

# CARING FOR COUNTRY AND PROTECTING SACRED SITES

**For thousands of years, First Nations people cared for Country, we must follow their lead.**

First Nations people have cared for lands and waters, including their totems, for tens of thousands of years.

But by disregarding First Nations science and land management we've seen a breakdown of ecological systems. These breakdowns and harms to biodiversity have been linked to a disregard of First Nations environmental science, and the implementation of imported and harmful practices.

We need to learn from First Nations people. The Greens will expand First Nations ranger programs and Indigenous protected areas and sacred sites.

## THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ **Strengthen laws to protect First Nations cultural heritage, knowledge, and intellectual property**
- ▲ **Contribute \$767m over the forward estimates to expand First Nations ranger programs and Indigenous Protected Areas to heal Country by returning land to First Nations management and providing long-term sustainable jobs**

## PAYING FOR OUR PLAN

By making billionaires and big corporations pay their fair share of tax and winding back handouts to big polluters, we can build a better life for all of us.

1 in 3 big corporations pays no tax and many big corporations and billionaires send their profits offshore tax free.

The Greens will tax billionaires with a new 'billionaires tax', require big corporations making excessive profits to pay a 'corporate super-profits tax' and axe billions of dollars in handouts to the coal, oil and gas giants that are driving the climate crisis.

These measures have all been costed by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office.

When big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share, everyone can have the services they need for a better life.

## FIRST NATIONS RANGERS

First Nations ranger programs support First Nations people to use their science, knowledge and culture to care for and manage Country as they have done for thousands of years.

First Nations people caring for Country has clear benefits to First Nations communities. When First Nations people are able to care for Country they report better mental and physical health, strengthening of culture, and women's empowerment.<sup>1</sup>

The Greens will triple the existing ranger program and employ more First Nations people to protect their lands, waters, rivers, lakes and the animals and plants that rely on them.

The Greens will also expand First Nations-led cultural burning programs to ensure First Nations people are involved in fuel and hazard reduction on Country which enhances the health of the land and its people.

## INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREAS

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) are areas of rich biodiversity that are owned, cared for, and managed by First Nations people. There are currently 78 dedicated IPAs, which make up more than 46 per cent of the National Reserve System.

IPAs deliver more than environmental benefits. Through managing IPAs, First Nations communities don't just protect the environment but also protect the cultural values of their Country

<sup>1</sup>

[https://www.countryneedspeople.org.au/what\\_are\\_indigenous\\_rangers](https://www.countryneedspeople.org.au/what_are_indigenous_rangers)

and create significant health, education, economic and social benefits.<sup>2</sup>

We will expand Indigenous Protected Areas to allow more First Nations people and communities to conserve and protect animals, plants, and sites of cultural significance for all future generations.

## PROTECTING CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Laws that are meant to protect First Nations heritage are fundamentally broken, with very few people or organisations held properly accountable for destroying First Nations heritage or desecrating their sites of significance. In line with the principles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we will introduce strong laws that protect First Nations people's tangible and intangible heritage, like sites of significance, traditional knowledge and science, intellectual property, ancestral remains, totems, symbols, and artistic works.

The Greens will also legislate to grant environmental personhood to natural areas of First Nations significance. Environmental personhood is giving nature, or parts of nature (like mountains, rivers, and lakes) rights in the same way that humans have rights. Environmental personhood recognises that for First Nations people nature is not a resource that can be owned, exploited or degraded but

rather an interconnected ecosystem on which we all depend for our wellbeing.

## HOW THE GREENS HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR YOU

**In the last parliament, it was the Greens who:**

- ▲ Successfully negotiated for an extension of the IPA programme, leading to its funding for another five years from 2018-19
- ▲ Held the Liberal government accountable for their failure to protect irreplaceable First Nations cultural heritage like the 46,000 year old Juukan gorge caves
- ▲ Defended the rights of First Nations people to decide what happens on Country

**FIND ALL OUR POLICIES:**

[greens.org.au/platform](https://greens.org.au/platform)

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<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.environment.gov.au/land/indigenous-protected-areas>