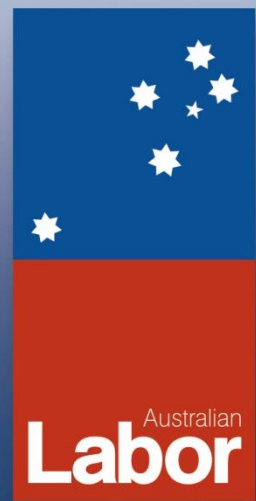


A Healthy Environment



Julia Gillard and Labor

Let's move Australia forward



A Healthy Environment

Peter Garrett MP

Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts



ELECTION 2010

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Overview

The Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts administers Australia's national environment law, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. This Act is a powerful tool for encouraging sustainable development while protecting our endangered species, World Heritage sites, oceans and cultural heritage sites from inappropriate development.

As well as being responsible for Australia's research work in Antarctica, the Minister is responsible for some of Australia's world class national parks – the magnificent Kakadu National Park, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in the Red Centre, and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The health of the Great Barrier Reef is improving due to funding for Reef Rescue under the Caring for our Country program, another of the Minister's responsibilities. Caring for our Country is Federal Labor's \$2 billion investment in environmental conservation and rehabilitation. Through this program, the Federal Government gives farmers, Landcare groups and other community organisations the support they need to tackle the big issues of species loss and sustainable land management.

The environment portfolio administers legislation covering hazardous waste, ozone depleting substances and fuel quality. It also includes the Bureau of Meteorology, which provides the weather forecasts that are an essential service for all Australians when planning their daily lives, whether on the land or in cities and towns.

Federal Labor's key environment priorities are the protection and conservation of Australia's native plants, animals and ecosystems, and supporting Indigenous Australians, landholders and community groups to protect and manage the natural environment. A particular priority is the protection of our ocean ecosystems, as Australia has the third largest marine estate of any nation.

In its first term, Federal Labor has built a strong foundation for our environment. We've increased the area of land managed for conservation by 3.4 million hectares, created more than 600 Indigenous Ranger jobs, and taken legal action to stop whaling in the Southern Ocean.

We've significantly increased protection of the Great Barrier Reef, by helping farmers to improve the quality of run-off water flowing into its waters as well as strengthening the laws that protect the Reef.

In its second term, Federal Labor will continue this tradition of reform. We will:

- Establish a comprehensive network of marine parks to ensure that our oceans stay healthy and continue to sustain fish stocks.
- Establish Green Corridors to build the resilience of our environment to climate change.
- Act on the wishes of Traditional Owners to add the Koongarra mining lease into Kakadu National Park, to ensure that uranium mining will never occur at this iconic site.

- Review Australia’s national environment law to ensure the environment gets the protection it deserves while encouraging sustainable development.
- Pass laws to make it an offence to import illegally logged timber into Australia.
- Improve the regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in Australia to better protect human health and the environment (particularly in vulnerable areas like the Great Barrier Reef).
- Manage native species and natural resources at the landscape scale.

What Federal Labor has achieved so far

Federal Labor recognises the importance of safeguarding our environment. We have made significant improvements to the Australian environment, both close to home in the places where most of us live, as well as in more remote natural landscapes. We've given the natural environment the focus it deserves, reoriented environment funding towards a whole-of-landscape approach through Caring for our Country, and made transparent and accountable decisions using the best available science.

Greater protection for the Great Barrier Reef

Federal Labor has significantly increased funding for the Great Barrier Reef, our most important natural asset. The Great Barrier Reef is on the World Heritage register because of its globally significant environmental values. It also contributes an estimated \$5.4 billion to the Australian economy through its tourism, fishing and other industries. With our record \$200 million investment through Reef Rescue, Federal Labor is supporting farmers and community groups to reduce pollutants flowing into the Reef by 25 per cent and building its resilience to climate change.

We have strengthened the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act to increase penalties for environmental damage like oil spills, as well as requiring all developments that affect the Reef to be considered under federal environment law. We've recognised the importance of the Reef HQ Aquarium to Townsville by providing significant capital funding to keep this valuable public asset in good shape.

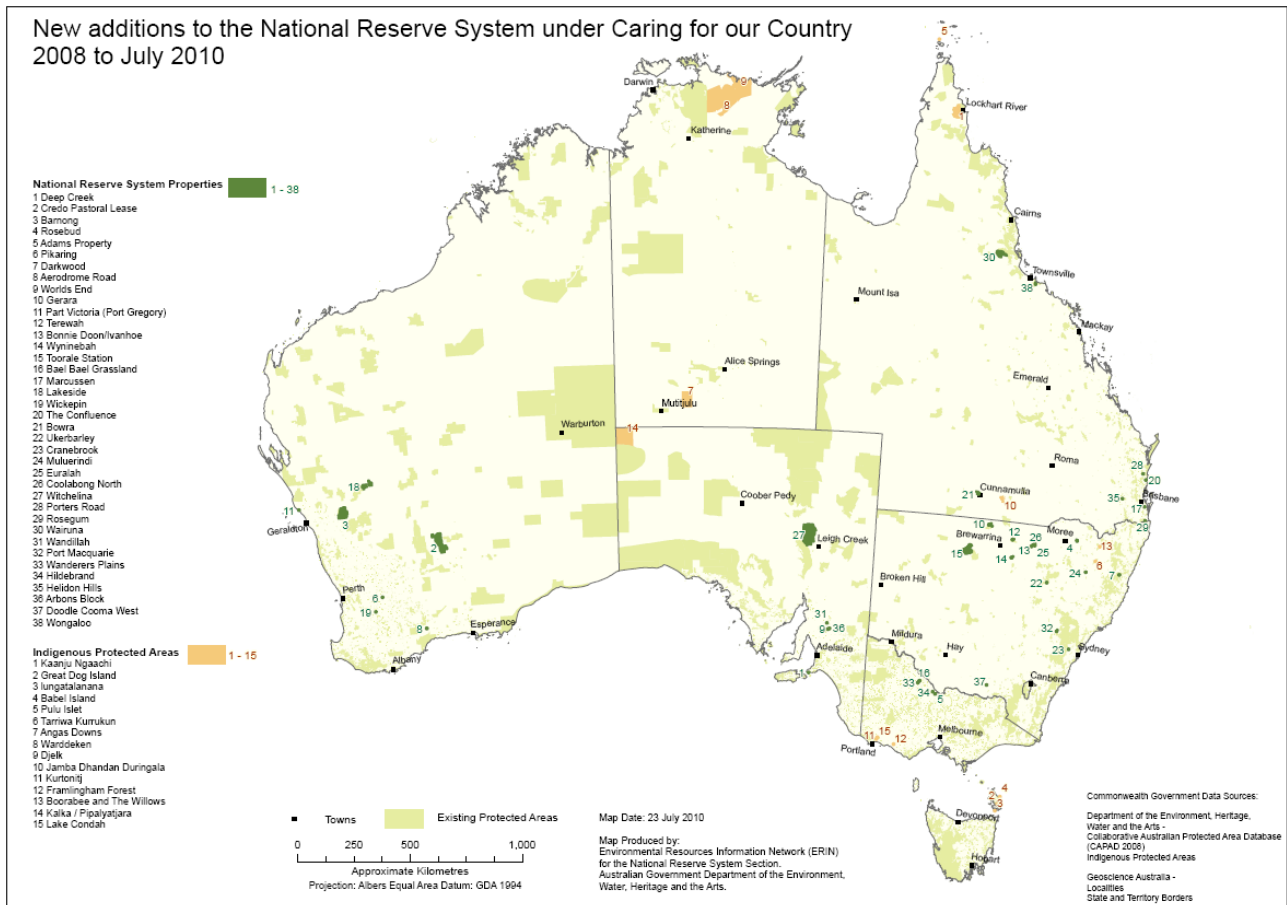
Whaling

Federal Labor has launched the world's largest non-lethal whale research partnership - the Southern Ocean Research Partnership – as part of a \$32 million investment for non-lethal whale research and other marine mammal conservation initiatives. We have advanced a strong reform agenda focusing on conservation and science at the International Whaling Commission. We have also appointed a Special Envoy on Whale Conservation.

Federal Labor has initiated legal action in the International Court of Justice in The Hague against Japanese 'scientific' whaling in the Southern Ocean.

Major expansion of Australia's national parks and reserves

Through the National Reserve System program, Federal Labor has quadrupled investment in acquiring new areas as national parks and reserves – critical reservoirs of biodiversity. Since coming to Government we have added 3.4 million hectares to Australia's conservation estate, including the two million hectare Warddeken and Djelk Indigenous Protected Areas in Arnhem Land.



Federal Labor has created 630 Indigenous Ranger positions in 66 Working on Country projects across Australia. As well as providing an important environmental service, Indigenous Rangers receive on-the-job training which will serve them well in their future careers. The program has also produced important social and health benefits in Indigenous communities.

Set the bar high on environmental regulation

Federal Labor has set the bar high on environmental regulation, enabling ecologically sustainable development while protecting our threatened species and ecosystems. We have made important environmental assessment decisions, protecting the cassowaries of Mission Beach, protecting threatened species in the Mary River, emergency National Heritage listing Tasmania’s Tarkine, and protecting threatened species from inappropriate development in Melbourne’s growth corridor while allowing new suburbs to be built. Since coming to office, Federal Labor has listed for protection a dozen threatened ecological communities, covering an estimated one million hectares.

Biodiversity research

The Federal Government's \$20 million per annum environmental research program has been reviewed to focus on biodiversity, particularly to answer questions about how ecosystems function, monitoring their health, maintaining and building their resilience, using them sustainably and exploring how to better use markets to protect biodiversity.

Waste

For the first time ever, Federal Labor has secured national commitment to substantial action on waste management. The National Waste Policy, agreed by all Australian environment ministers in November 2009, sets Australia's waste management and resource recovery direction to 2020.

The first stream of waste to be considered under the Product Stewardship framework will be e-waste – TVs and computers – recognised as a critical issue around the country.

World Heritage

Federal Labor has succeeded in having 11 Australian convict sites added to the World Heritage list, Australia's 18th World Heritage listing. This provides global recognition for places like the Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney, Port Arthur Historic Site in Tasmania and Fremantle Prison in Perth.

We have also nominated Ningaloo Reef to the World Heritage List. If this nomination is successful, this outstanding site which is visited each year by the gigantic whale sharks, will have global recognition.

Antarctica

Antarctica is a crucial place for research and conservation. As the human footprint has grown in Antarctica through increased tourist activities and the expansion of international research programs, Federal Labor has ensured that Australia's Antarctic Research Program remains strong and reflects our national interest in the Antarctic. In the 2010-11 Budget, we pledged \$11.7 million to continue the Antarctic Airlink.

Bureau of Meteorology

Federal Labor has dedicated \$30.5 million to deliver seven day weather forecasting to 650 towns and cities across Australia, an invaluable service in a country where the climate has such an impact on our daily lives. We have also commissioned new weather radars at Emerald, Mount Isa, Maningrida, Wollongong and Hobart, costing over \$50 million.

Future Challenges

Australia faces a future characterised by a growing economy, robust export industries and a strong housing market. This has great benefits for our society but poses significant sustainability challenges that we must address and manage.

We have a large and relatively healthy marine estate that faces pressure from a range of industries, including the oil and gas sector and increasing shipping traffic associated with our burgeoning economy. Good planning and management is needed to keep our oceans healthy.

With our natural environment facing a range of challenges such as weeds, feral animals, and climate change, we need to do all we can to build up the natural resilience of the landscape. Just as in human communities, there is strength in diversity. A diverse natural landscape is one that is strong and resilient. By protecting the many different kinds of native animals, plants and habitats that occur in the landscape, it is better able to withstand the shocks that it is likely to face in the coming decades.

In our natural landscapes, native plants and animals are under threat from climate change. We have to prepare now for a new, changing landscape and conditions. We need to be thinking on a continental scale, because our natural areas are facing challenges on this scale. We need to coordinate our investment, and our other efforts to protect and build vital green corridors.

What a Gillard Labor Government will do next

If re-elected, the Gillard Labor Government will continue the reforms that put the protection of the environment in its rightful place.

Establish a comprehensive network of marine parks

Federal Labor understands that we need our oceans to be healthy if they are to keep providing us with fish to eat, a place to drop a line, a base for sustainable tourism and, of course, a place to relax, unwind and be inspired.

As Australia has the third largest marine estate of any nation, we have a responsibility to manage it well.

There will always be great opportunities for fishing both now and in the future through our balanced marine planning process.

We will:

- Continue a thorough and balanced consultation process with stakeholders and the wider community to establish a shared vision for ocean health, ocean use and ocean protection, and the identification of new economic opportunities.
- Establish a representative network of marine parks by 2012, protecting key areas in Federal waters, right around the country.
- Use a scientifically driven process that determines the location and size of marine parks.
- Provide the highest level of conservation protection for the most sensitive and special areas.
- Continue to allow sustainable fishing in other areas that will benefit from the healthy fish stocks that the marine park network supports.
- Release within three months of the election a draft plan for the South West Marine Bioregion, which extends from Kangaroo Island in South Australia to Kalbarri in Western Australia.
- Finalise the remainder of the marine bioregional plans - North, Northwest and East - by December 2011.
- Provide an appropriate program budget to support the marine bioregional planning program nationally, including:

- Assistance for displaced activities - a Federal policy to provide fair and reasonable assistance to those industries affected by greater marine protection will be released within the first three months of the next term of government.
 - Funding for management, enforcement and education - the necessary resources for the effective management of marine protected areas and shore based community programs.
- Finalise the National Network of Whale and Dolphin Sanctuaries Federal Labor has been developing in collaboration with State Governments.

Green Corridors Plan

The Gillard Labor Government will invest \$10 million over the forward estimates to build the resilience of our environment to climate change. We will work with the 56 regional natural resource management groups to develop a National Green Corridors Plan to prepare our native plants and animals as well as our agricultural landscapes for climate change.

Federal Labor will work with the community through regional natural resource management groups to plan these Green Corridors on a continental scale. Green Corridors will link up national parks and reserves with well managed private land. Farmers will be encouraged to participate on a voluntary basis through incentives such as stewardship payments, capital grants or support from volunteer conservation organisations. The Plan will guide future investments under Caring for our Country.

The National Green Corridors Plan will consider climate change impacts and identify critical linkages in the landscape to allow the migration of species. It will also aim to protect natural stores of carbon in native ecosystems to minimise our greenhouse gas emissions.

As the National Green Corridors Plan is being finalised, Federal Labor will support regional natural resource management groups to revise their regional plans to help coordinate action at the regional, state and national scale. We will also pilot this approach in at least one region to test its effectiveness.

Add the Koongarra mining lease into Kakadu National Park

The Gillard Labor Government will incorporate the Indigenous lands of Koongarra into Kakadu National Park, ruling out any possibility of uranium mining there in the future. The area lies in the shadow of Nourlangie Rock, one of Kakadu's most popular visitor destinations with ancient rock art galleries, first settlement paintings and sacred burial sites.

The decision followed extensive consultation by the Northern Land Council and with traditional owners. The Northern Land Council has formally advised the Federal Government that the Traditional Owner opposed mining in the long term and wanted the threat of mining brought to an end by incorporation of their land into Kakadu.

Mining in Kakadu has been prohibited since 1987 to ensure the protection of the outstanding indigenous heritage and environmental values that make it a drawcard for tourists and led to its global acclaim as a World Heritage Area.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will apply to the World Heritage Committee to amend the boundaries of the Kakadu World Heritage property to include Koongarra.

Review Australia's national environment law

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act is one of the most powerful and fundamental tools for biodiversity protection available to the Federal Government. Late last year, Federal Labor received the final report of Dr Allan Hawke's review of the EPBC Act. Amongst other things, this report recommends linking bioregional planning and strategic assessment to broader environment policy objectives, using environmental markets and offsets arrangements to achieve the desired level of conservation of our precious biodiversity.

The Gillard Labor Government will consider the recommendations of the Hawke review carefully, to ensure that our national environmental laws are supporting efficient and effective environment protection and to facilitate sustainable development, while at the same time cutting red tape and increasing certainty for business.

We will introduce new legislation into Parliament during our second term to implement any reforms identified to better achieve these objectives.

Pass laws to make it an offence to import illegally logged timber into Australia.

Federal Labor will take action to restrict the sale of illegally logged wood in Australia. The Gillard Labor Government will introduce legislation that would make it an offence to import any timber products into Australia that have not been legally harvested.

This legislation will deliver on Federal Labor's 2007 illegal logging election commitment and ensure that those who circumvent these laws will be subject to criminal penalties.

Illegal logging is a global problem that needs to be eliminated as it has significant economic, social and environmental costs of around US\$60.5 billion per annum and affects some of the poorest nations in the world.

Federal Labor will also implement a code of conduct to ensure suppliers who first place timber into the Australian market carry out the proper tests to ensure wood coming into the country was legal. The use of a trade description and the circumstances under which it can be used will give consumers confidence that they are purchasing legally sourced wood.

Improving the regulation of chemicals in Australia

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will introduce new reforms to improve the regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in Australia.

These reforms will help to protect human health and improve environmental protections. They will have particular benefit on the Great Barrier Reef, where pesticides, including herbicides, insecticides and fungicides, have been detected in the Reef's food chain.

The reforms will mean a more efficient method of review to ensure that chemicals that are approved will be available sooner and chemicals that are banned will be taken off the shelves faster.

The new approach will improve the regulation of chemicals by providing a comprehensive risk management framework that will cut red tape and free up resources by ensuring high risk chemicals undergo a more rigorous assessment while the regulation of lower risk chemicals is more streamlined.

As part of the package, Federal Labor will increase the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)'s funding by \$9 million over the forward estimates, to strengthen its capacity to effectively protect human health and the environment.

Manage native species and natural resources at the landscape scale

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will take a more strategic, landscape-scale approach to managing biodiversity. To implement this broader landscape scale approach, in its second term Federal Labor will:

- Improve the Australian community's awareness of our unique biodiversity, and increase our collective understanding of how it contributes to our health and wellbeing.
- Continue to clearly identify our priorities, and use these priorities to focus our investment and our regulatory efforts.
- Coordinate our investment in parks and reserves with complementary programs that support good management elsewhere in the landscape, for example, through supporting farmers in voluntary environmental stewardship schemes.
- Make greater use of markets by properly valuing biodiversity in the economy and in our daily lives.
- Continue to invest directly in the environment, but more strategically, clearly stating the priorities we are seeking.

The Coalition's Record

The Coalition failed the environment for 12 long years.

They talked about saving whales, but took no action beyond slogans and a wrist band campaign.

They did not launch legal action, send a monitoring ship into the Southern Ocean or take a reform program to the International Whaling Commission.

They had no policy on waste management, instead sitting idly by while mountains of e-waste and car tyres built up in towns and suburbs across the country. Opportunities to increase recycling and build up a sustainable resource recovery industry were lost.

Under the national environment law, development projects were approved in an ad hoc and secretive fashion, lacking transparency and frequently subject to legal challenge.

The Coalition established the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) to justify the sale of Telstra, then used it as a slush fund to solve political problems and for local pork barrelling. The NHT was notorious for the bias shown towards funding activities in Coalition electorates. While some good work was done by enthusiastic community groups, the program failed to make a measurable difference in the landscape, due to the absence of clear national targets and priorities.

One study showed that while \$6 million from the NHT was claimed to be used to revegetate Queensland rainforest, only half the area claimed had actually been planted and the cost was double that originally reported.

The Audit Office was damning in a series of reports on the NHT.

Where Federal Labor has acted quickly to tackle deteriorating water quality in the Great Barrier Reef, the former Coalition Government ignored warnings about the issue. The Coalition failed to commit any funding towards the 10-year Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, despite signing it with great fanfare in 2002.

Now in Opposition, the Coalition has learnt nothing from their environmental failures. They are still using the environment for shallow political purposes. In January, Tony Abbott said he was making a speech on the environment because "it will be a vote changing issue in this year's election."

He announced a 15,000 person Green Army in January with little detail about what they would do, but it was specified they would be paid \$50,000 a year. In May when the costings were released, it became apparent that there will be no positions funded in the first year. In July, the Green Army got a 70 per cent salary cut, with Greg Hunt announcing that the workers would be paid just \$15,000 per year. The Coalition had broken its own election promise even before the election had been called. They do not have the judgement to protect Australia's environment.

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