

DEFEND WA'S NATURE WITH STRONG NATURE LAWS

**Right now, the WA Government is looking to amend the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and weaken WA's Environment Protection Authority (EPA).
The WA Government must stop the erosion of the WA EPA and strengthen nature laws to defend nature and the places we love.**

Western Australia is home to magnificent landscapes, unique wildlife and globally-significant biodiversity. From the Kimberley, to the South West forests and our coral reefs, our world-renowned nature has profound intrinsic values, and is fundamental to our sense of place, well-being and livelihoods.



But the nature we love is in serious trouble. WA's plants, animals, and ecosystems are facing increasing threats from climate change, deforestation, land clearing, fossil fuel expansion, industrialisation, and pollution. Following record-breaking summer temperatures and drought conditions, large areas of WA's central to south-west coast are at risk of ecosystem collapse. Wildlife are at increasing risk of extinction, including our precious Num-bats and Carnaby's and Baudin's Black Cockatoos.



We call on you to advocate for the WA Government to do the right thing and shelve its plans to weaken the WA EPA and instead act, in collaboration with the community, to put in place strong nature laws.



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Nature cannot defend itself. The best way we can protect nature and our unique quality of life in WA is through strong nature laws. We call on the WA Government to:

1 Strengthen the EPA and Environmental Laws

WA must strengthen environmental protection laws, including: ensuring no significant impacts to threatened species, limiting the use of offsets, imposing objectively verifiable conditions to improve compliance and monitoring, and properly assessing cumulative impacts.

The EPA exists to protect the environment. The EPA's objectives must be safeguarded and enhanced, and the integrity of the environmental assessment process and the EPA must be upheld.

2 Guarantee the Full Independence of the EPA

To be effective, the EPA must be able to give independent and uncontaminated advice.

The EPA Board must consist of environmental experts, not industry insiders, to avoid conflicts of interest. Recruitment should include a set of eligibility criteria that ensure members have an interest in, and experience of, matters affecting the protection of the environment. Moves to prioritise 'projects of state significance' and issue a 'statement of intent' will dramatically undermine the independence, purpose and integrity of the EPA. These proposed changes would send a strong signal to, and apply considerable pressure on, the EPA to prioritise, fast-track and approve projects and forgo proper environmental assessment. It is critical that these proposed changes are scrapped.

3 Ensure Community Consultation and Collaboration

Proposed changes to the EPA were brought about by lobbying from powerful vested interests in Western Australia. These proposed changes have so far lacked consultation with First Nations, community or environment groups. All communities in Australia have rights that should be recognised to ensure they get a meaningful and fair say in environmental decision-making, including the right to know and the right to participate. The public right to appeal EPA assessments is an essential check and balance and it must be maintained.

4 Commit to Thorough Environmental Assessment

The EPA must enhance its ability to conduct thorough environmental assessments by increasing staffing, improving training, enhancing data availability and conducting proactive, strategic assessments that provide for regional planning, upfront protections and recommendations of appropriate zones for development. Proposed time limits and fast-tracking would weaken decision making by limiting the information that the EPA can request, and risk reducing the integrity and rigour of complex assessments. To reduce delays and the drain on EPA resources, the onus needs to be placed on industry to provide well designed, peer reviewed, transparent and considered proposals that are not damaging to the environment. Further, the EPA must maintain its obligation to consider greenhouse gas emissions and not defer this responsibility to the inadequate Commonwealth Safeguard Mechanism; the WA State of the Environment reporting should be reinstated to provide credible, timely and accessible information to decision-makers and the community.