

Environmental Protection

Society depends on the ecological resources of the planet, therefore we must protect and maintain the integrity of its ecosystems. Environmental protection is the practice of protecting the natural environment by individuals, organisations and governments. Its objectives are to conserve natural resources and the existing natural environment and, where possible, to repair damage and reverse destructive trends. The precautionary principle¹ must be fully integrated into decision-making in order to secure the health of our living planet for present and future generations.

Among the many problems facing our world, climate change poses the greatest threat, and urgent and sustained local, national and global action is required.

In order to protect the natural world, the invaluable cultural knowledge of First Nations Peoples must be recognised and their land and sea country rights supported.

Aims

The Greens (WA) want:

- a society that uses the earth's resources sustainably, and maintains the ecology through care for the land, waters and the atmosphere
- a strong, independent, well-resourced Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with enhanced regulatory powers
- to develop agreements with First Nations Peoples to protect, manage and restore country (see also The Greens (WA) [First Nations Peoples](#) policy)
- to secure legislated funding and support for the Environmental Defenders Office
- the establishment of an Environmental Court or Tribunal to provide a more transparent, democratic and responsive system to address environmental impacts of proposals and developments
- the establishment of an Office of the Environment Advocate
- an end to unsustainable human exploitation of natural environments

Measures

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

- establish an Office of the Environment Advocate to be administered by extending and enhancing the powers of the Office of the Public Advocate pursuant to the *Guardianship and Administration Act 1990*
- enable the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to require planning and regulatory processes to more effectively protect environmental values
- require the EPA to underpin policy with current scientific evidence and require the Environment Minister to give more credence to EPA advice
- enable the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) to monitor, regulate and enforce compliance to more effectively protect threatened or degraded ecosystems
- give the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) more powers to allow complaints to be raised relating to all environmental matters
- develop and vigorously enforce strong penalties that include remediation costs against polluters who disregard environmental management and restoration
- review the evidence for the use and effectiveness of the offset policy in environmental assessment, and ensure that effective offsets against carbon emissions caused by major projects are required (see also the Greens (WA) [Climate Change](#) policy)
- ensure that overriding or ignoring Departmental or Ministers or other decision-makers triggers an automatic review process with a public consultation mechanism
- develop mechanisms to enable communities and community-based environmental organisations to play a greater role in the planning and implementation of strategies to protect, regenerate and manage the environment
- ensure that Not-for-Profit organisations (NFPs) are more able to fund and gather scientific evidence of existing environmental values, or of the likely environmental harm of projects, and of the validity of developers' claims to manage risks
- urge local environmental groups to work with First Nations Peoples in protecting, managing and restoring country (see also The Greens (WA) [First Nations Peoples](#) policy)
- ensure that local bodies, State and Federal governments provide effective and strong incentives to organisations and individual households to engage in environmental management and restoration
- ensure that researchers, academics and professionals are allowed to freely and publicly report environmental research evidence, regardless of government policy and funding sources

- encourage the publication of all environmental research in the peer-reviewed literature and in media available to the general public
- require the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to develop a management plan for Naturally Occurring Asbestos in national parks to minimise risks to humans from disturbances such as rock falls, vehicular and foot traffic
- develop and implement programs to regenerate natural spaces
- increase penalties for a breach of environmental protection laws and increase compliance regimes

(See also the Australian Greens [Environmental Principles](#) policy)

Glossary

1. The **precautionary principle** states that if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the environment, in the absence of scientific consensus that that the action or policy is harmful, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking the action.

The Environmental Protection policy was ratified by the Greens (WA) in 2021

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