

The Greens (WA) 2017 policy

Mining & Fossil Fuels

The consequences of the extractive industries on economic, environmental and social sustainability must be considered by decision-makers and each sector must be held accountable for the impacts it has on the Western Australian landscape, economy and community, now and in the future.

The extractive industries are based largely on non-renewable, common-property resources located on crown land. They are also a major greenhouse gas emitter, contributing disproportionately in comparison to other industries to dangerous climate change impacts. As such there is an immediate need to move away from economic dependence on these industries and move towards sustainable production practices. The Greens want to promote the use of renewable and recycled resources and expand resource recovery from the waste stream.

Aims

The Greens (WA) want:

- the extractive industries to be regulated and utilised to best serve Western Australia's long term interests, by providing high levels of local employment now, while transforming our economy to be smarter and greener for the future and to protect our natural environment
- our most important natural and cultural heritage to be protected from any large scale disturbances, such as mining.
- disturbed sites to be restored to a condition agreed as acceptable by the community and the long-term land managers
- environmental and heritage assessments to be treated seriously by responsible Ministers, and public concerns and appeals taken into proper account
- the Agencies responsible for environmental assessment, advice, approvals and compliance to be open, transparent and accountable
- members of bodies assessing the environmental or heritage merit of a proposal to be free of relevant vested interests
- the principles of free, prior and informed consent to be respected by resources companies and Government departments
- regional communities to benefit from extractive industry in a sustainable and responsible manner
- effective environmental regulation for the resources industries with significant deterrents for non-compliance with legislation, regulations and licence conditions
- departments responsible for compliance with environmental and heritage related assessment to be effective and well-resourced to manage the enforcement of legislation, regulations and licence conditions
- the extractive industries not to unreasonably draw skilled labour and other resources away from other industries such as housing construction, education and health

- the state's resources to be strategically developed, based around articulated sustainability objectives and for the rate of resource extraction to be regulated at a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable level
- specific incentives to encourage the use of Western Australian skills and industries in the engineering, design and fabrication of infrastructure for extractive industry projects
- Government agreements with extractive industries to be transparent and conform to the principles of open and honest Government (see also The Greens (WA) [Open & Honest Government](#) policy)

Measures

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

- increase the resources available to the relevant departments to monitor and enforce licence and ministerial conditions of resources developments and increase the financial and other penalties for non-compliance
- prohibit exploration, mining, development of industrial hubs associated with resource beneficiation¹ within National Parks and 'A' Class Conservation Reserves
- prevent the Mining Act 1978 (WA) from overriding planning instruments
- improve the environmental assessment process to include full life-cycle assessments of energy associated with mineral extraction, transportation and use
- prohibit mining, storage and export of uranium (see also The Greens (WA) [Nuclear Issues](#) policy)
- employ the precautionary principle² where there is significant uncertainty around a project's impact on the environment
- oppose unsafe or environmentally unsound gas extraction practices such as fracking³
- place significant restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions from resources industries and require full reporting and offsetting of all greenhouse gas emissions, including those from FIFO⁴ workers (see also The Greens (WA) [Climate Change](#) policy)
- prohibit Royalties for Regions funding being redirected back into the mining industry, either directly through the Exploration Incentive Scheme or indirectly through the funding of port or rail expansion projects developed specifically to benefit those industries (see also The Greens (WA) [Regions](#) policy)
- ensure royalty rates remain high enough to represent a fair rate of return to the community for the use of a finite natural resource, and also to limit the potential for the resources sector's success to hurt other parts of the economy
- stop the development of any further State Agreement Acts (see also The Greens (WA) [Economics](#) policy) and refer existing State Agreement Acts to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission with a view to ensuring that they are not anti-competitive to other industry stakeholders

Environment

- review the powers of all relevant State regulatory agencies and make any necessary changes to enhance cross-agency cooperation and improve the quality, thoroughness and transparency of environmental impact assessments
- develop regional water resource management plans for the Pilbara and other extractive industries regions so that the cumulative impact of those industries on surface and groundwater is understood, and ensure that future developments are assessed with an emphasis on cumulative impact to these resources (see also The Greens (WA) [Water](#) policy)
- place an increased emphasis on mine closure and rehabilitation planning requirements during the approvals process for new developments in line with a clearly articulated completion criteria, with the onus on proponents to demonstrate that satisfactory rehabilitation is likely to be achieved
- require specific mining amendments to the Environmental Protection Act 1986 (WA) to ensure that the environment affected by mining is subject to State standards and objectives
- ensure environmental regulation is taken out of the tenement based Mining Act 1978 (WA)
- place significant legal and financial penalties on any company found in breach of environmental legislation including those extractive industries projects that do not trigger Environmental Protection Agency assessment
- run a full and transparent environmental audit of all tailings impoundment facilities in Western Australia
- move to full cost recovery bonds and / or insurance for closure based on extensive modelling and projected costs of rehabilitation to cover all extractive industries and to be undertaken at proposal / environmental impact assessment stage
- ensure increased efficiencies in raw-materials use while reducing demand for virgin resources⁵ by promoting the reuse and recycling of mineral products (see also The Greens (WA) [Beyond Waste](#) policy)
- establish an open and transparent process for third party appeals against mining proposals, including maintenance of the rights for public interest objections in the Mining Wardens Court

Social

- promote decentralisation, and the re-establishment of regional and remote communities, through:
 - State-based measures seeking to counter trends which hurt regions (such as FIFO), including seeking to change State Agreement Acts; and
 - promoting alternatives to 12 hour shifts in the extractive industries which lead to unsafe work practices (see also The Greens (WA) [Workplace Relations](#) policy)
- review the royalties system to promote equity in the industries, greater downstream processing where appropriate, and greater recognition of the financial burdens carried by local government in regional service provision and asset management
- support the premise that at least 25% of royalties retained by the State, after Federal grants fiscal adjustment, are spent in regional and remote Western

- Australia, over and above current provision of state services, and where the social and environmental needs are greatest
- call for full rateability of the tenements of extractive industries to resolve the rating inequity for local government areas in which State Agreements operate

(See also [the Australian Greens Natural Resources policy](#))

Glossary

1. **beneficiation** - the removal of impurities from an ore in preparation for refining.
2. **the 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.
3. **fracking** – the extraction of all forms of unconventional gas by hydraulic fracturing involving the pumping at high pressure, water and sand down the well.
4. **FIFO** - fly in fly out.
5. **virgin resources** - newly processed raw materials containing no recycled materials.

Mining & Fossil Fuels policy ratified by The Greens (WA) in 2017