

Hon

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MLC

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Ms Julie Pettett
Chief Executive Officer
The Conservation Centre
Level 1, 157 Franklin Street
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Dear Ms Pettett

Julie,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a formal response to the 2010 State Election Agenda for SA.

The Liberal Party has a strong track record of environmental management from our last term in office. Our 2002 policy was regarded in the conservation sector as the best policy produced by any political party in a long time, and our current policy is consistent with that. I come from a first principle that our approach to environmental management should be guided by robust scientific evidence.

Labor's priorities are evidenced by the fact that in the last State Budget, environmental departments and agencies have had their budgets cut, with some agencies losing 50% of their funding and told to cut some 250 full-time positions. This has led to a number of existing programs coming under threat, for instance the protection of fossils in remote areas, parks management and bushfire management.

1. Implement Sanctuary Zones to highly protect at least 30 percent of South Australia's marine habitats in accordance with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) scientific benchmark and commit a minimum of \$40 million to implement the Marine Parks Programme.

The former Liberal Government began the work to create Marine Parks in the mid 1990s. In 1998 "Our Seas and Coasts – a Maritime and Estuarine Strategy for South Australia", was released with the comprehensive "Guide to Marine Protected Areas" being published in April 2000. Our 2002 election policy indicated our intention to complete the work by 2006. This reflected the State's obligation to establish a system of marine parks within the State's waters, flowing from COAG and the Commonwealth's international obligations.

The Rann Government waited until its second term to pass a Marine Parks Bill, which had to be amended by the Liberals and Greens to ensure that all interests would be properly consulted. In order for marine parks to work effectively, the whole community needs to have confidence in them, and concerns have emerged in some of our rural communities. Our fisheries are among the best managed in the world, and I believe that the contemporary fishing industry not only supports marine parks but genuinely sustainable catches.

The process of establishing marine parks needs to be a fully transparent process, so we would support an open public debate and the publication of submissions. We will also consider amending the Marine Parks Act to ensure that future changes to boundaries and zones must be agreed to by the Parliament.

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We are committed to completing the marine park management plans within the next Parliamentary term. Marine parks will contain a range of zones, including sanctuary zones. As stated above, the size and locations of each will be based on nationally and internationally accepted scientific benchmarks for the high level protection of marine biodiversity and ecosystem processes.

The amount of funding for marine parks will depend on an amount allocated for management and an amount available for displaced effort. While the process for the zoning and management plans is in process, it is difficult to commit to a specific quantum of funding for these purposes.

2. Protect the Simpson Desert region under the Wilderness Protection Act 1992 as a matter of urgency.

The Simpson Desert lies across the corners of three States - South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory, with the South Australian section divided into 3 protected areas, Simpson Desert Conservation Park, Simpson Desert Regional Reserve and Witjira National Park.

The State Liberals believe in the preservation of South Australia's indigenous flora species, the enhancement of habitat for native fauna for the benefit of biodiversity objectives, and educating the community to understand our natural environment. We acknowledge that the Simpson Desert is an ecosystem that holds many of these species. The Liberal party commits to referring the Simpson Desert to the Wilderness Advisory Committee for consideration as a wilderness protection area under the Wilderness Protection Act.

3. Invest an additional \$20 million in large scale conservation programs, such as NatureLinks, that are based on practical action to protect and restore wildlife and natural habitats. This must include mitigating the impacts of climate change on our biodiversity.

The Liberal Party initiated programs such as Nature Links and Operation Bounceback during our last term in office. Our Leader Isobel Redmond has even purchased her own block near the Murray River to revegetate it.

The current approach to biodiversity and conservation is often reactive rather than being proactive. In our first 100 days we will release a discussion paper to examine the need for a Biodiversity and Habitat Act, which will set indicators for habitat, based on spatial-mapping. The discussion paper will define the objectives of the proposed legislation, how species might be listed and their habitats best protected and how to enhance "off-park" conservation through voluntary partnerships with private landowners. Community input will be sought as well as key stakeholders such as conservation organisations, land owners, NRM boards and pastoralists.

A Redmond Liberal government is committed to:

- In the first 100 days of forming Government, release a Biodiversity and Habitat discussion paper which will set indicators for habitat, based on spatially mapping habitat and ecosystems.
- Continue to develop a comprehensive and representative reserve system, with an emphasis on making strategic purchases in bio-regions which are currently not represented or are under-represented.
- Provide greater emphasis on park management to reduce the impact of weeds and feral animal species on park biodiversity.
- Improve community education on how choice of garden plants can have a positive or negative impact on our conservation parks.
- Genuinely consult with groups with "grass-roots" environment skills and knowledge outside of Government, to ensure future South Australian biodiversity policies are effective, practical and well-informed.

4. Protect the unique ecology of the Upper Spencer Gulf and the breeding ground of the Giant Australian Cuttlefish by prohibiting the construction of a major desalination plant in this fragile region by BHP Billiton.

This is an issue I was personally so concerned about that I moved that it be examined by the Environment, Resources and Development (ERD) Committee of the Parliament – something that Labor opposed. Our committee unanimously stated that Point Lowly was the worst possible location. There are many concerns regarding the BHP Billiton desalination plant that have been raised not only by the community but through the draft EIS. I understand that through the EIS process BHP Billiton has been asked to consider other options for the desalination plant. The Liberal Party awaits the outcome of the EIS, which is at least 12 months away.

5. Commit South Australia to a peak and decline of greenhouse pollution levels during the next State Government term of office to 2014. This requires:
 - o Rejecting the BHP Roxby mine plan for a jump of 12 percent in SA's total greenhouse gas emissions.
 - o BHP to use renewable energy for the full electricity supply to the proposed new open pit mine.

The Liberal Party has consistently supported a targeted reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of 60% by 2050. During the debate of the *Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Bill 2007*, we supported amendments which increased our State's renewable energy target and sought verification from the CSIRO on the reporting of GHGE targets.

Federal Government climate change policies should seek to establish a carbon price signal across the board which will drive behaviour change in Australian businesses and consumers. Differing short term caps set by different states will make it difficult for Australian industries and business to develop and, at the same time, cut emissions. Short term caps do not recognise the ability of businesses to access renewable/low emissions technologies and will penalise South Australian businesses and promote carbon leakage. It may be a challenge to achieve access to large-scale cleaner, more efficient technologies and energy sources in the next four/five years. Especially as South Australia is not the leading state in renewable energy generation - as per the Annual Report from the Clean Energy Australia notes.

The State Government has a responsibility to ensure that Roxby operates under best practice methodologies and uses the most energy efficient equipment, which should be driven by the EIS process.

6. Prevent South Australia becoming the Radioactive State by requiring BHP's Roxby mine to:
 - o Only trade in copper
 - o Not export radioactive concentrates, and
 - o Leave the uranium and other radioactive waste at the mine site.

Require BHP to:

- o Rehabilitate the proposed Roxby open pit
- o Dispose of tailings into the pit
- o Prevent liquid radioactive waste leakage from tailings piles, and
- o Commit to biodiversity projects that genuinely compensate for the loss of flora and fauna caused by the pit and associated operations.

The Liberal Party supports uranium mining, with the caveat that all precautions need to be taken to ensure that the end use is for peaceful purposes. It is vital however that all exploration and mining activities are adequately policed and that companies comply with both environmental and social requirements as specified within the *Mining Act 1971*. It is disappointing that amendments to the Mining Act which were promised in response to

Marathon's breach of licence conditions weren't tabled until the very last sitting day before the Parliament rose.

It should be acknowledged that Western Mining and now BHP Billiton have contributed significantly to the Arid Lands Recovery Project, which I have personally had the privilege of visiting and viewing recovering species at close hand. Such programs should be encouraged.

7. Achieve South Australia's target of reducing our ecological footprint by:
 - o Stopping urban expansion in our most productive agricultural regions and ecologically significant areas including Gawler, Barossa Valley, Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula.
 - o Increasing investment in public transport so that 10 percent of journeys are by public transport by 2014.
 - o Establish clear buffer zones and a moratorium on all coastal development up to at least 1.5m above current sea level.

The Opposition agrees that without a long term vision for sustainable growth, we risk valuable agricultural land being lost to poorly planned residential developments. Any long term plan for future growth must be underpinned by adequate public transport infrastructure.

Labor's 30 Year Plan is a rigid document, rather than an open consultation process. Councils and communities must be genuinely engaged throughout the process, in order that alternatives can be discussed throughout the process.

It is concerning that the Government's 30 Year Plan aims for a "compact and carbon efficient city", yet allocates large numbers of new dwellings to the Barossa region – more than 50 km from the CBD, on the very edge of an already sprawling city. We believe that the plan needs to be reviewed, and alternatives need to be considered to the alternatives presented by the Department.

The Liberal Party supported the *Willunga Basin Protection Bill 2009* to protect the Willunga Basin (including areas like McLaren Vale, Willunga and Aldinga) from further urban and peri-urban development. In addition, the Liberal Party raised specific concerns about the continual encroachment of urban developments onto fertile primary production land in areas such as Mt Barker, where residential infrastructure is already under pressure. The government continues to press for developments such as Buckland Park, which is not only located away from any existing infrastructure but is situated on a floodplain.

8. Prevent mining activity in the mountains of the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary.

The Liberal Party understands the sensitivities surrounding Arkaroola and is considering all issues that have been raised by stakeholders. The Rann Government allowed exploration to occur, even after the licensee was found to have exploited the permit, in an Environmental Class A Zone. The zone states that *mining operations should not take place unless the deposits are of such paramount importance and their exploration is of the highest national or State interest that all other environment, heritage or conservation considerations may be overridden.*

Marathon believe that the size of the deposit justifies it achieving this status and I understand that no objections were raised at the time of granting of the original lease. Clearly the Rann government agrees, having granted the original exploration lease and the recent extension, in spite of Marathon's breach of its original licence. A document designed to quell criticism was hastily constructed by the government last year. *Seeking a Balance* was released in October 2009, and interested parties were given just two months to

comment. While the stated goals are all laudable, as a document it is short on detail, substance or referenced material. That the consultation period had to be extended by six weeks is an admission that the government rushed the process to fit in with the upcoming election.

Seeking a Balance states that DEH and PIRSA are seeking to identify icon sites in the Northern Flinders Ranges and then develop management plans and zoning arrangements to balance the needs of mining and the environment. Further, *Seeking a Balance* states that "Important areas should have a management framework that specifically protects the values that make them important", yet the management plans are based on existing knowledge. This begs the question - how can sites of significance be protected if they have not yet been identified?

A Liberal Government undertakes to fully investigate all environmental concerns and issues that have been made into the current Government's handling of exploration licenses for this area.

9. Develop legislation that gives private landholders the right to protect their conservation land from mining.

Currently, the Crown has the right over resources 6 metres below private land. In recent weeks, both our Shadow Minister for Mining and the Minister for Mining have ruled out changing the Act. However, opportunities for better protection can be explored on a case by case basis if we have a better understanding of priority areas for conservation through spatial mapping processes.

10. Reduce stormwater runoff from Adelaide into Gulf St Vincent to zero by 2020 by:
 - o Increasing aquifer storage and recharge of wetland purified stormwater
 - o Expanding the network of stormwater-fed wetlands in the metropolitan area
 - o Capturing/reusing rainwater on site, and
 - o Capturing stormwater on site

The Liberal Party is strongly committed to an investment of \$400 million to harvest over half the stormwater which is flowing into our gulf waters and damaging seagrass meadows. Labor has cynically undermined the credibility of utilising stormwater for drinking purposes, but we are confident that we can harvest and store 89 gigalitres of stormwater per year. This will improve water security, improve the health of the gulf and relieve pressure on the Murray.

11. Protect biodiversity from development impacts. Where "offsets" may be proposed as a last resort, require that they:
 - o Deliver net gains for biodiversity
 - o Are developed through a widespread and robust consultation process
 - o Are supported by a robust, resourced and transparent monitoring framework, and
 - o Do not undermine existing regulatory frameworks.

Our long term development plan must reflect the priorities of protecting biodiversity and local development plans should mirror this. The concept of "offsets" is still in its early stages of implementation and is certainly a matter which a Liberal Government would give further consideration.

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A Redmond Liberal government is committed to:

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 - Continue to develop a comprehensive and representative reserve system, with an emphasis on making strategic purchases in bio-regions which are currently not represented or are under-represented.
 - Provide greater emphasis on park management to reduce the impact of weeds and feral animal species on park biodiversity.
 - Improve community education on how choice of garden plants can have a positive or negative impact on our conservation parks.
12. Secure an environmental flow reserve and implement a long term plan that protects the ecological assets of the Lower Lakes and Coorong by investing \$400 million to buy permanent water entitlements for the Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth.

The Liberal Party has already committed \$400 million towards harvesting 89 gL of Adelaide’s stormwater, which will relieve pressure on the Murray River system.

The State Liberal Party supports the buy-back of water from willing sellers to restore a healthy river flow, however that should only be a part of the solution. Management of the volume of water pumped from the river upstream, together with the water buybacks and infrastructure works in upstream states, should be effective enough for South Australia to be guaranteed a minimum flow of 1850 gigalitres per annum regardless of upstream inflows. This would provide relief and some level of certainty for the environment. The environment should not have to compete on the market for its share of water.

We support a genuine federal takeover of the basin, which must include the northern parts of the basin. We support a freshwater solution for Lakes Albert, Alexandrina and the Coorong and we strenuously oppose the Wellington weir because seawater will destroy the Lakes and Coorong ecosystems and will lead to increased salinity upstream.

13. Prevent further destruction of natural bushland by ensuring urban and peri urban development planning provides for bushfire safety and nature conservation from the outset.

As a Hills resident, I am personally very aware of the balance between bushfire safety and nature conservation. Disturbingly, DEH’s fuel reduction program has not been adequately funded to pay for a core crew all year round to manage our parks in the Adelaide Hills.

The Liberal Party believes that native vegetation management needs to be a simple, clear, streamlined process to ensure that both government and private landholders are fully aware of the rights and responsibilities with regard to bushfire prevention.

A Redmond Liberal Government will ensure relevant legislation is adequate and residents in high risk areas adhere to the legislation, ensure compliance to prescribed “burn off” programs, and support local government to focus on the resource fire emergency management.

14. Stop deep drainage in the West Avenue Range and prevent further damage to the Parrakie Wetlands and West Avenue Range Watercourse.

The REFLOWS project seeks to partially restore some of the historical flows so that fresh waters enter the Coorong. The drains were unfortunately constructed in a period of drought, which led to drying out of wetlands and habitat reduction. The most recent bill relevant to deep drainage, the *Upper South East Dryland Salinity and Flood Management (Extension of Project) Amendment Bill 2009*, passed the Parliament with bipartisan support. The issues of dryland salinity, water logging and ecosystem degradation in this area that need to be better managed, and the completion of the project will assist this.

15. Implement a best practice, cross-government public consultation protocol by establishing a standard for genuine, meaningful and appropriate consultation that builds sustained and enduring relationships with communities within the next State Government term of office.

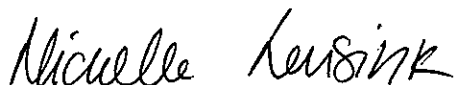
The Liberal Party recognises the value of engaging constructively with stakeholders, the community and all levels of Government in order to ensure that a best practice consultation protocol is adopted. In doing this, the benefits to all interested parties is a transparent and collaborative approach in tackling key issues affecting conservation in our State.

16. Ensure that the Environment Protection Authority is strongly and independently funded to fulfil its primary objective to protect the environment, and not be subject to a conflict of interest by relying on funding from the issuing of environmental licences.

In spite of criticism from industry and local government, the Rann Labor Government raids the EPA's solid waste fund to the tune of \$5 million every year, forcing our pollution regulator to become more dependent on raising its own funds than having a solid commitment from general revenue. This has reduced the amount of funding available for resource recovery initiatives, which is compounded by the State Government stockpiling millions of dollars instead of helping the community reduce the amount of waste it sends to landfill.

A Redmond Liberal government will restore \$5 million per annum for environmental initiatives. We support the independence of the EPA, including providing it with the resources to be an effective agency and carry out its legislative responsibilities.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Lensink

Deputy Liberal Leader of the Legislative Council
Shadow Minister for Environment and Conservation
Shadow Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change
Shadow Minister for the Status of Women
Shadow Minister for Youth