

Zali Steggall Environment Policy, 2019

Australia is one of the most beautiful and biodiverse places on Earth. It has 19 World Heritage properties, 65 Ramsar wetlands and more than one million species of plants and animals, many of which are found nowhere else. ⁽¹⁾ We are responsible for more than 16 million square kilometres of ocean ⁽²⁾ and have around 8% of the world's plant and animal species ⁽³⁾.

But our natural environment is under pressure like never before. Climate change, desertification, invasive species, increasing population and pollution are combining to threaten our clean air, fresh water and unique flora and fauna.

Most obviously, the Great Barrier Reef and the Murray-Darling Basin are at risk. That is starting to directly impact the wellbeing, prosperity and jobs of those who rely on the Reef and the Basin – quite apart from the environmental cost – and indirectly affect us all.

How can we manage our environmental assets as a national priority, transparently and beyond the electoral cycle?

**We need clear, cooperative action to sustain our environment
– our jobs, economy, culture, wellbeing and future generations depend on it.**

Working with business, scientists, environment groups and law makers at all levels, I will support funding, tax and R&D incentives to:

1. **Sustainably use our natural resources (farming, fisheries, forestry and energy)**
2. **Protect and manage our national and marine parks**
3. **Reduce pollution through innovation**
4. **Protect and enhance our local Warringah environment, and**
5. **Ensure our planning and environmental laws are coherent, effective and properly enforced**

I strongly believe that a healthy environment and a healthy economy rely on each other. Experience in other countries has shown that, with strong leadership, and a clear legislative framework, business can help us beat our biggest environmental challenges.

1. Sustainably use our natural resources (farming, fisheries, forestry and energy)

Australia's rich natural resources – its farmland, fisheries, forestry and energy – must be managed sustainably so that they are available for future generations.

- **Enforce the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and like plans for significant water catchment areas.** The Murray-Darling Basin Plan must be implemented with guaranteed environmental water flows, as intended under the Water Act. A lack of compliance and transparency can have devastating results and environmental water should be prioritised. Other water catchments, including the Swan, the Ord and the Great Artesian Basin, must also have effective and enforceable management plans.
- **Reduce deforestation and promote sustainable forestry.** According to a global study by WWF, NSW and Queensland are global hotspots of deforestation. More than 1500 football fields of

native bush are cleared in Queensland every day⁽⁴⁾. The federal government could help establish expanded and well-connected protected areas while promoting sustainable forest management.

- **Stop the Adani coal mine and mining of the Galilee basin and oppose new offshore gas and oil extraction.** I believe our future lies in clean energy and technology, so I am opposed to the Adani coal mine and new gas and oil extraction projects, including offshore and in the Great Australian Bight. They are too risky for our environment, locally and globally.
- **Promote more sustainable fisheries.** Australian fisheries are some of the best managed in the world⁽⁵⁾ but commercial trawlers, gillnets and longlines are still killing marine animals, including snubfin dolphins, dugongs, seabirds and turtles⁽⁶⁾. In addition, some aquaculture is using more fish for feed than it produces and has damaged sensitive environments, such as Macquarie Harbour in Tasmania⁽⁷⁾. We need better oversight of commercial fishing and an end to practices that are not sustainable.

2. Protect and manage our national and marine parks

- **Increase high level protections in Commonwealth Marine Parks.** Australia's marine parks protections were reduced in 2018 – with 400,000 square kilometres, or 46% of parks, going from high level 'no take' zones (IUCN II) to partially protected zones (IUCN IV). Commercial fishing is allowed in 80% of marine parks. I call on these protections to be increased, as advised by more than 1200 scientists of the global Ocean Science Council⁽⁸⁾.
- **Support Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples to care for country.** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the traditional custodians of our land. Co-management of Indigenous protection areas needs to be encouraged and the highly successful Indigenous Rangers program should be expanded.

3. Reduce pollution through innovation

- **Create research and development incentives for waste solutions.** The model of shipping our waste offshore or putting it in landfill is no longer sustainable. Households are doing their bit by recycling, now we should boost recycling technologies that turn waste into resources such as new products or power.
- **Work towards banning all single use plastics by 2025.** Around three-quarters of the debris found along the Australian coast is plastic⁽⁹⁾ which is having a devastating effect on our marine life. Around 85% of Australian seabirds are affected by plastic pollution⁽¹⁰⁾ and at least a third of marine turtles have ingested it⁽⁹⁾.

At least 16 countries and cities have already banned some single use plastics⁽¹¹⁾ such as bags, straws and coffee stirrers. The single use plastic bag ban at Coles and Woolworths has reduced Australia's single use plastic bag consumption by 80% and shows how business can play a part in changing behaviour. Other companies that have announced plastic reductions include Ikea, Hilton and Starbucks⁽¹²⁾. I want to encourage more companies in Australia to join this movement.

4. Protect and enhance our local Warringah environment

We're very lucky to be living in such a beautiful part of the world and it's our duty to protect it. Warringah is home to more than 26 endangered species⁽¹³⁾⁽¹⁴⁾, including little penguins, pygmy possums, frogs, snakes and lizards and 12 types of birds.

Underwater, we have numerous threatened and protected species including the blue groper, green

turtles, black rockcod, weedy seadragon, two types of sea horses and critically endangered grey nurse sharks ⁽¹⁵⁾.

In addition, we have several threatened plant communities including endangered coastal rainforest at Middle Harbour ⁽¹⁶⁾.

To protect these unique natural communities, I will support action to:

- **Give greater protection for Cabbage Tree Bay.** This unique strip of water off Manly is a great example of a successful environmental protection. It supports a wide range of users including boats, swimmers, commercial dive tours, surfers, and kayakers and is a drawcard for tourists. Because of competing interests and the potentially damaging effects of boats, I would support restricting large boat access to Cabbage Tree Bay except to provide safe harbour. Calls for this in the past have been rejected because of state bureaucracy ⁽¹⁷⁾ and the greater protections for this area, promised by the state government, have never happened. I would also advocate for more patrols to enforce the no take zones.
- **Advocate for better water quality.** The quality of water in the ocean is an issue for all of us who love to surf, swim or go fishing. With a massive sewage treatment plant in Manly and stormwater running into our oceans from busy urban areas, we cannot be complacent. I will be an advocate for clean beaches and oceans, from collaborating with Sydney Water to implement the best possible sewage treatment to supporting local efforts to reuse and improve the quality of stormwater.
- **Support environmental tourism in Warringah.** More than 2.4 million people visit Manly every year. Around 1.2 million of those are international travellers, 90% of whom visit the beach, and 88% of whom go sightseeing ⁽¹⁸⁾. In addition, diving at Cabbage Tree Bay and the Manly to Spit coastal walk are listed as some of the top local recreation activities on Australia's main tourism website ⁽¹⁹⁾.

More than 20% of Australians ⁽²⁰⁾ and 35% of people globally will next choose an eco-holiday ⁽²¹⁾. This is an opportunity for Warringah. I propose that our local tourist operators be given greater assistance to promote Warringah as an eco-destination – especially to overseas visitors. The added benefits will be more local jobs and a greater incentive to protect our natural areas.

6. Ensure our planning and environmental laws are coherent, effective and properly enforced

Overdevelopment, and the traffic and pollution it creates, is a real concern to the people of Warringah. I believe that Councils and local communities are best placed to make planning decisions and they shouldn't be overridden by the state government.

Nationally, we need stronger, clearer and more cohesive environmental laws.

- **A cabinet-level environment minister to ensure stronger legal frameworks and resources.** The complex issues we face such as invasive species, pollution and climate change require a national response. The 2016 State of the Environment Report found a lack of cohesive management and resources is hindering the country's efforts to save our biodiversity. ⁽²²⁾ Currently there are too many confusing and overlapping laws and legislation. Federally, there are more than 70 laws dealing with environmental issues, and there are countless more in each state and territory ⁽¹⁾. Similarly, enforcement is currently piecemeal and dependent of time, place and resources.

Several environment groups, including the Australian panel of Experts on Environmental Law, the Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Society have called for updated environment laws and a national protection authority, such as an EPA. This idea deserves

support so that business, organisations and individuals have a clear framework to work within.

- **Review State planning laws.** The State Government's Medium Density Housing Code, which aims to allow people to quickly and cheaply put townhouses on suburban lots without community consultation, is of great concern. Similarly, the State Environment Planning Policies (SEPPs) are taking Councils and communities out of planning decisions. We don't want inappropriate developments, such as boarding houses, in suburban neighbourhoods without inadequate supporting infrastructure. I will seek urgent clarification on the state government's plans on these issues and fight for community voices to be heard.
- **Balance increased population with environmental needs.** Australia's population is expected to reach 30 million people by 2033, with up to 9.3 million in NSW ⁽²³⁾. While we do need more affordable housing for essential workers, we also need to ensure the environment and infrastructure can cope with more people.

Zali Steggall, Candidate for Warringah, 2019

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