Our Purpose and Values

Our purpose is protecting, promoting and restoring wilderness and natural processes across Australia for the survival and ongoing evolution of life on Earth.

We embody:
• Passion for our purpose.
• The power of people to make change.
• Organisational independence and integrity.
• Compassion.
• Commitment to success.

The Wilderness Society recognises Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as the Traditional Owners and custodians of all Country in Australia and pays its respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge that this land was never ceded. We support efforts to progress recognition of the distinct rights of Indigenous peoples as well as reconciliation, land justice and equality. We welcome actions that better seek to identify, present, protect and conserve Aboriginal cultural heritage, irrespective of where it is located.

Reflections From Our Board and Executive Team

It may be a cliché, but there can be little doubt that the world is changing rapidly. To survive, everyone must adapt — including The Wilderness Society.

For The Wilderness Society, the imperative to protect nature and wilderness in an era of accelerated climate change has compelled us to embark on ever more audacious campaigns. We have been constantly adapting, reviewing and evolving our approaches to create lasting and positive change.

This constant process of change and adaptation meant that, in 2016/2017, we achieved a truly stunning victory for both nature and for the climate.

BP’s decision to abandon its plans to drill for oil in the deep waters of the Great Australian Bight whale sanctuary was the result of an incredible campaign that spanned the globe — from Kangaroo Island all the way to London.

The decision by Chevron only a few weeks ago to follow BP is breathtaking and inspiring.

The creation of a new Aboriginal-owned and managed national park at Shelburne Bay on Cape York is another remarkable achievement that has been decades in the making. In the world of change, you need to play the long game.

Our ambitious plan to build a powerful movement for nature continues apace. We continue to train and support thousands of Wilderness Society members to become local champions for the wild as part of our Movement For Life initiative.

We also added to our arsenal a new cutting edge database to support our campaigns and organising programs.

Information is power in the modern world of campaigning and organising. In 2016/2017, our team created and delivered (on budget) a massive resource which we named, appropriately, Franklin.

Data drives campaigns, enables us to reach and mobilise our members and supporters, and draws together our digital and on-ground campaigns and organising.

The Wilderness Society continues to adapt and evolve in a changing world. We have achieved much in the past year because of your support and because of the work of our talented and committed staff and volunteer activists.

The year ahead poses many new challenges, including the building of an ambitious campaign to end deforestation across our continent and finish the job in the Bight. But with your support, we go forward confident that we can make change and we will succeed.

Linda Selvey
Convenor Board of Directors

Matt Brennan
Chief Operating Officer

Lyndon Schneiders
National Campaigns Director

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Making An Impact Across The Country

Western Australia
- 51 volunteers
- 28 graduates from two-day community organising training program
- Plans to mine uranium at South Australia’s Arkaroola — a multi-award winning Wilderness Sanctuary 600km north of Adelaide — saw us form alliances with a broad cross section of the community. Five years of relentless campaigning culminated in the Arkaroola Protection Act in 2012. Today, Arkaroola is being considered for National and World Heritage listing.

Queensland
- 135 community organisers
- 55 volunteers
- We launched a powerful alliance of organisations to work on the deforestation crisis.

South Australia
- 77 community organisers working across SA for the Bight campaign
- 5 regional workshops in coastal communities
- 4 Movement For Life training sessions in Adelaide

Tasmania
- 125 members of campaign and organising teams across Tasmania
- 30 graduates from two-day community organising training program

Victoria
- 245 volunteers
- 147 people went on a forest tour to the Great Forest National Park
- 138 graduates from two-day community organising training program

Newcastle
- 60 volunteers
- 69 graduates from two-day community organising training program

Sydney
- 53 volunteers
- 70 graduates from two-day community organising training program

After forming in 1976, our first campaign successes came after a long fight for an undammed Franklin River in 1981, the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park was proclaimed in Tasmania, followed by the 1983 High Court decision to save the Franklin River.

The Wilderness Society (with Prof. David Bellamy) launched its proposal for the creation of a world-class Aboriginal owned national park and marine park in the north Kimberley, in 1992.

In the Historic Kalpowar Agreement of 2006, more than 400,000ha in Cape York Peninsula was protected — including the return of 200,000ha of homelands to Traditional Owners and the creation of the Jack River National Park.

Despite challenges thrown down by Tasmania’s irreplaceable forests.

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In a pre-emptive strike designed to cripple the green movement before announcing plans for a new pulp mill, Gunns sued 29 people — five of our staff — over our campaign to protect forests. Following mass rallies, public outcry and exposure of corruption, we garnered nationwide support. In 2009, community pressure simply wouldn’t allow the pulp mill to go ahead.

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Three years ago, we heard that BP had its sights set on the Great Australian Bight Marine Reserve. The same BP that caused the worst marine oil spill in history. We’ve been campaigning hard ever since — we brought together tens of thousands of people across Australia, supported local communities to stand up to multi-national companies, and have been a leader in an alliance of organisations to protect our pristine southern ocean. And we won! In October 2016, BP backed out of its plans for risky ultra-deepwater oil drilling in the Bight.

In 2010, Western Australia Premier Colin Barnett announced four new marine parks in the Kimberley.

After decades of conflict between forestry and conservation groups, a real path forward was realised for Tasmania’s irreplaceable forests. Despite challenges thrown down by Tasmania’s Upper House, in 2012 the legislation was passed and will deliver formal protection for new national parks and reserves.

After years of campaigning to keep a liquefied natural gas hub out of James Price Point in Western Australia, in 2013 the company Woodside Petroleum announced it would not build the plant.

In 2013, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area expanded to include an extra 170,000ha — permanently protecting the Styx, Florentine and Weld valleys with the support of the timber industry and the unions, as a key outcome of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement.

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It’s been another exciting year in our nature campaigns. We’re a core part of the Places You Love Alliance, developing ground-breaking new policy and campaigning for new laws which will help us win for nature into the future. We stopped the Tasmanian Government opening 400,000 hectares of old growth forest up to logging, and successfully brought about the Giant Lobster Recovery Plan. The Victorian Forest Industry Taskforce led to widespread acknowledgement that the native forest logging industry is unsustainable, among other outcomes. We made great progress towards key protected areas: the Kimberley marine parks network is almost complete; the Great Western Woodlands national park is on the horizon after we held off mining in the Helena Aurora Range; and momentum is building towards a Great Forest National Park. And we have also shone a major public spotlight on the huge toll Australia’s deforestation crisis is taking on our environment and wildlife.

Suzanne Milthorpe
Nature Campaign Manager
Acting On Climate

We’re committed to working to keep fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) in the ground. For several years, we’ve pressured Big Oil, the Federal Government and South Australian Government to protect the pristine waters of the Great Australian Bight from deep sea drilling. Tens of thousands of people signed petitions, communities lobbied their local councils to stand up to Big Oil, and we worked across the country to raise awareness about this risky project.

In October 2016, after significant community pressure, BP withdrew its plan to deep sea drill for oil in the pristine waters of the Great Australian Bight. There’s still more to do — in breaking news, Chevron recently followed in BP’s footsteps and withdrew its plans to drill in the Bight, but one Big Oil company remains: Statoil. With those wins under our belt, we’re ready to take them on.

The long-awaited Environmental Impact Statement on the Narrabri Gas Project in the Pilliga forest was finally released. A record-breaking number of submissions — more than 23,000 — were made to the NSW government.

In Western Australia, we have continued to support Traditional Custodian Micklo Corpus to fight fracking in the Canning Basin. After the initial exploration phase of the Canning Basin by Buru Energy, half a dozen wells were drilled and the company experienced well integrity issues, gas leaks and issues with water management.

Through our community organising during the WA election, we made fracking an election issue and convinced the incoming Labor Government to promise a gas fracking moratorium. Recently, the government committed to its campaign promise and the moratorium was locked in!

Greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and land clearing (including native forest logging) in Australia are equal to about half of all the coal-fired power stations emissions in Australia. We are on the cusp of an exciting opportunity to transform and restore degraded landscapes, while creating new revenue streams for landholders — driven by action on climate change. Our deforestation campaign is laying the foundation for this exciting work.

It has been a big year for our climate work. Two of the world’s largest oil companies, BP and Chevron, have withdrawn from their risky oil drilling plans in the Great Australian Bight — an extraordinary outcome. Meanwhile, gas frackers have been kept at bay in the Kimberley and Pilliga forest — where we are actively working with local communities. We have also shone a major public spotlight on the huge emissions from Australia’s deforestation, while promoting the exciting potential to restore forests and bushland and soak up carbon to help the climate.

Glenn Walker
Climate Campaign Manager
From July 2016 to June 2017, our Movement For Life community organising training program has achieved:

- **709** people completed two- to five-day training courses
- **Over 50** community training sessions run
- **290** community events
- **8** functioning organising and training centres in six states around the country
- **32** community-based teams of over 10 people
- **62,099** petitions signed
- **Our volunteers have made over 8,000** phone calls and knocked on thousands of doors in the community to support our campaigns

Our national training program, Movement For Life, is now reaching maturity and leading the eNGO sector in terms of scale and scope. Every six to eight weeks, our campaign centres are running the two-day Fundamentals of Organising program, resulting in over 50 training programs per year. Movement For Life leaders who completed the train-the-trainer program in December 2016 are now training new community organisers alongside staff, providing extra capacity and allowing us greater opportunity to directly engage our volunteers in our training process.

Our community organisers are holding welcome nights between training programs, which are designed to integrate new supporters into local organising teams, introduce them to our work and the Movement For Life, and invite them to training programs.

Growing Our Movement

With Movement For Life in its second year, I’m so pleased to see that the national movement building program is creating real momentum across the country. Hundreds of people have graduated from our organising training programs and are off having conversations with their friends and neighbours to create transformative change for the environment.

Damian Ogden
Community Organising Manager

“With hundreds of people being trained to have conversations with their friends and neighbours, our community organising program is bringing the power back into the hands of the people to create real and lasting change for our natural environment. It is how we letterboxed 28,000 homes in Victoria, broke the NSW record for submissions on the Narrabri Gas Project in the Pilliga, and built community support to kick one of the world’s biggest corporations out of the Great Australian Bight.

Getting involved in Movement For Life is a great way to do some good for the environment with a group of passionate, everyday people.

Sharlene Younger is just such a person and has been volunteering her time, knocking on doors and talking to Queenslanders about the deforestation crisis.

“If you’re interested in getting involved — just do it, it’s so easy! There’s so much love and integrity as a result. You really can stand with your shoulders back because you know you are doing something that is making a difference,” she says.

Sharlene Younger
Movement For Life Volunteer
Wilderness has been part of my life since childhood. I was raised a bushwalker, environmentalist and scientist with a love of the natural world, a keenness to understand how it worked and a strong ethic to reduce my own impact.

After finishing uni, I attended a Wilderness Society slideshow about Tasmania’s forests. Thus began two years as a volunteer Wilderness Society activist, including one year living on my savings, travelling around to different branches helping with planning, IT and campaigns. I was asked to come down to Hobart for three months to sort out the computers. Luckily no one has noticed yet that that was a positive mark on the world.

Leaving a Gift in your Will leaves a positive mark on the world.
Financial Performance

Financial Statements for The Wilderness Society Ltd

We have had a good year financially and achieved a surplus of $0.3M (2016: deficit $0.3M), and yet we have decreased investment in campaigns and organising from the previous year. The primary reason for this decrease is due to strong receipts received late in the financial year which are reflected in stronger reserves of $2.6M (2016: $2.3M). Results in our environmental campaigns were exceptional and a balance to direct, well-planned investment in the purpose will be restored in 2018.

Total fundraising revenue has increased to $11.7M (2016: $11.3M); an increase in Bequests is the major contributor and our long-term Forever Wild program ensures our most passionate supporters can create a legacy to protect Australia’s magnificent landscapes into the future. The Wilderness Society is proudly independent and we are funded by a large member and supporter base, each donating an average of $240 annually. We believe this gives us enormous integrity in our campaigning, which means we need to continue to be highly efficient in how we process transactions and attract new supporters. We have increased our investment into fundraising efforts to $4.7M (2016: $4.3M). We highly value the unwavering support of our new and long-term supporters, and continue to strive for real outcomes to backup this support.

In the past two financial years, we have invested strategically in a project called Franklin – to upgrade IT systems and databases, and ensure we are operating efficiently and improving our capability to communicate and raise funds. This year, we successfully completed Franklin on budget, which is a significant undertaking for the scale of project. This risk was mitigated through careful planning and purposeful delivery. It has meant we could manage our cashflow carefully, and so prudently entered into a long-term loan agreement with the Forever Wild Trust to ensure sufficient working capital.

This key investment hasn’t reduced our capability to undertake key campaigns in the short-term, and some notable outcomes have been BP discontinuing operations in the Great Australian Bight, and continued training of a core grassroots supporter base through our Movement For Life program. We have Campaign Centres in every state capital plus Newcastle, and each has been effective. Our broad geographical reach is key to achieving our longer term goals.

We continue to keep administrative and operating costs in check at $1.3M (2016: $1.4M), although we note that compliance burdens are increasing annually with multi-faceted government and departmental focus on charities and environment groups.

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Thank you for your support!