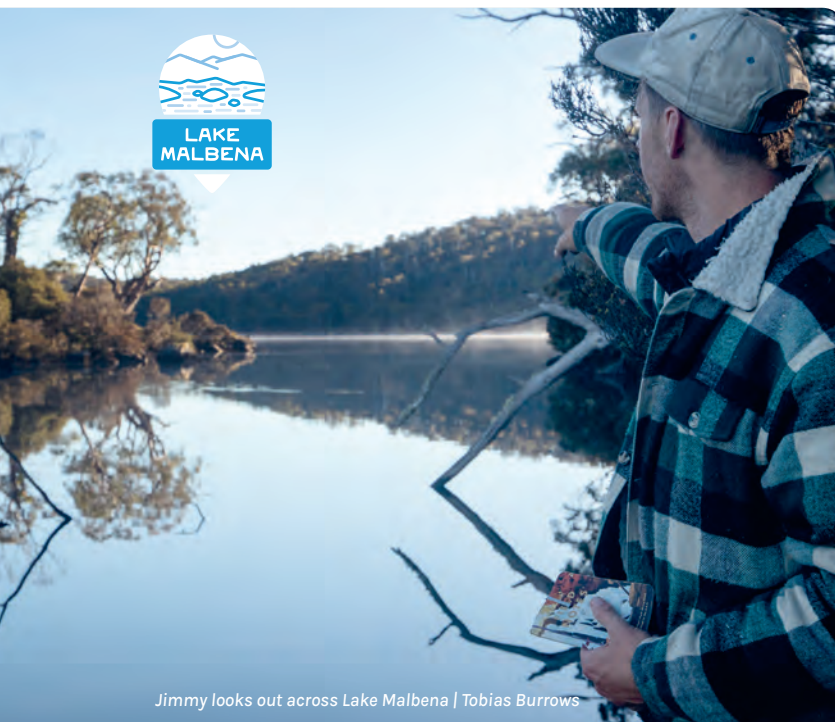


A trek out to Lake Malbena

Wilderness Society Campaigner Jimmy Cordwell made the trek to the remote, timeless beauty of Lake Malbena in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Here he saw endangered Tasmanian Wedge tail eagles soaring the thermals. Halls Island—a 10-hectare island on the lake—is the subject of an attempt to privatise a World Heritage site for exclusive accommodation. If it proceeds, up to 300 helicopter flights a year could destroy the tranquillity of this place, and disturb the eagles that raise their young there.

Unfortunately Jimmy couldn't set foot on the island. "Currently we can't go to Halls Island, it's illegal," he says. "Despite it being public land, a national park, and World Heritage—and that no part of the development has been successful in getting approval—the developer holds an exclusive lease to the area. So much of this is wrong."

Thanks to our supporters, the Wilderness Society has held back this development—and a whole pipeline of developments—in the globe's highest ranked World Heritage wilderness, for yet another year. The decision of whether to allow or reject this proposal sits with the Federal Environment Minister. At the time of writing, we await her decision.



Nullarbor and Great Australian Bight

For the past 20 years we have worked to deliver a highly protected land and sea conservation estate across the Nullarbor and Great Australian Bight. Our successful campaign to stop the fossil fuel industry expanding into this remarkable part of Australia also helped to secure a policy commitment from the South Australian Government to support World Heritage Listing for the region.

"Together with the Mirning Council of Elders we have completed a draft consultation document titled 'The Case for World Heritage Nomination of the Nullarbor and Great Australian Bight'," says South Australia Director Peter Owen.

"We are currently in negotiations with relevant SA, Australian Government and IUCN World Heritage officials. Places as extraordinary as the Great Australian Bight need to be permanently protected for future generations."



Expanding protections in the Lake Eyre Basin

Since securing the proclamation of Australia's largest-ever National Park in the Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert, we have managed to negotiate many significant policy commitments from the South Australian Government.

"A commitment to carry out a new statewide wilderness assessment has been completed and will now inform the expansion of protected areas within the Lake Eyre Basin in line with international conservation targets," says South Australia Director, Peter Owen.

"This expansion would protect ecologically important areas such as Goyder Lagoon, the Kallakoopah Creek region and Coongie Lakes Ramsar site, working with First Nations people.

"We are currently running a major awareness campaign with billboards around Adelaide to help deliver a further policy commitment regarding the fossil fuel leases held by gas company Tri-Star within and adjacent to the Munga-Thirri Simpson Desert National Park. The cancellation of these leases would prevent the fossil fuel industry from expanding into this globally significant desert wilderness."



Stopping fossil fuel expansion

Government pauses fossil fuel exploration acreage release

During May 2023, it became clear that this year the Australian government wasn't releasing a round of new offshore oil and gas exploration acreage areas this year, like it does every year.

“Over the last couple of years, tens of thousands of supporters have helped expose the continual release of new acreage to the fossil fuel industry,”

says Tim Beshara, the Wilderness Society's Manager of Policy and Strategy.

"This year, it seems the usual mindless release of precious oceans hasn't happened! Rumours are swirling that there might just be an end in sight to this insanity."

King Island

Back in 2021, the people of King Island, Lutruwita / Tasmania, explicitly said no to fossil fuel exploration off the island's coast. An independent survey of islanders found that 94% were opposed to conducting oil and gas exploration. But they were ignored. ConocoPhillips and other fossil fuel companies continue to expand fossil fuel projects off King Island and Bass Strait.

With your support, in March this year, we took out a full-page advert in the local newspaper, the King Island Chronicle, which also ran a front page story on the community's overwhelming objection to fossil fuel exploration. Meanwhile the community held the island's biggest ever rally in opposition.

Together, we are calling for communities to have a say in environmental decisions that affect them, and to expose and end the mindless release of oceans for fossil fuel exploration.



From the Convenor

on behalf of the Board

Our vision is to transform Australia into a society that protects, respects and connects with the natural world that sustains us.

It's inspiring and nothing less than incredibly radical and ambitious. Many thousands of members, donors and supporters believe it is not a pipedream, but will indeed become a reality—this is our shared inspiration.

From our foundation defending the Franklin, to the many wins over decades—the relentless belief and drive of our work has delivered many stunning outcomes. Each and every time against entrenched power seeking to maintain the 'status quo'.

It is such entrenched and vested power that says to us ideas like fairness, justice and integrity are 'radical' when they are categorically not. It is the 'status quo' that says to us that we cannot have a safe and protected environment and also a prosperous society.

Amidst the darkness and despondency of the daily news cycle, it is very easy and seductive to think that the natural world we all love is doomed. It is not.

What I have seen in the past year is that when we work and act together, we are unstoppable. I believe all progressive social change is inevitable; there just needs to be the political, social and economic will to make it so. Creating this kind of will is core to our work and our organisational campaign plan seeks to do exactly this.

And it's working.

The pillars and principles of the organisational campaign plan are appropriately ambitious and effective, and we have the people to deliver it. From ensuring that communities have a real say, to challenging the mindless release of acreage for fossil fuel exploration, our impact has never been greater.

This is my first year as Convenor, and I am truly honoured by the position and responsibility. I'd like to thank every person who volunteers, all convenors and staff of the Wilderness Society who contribute to delivering our collective impact.

Most importantly, I'd like to thank the many members, donors and supporters who believe that nature must be protected. We all have the very unique opportunity to sustain nature in all its awe and majesty for future generations—to realise balance and sustainability, and re-imagine the 'status quo' like never before.



Karl Tischler
Convenor, The Wilderness Society Ltd



Board Directors at end of financial year:

Karl Tischler Convenor Appointed Director from 28 July 2021; Appointed Convenor 21 February 2023	Amanda Branley Director Re-elected Director 25 November 2021; Appointed Deputy Convenor 6 December 2022	Andrew Barker Director Elected Director 26 November 2020	Lisa Roberts Director Re-elected 23 November 2022
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The financials

from Jen Rowe, CFO

For the 2022/2023 financial year, The Wilderness Society Ltd delivered an operating deficit of \$198 k (after our \$1.6 million surplus result in 2021-22). The deficit position resulted from an expansionary budget with significant increases in our financial investment in organisational growth and our campaigns. But our actual result was better than planned, largely due to above budget fundraising income—particularly bequest income.

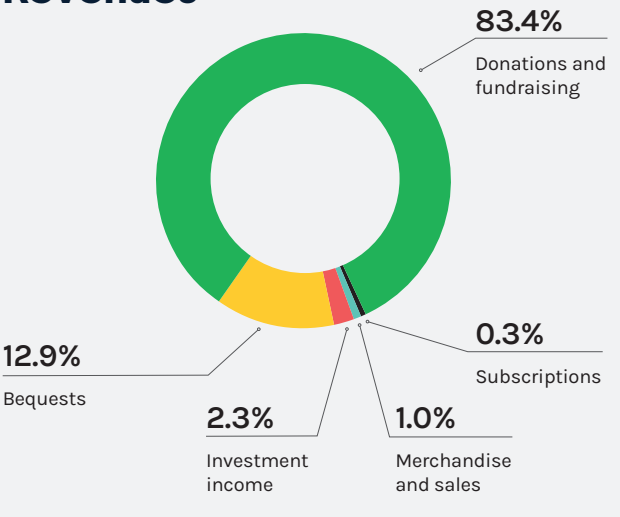
It was a sound financial result for 2022/2023. This was a challenging period where we were rebuilding from the impact of the pandemic, while facing economic uncertainty and inflationary pressures. We have maintained a secure financial footing with our balance sheet and liquidity remaining strong. Our strong reserves position gives us confidence to pursue continued investment in our organisation and its work in delivering our continental campaign plan.

Total revenues grew to \$12.4m (\$11.9m in 2021-22). We are incredibly grateful to all our donors for their ongoing generosity. We received higher bequest income than the prior year, and significantly higher than our long-term average for this program. We built our fundraising events program and also increased investment income, helped by higher interest rates. Within our donations stream, cash appeals income grew, supported by greater investment in this program. Our face-to-face fundraising program faced challenges as we invested to rebuild the program in the face of emerging cost of living pressures.

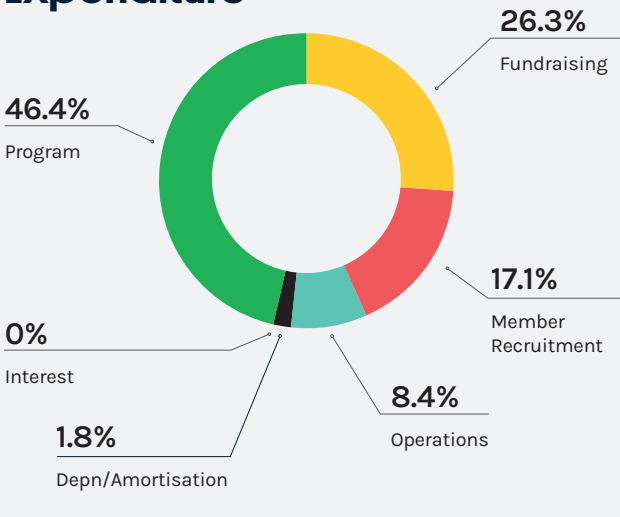
Overall spend on our environmental campaigns and programs increased by \$750k (15%) to \$5.85m (\$5.1m in 2021-22), as we continued to invest more deeply into delivering on our ambitious campaign agenda. We have also further built our reserve funds for our ongoing campaign programs.

We continued to review our operational efficiency. Our governance finance and operating costs were 8.3% of total expenditures, compared to 8.4% in the prior year and 9.6% in the year before that. We increased our investment in fundraising activities to \$5.5m (\$4.1m in 2021-22) to support our long-term growth in fundraising income.

Revenues



Expenditure



Financial results

(for the year ended 30 June 2023)

	2023	2022
Income from fundraising, donations, bequests and grants	\$12,114,361	\$11,769,727
Investment and other non-operating income	\$284,946	\$98,402
TOTAL INCOME	\$12,399,307	\$11,868,129
LESS: EXPENSES		
Environmental campaigns and programs	\$5,849,477	\$5,100,111
Recruitment of new supporters	\$2,156,842	\$1,329,128
Fundraising expenses: staff, appeals, supporters and costs	\$3,314,020	\$2,796,484
Governance, finance and operations	\$1,047,971	\$864,668
Depreciation and amortisation	\$229,011	\$225,239
Interest costs	-	\$13,832
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$12,597,321	\$10,329,462
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	-\$198,014	\$1,538,667
Other comprehensive income (Gain on Revaluation)	-	\$1,100,000
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	-\$198,014	\$2,638,667

Financial position

(for the year ended 30 June 2023)

	2023	2022
Total Assets	\$11,455,437	\$11,377,238
Less: Total Liabilities	\$2,091,786	\$1,807,803
NET ASSETS	\$9,363,651	\$9,569,435
Accumulated Surpluses	\$730,784	\$1,890,967
Reserves	\$8,129,298	\$7,174,899
Non-controlling interest accum. surpluses	\$503,569	\$503,569
TOTAL EQUITY	\$9,363,651	\$9,569,435

This financial information is extracted from the Full Consolidated Financial Report for the year ending 30 June 2023, which you can find at wilderness.org.au/about/reports

“And what of all those Wilderness Society demonstrations, forest marches, meetings with politicians, the drawing of maps and forest stalls at festivals in country and city? Stories for another day.”

Geraldine Ryan, long-time volunteer

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