



Water and Inland Aquatic Environments

Policy Category: A. Environment

Issued: March 2007

Principles

The Australian Greens believe that:

1. access to clean and adequate water is fundamental to life.
2. Australia is the driest inhabited continent in the world, and our freshwater resources are coming under increasing pressure as a result of climate change and growing human demand.
3. the health of our catchments, rivers, wetlands, groundwater systems and estuaries underpins the health of our environment and our communities, and the prosperity of our agriculture and industry.
4. we have a responsibility to protect Australia's rivers and freshwater environments as part of our natural heritage and future prosperity.
5. as a scarce and fluctuating resource, Australia's major water supplies must be publicly owned and must be managed through a system of regulated water allocation.
6. water efficiency and recycling measures must be considered before expensive, environmentally damaging and greenhouse gas intensive alternative water management strategies.
7. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must have the opportunity to participate in water catchment planning and management where appropriate.
8. there should be no new large-scale dams on Australian rivers.

Goals

The Australian Greens want:

9. legislation and regulatory systems which protect our catchments, rivers, wetlands, estuaries and groundwater systems
10. healthy drinking water that consistently meets or exceeds World Health Organisation (WHO) and National Drinking Water standards.
11. public ownership and control of all major water supply, distribution, drainage and disposal systems.
12. sustainable water use planning to be required for all new developments and agricultural use.
13. national research and planning addressing the impacts of climate change on our catchments, rivers, wetlands, estuaries and groundwater systems.
14. all national water reform legislation, planning and agreements to strategically address the impacts of climate change on Australia's water resources.
15. sufficient water allocations for environmental flows.

Measures

The Australian Greens will:

- 16 ensure that all major water infrastructure systems are in public ownership.
- 17 establish funding agreements with the states and territories based on per capita targets for reduction in water consumption and increases in recycling and reuse.
- 18 encourage the states and territories to adopt Water Sensitive Urban Design principles and methods for both new and existing development and infrastructure.
- 19 work with the states and territories to:
 - review the impact of climate change on catchments, rivers, wetlands, groundwater systems and estuaries and ensure that all future planning adequately addresses climate change;
 - implement a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) system of reserves for Australia's unique and high conservation value freshwater ecosystems, and fully protect rivers that still have natural flow regimes;
 - implement integrated catchment management planning and establish environmental flow targets for all catchments on a national basis;
 - buy back water entitlements in severely degraded and over-allocated systems;
 - permit extraction from groundwater systems that do not exceed recharge rates, as determined by a comprehensive hydrogeological assessment; and
 - support the introduction of water recycling measures.
- 20 conduct a national review of the social, economic and ecological impacts of Australian water allocations and water trading systems, and place a moratorium on the further extension of water trading systems until this review is completed.
- 21 ensure that any water trading systems are based on scientific studies of the freshwater systems involved, and that water trading boundaries and allocations are ecologically appropriate.
- 22 legislate to ensure the provision of environmental water flows in all catchments to sustain and restore our natural environmental heritage.
- 23 implement water saving measures for irrigated agriculture, and ensure pricing encourages efficient water use.
- 24 consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in integrated catchment planning and management.
- 25 require a complete environmental impact assessment, prior to commencement, for schemes involving re-insertion of waste-water into an aquifer.
- 26 assist the states and territories to address processes that threaten Australia's freshwater systems such as land clearance, mining, erosion, sedimentation and pollution, by protecting and restoring native vegetation, and addressing point and diffuse sources of pollution and sediment runoff.
- 27 ensure that Australian drinking water supplies consistently meet or exceed WHO and National Drinking Water standards, and that catchment water quality is regularly monitored and publicly reported.
- 28 ensure that there are comprehensive minimum water efficiency standards for new domestic and commercial appliances.