

Our choice

Ten actions to protect people,
rivers, reefs, forests and wildlife

National Agenda 2016



**AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION**



Kelly O'Shanassy
CEO

“For too long, too little has been done. We are living in a climate and extinction crisis. But the future is not set. Our next government could make Australia better than we ever imagined. Better for everyone, and every living thing. But there can be no more delay.”

Our vision



A global pollution and extinction crisis is threatening life. We must rapidly build a bridge to a brighter future. We know this.

Australians love this ancient island continent, its seas and forests, its unique critters and country. We honour the Indigenous Australians who have cared for life and land for tens of thousands of years, and still do.

We all share a responsibility – communities, businesses and government – to live in a way that embraces life. With hope, ingenuity and creativity, people can protect our air, rivers, forests and wildlife, so together we can create a brighter future.

Scientists have warned us time is running out. We need to change the trajectory of extinction and rapid depletion of the natural world which sustains us.

Today, millions of Australians are planting trees, installing solar panels and divesting from dirty energy. While the stakes have never been higher, there is also a great desire to transform the way we, as Australians, live on this land.

In the lead up to the Paris COP 21 in 2015 communities from across Australia created the biggest climate marches we have ever seen. People want a brighter future and are prepared to stand up for it.

The majority of Australians expect our government to lead with a plan to protect wildlife and nature. We want our children and grandchildren to experience the bush as we did. We want to live in a country where our plants and wildlife thrive, where people and nature support one another.

The Australian Conservation Foundation – with the support of our community of over a quarter of a million Australians – expects all political parties, and people who seek to represent us, to sustain life. There are ten actions to achieve this and create a better Australia, for everyone, and every living thing.

The future we hand on to generations that follow will be the result of decisions elected representatives make today. The power of these decisions is immense.

Our choice is to create a future in which our water flows clean and we care for country and communities. Where we share in abundant energy from the sun and wind and use this clean energy to power our cities. Where business creates opportunities to work in harmony with nature and people work in jobs with a future. Where a healthy environment supports wellbeing, culture, active communities and a sound economy.

Let's create a tomorrow that is brighter than today.



Ten actions to protect people, rivers, reefs, forests and wildlife



ACF calls on governments, and people who seek to represent Australians, to commit to:



1. Cut pollution

Set strong climate pollution targets and do Australia's fair share to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C hotter than pre-industrial temperatures.



2. Go 100% clean energy

Remove barriers and create incentives so Australian communities, cities and industries can be powered by 100 per cent clean, renewable energy by 2050 or sooner.



3. Shift away from polluting coal

Replace dirty, out-of-date coal-fired power stations with clean energy, don't approve any new or bigger coal mines and phase out existing mines.



4. Help communities and nature thrive

Create clean, smart cities and restore our natural landscapes to cut pollution and help communities and nature cope with worsening droughts, floods and bushfires.



5. Be nuclear free

Reduce radioactive risks by stopping uranium mining and export, withdrawing from the global nuclear industry and responsibly managing Australia's radioactive waste.



6. Create strong laws to protect air, water and wildlife

Develop a new generation of strong national laws and institutions to protect our rivers, reefs, forests and wildlife, improve biodiversity and regulate pollution.



7. Re-connect habitats

Protect, restore and connect critical habitats, water catchments and forests to give communities, plants and animals the best chance to thrive and adapt to global warming.



8. Help nature and culture thrive in the north

Protect and manage the natural and cultural heritage of the Kimberley, Kakadu and Cape York Peninsula and invest so people can have jobs that are good for families, communities and nature.



9. Keep the Murray flowing

Deliver the historic Murray-Darling Basin Plan for healthier rivers and wetlands, wildlife and communities and reinvigorate national water reform.



10. Value nature in government decision making

Integrate the value of Australia's rivers, oceans, forests and land into political decision making, policy advice and economic reporting.



Cut pollution



Set strong climate pollution targets and do Australia's fair share to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C hotter than pre-industrial temperatures.

Pollution from burning dirty coal is damaging our climate. The science is clear: we must limit global warming to less than 1.5°C hotter than pre-industrial temperatures to avoid more damage. Globally, 195 countries have agreed to keep global warming well below 2°C and aim to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. This is great momentum. The Australian government has a responsibility to curb global warming based on the safer threshold of 1.5°C to protect our communities from worse fires, droughts and floods. We need to work together with other countries. As a developed nation that produces more than its fair share of pollution – and skills, ingenuity and creativity – we must do our bit. That means setting strong but fair national targets to cut climate pollution.

How to make it happen

- 1 Do our fair share in the global effort to cut climate pollution, committing to pollution reduction targets of at least:
 - a. 25 per cent on 2000 levels by 2020;
 - b. 45-65 per cent on 2005 levels by 2025;
 - c. 65-85 per cent on 2005 levels by 2030; and
 - d. zero net climate pollution by 2040-2050.
- 2 Establish a long-term market and/or regulatory mechanism to effectively, efficiently and permanently reduce climate pollution.
- 3 Retain the independent Climate Change Authority to provide credible, science-based advice on the scale and effectiveness of pollution reduction targets and policies.
- 4 Help developed countries (particularly our neighbours in the Asia Pacific) cut pollution and adapt to the unavoidable impacts of damage to our climate. We can achieve this by providing adequate financial resources to the Green Climate Fund to help to develop capacity, collaboration and other forms of support.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Set pollution targets to progressively reduce our pollution and enable Australia to reach net zero climate pollution by 2050 at the latest?
- Be effective, durable, scalable and able to achieve the goal of reducing Australia's climate pollution to net zero by 2050 at the latest?
- Keep and adequately fund the independent Climate Change Authority, or similar independent authority that advises the government on climate change?
- Commit our fair share of funding – \$550 million in 2016-17, growing to \$1.6 billion by 2020 – to the Green Climate Fund?

What it means to our everyday lives

Buoyant communities will cope and thrive even with worsening impacts of fires, floods, heatwaves and water shortages. We will leave our families, children and future generations a country where the air in their lungs and the water they drink is clean. And the Great Barrier Reef, home to dolphins, whales, turtles and other marine life, remains one of the great wonders of our magnificent natural world.



Maja Barnett
Engineer

Maja Barnett is an engineer working for Pacific Hydro, one of the largest clean energy companies operating in Australia.

A strong renewable energy target means cleaner, healthier, safer communities. It also means more jobs in this growing sector. "When I began working in the renewable energy industry almost 14 years ago, the technology was very new to Australia, and it was a very exciting time," Maja says. "We met with community members who were keen to embrace new technology and farmers who were keen to 'drought proof' their farms. Local and state governments were supportive and keen to see the industry grow and local manufacturing plants began to manufacture components in Australia." She says more recently a lack of consistent government backing has created uncertainty in the sector. Maja says renewable energy will one day be the largest portion of Australia's energy mix, but the industry needs to know it has the confidence of government. "I want to be able to look back and be proud that we were the generation that shifted this country to a sustainable energy path."

Go 100% clean energy



Remove barriers and create incentives so Australian communities, cities and industries can be powered by 100 per cent clean, renewable energy by 2050 or sooner.

People want clean energy. This means affordable, local, wind and solar power made in communities and regions across Australia. We must rapidly remove pollution from coal, gas and oil from Australia's energy sector to achieve net zero climate pollution in Australia well before 2050. This means accelerating investment in clean, renewable energy generation. Australia must end preferential treatment for dirty energy through subsidies and the tax system. We need new policies and funding to support energy efficiency, faster growth in clean energy and increased electrification of transport, buildings and industry. We must also address barriers such as financing and investor confidence through stable and effective policy.

How to make it happen

- 1 Set a target for clean renewables to power 100% of Australia's electricity by 2035, and 100% of all Australia's energy before 2050.
- 2 Plan for the transport, building and industry sectors to move from pollution intensive energy to clean energy and electrification where possible.
- 3 Deliver an ambitious national energy efficiency strategy that includes homes, businesses and industry.
- 4 Reduce pollution from cars and light commercial vehicles through vehicle fuel efficiency standards that become increasingly stringent over time.
- 5 Remove subsidies that entrench the use of dirty coal, oil and gas to save billions of dollars every year.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Ensure clean renewables power 100% of Australia's electricity by 2035, and 100% of all Australia's energy before 2050.
- Double the energy productivity of Australia's economy by 2030?
- Retain the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and Australian Renewable Energy Agency with existing or additional resources?
- Introduce vehicle fuel pollution standards by 2017 to bring Australia into line with EU standards?
- Stop public subsidies to polluting fossil fuel industries?

What it means to our everyday lives

Australians will power their lives with endless local energy sources like the sun, wind and waves. The air we breathe and the water we drink will be cleaner and we will curb the damage to our climate. Australian homes and commercial buildings will be highly efficient and new cars will be far cleaner than the ones currently on our roads. Fewer Australians will suffer from conditions exacerbated by air pollution including coal dust and smoke.



Shift away from polluting coal



Replace dirty, out-of-date coal-fired power stations with clean energy, don't approve any new or bigger coal mines and phase out existing mines.

Burning coal for electricity is a big contributor to Australia's climate pollution. We can move now from out-of-date, dirty energy to clean, affordable sources of energy like wind and solar. The coal industry harms people's health, damages the environment and coal mining employs less than half of one percent of the Australian workforce. The industry's negative impacts now outweigh its benefits. To reach zero net pollution by 2050 we must transform our energy sector. Australia must phase out existing coal-fired power plants. To stop further damage to our climate from pollution, much of the world's coal must not be dug and burnt. That means Australia must not approve any new coal mines or extensions of existing coal mines.

How to make it happen

- 1 Introduce a phased closure of Australia's coal-fired power stations, starting with the dirtiest, oldest and least efficient and replace them with clean renewable energy.
- 2 Do not approve any new coal mines or extensions of existing coal mines and accelerate the closure and rehabilitation of existing coal mining operations.
- 3 Develop and fund social and economic transition plans for communities and regions affected by the closure of coal mines and coal-fired power stations. Support the growth of new and sustainable export industries for Australia as the coal export industry is phased out in line with reaching net zero climate pollution before 2050.
- 4 Implement a federal plan to bolster mine rehabilitation securities from liable companies so there is sufficient funding and capacity to fully restore affected land.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Provide a plan to phase out Australia's coal-fired power stations, starting with the dirtiest, most inefficient and polluting power stations?
- Ensure no new coal mines or coal mine extensions are approved.
- Allocate funding for social and economic transition plans to retrain people who work in regions affected by the closure of coal operations, providing new opportunities for these communities?
- Require coal mining companies provide adequate financial securities to comprehensively rehabilitate current and former mine sites?

What it means to our everyday lives

Coal mining companies are not allowed to walk away, leaving a toxic mess, but will clean up and rehabilitate the places they have mined. New employment opportunities will grow from emerging industries. Coal mine workers will no longer have to worry about 'black lung' and other hazards of coal mining. Our air will be cleaner and our communities will have healthier places to live.



Anika Molesworth
Young Farmer of the Year, 2015

Anika Molesworth is Australian Young Farmer of the Year and helps her family run a sheep and goat farm in Broken Hill.

It's a long way from Broken Hill to Paris. For Anika it was vital to attend the United Nations COP 21 conference. She is part of the first generation of farmers that understand the impacts of climate change and the last generation that can do anything about it. "Farmers are innovative, forward-thinkers, respected by the wider community, and can champion a move to renewable energy, but this depends on a forward-thinking government." She believes it is the responsibility of farmers to engage with climate impacts in order to get on with the job of farming in 2016. "We are hardworking by nature and don't stand back and wait to fix a problem," Anika says. "We cannot tackle the challenges of the 21st century with 20th century practices and technologies alone. The agricultural industry has an opportunity to champion renewable energy. Blessed with open skies and vast horizons, we have boundless solar and wind resources."

Help communities and nature thrive



Create clean, smart cities and restore our natural landscapes to cut pollution and help communities and nature cope with worsening droughts, floods and bushfires.

Reducing climate pollution and adapting to the unavoidable impacts of climate change will require planning and action on many fronts, from regional areas to densely populated cities. Communities across Australia will need to play a part and will need help. Government has a responsibility to encourage, support and assist with these efforts.

How to make it happen

- 1 Establish policies and leverage investment to restore Australia's biodiverse natural landscapes and increase the amount of carbon they securely store to help Australia achieve net zero climate pollution by 2050.
- 2 Maintain funding for the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility to secure ongoing research and build on Australia's adaptation research reputation.
- 3 Develop national strategies and standards for sustainable and resilient cities, including requirements for green space, tree cover, building standards and sustainable transport accessibility, and support state and local government adaptation strategies.
- 4 Reform Infrastructure Australia to prioritise investment in natural infrastructure to support mitigation and adaptation to global warming in cities, towns and landscapes.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Leverage investment and increase the amount of carbon securely stored in biodiverse natural landscapes in line with the goal of net zero carbon pollution by 2050?
- Maintain funding for the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility?
- Introduce a national strategy and standards for sustainable and resilient cities and urban centres?
- Provide funding support for state and local government implementation of adaptation strategies?

What it means to our everyday lives

Every community in Australia can do its bit on climate change. Some of us will replant trees and see birds and wildlife return. Some of us will make our towns and cities greener, better places to live and enjoy. And others will help build resilience in communities and industries most affected by our changing climate. All of us will enjoy cleaner air and water and the places and wildlife we love will be able to thrive.



Be nuclear free



Reduce radioactive risks by stopping uranium mining and export, withdrawing from the global nuclear industry and responsibly managing Australia's radioactive waste.

Uranium is like no other energy source – it fuels nuclear reactors, nuclear weapons and produces nuclear waste. Australian uranium exports cause significant environmental and cultural damage at home and increase nuclear risks internationally. Unlike renewable energy, every kilogram of uranium becomes long-lived radioactive waste, an unresolved and expensive global environmental and security problem. Australia needs to phase out our involvement in fuelling the global nuclear trade by ending the mining and export of uranium.

How to make it happen

- 1 Withdraw support for new or expanded uranium mines in Australia and accelerate the closure of existing operations.
- 2 Establish a responsible and transparent process for radioactive waste management in Australia.
- 3 Bolster international efforts to improve nuclear safety and advance a nuclear-free future including ending new uranium sales and not advancing nuclear cooperation agreements.
- 4 Develop and implement a federal plan to bolster mine rehabilitation securities from liable companies so there is sufficient funding and capacity to fully restore affected landscapes.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Phase out uranium mining?
- Advance a new approach for the responsible and transparent management of Australia's radioactive waste?
- Stop new uranium sales and nuclear cooperation agreements?
- Introduce a federal plan to bolster mine rehabilitation securities from liable companies?

What it means to our everyday lives

Australians will never fuel another Fukushima. Remote communities can be confident their land will not be used as a dumping ground for radioactive waste when more responsible, safer options exist. People can work in jobs that don't trade off their health.



Deanne Eccles
Knitting Nannas of Toolangi

Deanne Eccles, member of Knitting Nannas of Toolangi.

Deanne Eccles knows how important Victoria's remaining forests are for air quality, water filtration, health and wellbeing. "I live in Toolangi in the Mountain Ash forests at the southernmost region of the Great Dividing Range. Our kids are connected to the forest in so many ways. They breathe it, they climb it, they smell it. These incredible tall trees can be 140 metres high. We need these trees to keep drawing the water out of the atmosphere and bringing the water to us. These forests are the water catchments for Melbourne and all of the communities surrounding it. These trees are also the last remaining habitat of the critically endangered Leadbeater's Possum. Logging is making the forests more vulnerable to bushfires and I'm fearful of another Black Saturday. I experienced those bushfires and I don't want to go through it again. These forests here are our children's future and we need to protect that."

Create strong laws to protect life



Develop a new generation of strong national laws and institutions to protect our rivers, reefs, forests and wildlife, improve biodiversity and regulate pollution.

The Australian government has historically played a critical role in protecting the places and wildlife we love, but indicators show the biodiversity and health of our environment continues to decline. Our national environment laws need to be strengthened and improved, not weakened and degraded. Developing a robust set of national laws and programs is a critical step to safeguarding our future.

How to make it happen

- 1 Implement a new Commonwealth Environment Act within two years, providing national leadership on environmental protection.
- 2 Expand Australian government oversight of climate issues, water, native vegetation and reserves within 12 months, and increase the accountability and funding for state and territory governments to deliver nature protection objectives under an enhanced national framework.
- 3 Create an independent national Environment Authority to administer national environment law and coordinate national nature conservation strategies.
- 4 Within 12 months, ensure environmental legislation embodies the rights of public access and supports accountability and integrity of decision making on environmental matters.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Provide an effective national system of nature protection laws to protect and improve the health of Australia's air, land, water and biodiversity by December 2018?
- Expand Australian government oversight of climate issues, water resources, native vegetation and reserves within 12 months of taking office?
- Ensure the federal government has direct responsibility to regulate projects that impact on matters of national importance?
- Establish and adequately resource an independent statutory authority to administer our national environmental law by December 2018?
- Ensure greater public access and accountability under national environmental law, including open standing provisions and merits review of decisions within 12 months of taking office?

What it means to our everyday lives

Proposed resource-extraction projects that threaten the survival of unique species will not be given the green light. Communities and cities will develop in balance with nature. Our forest-filtered drinking water will flow clean from city taps. Our laws will protect the wildlife and places we love and value. Our grandchildren will still be able to see koalas in the wild.



Stanley Tang
Ornithologist and Zoologist

Stanley Tang is an ornithologist and zoologist based at James Cook University in QLD, studying a PhD on the Southern Black-throated Finch. The proposed Carmichael coal mine in the Galilee Basin threatens the last remaining stronghold of this species.

"I came all the way from China. I always had dreams about touching a koala, looking at wallabies jumping around and platypus swimming in the creeks. To me [the Southern Black-throated Finch is] not just a really beautiful bird – it connects me with nature and with Australia. This giant mining company is proposing to build one of the largest mines in the southern hemisphere. The habitat the finches rely on is right in the centre of the mining site. Once the Black-throated Finch is gone then it's gone. In some sense this little finch [is] a starting point of a much greater environmental impact, not just within central Queensland, but also throughout the Great Barrier Reef and all the way to wherever the coal is going to be shipped to. It doesn't mean we can't use natural resources but we cannot just simply take resources from nature for our own benefit by destroying the lives of other animals who share the same resources."



Re-connect habitats

Protect, restore and connect critical habitats, water catchments and forests to give communities, plants and animals the best chance to thrive and adapt to global warming.

Australia has one of the world's worst records on species loss and extinction. At no time in history has our natural environment been more degraded or threatened through unsustainable land use and the rising threat of global warming. Re-connecting important natural places gives birds and wildlife safe places to feed, breed and migrate. These places are refuges for plants and animals adapting to a changing climate.

How to make it happen

- 1 Create a National Environment Fund with an annual investment of \$1 billion by 2018 to:
 - a. Protect and restore an additional 50 million hectares of catchments, habitats and climate refuges nationally by 2020 and 10 million hectares along the Great Dividing Range;
 - b. Establish a national program to support the expansion and management of national parks, Indigenous Protected Areas, private landholder covenants and World Heritage Areas by 2017; and
 - c. Resource the implementation of threatened species recovery plans and threat abatement plans, and protect critical habitats to stop preventable species extinctions by 2020.
- 2 Rule out logging, mining and unsustainable land and sea uses in Australia's World Heritage Areas.
- 3 Provide federal funding and reforms to protect high conservation value forests and wildlife in eastern Victoria, including the establishment of the Great Forest National Park.
- 4 Create incentives through the taxation system for private landholders to improve the health and extent of ecosystems under their stewardship.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Commit \$1 billion annually by 2018 in a National Environment Fund?
- Rule out logging, mining and other unsustainable land and sea uses in Australia's World Heritage Areas?
- Introduce national policies and regulations to protect and restore ecosystems along the Great Dividing Range, including establishing the Great Forest National Park?
- Create new tax incentives for the management and restoration of ecosystems on private land?

What it means to our everyday lives

Australia's great natural places – the places that filter our drinking water, cool our climate, provide habitat for wildlife, the places where we walk and explore and relax – will be properly protected. Animals can move through connected habitats to find safe refuges to breed and feed.



Mike Ross
Olkola Elder

Mike Ross, Olkola Elder, was born in the town of Coen in central Cape York and has lived his whole life on the Cape. From his days mustering cattle in Far North Queensland to his current role as Chair of the Olkola Aboriginal Corporation – the largest non-government landholder in the region– his deep connection to country remains unbroken.

“The whole Olkola nation is special to people, I like taking my family there and my boys there. And maybe at a later stage I will take my grandchildren and get them to get that feeling I feel when I’m there.”

Olkola Elders, like Mike Ross, are working to share their knowledge of Country with young Olkola people and land managers, and to instill pride in country and culture. “I’d really like to protect it and really like to do the best thing I can because of its cultural value, I can’t put a limit on the cultural value.”

Help nature and culture thrive in the north



Protect and manage the natural and cultural heritage of the Kimberley, Kakadu and Cape York Peninsula and invest so people can have jobs that are good for families, communities and nature.

Northern Australia contains the largest intact tropical savannah left on Earth. Grasslands and woodlands, spinifex clad ranges, wetlands and coastal rainforests stretch across 2,500 kilometres from the Kimberley, through Kakadu, to Cape York Peninsula. These ecosystems underpin thousands of jobs in tourism and the productive capacity of river systems. But plans for new big dams, more mines and extensive shale gas fields threaten northern Australia. A better future for our beautiful north starts with supporting the goals of many Indigenous people to sustainably manage their country and its resources.

How to make it happen

- 1 Provide long-term support to help Indigenous communities manage country, protect habitats and address key threats like invasive species and inappropriate fire regimes. Boost long-term funding for new and existing Indigenous Protected Areas, scaling up to \$30 million per annum by 2020.
- 2 Increase federal funding for the highly successful Indigenous Ranger program to achieve a target of 5,000 rangers by 2025 with long-term certainty of funding to 2030.
- 3 Use the \$5 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility to resource projects that will build an environmentally sustainable and more resilient economy for people living across the north. Boost high value nature and culture based tourism, and invest in a clean renewable energy future for northern Australia, beginning by building a network of large-scale solar farms.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Increase funding for Indigenous Protected Areas, scaling up to \$30 million per annum by 2020 as part of a National Environment Fund?
- Commit to supporting the employment of 5,000 Indigenous rangers by 2025?
- Provide commitments to the expansion of sustainable tourism and renewable energy initiatives across northern Australia to benefit local communities?

What it means to our everyday lives

Australians and overseas visitors will be able to explore the north – from the Kimberley to Kakadu to Cape York – and know these culturally and ecologically rich landscapes are being looked after by country's original owners. Indigenous communities will benefit from sustainable tourism, clean energy and Indigenous Ranger programs, bringing renewed opportunities to support their health, families, communities and culture and country.



Howard Jones
Farmer

Howard Jones is a farmer at Dareton, near Wentworth in NSW, and Chair of the Murray-Darling Wetlands Working Group.

Howard has witnessed environmental water, which the government buys from willing sellers and returns to thirsty wetlands, making a difference to the health of ancient river red gums, fish, birds and other wildlife. This is the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in action. "My family have fished the Edward River, down towards the bottom near Moulamein, for 80 years," Howard says. "Up until last year they've been grizzling because all they're catching is small cod, no yellowbelly, heaps of carp and the odd Silver Perch. Last year, the fish were starting to move. Your big fish were starting to come through because there was connectivity. They were catching not only Murray Cod, but Yellowbelly too. I'm very buoyant about where it's going. If it's done as a quick fix, the fish and the river will be the losers. But if it's done right, there won't be any losers."



Keep the Murray flowing

Deliver the historic Murray-Darling Basin Plan for healthier rivers and wetlands, wildlife and communities and reinvigorate national water reform.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fix the rivers and wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin. Multi-party support for the Basin Plan is crucial to restoring the system to good health. Outside the Murray-Darling, national water reform must be reinvigorated to build sustainable and resilient river system and communities.

How to make it happen

- 1 Guarantee environmental outcomes equivalent to the delivery of 3,200 gigalitres of water for the environment, including the full 450 gigalitres of water recovered through the Water for the Future special account.
- 2 Deliver incentive programs that reward private landholders for managing floodplains for the agricultural and environmental benefits they provide.
- 3 Increase and stabilise long-term funding and resources for the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to build and manage its portfolio of environmental water.
- 4 Remove redundant infrastructure that prevents native fish and other species from being able to move and breed along the length of the river system and adequately finance a science-driven program to deal with invasive European carp.
- 5 Revitalise Australia's national water reform agenda to deliver responsible water management, especially in northern Australia, and recognise Indigenous water rights.

Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Deliver the commitments made under the Murray Darling Basin Plan on time and in full, including the delivery of outcomes equivalent to 3,200 gigalitres in environmental water?
- Provide a plan to reward private landholders for managing floodplains to produce environmental benefits for the river system?
- Adequately resource the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to build and deliver its critically important portfolio of environment water?
- Support and fund a science-driven program to eradicate invasive European carp in the Murray-Darling Basin?
- Revitalise national water reform in Australia and set out a road-map for the recognition of Indigenous water rights?

What it means to our everyday lives

A swimmable, fishable river flowing all the way to the sea. Trees, animals and farms get a drink and the river system supports life and communities along its entire length.



Value nature in government decision making



Integrate the value of Australia's rivers, oceans, forests and land into political decision making, policy advice and economic reporting.

Our rivers, oceans, forests and land should be valued for their contribution to life on our continent, not merely for what can be extracted from them. Because the true value of Australia's amazing natural places has not been incorporated into decision-making, we risk losing these very places and ecosystems that underpin our lives. When government makes important decisions, they must value what matters and make what matters valuable.

How to make it happen

- 1 Adequately resource the internationally recognised System of Environmental-Economic Accounting across the federal government and build a set of regional scale environment accounts based on the Accounting for Nature model.
- 2 Reform the Productivity Commission to be a Productivity and Sustainability Commission, with a mandate to publish an annual green paper that identifies trends in economic links to ecosystem services, green infrastructure and public/private barriers to improved resource productivity.
- 3 Require Infrastructure Australia to publicly release a cost/benefit analysis for major projects that fully incorporates environmental considerations.


Tests of success

Will the policies and programs proposed by our leaders:

- Introduce a well-resourced and complete system of annual national and regional environmental accounts by 2019?
- Expand the mandate of the Productivity Commission to explicitly include environmental issues?
- Introduce transparent and independent analysis of the social, economic and environmental costs and benefits of all major projects by 2017?

What it means to our everyday lives


Rivers, oceans, forests and land are valued for what they are, not merely for what can be extracted from them. Government factors in nature and that a strong economy depends on a healthy environment. Businesses work in harmony with nature.



The Australian Conservation Foundation is Australia's national environment group. We are a community of people advocating for a healthy environment, a safe climate and a better life for all.



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