

# Where do the parties stand?

Environmental policy assessment of major parties for the 2019 federal election and facts verifying campaign claims

v.2 - Accurate as of 15th Feb 2019

*This document provides a summary of The Wilderness Society's election policy asks (and more detail in an Appendix), an assessment of where the key political parties stand against our core election policy asks, a summary of the record of the current Coalition Government on environmental policy and performance, and a list of key facts verifying major claims made in public communications.*

## Policy asks

The Wilderness Society is seeking the following commitments from all political parties at the 2019 federal election:

1. **Creating nature laws that work**  
Provide a robust and world-leading framework that empower the Federal Government to protect and manage Australia's environment.
2. **Protecting and restoring forests and woodlands**  
Protect our wildlife and most important forest and bushland areas. This includes supporting sustainable agricultural and wood and fibre industries.
3. **Combating climate change**  
Prevent new fossil fuel projects and plan for the decline of existing ones. This includes supporting alternative industries, including renewable energy.
4. **Protecting iconic places**  
Expand and invest in the protected area estate and protect iconic places.

Please see Appendix 1 for more detail on these policies.

Much of the priority of our policy asks for this particular election centres around this first ask. Therefore much of our public communications and materials relate to this.

## Where do the parties stand?

The following table provides a summary of the major parties' current policy positions against our specific policy asks outlined above and in Appendix 1 in detail:

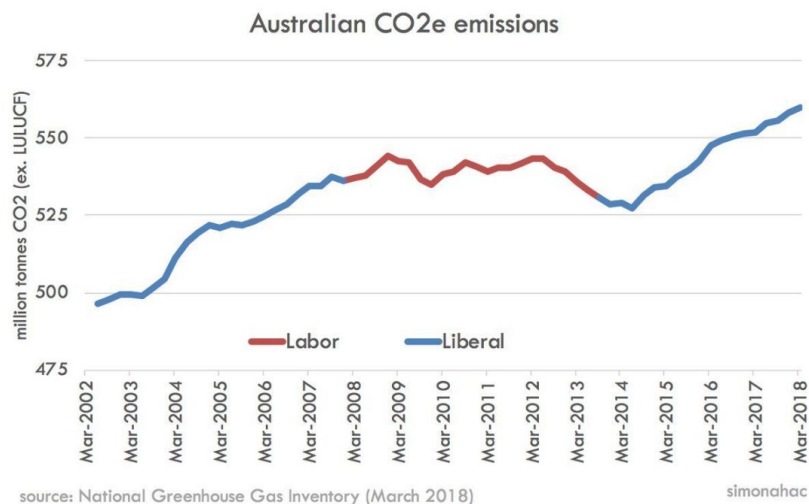
	Labor	Coalition	Greens
<b>Creating nature laws that work</b>	<b>Good progress.</b> Support new laws and national environmental protection authority. Important detail yet to be revealed however.	<b>Long way to go.</b> Oppose new laws and institutions, support handing over environmental powers to the states.	<b>Good progress.</b> Have committed to many aspects of our policy.
<b>Protecting and restoring forests and woodlands</b>	<b>Some progress.</b> Support stronger controls on deforestation and land clearing, but less clear on native forest logging.	<b>Long way to go.</b> Oppose further regulations on deforestation and native forest logging.	<b>Good progress.</b> Have committed to many aspects of our policy.
<b>Combating climate change</b>	<b>Long way to go.</b> Oppose most actions to curb fossil fuel extraction.	<b>Long way to go.</b> Oppose actions to curb fossil fuel extraction.	<b>Good progress.</b> Have committed to many aspects of our policy.
<b>Protecting iconic places</b>	<b>Some progress.</b> Support expansion of protected areas and Indigenous rangers but lacking in specifics and funding.	<b>Long way to go.</b> Some commitments made to support Indigenous rangers but not large expansion of protected areas.	<b>Good progress.</b> Have committed to many aspects of our policy.

## Record of current Coalition Government (2013-2019)

The Wilderness Society has and will continue to educate the public about the environmental record of the current Coalition Government (covering the Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison era). This is important information in the context of our policy asks and the debate over the environment and environmental policy more broadly.

### Environmental decline as result of negligence and inaction

- An estimated 3 million hectares of forest and bushland have been bulldozed since the Coalition came to power in late 2013. That's an area almost 3 times the size of Greater Sydney. This 5-year figure is double than that of the previous 5 years under the previous Labor Government.<sup>1</sup> The Federal Government should and can control this rampant deforestation but this Coalition Government has chosen not to.
- About 770,000 hectares of forest and bushland has been bulldozed in Great Barrier Reef catchment areas since the Coalition Government came to power.<sup>2</sup> This is more than double than that of the previous 5 years under the previous Labor Government. This is despite repeated commitments to Australians and the international community that improving the health of the Great Barrier Reef was a major priority.
- The Murray-Darling river systems continues to be in serious decline, despite the Federal Government playing a central role its management and ensuring its health. Up to a million fish have recently died in the Murray-Darling river system and towns are running out of clean drinking water.<sup>3</sup>
- Australia's greenhouse gas emissions have increased markedly over the past 5 years as this graph demonstrates (excluding land sector due to data uncertainty):<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Detailed data available on request. Sourced from Queensland SLATS and National Greenhouse Gas inventory data. Includes native forest logging. 2016-2018 Qld data is available but other jurisdictions are conservatively estimated.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Energy and Environment. 2018. Quarterly Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report - March 2018. P.22.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/63391569-7ffa-4395-b245-e53893158566/files/nggi-quarterly-update-mar-2018.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><https://theconversation.com/the-murray-darling-basin-plan-is-not-delivering-theres-no-more-time-to-waste-91076>

<sup>4</sup> A Court, S, 2019. <https://twitter.com/simonahac/status/1090758075999432705> - from National Greenhouse Gas Inventory March 2018.

## Decisions and actions (or attempted actions) leading to environmental damage and negative commentary about environmental protection

2013 - PM Tony Abbott, Environment Minister Greg Hunt

- Oversaw very high levels of deforestation, particularly in Queensland and including in Great Barrier Reef catchments.<sup>5</sup>

2014 - PM Tony Abbott, Environment Minister Greg Hunt

- Attempted to open up the giant Styx and Florentine forest valleys in Tasmania to logging by removing them from World Heritage protection.<sup>6</sup>
- Oversaw very high levels of deforestation, particularly in Queensland and including in Great Barrier Reef catchments.
- Oversaw increase in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (when excluding land sector - due to lack of precision in data in this sector).<sup>7</sup>
- Repealed the carbon pricing scheme.<sup>8</sup>
- Twice invoked a rarely used "national interest exemption" to allow the Western Australian government's program to cull great white sharks, despite this species being internationally protected.<sup>9</sup>
- Attempted to rip up environmental protections in the name of "Removing red and green tape"<sup>10</sup>
- Tony Abbott claimed that the logging industry were the "ultimate conservationists"<sup>11</sup>
- Tony Abbott claimed that "coal is good for humanity, coal is good for prosperity"<sup>12</sup>

2015 - PM Tony Abbott, Environment Minister Greg Hunt

- Approved Adani coal mine<sup>13</sup>
- Took away independent oversight of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.<sup>14</sup>
- Attempted to make it almost impossible for environment groups to protect the environment through the courts.
- Oversaw very high levels of deforestation, particularly in Queensland and including in Great Barrier Reef catchments.

---

<sup>5</sup> This point applies to each year. See previous page for references on these figures.

<sup>6</sup><https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/greg-hunt-seeks-to-wind-back-world-heritage-protection-for-tasmanian-forests-20140123-31aww.html>

<sup>7</sup> This point applies to each year. See previous page for references on these figures.

<sup>8</sup><https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/liberals-celebrate-as-carbon-tax-repeal-passes-lower-house-20140626-3awd4.html>

<sup>9</sup> See EPBC exemption notice

<http://epbcnotices.environment.gov.au/exemptionnotices/exemptionnotice/?id=47089832-6c62-e511-b4b8-005056ba00ab>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/national/abbott-to-unveil-red-and-green-tape-cuts-20140318-34zkd.html>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/no-more-national-parks-as-tony-abbott-pledges-to-support-loggers-as-the-ultimate-conservationists-20140305-345zp.html>

<sup>12</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/nov/04/coal-is-the-future-insists-tony-abbott-as-un-calls-for-action-on-climate-change>

<sup>13</sup><https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/adani-carmichael-australias-largest-coal-mine-to-proceed-after-greg-hunt-gives-approval-20151015-gk9wof.html>

<sup>14</sup><https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2F4078409%22>

- Oversaw increase in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (when excluding land sector - due to lack of precision in data in this sector).

2016 - PM Malcolm Turnbull, Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg (from July onwards)

- Oversaw very high levels of deforestation, particularly in Queensland and including in Great Barrier Reef catchments.
- Oversaw increase in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (when excluding land sector - due to lack of precision in data in this sector).

2017 - PM Malcolm Turnbull, Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg

- Criticised the states for not doing enough fracking.<sup>15</sup>
- Oversaw very high levels of deforestation, particularly in Queensland and including in Great Barrier Reef catchments.
- Oversaw increase in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (when excluding land sector - due to lack of precision in data in this sector).
- Rejected clear advice from the Department of the Environment by clearing a Liberal Party donor's project for assessment by the department. The project will "result in permanent and irreversible damage" to a internationally-listed wetland and the Department advised that the proposal was "clearly unacceptable"<sup>16</sup>.

2018 - PM Scott Morrison, Environment Minister Melissa Price (from from August onwards)

- Gave \$443.8m in funding for Great Barrier Reef protection to Great Barrier Reef Foundation, despite that organisation having no on-ground experience, without Departmental oversight or going through a competitive tender process.<sup>17</sup>
- Oversaw very high levels of deforestation, particularly in Queensland and including in Great Barrier Reef catchments.
- Oversaw increase in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (when excluding land sector - due to lack of precision in data in this sector).
- Oversaw publication of Woodside Petroleum project proposal on Christmas Eve, giving the public 10 business days (to 9 January) to comment.<sup>18</sup> This period was later extended after media scrutiny.

---

<sup>15</sup><https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-02-02/liberals-at-odds-over-fracking-in-sa/8235616>

<sup>16</sup><https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-09/the-developer-the-whistleblower-and-the-minister-toondah-harbour/10487806>

<sup>17</sup>[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment\\_and\\_Communications/GBRPartnershipProgram/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/GBRPartnershipProgram/Report)

<sup>18</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/27/woodside-seeks-approval-for-gas-project-near-was-dampier-marine-reserves>



## Appendix 1 - Detailed 2019 federal election policy asks

### Creating nature laws that work

1. **Take urgent interim measures within the first 100 days to improve Australia's environmental regulation** by:
  - Reviewing and publicly reporting on all existing subsidies, incentives and market signals that negatively affect environmental values, assess their harm to the environment and where they could be directed to support environmental and social outcomes.
  - Conducting an independent audit and reporting on spending and impact of Australia's Threatened Species Strategy.
  
2. **Establish a new National Environment Act** that:
  - Provides the framework and power for the active protection and management of the environment.
  - Defines a set of National Environmental Matters (NEMs) for which the Federal Government is responsible for enhancing or maintaining, including:
    - the National Reserve System, encompassing terrestrial and marine protected areas, National and World Heritage areas;
    - High Conservation Value forests and bushland. This includes all primary, old growth and remnant vegetation, and regrowth vegetation where it meets one of the six criteria as defined by the High Conservation Value Network, including riparian areas and threatened species habitat.
    - Critical habitat for critically endangered or endangered species and communities;
    - Population numbers for endangered and critically endangered species; and
    - Large, intact, functioning ecosystems (wilderness areas).
  - Defines a new set of triggers for Federal Government assessment of development applications, which includes:
    - Current Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) under the EPBC Act;
    - National Environmental Matters (NEMs) as defined above;
    - Impacts from land clearing;
    - Significant water resources and wetlands of national significance;
    - Threatened ecological communities;
    - Large, intact, functioning ecosystems (wilderness areas); and
    - Air quality.
  - Takes climate change impacts and adaptation into account in the setting of plans, targets and performing assessments. Climate change impacts to be defined based on current trajectory.
  - Provides legislated requirement to develop science-based recovery plans for all threatened species that are enforceable, binding, and require climate impact assessment for species and its critical habitat, and include emergency response plans and funding in the event of extreme events affecting habitat (such as fire).

- Provides mechanisms for protection against major threats and for High Conservation Value ecosystems, like internationally important wetlands, critical catchments, wilderness areas and threatened species.
- Provides mechanisms for cumulative assessment of impacts on all new and existing MNES and sets clear, unambiguous thresholds for higher order assessments (eg. Public Inquiry etc).
- Requires the Federal Government to set out:
  - Twenty year national strategies, commensurate with our requirement to have a National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity; and
  - Five-year National Environment Plans, including national emissions targets.
- Guarantees standing, merits and judicial appeals rights and right to adequate, timely and full access to information on environmental impacts for all Australians.
- Ensures environment law provides minimum national standards that apply equally across industries and sectors, with no exemptions.

**2. Establish an independent National Environment Commission** with the authority to:

- Develop a National Environment Plan that sets out goals and objectives for:
  - Improving indicators of environmental health;
  - Coordinating protection and management of public and private protected areas; and
  - Transitioning away from subsidies, policies and incentives harmful to the environment.
- Engage state and local governments, stakeholders and community to:
  - Develop regional plans for all areas of Australia to deliver on these goals and objectives, including incorporating environmental decision making into development and agricultural policy making;
  - Monitor and report annually on progress against the National Environment Plan to Federal Parliament, providing recommendations on future actions to which the Federal Government is obliged to respond; and
  - Report annually on environmental indicators publicly via OurEnvironment.gov interface or similar.
- Develop a national set of definitions, standards and methodologies for environmental indicators.

**3. Establish a new independent National Environmental Protection Authority** with the authority to:

- Conduct environmental impact assessments for matters directly regulated by the Australian Government, including requiring proponents to meaningfully consult with "key stakeholders" (including environmental NGOs and Indigenous Australians).
- Make approval decisions, with the Environment Minister retaining a veto or power to impose additional conditions. Approvals outcomes and the exercise of Ministerial powers must be public and are required to be in line with the National Environment Plan.
- Act as watchdog over system, at arm's-length from government, with responsibility for monitoring, compliance and enforcement of all national



environmental laws, with appropriate powers and specific responsibilities to undertake these functions (including investigations and inspections).

- Advise the Federal Government on emissions reduction targets, based on impacts on the environment. The EPA can trigger a review of emissions mitigation targets.

The success of this new governance framework will be judged by the following results:

- Zero destruction of primary, remnant, old growth or high conservation value forests and bushland.
- At least fifty percent (50%) reduction in current land clearing rates of regrowth vegetation by 2020, near zero by 2025.
- No more fauna or flora extinctions.
- Measurable recovery of numbers or extent and quality of threatened, endangered and critically endangered species and ecosystems.
- Measurable recovery of freshwater ecosystems, including the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Measurable recovery of large, intact and functioning ecosystems (wilderness areas);
- Twenty percent (20%) of every terrestrial and marine bioregion in Australia are protected in nationally coordinated and consistent system of conservation tenures.
- Federal Government leads the country in ensuring environmental indicators improve.
- Environmental regulation, planning and decision making independent from political parties, adequately resourced to achieve outcomes, conducted transparently and fully enforced.
- Community has legislated right to open standing, merits review and third-party enforcement rights under national environmental laws.
- Community and NGO sector have access to consistent, regularly updated and reliable government data on environmental values and greenhouse gas reporting on disaggregated by sector and between sequestration and emissions.

## Protecting and restoring forests and bushland

1. **Take urgent interim measures within the first 100 days to reign in land clearing by:**
  - Immediately enforcing the EPBC Act, to ensure full and proper assessment of potential forest and bushland destruction likely to impact on MNES, including the Great Barrier Reef, nationally-listed threatened species habitat and threatened ecological communities.
  - As new environment laws and institutions will take time to draft and develop, in the interim, strengthen the EPBC Act to bolster Federal Government powers to prevent further land clearing. This should include a specific land clearing trigger under the Act, making it a matter of national environmental significance as an environmental threat directly impacting on Federal Government responsibilities. The powers established should include denying clearing applications where there is proposed clearing of High Conservation Value forests and bushland. This includes all primary, old growth and remnant vegetation, and regrowth vegetation where it meets one of the six criteria as defined by the High Conservation Value Network, including riparian areas and threatened species habitat.

**2. Take urgent measures within the first 100 days to review Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs), including:**

- Undertake a high-level, transparent and genuinely independent inquiry to review the state of the publicly owned forest estate, including:
  - A review of the objectives and operation of the RFAs against actual outcomes;
  - A financial analysis of the social and economic value of RFA-related financial and business activities, including full accounting of public subsidies to RFA related government agencies and businesses;
  - Analysis of the effectiveness of state-based regulatory systems, in the context of RFAs, against, at a minimum:
    - The EPBC Act objectives;
    - FSC standards;
    - The UN Convention for Biological Diversity;
    - Any other relevant international agreements; and
    - To identify gaps and other inadequacies.
  - Examination of the changed social, environmental and economic context of forest management, including the cumulative impacts of successive bushfires and changing climate conditions in relation to forests and RFAs; and
  - Provision of a clear set of recommendations as to fit-for-purpose national forest policy and associated agreements between jurisdictions.
- Not rollover or extend RFAs, and comprehensively review any that have already been rolled over or extended.
- Ensure that any future forest management arrangements that replace RFAs value and account for the full range of forest uses including; conservation, tourism, recreation, water, carbon and any limited native forest logging that may form part of a rapid industry transition.
- These arrangements should also require, at a minimum, that conservation protections meet or exceed those required by the FSC national Forest Management standard.

**3. Support transition to sustainable wood and fibre industry:**

- Provide greater incentives to encourage a transition to sustainable, FSC-certified plantations, and to recycled fibre. Where required, this may involve the establishment of new plantations, or the upgrading of existing plantations.
- Work with states and territories to stop taxpayer subsidies to the native forest logging industry.
- Strengthen and formalise support for FSC certification and require logging standards to match or exceed those required by FSC national Forest Management standard.
- Require state/territory governments to secure the highest-level of FSC full forest management certification for publicly-owned logging entities.

**4. Ensure the new environment laws and institutions establish firm national strategic leadership and regulatory powers over land clearing and logging by:**

- Setting and enforcing clear national and regional targets to protect forest and

bushland and rapidly and substantially reduce deforestation, logging and clearing rates, including denying clearing applications where there is proposed clearing of High Conservation Value forests and bushland. This includes all primary, old growth and remnant vegetation, and regrowth vegetation where it meets one of the six criteria as defined by the High Conservation Value Network, including riparian areas and threatened species habitat. Cumulative impacts must be taken into account.

**5. Expand and strengthen Australia’s protected area estate:**

- The current formal protected area system is not comprehensive, adequate and representative—the three key formal scientific objectives agreed by all Australian governments. New and expanded formal and informal protected areas and contiguous reserves are required to protect critical threatened species habitat and threatened ecological forest and bushland communities.
- This includes the protection of Tasmanian Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF) areas within formal reserves support the establishment of the proposed Great Forest National Park and the Emerald Link in Victoria, and the Great Koala National Park in NSW.
- Support the uptake of conservation covenanting programs for areas of significant environmental value on private land.

**6. Establish a National Nature and Climate Fund to enable large-scale ecological restoration that:**

- Ensures all projects should meet minimum standards for biodiversity and resilience outcomes - including by excluding monoculture plantations.
- Prioritises areas for ecological restoration, where climate, biodiversity, community and economic benefits are collectively maximised. This should include developing methods to protect and restore forests impacted by Regional Forest Agreements, and savanna burning projects.
- Supports coordinated restoration response to impacts on the natural environment from extreme events, particularly large scale wildfire, and involving implementation of ecological fire regimes as a preventative measure.
- Provides skills and enterprise training, development opportunities, infrastructure, and support for lower income / disadvantaged communities to remove barriers to participation in restoration, remediation and conservation projects.
- Ensures no direct offsetting of fossil fuel emissions with land carbon credits either domestically or internationally.

**7. Implement a national deforestation and ecological restoration monitoring program that includes:**

- Regular, detailed data made publicly available, including raw GIS data, interactive maps and detailed breakdowns of land clearing and logging emissions and carbon drawdown by land use and sector.
- Provision of data to be based on Queensland’s SLATS approach and the latest remote sensing technologies.

**8. Reform greenhouse gas emissions accounting for the land sector including:**

- Reporting to fully disaggregate land sector data.
- Clearly recording carbon currently stored in land systems and categorising the

- stability of the carbon (using health and naturalness of vegetation as a surrogate and including weather and climate risk modelling).
- Separating land sector emission reduction targets from non-land sector targets.
- Making data available at national, state and regional levels, and attribute deforestation, logging and land clearing by sector.

## Combating climate change

### 1. Reform greenhouse gas emissions accounting including:

- Reporting of scope 3 emissions from fossil fuel mining activities, disaggregated by sector, mine site and domestic/export destination market.
- Reporting of new projects proposed, where individual projects have cumulative emissions above a determined threshold (including scope 3 emissions in the case of fossil fuel mining projects).
- An analysis of the contribution of the Australian economy to global climate change via fossil fuel mining and exports (scope 1, 2 and 3), including an analysis of the industry's scope 3 emissions over the past 50 years, forward projections (updated annually) and scope 3 emission estimates for current fossil fuel reserves.

### 2. Disclose Australia's climate-related economic and financial risks within context of Paris Climate Agreement:

- In the context of institutional climate-related risk disclosure, within 100 days initiate a national public analysis to identify, cost and mitigate the risks that climate change (and continued fossil fuel use) poses to the Australian economy and Federal Government budget - led by Treasury or another high level and credible economic institution.
- The scope should include:
  - Physical risks of and economic costs to major infrastructure, social activities, economic activities and natural assets from climate change;
  - Transition risks from the rapid shift from fossil fuel economies to renewable-powered economies, including the risks of continued subsidies, investment and support for the fossil fuel industry. This should explicitly outline the climate consequences of burning all known Australian fossil fuels reserves within the context of the global carbon budget under the Paris Climate Agreement;
  - Liability risk evaluation as a result of exposure to climate change litigation of both publicly owned assets and to the economy more broadly through companies subject to extensive litigation; and
  - Evaluation of 'opportunity costs' of business as usual activities, compared to costs of transition and mitigation of climate-change causing and exposed activities.
- As an additional measure and to assist the compilation of the above information, ensure mandatory climate risk disclosure from all ASX companies as part of their statutory reporting requirements, in terms of their full scope 1-3 cumulative emissions, and the physical, transition and liability risks outlined above.

### 3. End fossil fuel industry subsidies, including:

- Immediately halt the use of public funds (including all grants, investments, tax concessions and other subsidies) supporting fossil fuel projects, pollution-intensive industries or industry hubs.
  - Ensure public money is only used to accelerate projects, industries and facilities (including infrastructure) that are consistent with the transition to a fossil fuel-free, decarbonised economy.
4. **Prevent expansion of offshore oil and gas industry, including:**
- No new release of offshore oil or gas acreage. Existing permits that lapse should be cancelled and extensions no longer be granted. This includes:
    - Amend legislation to prevent approval of any offshore exploration or production works in any Marine Reserves;
    - Disallow any production licenses or further exploration permits in the Great Australian Bight and central NSW coast as priority frontier basins where both project risks and community opposition are high;
    - Prevent release of all further offshore oil and gas acreage; and
    - Development framework for the 'hand-in' of existing exploration licences and withdraw regulatory framework for the approval of future production licences.
5. **Work with states to prevent new onshore fossil fuel projects and plan for the decline of existing ones including:**
- Formally support state moratoriums on unconventional gas development or any other fossil fuel acreage release and development.
  - Initiate COAG workstream to develop a clear and time-constrained plan for the prevention of new fossil fuel acreage release, further fossil fuel mining expansion, and the closure of existing coal, gas and oil mines and related processing facilities. This must include adequately resourced transition plans to support workers and communities through the transition and to stimulate diversified, low-pollution economies for the future.
6. **Lead internationally in managed decline of fossil fuel industry, including:**
- Taking a suite of commitments to UNFCCC that includes emission reduction targets, land sector targets and Government-led fossil fuel industry contraction commitments and targets - seeking support and similar breadth of commitment from allies.

## Protecting iconic places

1. **Expand and strengthen Australia's protected area estate:**
- The current formal protected area system is not comprehensive, adequate and representative—the three key formal scientific objectives agreed by all Australian governments. New, expanded and upgraded formal and informal protected areas are required to protect critical threatened species habitat and threatened ecological forest and bushland communities.
  - Work with the states to ensure the National Reserve System is adequately protected against all mining and other resource extraction, including 'selective' logging.
  - Include specific protected area expansion goal in the National Environment Plan, with the aim of twenty percent (20%) of every terrestrial and marine

- bioregion in Australia being protected in IUCN category I-III protected areas.
- Fund the National Reserve System Program to at least \$200 million a year to ensure protected area expansion and management, including long-term funding for effective management and conservation of Indigenous cultural values and support for and expansion of Indigenous Protected Areas and Traditional Ranger programs around the country.
  - Ensure a nationally consistent and coordinated system of protection tenures (public, Indigenous and private) that help the Federal Government meet its obligation to enhance or maintain National Environment Matters (see Creating Nature Laws that work section).
  - Joint and co-management in collaboration with Indigenous Australians should be encouraged and supported with funding, and establishment of protected and conservation areas should not compromise Traditional Owner rights and interests regardless of whether their native title rights have been recognised.

## **2. Priorities for protection in protected area estate:**

- Under the Protected Areas goal in the National Environment Plan, work with states to prioritise the gazetted protection of:
  - Iconic natural and cultural areas, including as part of a World Heritage nomination or expansions, for Great Australian Bight, and takayna/Tarkine (Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area expansion);
  - Nationally important ecosystems, such as the Tasmanian Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF), Great Forest National Park, the Simpson and Central Desert, Emerald Link, Pilliga, Great Koala National Park, Fitzroy River National Park in the Kimberley and Helena Aurora Range National Park in the Great Western Woodlands;
  - Update the National Wilderness Inventory and prioritise the protection of large, intact, functioning ecosystem (wilderness areas) currently outside of the protected area estate; and
  - Critically unprotected or underprotected ecosystems, such as our offshore continental shelf and slope, RAMSAR sites such as the Lower Murray Lakes/Coorong and Coongie Lakes, known ranges of endangered and critically endangered animals, and critically endangered ecological communities.

## Appendix 2 - References for key campaign claims

The following are key facts that support claims The Wilderness Society is and will continue to make throughout the federal election campaign 2019:

- **Australia has the worst rate in the world for mammal extinctions<sup>19</sup>.**
  - The total is 30 confirmed, with 27 officially listed on our EPBC list as extinct and 3 more confirmed but not listed on the EPBC extinction list yet<sup>20</sup>
  - Includes the Tasmanian Tiger and the Gould's mouse
  - [Full list here](#)
- **Australia is second worst in the world for loss of diversity of life (or biodiversity loss)<sup>21</sup>.**
  - No.1 is Indonesia
  - An expert responding to the report said the number one reason for this was land clearing.<sup>22</sup>
  - Since 2000 Australia's list of nationally threatened species and ecological communities has increased by more than 30%<sup>23</sup>.
- **Australia is fourth in the world for overall plant and animal extinctions<sup>24</sup>.**
  - A recent study found that unless management improves Australia's extinction rate will accelerate from a confirmed 6 extinctions in the twenty years to a probable seventeen in the next twenty<sup>25</sup>.
- **Australia is up there with the Amazon and Indonesia for deforestation and wildlife extinctions.**
  - Another way to put it: Australia is in the top 10 global deforestation hotspots, next to places like the Amazon, Indonesia and the Congo.
  - More on where this derives from: led by Queensland, Eastern Australia has been recognised as one of eleven "deforestation fronts" in the world, according to WWF-International.<sup>26</sup> "Deforestation fronts" are defined in the Report as "the places where the largest concentrations of forest loss or severe degradation are projected between 2010 and 2030."<sup>27</sup>
  - This is really a merging of the deforestation fact here and the two above re mammals and second worst for biodiversity loss.
- **An area the size of the MCG is bulldozed every 2 minutes in Australia**

---

<sup>19</sup> Woinarski et al (2015) "Ongoing unraveling of a continental fauna: decline and extinction of Australian mammals since European settlement" *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112(5): 4531-4540

<sup>20</sup> Currently Bramble Cays Melomys, Christmas island Forest Skink + Christmas Island Pipistrelle still not listed as extinct - this is paperwork, not reality.

<sup>21</sup> Waldron et al (2017) "Reductions in global biodiversity loss predicted from conservation spending" *Nature* 551: 364-367.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-10-26/australia-biodiversity-loss-conservation/8987696>

<sup>23</sup> From 1,483 to 1,947 - as at 31 July 2018 (Australian Conservation Foundation, WWF and The Wilderness Society Australia (2018) *Fast-tracking Extinction: Australia's national environmental law* Available online at <https://www.acf.org.au/reports>)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-08-19/fact-check-does-australia-have-one-of-the-highest-extinction/6691026>

<sup>25</sup> Gayle H et al (2018) "Quantifying extinction risk and forecasting the number of impending Australian bird and mammal extinctions" *Pacific Conservation Biology* 24:157-167

<sup>26</sup> WWF International, WWF International, *Living Forests Report* (2015), Chapter 5: Saving Forests at Risk [http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lfr\\_chapter\\_5\\_executive\\_summary\\_final.pdf](http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lfr_chapter_5_executive_summary_final.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> WWF-International, 2015. *Living Forests Report (Chapter 5: Saving Forests at Risk)*, p. 2.

- We estimate about 600,000 hectares of forest and bushland in Australia was bulldozed in 2016.<sup>28</sup> That's an area twice the size of the ACT.
- 50% of our forests in Australia have been bulldozed or severely cleared<sup>29</sup>.
- **Australia is one of the world's most mega-diverse countries, with about 10% of the world's species**
  - We have a very high level of endemism (uniqueness to this country) compared with other countries. For example, 46% of our birds, 87% of mammals, and 93% of reptiles are only found here<sup>30</sup>.
- **One native animal is killed every single second from bulldozers / deforestation and land clearing in Australia<sup>31</sup>**
  - This is an underestimate as is only Queensland, but is an impactful enough stat as is.
  - It is estimated that each year in Queensland and New South Wales alone, about 50 million mammals, birds and reptiles are killed as a result of deforestation and land clearing.<sup>32</sup>
- **Out of more than 6,100 projects referred to the government for assessment, only 21 (less than 0.3%) have been refused in 20 years**
  - Only 2% of projects have been successfully challenged in the courts<sup>33</sup>.
  - Spending for biodiversity programs has decreased by 37% since 2013<sup>34</sup>.
  - WWF Australia calculates that Australia's National Reserve System is underfunded by at least \$170 million per year<sup>35</sup>.
- **The koala is threatened with extinction in NSW and Qld**
  - Koala numbers have declined 26% across NSW in just 20 years<sup>36</sup>.
  - It is estimated there are now only 21,000 koalas left in NSW (as of 2010), a tiny fraction of the millions that are believed to have occupied the state's forests and bushland at the time of European settlement 230 years ago<sup>37</sup>.

---

<sup>28</sup> April 2018, Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory Activity Table 1990-2016 LULUCF, Commonwealth of Australia 2017, Available online at: <http://ageis.climatechange.gov.au/QueryAppendixTable.aspx>. Qld column has been replaced with Qld SLATS data to arrive at this figure. It includes native forest logging. More detail on this data available on request.

<sup>29</sup> Bradshaw C (2012) "Little left to lose: deforestation and forest degradation in Australia since European colonization" *Journal of Plant Ecology* 5 (1)

<sup>30</sup> Cresswell D & Murphy H (2017) Australia state of the environment 2016: biodiversity Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy, Canberra p4; Chapman, A. D. 2009 "Numbers of living species in Australia and the world" *Australian Biological Resources Study*, Canberra, Australia

<sup>31</sup> Based on 50 million native animals in QLD and NSW alone: 50 million / 365 days per year = 136,986 animals per day. / 24 hours = 5,707 per hour. / 60 minutes = 95 per minute. / 60 seconds = 1.5 per second. So this figure is very conservative, but impactful nonetheless because it is nicely rounded.

<sup>32</sup> Finn, HC. & Stephens, NS., 2017. The invisible harm: land clearing is an issue of animal welfare. *Wildlife Research (CSIRO Journal)*. CSIRO Publishing, p.4.

<sup>33</sup> Macintosh, A; Roberts H; Constable, A (2017) "An Empirical Evaluation of Environmental Citizen Suits under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)" *Sydney Law Review* 39(1)

<sup>34</sup> Australian Conservation Foundation 2018 *Budget Submission 2018-19*. Available online [https://www.acf.org.au/budget\\_2018\\_19\\_investment\\_in\\_a\\_healthy\\_environment\\_cut\\_to\\_bare\\_bones\\_while\\_fossil\\_fuel\\_subsidies\\_continue](https://www.acf.org.au/budget_2018_19_investment_in_a_healthy_environment_cut_to_bare_bones_while_fossil_fuel_subsidies_continue)

<sup>35</sup> Taylor M et al 2014 *Building Nature's Safety Net 2014: A decade of protected area achievements in Australia* WWF-Australia, Sydney [www.wwf.org.au/buildingnaturesafetynet2014](http://www.wwf.org.au/buildingnaturesafetynet2014)

<sup>36</sup> O'Kane, M., 2016. *Report of the independent review into the decline of koala populations in key areas of NSW*. Online, available at: <<https://bit.ly/2iD78Ds>> accessed 29 May 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Threatened Species Scientific Committee. 2012. Advice to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (the Committee) on Amendment



- Koalas are on track to face extinction in NSW as early as 2050 based on current trends and expert knowledge.<sup>38</sup>
- Across Queensland there has been a 43% decline in koala populations over 20 years (1990-2010).<sup>39</sup>
- Have to be careful using these stats, as in Victoria and South Australia the koala is unnaturally over-abundant in some key localised areas, particularly where they have been artificially introduced.
- **Only 0.3% of destructive projects have been stopped by national environment laws in 20 years.**
  - Out of more than 6,100 projects referred to the government for assessment, only 21 (less than 0.3%) have been refused approval<sup>40</sup>.
  - Some activities like deforestation should be stopped by our national environment laws, but the Federal Government refuses to enforce them because they are worried about short-term political consequences.
- **99% of koala habitat on private land can be bulldozed in NSW<sup>41</sup>**
  - Eight million hectares of land in NSW has been put at risk of clearing by just one new code<sup>42</sup>.
- **Some sectors are given special exemption from the rules and laws are not enforced.**
  - For example, logging of native forests, including mature and old-growth forests is not covered by our national environment laws, despite being the primary threat to critically endangered animals like the Leadbeater's Possum and Swift Parrot.
- **Loopholes and policies such as offsets allow the destruction of known habitat for endangered species against the advice of experts.**
  - For example, a dam in tasmania will destroy 21 ha of nesting and breeding habitat provided another area of habitat that is not threatened and should already be protected is set aside for conservation<sup>43</sup>
- **Federal protections can't stop threats to wildlife and habitat**
  - In 2007, the EPBC Act was amended to remove the legal requirement for threatened species to have a recovery plan - no recovery plan or conservation advice has the legal power to compel Australian governments to protect a species.
- **The EPBC Act is not being properly enforced:**

---

to the list of Threatened Species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) (Koala in Qld, NSW and ACT).

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/197-listing-advice.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> WWF-Australia (2018). Koala extinction risk NSW.

<http://www.wwf.org.au/ArticleDocuments/351/pub-Koala-extinction-risk-NSW-28sept18.pdf.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> Department of the Environment and Energy, 2017. *Species Profile and Threats Database - koala* (Online).

<http://bit.ly/SVOqGm>. Accessed September 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Australian Conservation Foundation, WWF and The Wilderness Society Australia (2018) *Fast-tracking Extinction: Australia's national environmental law* Available online at <https://www.acf.org.au/reports>

<sup>41</sup> Nature Conservation Council, 2018. *Environment Minister knew 99% of koala habitat would be exposed to land clearing by contentious new laws, FOI document shows*. Online, available at: <<https://bit.ly/2kxZpXd>> accessed 3 May 2018.

<sup>42</sup> Ecological Australia, 2016. *Potential vegetation clearing under the equity code*. Online, available at:

<<https://bit.ly/2wlyKWp>> accessed May 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Referral 2018/07 Prosser Plains Raw Water Scheme -

<https://gsbc.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/PPRWS-Referral-20170516-Signed.pdf>

- One analysis by WWF-Australia has found 7,658 locations in Queensland where clearing had occurred or was planned in which the landowner should (or probably should) have sought approval (at the initial stage, called a 'referral' under the EPBC Act), yet in 99% of cases no steps have been taken by the Australian Government. Over half of that clearing was in Great Barrier Reef catchments.<sup>44</sup>
- **To date, there are only 5 EPBC referrals for Queensland clearing in Reef catchments.**
  - This is despite the fact that 770,000 hectares of forest were bulldozed in Great Barrier Reef catchment areas over the past 5 years<sup>45</sup>
- **The US EPA and Endangered Species Act (ESA) has protected 1,482 threatened plants and animals, and has prevented 227 extinctions during its 45 year life<sup>46</sup>.**
  - Most species covered by the ESA haven't yet reached their expected recovery year:
    - The El Segundo butterfly is likely to be delisted in the next 10 years, and has experienced a 22,312% increase in population since 1984; and
    - The Florida Panther has experienced an approximate 200-400% recovery in population [from 30-50 individuals in 1980s to ~130 in 2010, but is not expected to fully recover until 2085<sup>47</sup>
  - A 2012 study found that 90 per cent of species covered by the ESA are meeting recovery milestones and recovering as predicted in their recovery plans<sup>48</sup>.
  - 1 per cent of species listed under the ESA have recovered entirely and been delisted owing to conservation action<sup>49</sup>.
  - 85 per cent of continental US birds are recovering or have stabilised since being protected under the ESA, with the average population growth after listing being 624 per cent<sup>50</sup>
- **By contrast, Australia has only had one animal recover and be delisted from the threatened species list (Muir's Corella)<sup>51</sup>.**

---

<sup>44</sup> WWF-Australia (2017), Pervasive inaction on national conservation law in Qld. Available online via <http://www.wwf.org.au/knowledge-centre/resource-library#gs.qD39tiE> Also reported in The Guardian on 12 July 2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jul/12/exclusive-government-inaction-leading-to-increased-pollution-on-barrier-reef-says-wwf>

<sup>45</sup> Department of Energy and Environment. 2018. Quarterly Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report - March 2018. P.22.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/63391569-7ffa-4395-b245-e53893158566/files/nggi-quarterly-update-mar-2018.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Center for Biological Diversity 2012 *On time, on target: How the Endangered Species Act is Saving America's Wildlife* accessed here [https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/110\\_REPORT.pdf](https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/110_REPORT.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Center for Biological Diversity 2012 *On time, on target: How the Endangered Species Act is Saving America's Wildlife* accessed here [https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/110\\_REPORT.pdf](https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/110_REPORT.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Center for Biological Diversity 2012 *On time, on target: How the Endangered Species Act is Saving America's Wildlife* accessed here [https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/110\\_REPORT.pdf](https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/110_REPORT.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Center for Biological Diversity 2012 *On time, on target: How the Endangered Species Act is Saving America's Wildlife* accessed here [https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/110\\_REPORT.pdf](https://www.esasuccess.org/pdfs/110_REPORT.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Center for Biological Diversity 2016 *A Wild Success: A Systematic Review of Bird Recovery Under the Endangered Species Act*

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon\\_id=25981](http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=25981)

