



Julie Pettett
Conservation Council of South Australia
Level 1, Franklin Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Ms Pettett *Julie*

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on the combined environmental groups 2010 State Election Agenda for South Australia.

Thank you also for convening the recent Conservation Council Roundtable and the subsequent forum. I thought that the discussions we had gave me valuable insight into the issues that the Conservation Council regards as priority issues.

Please find the Government's response below to the Agenda.

1. Marine Parks – Sanctuary Zones and Funding

It is now clear that Labor is the only major party committed to marine parks. As we have begun to implement the marine parks network, the Liberal party attempted to undermine them at every turn. They have continued to raise the spectre of us "locking out" fishers from 50% of state waters – a false claim designed to whip up fear and opposition to marine parks amongst the fishing community and the regional communities they support.

We believe that marine parks will have the strongest and most effective future if local communities support and identify with their parks. Therefore, we have committed to extensive consultation with local communities as well as key stakeholders. The local advisory groups will provide advice to Government about the composition of the parks. So too will the scientific working group, responsible for the design principles for the marine parks network.

Setting targets for size of zones and compensation amounts would compromise this consultation process.

Rather, the Rann Government commits that, if re-elected, it will have a network of marine parks in place by 2012, which will provide comprehensive,

adequate and representative protection for the marine environment that meets Australian and international standards.

The parks will include sanctuary zones that provide meaningful protection. While every effort will be made to minimise displacement, where necessary, effort will be displaced and compensated to enable the creation of meaningful sanctuary zones.

2. Simpson Desert as Wilderness

In 1992 Labor passed the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* to ensure that South Australia's pristine wilderness could be provided with the highest level of protection in our parks system, including protection from mining. Labor has been the only party that has afforded this level of protection in our parks.

Since 2002, Labor has proclaimed in excess of 800,000 hectares of land under the *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* and recently announced an additional 900,000 hectares with the proposed Nullarbor wilderness protection area.

This will double the current area under wilderness protection, taking the number of hectares granted the highest form of protection to over 1.8 million hectares.

To continue this legacy, Labor commits to referring the Simpson Desert to the Wilderness Advisory Committee for consideration as a wilderness protection area under the *Wilderness Protection Act*.

3. Naturelinks

The Rann Government set a State Strategic Plan Target to have five well-established landscape scale biodiversity corridors by 2010 aimed at maximising ecological outcomes and increasing South Australia's resilience to a changing climate.

We have now released management plans for all 5 NatureLinks corridors.

As early tangible steps in creating these corridors, the Rann Government accompanied the release of the final four NatureLinks plans with the proclamation of new parks, or extensions to parks, in NatureLinks corridors. This represented over 81,000 new hectares of park in these corridors.

We have also committed with the Northern Territory to a Trans-Australia Eco-Link. This is a 3000 kilometre NatureLink that stretches from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Port Augusta, and is unprecedented in Australia. In South Australia, it overlays 2 Naturelinks – the Arid Lands and Flinders-Olary. Both state and territory governments have committed \$1.8 million in new funding to the Eco-Link.

The development of the NatureLinks corridors is a long term project. It is now core business for our environmental agencies. Funding will be sourced from a range of programs including NRM, native vegetation offsets, and River Murray Forest as well as direct funding from Government.

4. Upper Spencer Gulf

BHP Billiton (BHPB) proposes a desalination plant in the Upper Spencer Gulf to provide water for its planned expansion of the Roxby Downs mine. It believes that it can construct the plant so as to have no adverse impacts on the ecology of the area. BHPB released its draft EIS in May 2009 which it claimed addressed all environmental concerns.

In its submission as part of the EIS process, the Government identified a range of issues and required additional information on a variety of topics, including in relation to the desalination plant and its potential impact on the surrounding ecology.

The supplementary EIS is expected later this year.

All environmental concerns will need to be sufficiently addressed in the supplementary EIS, before being considered by the Commonwealth, Northern Territory and South Australian Governments.

However, it would be premature to prejudge the EIS process and prohibit the desalination plant now. This Government has put in place a rigorous and transparent process for determining the environmental effects of BHPB's proposal. It is of the utmost importance that processes we put in place for assessment of environmental impacts cannot be changed by any single interest.

We can't change the rules half way through.

5. Peak and Decline of Greenhouse Pollution levels.

Under a Labor Government, South Australia will continue to be a national leader in emissions reductions.

The Rann Government was the first in Australia to establish climate change legislation. This legislation includes a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 60% of 1990 levels by 2050.

We also established targets to produce 33% of our electricity from renewable sources by 2020, to improve the energy efficiency of government buildings by 25% from 2000-01 levels by 2014; and to increase the energy efficiency of dwellings by 10% by 2014.

South Australia's emissions from energy use have reduced since 2000, and are only slightly above 1990 levels. This is markedly different from other states' experience.

If re-elected, we will continue to act to lower South Australia's emissions profile while working to balance the effects, and maximise the benefits, of these actions to our economy. South Australia must also work within the carbon policy framework established by the Commonwealth.

A national emissions trading scheme has not yet been finalised and is not likely to be fully in place until at least 2011. That would leave only 3 years before 2014 for South Australia to achieve the peak and decline suggested with the assistance of a national carbon policy framework.

We are working hard to increase renewable energy generation and investment in our State—including through establishment of a \$20 million Renewable Energy Fund, RenewablesSA Board and strong efforts to secure a Solar Flagship bid, and assess issues related to transmission infrastructure.

All the investment outlined above will enable BHPB to source increasing amounts of renewable energy for its proposed Olympic Dam mine expansion. BHPB will need to satisfy all environmental concerns, including the impact of its increased energy demand, if the expansion is to be approved.

6. Radioactive State

The Olympic Dam mine is the world's fourth largest copper deposit; largest uranium deposit; and fourth largest gold deposit.

40% of the world's known uranium sources exist in South Australia. Extraction of uranium will generate significant economic benefit to the State and will result in greenhouse benefits internationally by replacing more carbon intensive forms of energy.

As stated above, BHPB's draft EIS set out the grounds upon which it claimed that all environmental concerns associated with uranium extraction, handling and export were addressed. The Government in its submission to the EIS process has requested that BHPB address a range of issues arising out of the uranium mining and export in its supplementary EIS.

In addition, State and Federal approvals would govern uranium mining, handling and export in the event that BHPB receives approval. These include strict conditions that South Australia's uranium can only be used for peaceful purposes and buyers must be from a country that has signed the nuclear non-proliferation accord.

7. Reducing the Ecological Footprint.

The 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide aims to balance the need to contain urban sprawl, maintain the existing character of Adelaide's suburbs and deliver sustainable outcomes for new developments across Adelaide over the next 30 years.

Through the 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide, development plans will designate areas of primary production significance and create new opportunities for the expansion for horticultural production north of the Gawler River. The Government will use a combination of land use controls and a more strategic approach to identifying significant production land to prevent its fragmentation.

The 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide identifies and protects up to 375,000 hectares of significant primary production land. Importantly, the 30 year Plan for Greater Adelaide does not plan any further urban lands surrounding the towns of McLaren Vale, McLaren Flat or Willunga.

The State Government is committed to revitalising the public transport network to transform Adelaide into Australia's most liveable and sustainable city. We're investing \$2 billion to achieve this transformation.

We are also investing in Transit Oriented Developments, higher density purpose built neighbourhoods with an improved public transport system as their centre piece, providing sustainable living for the future. The Greater Adelaide Plan at this stage has provided a target of approximately 60 per cent of new housing within the Metropolitan area to be located within 800 metres of a transit corridor or hub, but these targets can be revised if there is community acceptance of these forms of urban living.

This unprecedented investment will assist us to meet our State Strategic Plan target to increase the use of public transport to 10% of metropolitan weekday passenger vehicle kilometres travelled by 2018.

New coastal development is already required to be higher than 1.5m above current sea level. The required level varies across the state from a minimum value of 1.6m AHD to over 4m AHD (0m AHD is approximately mean sea level). The amount of variation reflects the different tidal ranges, storm surges and wave impacts along the coast. To complement this protection, the Government establishes coastal zones over features requiring additional protection or over areas giving rise to additional risks.

Of course, the establishment of Zero Waste and the adoption of the waste strategy and actions underpinning it, as well as the actions set out above regarding emissions reduction and renewable energy, have all contributed to reducing the ecological footprint. Our recent policy announcements regarding the next steps in tackling waste and investing in recycling will further assist.

8. Arkaroola

The Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary has been subject to mining exploration activities since the early years of South Australia's history, precisely because of the prospect of significant mineral resources in this area. However, it is also a place of great beauty and significant wilderness value.

Last year, the Government released for consultation its draft policy document – *Seeking a Balance: Conservation and Resource Use in the Northern Flinders Ranges*. The purpose was to provide greater clarity about the permissible impacts on the region, including higher protection for parts of the Northern Flinders - for Arkaroola in particular.

Public submissions on the draft, which are being made publicly available, are currently being considered.

The Government commits that, when finalised, *Seeking a Balance* will provide greater protection to the mountains of Arkaroola than has been provided up to now.

9. Private Landholders and Mining

Labor legislated for the protection of land from mining by passing the *Wilderness Protection Act*. Labor is the only party in South Australia to have declared protected areas under the *Wilderness Protection Act* – 900,000 hectares since 1993.

Wilderness Protection legislation can extend to private land, where the land justifies protection under the Act and where the landholders consent. The Government is not considering extending this protection beyond land that meets the wilderness values under the Act.

10. Reduce stormwater run-off

South Australia leads the nation in stormwater recycling, wastewater recycling and rainwater tank ownership, and this will continue under a re-elected Labor Government.

It is important to remember that when we came to office only two gigalitres of stormwater was being harvested.

Projects underway will more than triple the amount of stormwater currently captured by 2013 - from the current 6 billion litres to over 20 billion litres.

Under Labor the most detailed investigation of stormwater harvesting potential at a metropolitan scale for any Australia capital city has been undertaken. The study identified that large scale schemes could be developed to harvest up to 60 billion litres annually. This is the same level of stormwater harvesting as proposed by The Greens. Labor has committed to reach this harvest volume by 2050 and set an interim target of 35 billion litres by 2025.

Under Labor, South Australia will also build on its national leadership in wastewater recycling. We've more than doubled the amount of wastewater reuse since 2002 to over 30%, and projects are underway to increase this to 45% by 2013. This will mean recycling in the order of 35 to 40 billion litres of wastewater per year.

Reducing demand and increasing household capture of water is another element of reducing run-off. Labor has encouraged more people to retrofit rainwater tanks into their homes. Through the Rainwater Tank and Plumbing Rebate Scheme 8977 grants worth more than \$5.7 million have been provided.

Labor will also better integrate water management and urban design. Locations for potential stormwater harvesting schemes will be protected and water sensitive urban design will be mandated in new developments so that more water is captured and re-used on site.

11. Protect Biodiversity from Development

Labor believes that the protection of important ecosystems should be incorporated into land use planning.

Through the 30-year Plan for Greater Adelaide at least 115,000 hectares of environmentally significant land will be protected.

Under Labor, work has begun to map 12,000 hectares of native vegetation in growth areas over the next three years. This work will feed into regional land use planning processes so that impacts on biodiversity can be avoided, or if unavoidable, minimised or offset.

Labor will maintain the current approach that requires native vegetation clearance offsets to make up for the loss of vegetation, habitat and biodiversity over and above the loss.

Following extensive consultation, last year Labor sought legislative change that would have encouraged landholders to establish offsets before undertaking land clearing. The Liberals opposed the legislation and instead sought to weaken the existing controls on land clearance. The Liberals emergency services election policy clearly signals their intention to pursue this further under the guise of fire prevention.

12. Environmental Flow Reserve

Labor supports a fresh water future for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth.

However, it's not possible for South Australia to save the River alone. Of all the water taken from the Murray Darling Basin, we take just 7% while upstream States take 93%.

That is why the Rann Government has led negotiations with all Murray Darling States and the Commonwealth to ensure a better future for the Murray Darling Basin.

Thanks to these negotiations, 500 GL of environmental flows to the River through The Living Murray program, have been permanently restored - 485 GL of this is now secured.

We fought for and won an independent national authority to govern the river – a breakthrough that upstream states resisted for more than 100 years. It will prepare a Basin-wide plan that is predicated on securing healthy flows down the River. That plan will commence next year.

We are taking Victoria to the High Court. In this period of adjustment in the Murray Darling Basin it is critical we can get environmental water to where it is needed most. Victoria's trade barriers must be removed to enable this.

We are finalising a \$200 million long term plan for the Coorong and Lower Lakes. The plan includes short-term actions that will help lock-in fundamental ecological characteristics even under 'worst case' flows, and longer term actions that will preserve this unique system under a changed climate. It will focus on a freshwater solution for the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

While these long term solutions are developed and implemented, Labor has acted to protect the River in the short term.

In November 2009, we guaranteed an environmental reserve of 170 GL for the Lower Lakes in summer and autumn.

As a result of establishing that reserve, we were able to negotiate a further 238 GL from negotiations on NSW floodwater.

So an extra 408 GL of water - more than twice what Adelaide used last year - is now being delivered to the Lower Lakes. This will guarantee we are able to prevent the devastating effects of acidification and salinity for a further 12 – 18 months even if we return to record low flow conditions.

Labor's plans for the river – in the short and long term – are for a fresh water solution for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth.

Therefore we commit to continuing the approach taken this summer to secure a 170 GL environmental reserve. We will underwrite the purchase of water if necessary to accumulate the reserve at a cost of \$15 million. And we will review the Environmental Reserve on commencement of the Basin Plan in mid-2011.

13. Prevent further destruction of native bushland

The Labor Government has made it a clear policy of the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide that new urban areas will be based on minimising bushfire risks and minimising impacts on high value environmental areas.

The new growth areas identified in the Plan will be subject to further investigation and public consultation. The need for development proponents

to take into account the requirements of *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth)* is retained. The Plan also prioritises the avoidance of permanent development in areas at risk from hazards such as bushfire unless there is an overriding and demonstrable social, economic or environmental benefit.

14. West Avenue Range Wetlands

Labor acknowledges the environmental importance of the Parrakie wetlands and West Avenue Watercourse.

It was announced in 2006 that construction of a drain at Bald Hill would be contingent on the introduction of fresh water flows along historic flow paths from the Lower South East to the wetlands of the Upper South East. A floodways project to provide these flows has since been developed and floodways will be constructed this year.

Before proceeding with the Bald Hill drain project in 2009, we ordered two independent scientific reviews. These advised that if no action was taken further degradation of the West Avenue watercourse would be likely to occur.

Operation of the completed Upper South East drainage network will include monitoring of the surrounding floodplains, wetlands and their ecosystems to better inform management of the network. Unlike the old drains of the past, which flowed straight out to sea, the combination of the Bald Hill project and the floodways will return flows to wetlands and the Coorong.

15. Public Consultation Protocol

The Rann Government has taken great strides towards improved consultation during its most recent term.

In my own portfolio, this desire to establish widespread community consultation is demonstrated in the extensive consultation of the Marine Parks program and the Coorong Lower Lakes team.

Work has already started on developing a model for community engagement to be used across Government. The model will take into account the different circumstances in which community engagement occurs, and the different nature of the engagement appropriate to those circumstances – from information sharing to structured consultation and right through to collaboration and partnership. We will introduce this new model for consultation in our next term, if re-elected.

16. Environment Protection Authority

In 2002 the Rann Government amended the *Environment Protection Act* to strengthen the independence of the Environment Protection Authority. We strengthened the powers of the EPA to investigate and prosecute

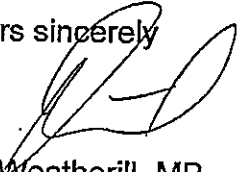
environmental offenders and recast the EPA as a truly independent body. We reinforced this in 2008 by ensuring that the roles of EPA and chair and EPA chief executive were made separate.

The EPA receives its revenue from the waste levy and environment licence fees. The revenue from the waste levy is used to fund activities other than the environment licence regulation – which is funded by licence fees. Any revenue received by the EPA is administered by the agency.

A Labor Government will maintain the independence of the EPA and will ensure that the EPA is sufficiently resourced to carry out its work.

Finally, I would like to thank the Conservation Council and the peak environmental groups for the constructive relationship I believe we have developed in my time as Minister for Environment and Conservation and I look forward to this continuing if the Rann Labor Government is re-elected.

Yours sincerely



Jay Weatherill, MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation

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