

The Greens (WA) 2017 policy

Water

The Greens (WA) believe that:

- with declining rainfall, the South West of the State in particular faces a significant challenge to meet its water needs in a sustainable way
- a changing climate poses new problems for water resource management which affects biodiversity, forests in water catchments, dependent industries, groundwater dependant ecosystems and urban water users
- groundwater extraction in some areas of Western Australia exceeds sustainable water extraction levels and wetlands and other important environmental areas are adversely affected as a result
- The Greens (WA) believe that current State policies are unsustainable and much more can and should be done to conserve, reuse and recycle water
- Western Australia faces increasing pressure on water supplies due to continued growth in population and industry and as a result of the effects of climate change
- more should be done to conserve, re-use and recycle water

Aims

The Greens (WA) want:

- long-term assessment of the impact of climate change on the extent and sustainability of our water resources (see also The Greens [Climate Change](#) policy)
- water resource management integrated with long-term regional planning
- the creation and implementation of Area Water Management Plans according to sustainable management principles in order to achieve sustainable water resource outcomes
- regular reports published on Area Water Management Plans detailing the quantity and quality of water resources, the extent of extraction, the health of dependent ecosystems and the ongoing sustainability of resource use
- continued public ownership of essential scheme water infrastructure
- appropriate forms of subsidy for scheme water customers in the interests of equity and social justice, recognising that water is a necessity for life.
- research and implementation of water conservation, re-use and recycling measures

Measures

The Greens (WA) will initiate actions and support legislation to:

- ensure open, inclusive and equitable processes in water resource protection and management, applying the precautionary principle¹
- ban unconventional gas extraction processes, such as ‘fracking’, that pose an unacceptable risk to aquifers
- research the long-term impact of bauxite and other mining activities, site revegetation and the consequences for water resources

- negotiate for federally owned or controlled land, such as airports, to be subject to state water resource management legislation
- promote the use of rainwater tanks as water sources
- ensure that water use charges for all water users reflect the true cost of monitoring, managing and protecting our water resources and send a clear price signal to profligate users
- provide for the publishing of regular performance reports on Area Water Management Plans in newspapers
- investigate and report on the status of water logging and salinity risk in the Stage 1 Ord River irrigation project, and the implications for Stage 2 expansion
- ensure that water allocation and licensing practices:
 - are within sustainable extraction limits
 - promote the equitable use of limited shared resources
 - are informed by monitoring of the extent of the resource and the health of dependent ecosystems
- ensure adaptive management that reflects the changing volume of sustainable yield in any given year
- introduce better policing of the metering of water use for licensed water extraction
- investigate the benefits of measuring private bore consumption
- create a transparent and open process within the Department of Water to allocate water licenses, based on consultation with local communities, and to resolve disputes.
- institute a third party right of appeal for water licence allocations
- regularly review existing groundwater allocation limits and develop allocation plans for those areas with no plan
- promote the introduction of efficient water use practices in irrigation and discourage the growing of high water use, low value crops
- require that the establishment of new industries that are large consumers of fresh water demonstrate their benefit to the community and the environment and review existing industries that are large consumers of water on that basis
- reform the laws governing water utilities, so that they have the function of providing water conservation services as well as supplying water
- where possible, ensure the energy requirements of water infrastructure are met with low or zero emissions energy (see also The Greens (WA) [Energy](#) policy)
- review the role of the Economic Regulation Authority in the pricing of water services to ensure that prices for water at the minimum allocations do not penalise people living on low incomes (see also The Greens (WA) [Economics](#) policy)
- set targets to reduce water consumption by industry, commerce and the community, making appropriate use of subsidies and incentives
- require water sensitive urban design principles in subdivision planning, housing and building design
- ensure that all current and future water utilities do not draw groundwater at an unsustainable rate
- develop systems to recycle and re-use wastewater
- trial the use of reinjection of water of suitable quality to restore the health of the superficial aquifer²

- increase the use of water sensitive urban design and construction to recharge groundwater aquifers, subject to safe management of likely pollutants
- manage drainage systems and catchments to minimise the entry of nutrient and non-nutrient pollutants in waterways
- promote 'third pipe' plumbing systems³ in new buildings which allow for the reuse of domestic greywater
- research and trial alternatives to the present wastewater systems that dispose to the ocean water which is suitable for other uses
- promote fit-for-use water⁴ usage, in particular in regard to potable water standards, industry and the re-use of waste water
- support the development of efficiency, re-use and conservation proposals

Glossary

1. **precautionary principle** - where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.
2. **superficial aquifer** - refers to the aquifer nearest the surface, usually consisting of loose, permeable deposits such as sand or gravel.
3. **'third pipe' plumbing system** – a system to provide non-drinking water to multiple users as an additional water supply network to the mains scheme that supplies drinking water and the sewerage scheme that takes used water away from the house. Plumbing design standards apply to avoid cross contamination.
4. **fit-for-use water** - water that is treated to an appropriate quality level for its intended end use(s).

Water policy ratified by The Greens (WA) in 2017