



Conservation  
Council SA

Monday 10 November  
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Senate Standing Committees on Environment  
and Communications,  
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**RE: Senate Inquiry on Australia's Environment**

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for your invitation to provide comment on the Senate Inquiry on Australia's Environment, for which submissions close on 10 November 2014.

Conservation Council SA is an independent, non-profit and strictly non-party political organisation representing around 50 of South Australia's environment and conservation organisations and their 90,000 members.

The Senate Committee's Terms of Reference cover:

- a. attacks on measures which seek to reduce the impact of climate change
- b. attacks on federal environmental protection
- c. attacks on funding for community environmental organisations and related funds
- d. undermining of Australia's ability to abide by its international environmental obligations
- e. other related matters.

Conservation Council SA was a signatory to a major submission to the Committee prepared jointly by conservation councils from the Australian states and territories, dated 1 September 2014.

As with the other conservation councils, Conservation Council SA believes that climate change is a major threat to the continued existence of life on this continent and planet. In responding to this threat, Conservation Council SA has recently developed a comprehensive view of environment policy in South Australia in a Changing Climate: A Blueprint for a Sustainable Future - Second Edition<sup>1</sup>. This document sets out, at a strategic level, policy positions in six key environmental areas, including biodiversity, coast and marine, water, planning and development, energy and water. A summary of recommendations is attached as an appendix to

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[http://www.conservationsa.org.au/images/CCSA\\_Policy\\_Blueprint\\_2013\\_Final.pdf](http://www.conservationsa.org.au/images/CCSA_Policy_Blueprint_2013_Final.pdf)<sup>1</sup>

this submission. While developed as a South Australian response to climate change, many of the recommendations are applicable to the considerations of this Senate Committee. In particular, several areas addressed by Conservation Council SA's Blueprint do not appear to have been encompassed by the terms of reference of the Committee but should be considered at item e. These include:

- **water:** attacks on arrangements for management of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The previous Government signed off on a Murray-Darling Basin Plan which envisaged substantial investment in acquiring water rights so that the Basin would not again be as degraded as in the recent severe drought. Key to that Plan was ensuring that sufficient water was available at all times to flush out to the sea (through the Murray Mouth) the two million tonnes of salt that the Murray collects from upstream landscapes. Without this guaranteed flush of salt, the communities and livelihoods along the river dependent on potable water will die. Conservation Council SA is particularly concerned that the Abbott Government has wound back some of the Plan's provisions and, in particular, the buy-back of water, in favour of upgrades of infrastructure. Conservation Council SA believes that this approach will not achieve the aim of the Plan.
- **coast and marine:** Conservation Council SA notes with great concern the Abbott Government's recent announcements to review marine parks. These parks were formed after long and detailed consultation with scientists, community and the fishing industry. Conservation Council SA is particularly concerned that such a review will presage the watering-down, reduction or elimination of the parks.

I would be happy to discuss this matter in more detail.

Kind regards,

**Craig Wilkins**  
**Chief Executive**

## Appendix Summary of Recommendations

### Biodiversity

BD1: Biodiversity must be the key driver of decision-making under the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999.

BD2: Develop and implement a climate change adaptation strategy

BD3: Provide more resources to better manage threats to South Australian biodiversity

BD4: Strengthen the ability of the reserve system to protect biodiversity

BD5: Fire management should have biodiversity objectives as a key driver

BD6: Management of water resources should have biodiversity conservation as a key driver (see also Recommendation WT2)

BD7: Support community engagement in biodiversity conservation

BD8: Strengthen initiatives that educate the community about the environment

BD9: Develop incentives to maintain biodiversity on private lands

BD10: South Australia's biodiversity legislation needs to be strengthened.

BD11: Integrated decision-making is needed to support biodiversity outcomes

BD12: Our planning system should protect our native vegetation and biodiversity (see also the chapter on Planning and Development)

### Coast and Marine

CM1: Adequate resources must be allocated to monitor and manage marine parks

CM2: Community (and conservation) involvement in marine parks must be adequately resourced

CM3: Commercial fishing operations must aim to substantially reduce by-catch

CM4: Incorporate ecosystem-based models into fisheries management

CM5: Threatened species legislation must be harmonised

CM6: Develop a plan responding to sea level rise

CM7: Improve the quality of coastal waters and estuaries

CM8: Ensure compliance with aquaculture protocols

CM9: Recreational fishing must be licensed

CM10: Management of dredge spoil must be best practice

CM11: The benefits of a healthy coastal and marine environment must be promoted

CM12: Support the development of a 'Green Standard' for sustainable harvest of the marine environment

CM13: The effectiveness of the Biosecurity (pest) strategy must be reviewed

CM14: Prevent environmental damage from the oil and gas industry

CM15: The South Australian Marine Parks Act 2007 requires strengthening to achieve its intended goals

### Energy

EN1: Ensure Australia has effective policies to reduce to emissions as quickly as possible

EN2: Repower Port Augusta by replacing the town's coal-fired power stations with renewable energy.

EN3: Speed up the move to a clean energy future by tightening the Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reductions Act 2007 and implementing complementary policy.

EN4: Expand the number of energy-related 'green jobs'

EN5: Promote energy-efficient living choices

EN6: Re-invigorate the greening of state government operations.

EN7: Aim for more fuel-efficient vehicles

EN8: Expand the role of renewable energy

EN9: Update the GreenPower framework

EN10: Develop a transition strategy to phase out coal and gas

EN11: Prohibit the use of nuclear power and phase out uranium mining

EN12: Update state legislation to improve sustainable outcomes in mining and electricity supply

## Planning and Development

PD1: Develop a whole-of-state long-term plan PD2: Reduce our ecological footprint

PD3: Plan to avoid climate-change hazards

PD4: Protect our native vegetation and biodiversity PD5: Use our heritage wisely

PD6: Improve public participation in the development process

## Waste

WS1: CCSA opposes the abolition of Zero Waste SA and advocates that the government reverse this decision. Increased community participation in waste reduction strategies and effective waste-handling practices needs to be promoted.

WS2: Develop adequate and appropriate legislation to manage litter.

WS3: Identify emerging wastes and develop policies and strategies to manage these wastes before they impact the environment

WS4: Monitor and audit to ensure progress is on track to achieve targets set in South Australia's Strategic Plan 2011 and in South Australia's Waste Strategy 2011–2015.

WS5: Ensure that the true cost of waste is factored into waste levies and charges, and reward efforts to minimise the production of waste. Revenue raised from waste levies and charges must be readily accessible for waste reduction and environmental protection programs

WS6: Extend strategies to manage organic waste to address sectors currently overlooked.

WS7: Maintain South Australia's lead role nationally in encouraging and promoting the reuse of all materials.

WS8: The state government should act to remove barriers to the full re-use of Commercial and Industrial (C&I) and Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste.

WS9: Take the lead in promoting extended producer responsibility at the national level.

WS10: Develop legislation, policies and programs to address outstanding issues in site contamination management.

WS11: Promote Waste-to-energy policies

## Water

WT1: Water must be treated as a public trust

WT2: The intrinsic value of water for environmental and human use must be reflected in greater protection of water resources (see also Recommendation BD6):

WT3: The South Australian Stormwater Strategy should be implemented in full by government.

WT4: Incentives should be used to drive more efficient water use in existing houses and businesses and prevent wasteful water use in new developments.

WT5: Engineering solutions to water issues should require a full cost-benefit analysis and must be based on best environmental practice.

WT6: The Murray-Darling Basin Plan needs to be strengthened in six key areas.