

Conservation SA Media Release Attachment 22 March 2018

Key Liberal Government Commitments

A ten year moratorium on fracking in the South East. While a permanent ban would be preferable, and ideally it should also include exploration and extraction of conventional gas, this is an important first step in recognising the importance of South Australia's primary food bowl.

Wilderness protection for the southern part of the Simpson Desert. The Simpson Desert is one of Australia's largest remaining areas of high-quality wilderness. It is home to an incredible diversity of species and attracts birds from all over Australia for massive breeding events. The Kallakoopah Creek region is currently threatened by invasive fossil fuel projects. Wilderness protection would not allow such projects to proceed.

Reform of the natural resource management (NRM) system to maximise and fund greater community involvement. The new government intends to reinvent the NRM system from the ground up. The NRM Act will be replaced with a new Landscapes Act, and the new 7 member Boards for each region will have 3 members elected directly by the community. There is a commitment to more money reaching community groups working to improve the state of our natural resources, and less tied up in government bureaucracy.

A new \$2m Grassroots Grant program for community groups to protect and restore nature. Since the abolition of the NRM Community Grants in 2014, hundreds of community volunteers who work to restore their local patch have had no financial support. Supporting these fantastic land stewards makes every kind of sense – previous experience shows that for every dollar the government invests, it is rewarded with five times the value in volunteer effort.

Increase to park ranger numbers. Park rangers are the frontline workers for our national parks but over the years as our national park system has grown, their numbers have dwindled. There is now approximately one ranger per 2500km of land to be managed. The new government has committed to an increase of 20 paid rangers (from 93 currently) and also wants to build a volunteer ranger program. It will provide specific pathways for Indigenous rangers to recognise their unique and important relationship to country.

Review of measures to protect our remaining native vegetation and urban trees. This is sorely needed as a series of amendments to laws protecting our native vegetation have seen death by a thousand cuts. Over 12,000 ha (10,000 Adelaide ovals) of vegetation were cleared in the five years from 2011 to 2016. Likewise significant trees in some Adelaide suburbs are disappearing at a rate of one tree a week, which adds up to 10% of tree canopy cover disappearing every five years. Adelaide already has one of the lowest levels of canopy cover of any Australian city.

Review of bushfire management to better protect biodiversity. Bushfire prevention is vital but it must be evidence based so that we don't destroy important habitat in the process. There are a number of simple steps for improving our current bushfire management practices to better look after our native plants and animals.

Reinstatement of the Wilderness Advisory Committee. Most of South Australia's national parks still allow activities such as mining within their borders. Only Wilderness Protected Areas are completely safe from these types of damaging activities. The Wilderness Advisory Committee had an independent role to determine which natural places warrant wilderness protection, but was abolished a few years ago when the Weatherill government dramatically reduced the number of government boards and committees.

New measures to protect Adelaide's coastline. Adelaide beaches have been taking a battering in recent years because natural barriers such as sand dunes have seagrass meadows have been disappearing. The new government has committed to a range of measures including restoring large seagrass meadows off the coastline and using wetlands and stormwater harvesting to improve the quality of water entering the sea.

A new cycle tourism trail from Adelaide to Melbourne. South Australia has the potential to build on events like the Tour Down Under to become a world class cycling destination. We know cycling provides a range of environmental, health and economic benefits so it makes sense to grow our cycle tourism industry.