



# HEALTHY OCEANS

The Australian Greens will:

1. Act on climate change
2. Save the Great Barrier Reef
3. Restore Marine Parks
4. Stop new offshore oil and gas
5. Stop plastic pollution
6. Sustainably manage our fisheries
7. Get smart about sharks
8. Act on lethal whaling
9. Protect Antarctica

Australians love their coastlines and oceans. From sightseeing to surfing, from fishing to sailing, the marine environment is a big part of our lives and our identity.

But our oceans are under serious threat. Global crises such as climate change and plastic pollution are compounding the local impact of overfishing and oil and gas exploration. We must act if we are to protect the two-thirds of the planet covered in water.

The Greens have a comprehensive plan to ensure Australia does our bit to tackle the raft of issues facing our oceans. This is a matter of utmost national and global importance.

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## ONE: ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is affecting our oceans right now. Marine heat waves have increased by 50% in the last three decades.<sup>1</sup> Coral, kelp and other marine life have been seriously and possibly irreversibly damaged.<sup>2</sup> The 2018 summer heat wave in the Tasman Sea was literally off-the-charts.<sup>3</sup> People are reporting dramatic changes in the marine life they are seeing.<sup>4</sup>

The Greens would tackle climate change head-on by rapidly transitioning to a clean energy future.<sup>5</sup> This would include:

- 100% Renewable Energy by 2030.
- Phasing out coal exports by 2030.
- Establish Renew Australia to manage the transition.

## TWO: SAVE THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

The World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is the jewel in Australia's oceans. It is also an economic boon, contributing approximately \$6.4 billion to the Australian economy annually and supporting a workforce of 64,000.<sup>6</sup> But in the last three years, half of the coral cover in the northern reef has died as a result of heat, poor water quality, and crown-of-thorns starfish.<sup>7</sup> Back-to-back bleaching of the reef has also reduced new coral growth by 90%.<sup>8</sup>

We need to act now if we are to save the reef. And we need a better response than the Liberal's ill-considered and irresponsible granting of \$443 million to a private organisation if we are to avoid an 'in danger' listing by the United Nations.<sup>9</sup>

The Greens would:

- Recover the unspent money granted to the GBR Foundation for projects to protect and preserve the reef over the next five years.
- Appoint the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) as the responsible authority for managing grants for the reef, including establishing a special account for funds recovered from the GBR Foundation.
- Strengthen GBRMPA and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) with \$45 million each in extra funding over five years.
- Improve water quality with a \$2 billion grant fund over ten years for scientists, governments and farmers to improve agricultural practices and repair reef catchments.
- Set legally enforceable caps on water pollution by catchment and establish land clearing triggers within environmental laws.
- Ban offshore dumping of dredge spoil.

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<sup>1</sup> Smale and Wernberg, Suffering in the heat: the rise in marine heatwaves is harming ocean species, The Conversation, 5 March 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Oliver et al, Marine heatwaves are getting hotter, lasting longer and doing more damage, The Conversation, 31 May 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Meteorology and Taihoro Nukurangi, Special Climate Statement: record warmth in the Tasman Sea, New Zealand and Tasmania, 27 March 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Fitzsimmons, Save our minds by saving the world, Sydney Morning Herald, 20 January 2019.

<sup>5</sup> See: The Australian Greens, Renew Australia: Powering Past Coal to a Clean Future for All of Us.

<sup>6</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, At what price? The economic, social and icon value of the Great Barrier Reef, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Reef Health, viewed 15 April 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Pratchett, Coral reproduction on the Great Barrier Reef falls 89% after repeated bleaching, The Conversation, 4 April 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Senate Environment & Communications References Committee, Great Barrier Reef 2050 Partnership Program, 13 February 2019.

- Tackle illegal fishing and overfishing.
- End shark fishing.
- Stop the Adani coal mine.
- Stop coal and gas port expansions including at Abbot Point and pristine areas like the Fitzroy Delta and Cape York Peninsula.

### **THREE: RESTORE MARINE PARKS**

In 2012, after years of advocacy by oceans campaigners, Australia created the world's largest network of marine parks.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the original management plans were not fully implemented. The Liberal Government then introduced a vastly inferior set of management plans in 2018 that nearly halved the amount of high level protection provided for by 'green zones'.<sup>11</sup> Marine environments have had their protection downgraded and the integrity of the network has been severely weakened. This has damaged Australia's reputation, and has put unique and diverse oceans and marine life at risk in the face of climate change and a new wave of fossil fuel expansion. We need to fix this.

The Greens would:

- Immediately reinstate the original 2012 green zones in full.
- Assign \$247 million over four years for fisheries adjustment.
- Undertake a comprehensive review to advise on the creation of new or expanded marine parks that are truly comprehensive, and that take into account updated science, particularly related to climate change and fish stocks.

### **FOUR: STOP NEW OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS**

Australia is being deluged with a new wave of oil and gas exploration. Because all of the easy fuel has been extracted, this is happening deeper down and further offshore, creating a multitude of problems.

It starts with seismic testing: continuous blasts from an air gun that have been shown to kill plankton and shellfish.<sup>12</sup> The next step is drilling. If something goes wrong, there is the potential for catastrophic oil spills that spread thousands of kilometres.<sup>13</sup> Finally, more oil and more gas will mean more carbon emissions which means hotter and more acidic oceans.

The downsides are enormous. The Greens would:

- Ban all new offshore oil and gas exploration, including a ban on seismic testing.
- Ban all new offshore oil and gas extraction.
- Stop all oil and gas exploration and extraction in marine parks and in the Great Australian Bight, including by revoking existing permits.

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<sup>10</sup> Duffy, World's largest marine reserve network unveiled, ABC News, 14 June 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Rebgetz, Marine park protections almost halved under new draft plan, conservationists warn, ABC News, 17 September 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Carroll et al, A critical review of the potential impacts of marine seismic surveys on fish & invertebrates, Marine Pollution Bulletin, Volume 114, Issue 1, 15 January 2017; McCauley et al, Widely used marine seismic survey air gun operations negatively impact zooplankton, Nature Ecology & Evolution volume 1, Article number: 0195 (2017); CSIRO, Potential impacts on zooplankton of seismic surveys, 29 June 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Boisvert & Puddy, Oil spills in Great Australian Bight could reach Sydney's beaches, planning document shows, ABC News, 14 November 2018.

## **FIVE: STOP PLASTIC POLLUTION**

We have got to get serious about marine plastics. Dolphins, seals and turtles are being killed and maimed when entangled in plastic waste. Albatrosses have been discovered with whole toothbrushes in their guts. Plastic is breaking down into microplastics that are so small they are absorbed into the body of marine organisms. A recent report by the World Economic Forum warned that, on current trends, by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans.<sup>14</sup> We are literally choking our oceans with our waste.

The Greens would:

- Ban problematic single-use plastics from sale by 2025.
- Ban microbeads and light-weight single-use plastic bags by 2021.
- Mandate recycling targets for all plastic packaging.
- Introduce a mandatory container deposit system.
- Establish a plastics co-operative research centre.
- Reboot the recycling industry with \$500 million for infrastructure and programs.

## **SIX: SUSTAINABLY MANAGE OUR FISHERIES**

Fisheries are yet another area of oceans policy that has been left to languish under the Liberal Government. The 2012 Borthwick Review laid out a framework for an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management. Unfortunately, this has not been fully adopted, and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority continues to have a conflicted mandate of regulating the same industry whose economic viability it must maximise.<sup>15</sup> The Liberals have also abandoned plans for better monitoring of fish stocks<sup>16</sup>, criticised scientists who question the accuracy of reported fish stocks<sup>17</sup>, and voted with Labor to stop seafood labelling<sup>18</sup>.

In the face of climate change and overfishing, and species extinction on a mass scale, we need to do better. The Greens would:

- Fully implement an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management.
- Ensure the fisheries science is funded at arm's length from industry.
- Introduce a national system of seafood labelling for country-of-origin and species identification.
- Permanently ban all super trawlers from Commonwealth waters.
- Initiate a Senate inquiry into overseas vessels fishing in Australian waters.

## **SEVEN: GET SMART ABOUT SHARKS**

Shark bites are shocking and traumatic. And while they are extremely rare, we must accept they are part of life in Australia and try to manage this risk. The role of Government should be to ensure the policy response is informed by evidence.

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<sup>14</sup> World Economic Forum, *The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics*, January 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Fisheries Administration Act 1991, Part 2—Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Division 1—Establishment, functions and powers of Authority, Section 6: Objectives.

<sup>16</sup> Darby, *Tuna fishers defend \$320,000 donation to Liberal Party*, Sydney Morning Herald, 24 February 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee, *Estimates - Agriculture and Water Resources Portfolio*: Australian Fisheries Management Authority, 19 February 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Food Standards Amendment (Fish Labelling) Bill 2015.

The Greens have a plan to change community attitudes and invest in new technologies that can help reduce the risk of sharks without further damaging the marine environment. The Greens also believe that lethal methods are lazy and belong in the past. There is no evidence that these approaches are making ocean-goers safe.<sup>19</sup>

The Greens would:

- End lethal shark control measures through a 'phase out' of shark nets and drum lines.
- Provide funding for public good science to better understand sharks, and the development of non-lethal technologies.
- Establish programs to better inform ocean-goers.

## **EIGHT: ACT ON LETHAL WHALING**

Unfortunately, Japan has joined Norway and Iceland in defying international sentiment and international law by killing whales for commercial purposes. Japan's decision to leave the International Whaling Commission is also devastating, both for the protection of whales and for international environmental regulation.

Australia must continue to pursue an end to commercial whaling. We need to commit to a new round of diplomatic efforts with similarly minded countries, and explore alternative avenues, such as the extension of the regulation of commercial whaling into the convention on migratory species.<sup>20</sup>

## **NINE: PROTECT ANTARCTICA**

Antarctica is one of the last wild places left on Earth. As a party to international treaties<sup>21</sup> and a gateway to the South Pole, Australia has an important role to play in protecting the Antarctic's diverse marine life. Despite global recognition of the value of marine parks, the majority of Antarctic waters remain unprotected. Australia and the EU's 2012 proposal for the establishment of an East Antarctic Marine Park is yet to be approved and has been reduced to half the original size proposed.<sup>22</sup>

The Greens would:

- Continue to advocate for the establishment of an East Antarctic Marine Park.
- Advocate for increased protection around Heard and McDonald Islands, including marine park corridors.
- Advocate for a new ecosystem-based management measure for the Antarctic krill fishery.

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<sup>19</sup> Senate Environment & Communications Reference Committee, Shark mitigation and deterrent measures, December 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Bridgewater, Japan leaving the International Whaling Commission is a disaster, but not for the reasons you think, 31 December 2018.

<sup>21</sup> The Antarctic Treaty, and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

<sup>22</sup> Brooks, Why are talks over an East Antarctic marine park still deadlocked? The Conversation, 3 November 2017.