

The Greens (WA) 2020 policy

Water

Water is essential for human life and its provision should be reliable, responsible and provide efficient access to clean water in a way that is responsive to changing needs and climate. Climate change is decreasing Western Australia's water supplies. At the same time, we are increasing pressure on these supplies due to continued population and industry growth. Decline in rainfall and higher temperatures have put our water supply under stress. When competing interests act to secure their water supply from limited water resources, less water is available for protecting and regenerating biodiversity and natural landscapes. Action must be taken to recharge aquifers, conserve and recycle water, and reduce wastage.

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 (WA) [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 gas extraction processes, and fracking² in particular, that pose 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
- provide for the publishing of regular performance reports on Area Water Management Plans in the media

- investigate and report on the status of water logging, soil acidity, salinity and soil structural changes in the Stage 1 Ord River irrigation project, and the implications of expansion into further stages
- ensure that water allocation and licensing practices are equitable and within sustainable extraction limits, and are informed by monitoring of the extent of the resource and the health of dependent ecosystems
- introduce better policing of the metering of water use for licensed water extraction
- investigate the benefits of measuring private bore consumption, and limit use where residential bores have depleted coastal aquifers, to the extent that seawater intrusion and water table lowering have occurred to the detriment of ecosystems
- ensure water protection legislation recognises and incorporates urban planning as an integral part of water management, including sewerage management, runoff, and erosion (see also The Greens (WA) [Planning](#) policy)
- create a transparent and open process within the Department of Water to allocate water licenses, based on consultation with local communities, and independent hydrologists with training and expertise, 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, and ensure adaptive management reflects the changing volume of sustainable yield in any given year
- promote the introduction of efficient water use practices in irrigation and discourage the growing of water intensive crops such as cotton (see also The Greens (WA) [Agriculture](#) policy)
- require that new industries, that are large consumers of potable 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, and ensure that charges for all users better reflect the true cost of monitoring, managing and protecting our water resources, and send a clearer price signal to profligate users (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 to recharge groundwater aquifers, subject to safe management of likely pollutants
- ensure that all current and future water utilities do not draw groundwater at an unsustainable rate
- develop systems to recycle and re-use wastewater and minimise wastewater disposal into the oceans, such as aquifer recharge and greywater systems for new developments, and introduce government funded incentives to encourage use of these systems in residential households and commercial accommodation

- monitor the effectiveness of re-injection of water of suitable quality to restore the health of the superficial aquifer³
- promote fit-for-use water⁴ usage, in particular in regard to potable water standards, industry and the re-use of wastewater
- ensure that remote communities have clean, potable water supplies that meet Western Australia's minimum drinking water standards (see also The Greens (WA) [Health](#) policy)
- support the development of efficiency, re-use and conservation proposals
- preserve and expand vegetation to facilitate natural water cycles (See also The Greens (WA) [Forests](#) and [Plantations](#) policies)

(See also the Australian Greens [Water](#) policy)

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 measures to prevent environmental degradation.
2. **fracking** - Hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking' is a technique in which rock is fractured by a pressurized liquid. The process involves the high pressure injection of 'fracking fluid into the well-bore to create cracks in the deep rock formations through which natural gas and petroleum will flow more freely.
3. **superficial aquifer** - refers to the aquifer nearest the surface, usually consisting of loose, permeable deposits such as sand or gravel.
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 2020

The Greens (WA) water spokesperson is [Diane Evers MLC](#)