



NSW Greens plan for healthy oceans

Policy Initiative

Overview

The NSW community loves our coast but we are at risk of loving it to death. Our oceans have never been under more pressure from climate disruption, pollution, historical over-fishing and coastal development.

A healthy and vibrant marine and coastal environment requires strong protections and active community involvement in caring for our coast. We can all play our part to reduce plastic pollution, restore estuary and coastal habitat, support our marine park network and challenge over-development of our estuaries and coastline. But Government has to back the community, invest in restoring our degrading coastal environment and enforce strong laws to protect our shared resources.

The Greens' Healthy Ocean Plan

The NSW Greens' **Healthy Ocean Plan** will:

1. Legislate to phase out single-use plastics.
2. Strengthen our network of marine parks and sanctuaries.
3. Introduce a river-to-sea habitat restoration program.
4. Recognise cultural fishing rights.
5. Remove shark nets and adopt non-lethal approach shark management program.
6. Support sustainable seafood in NSW.
7. Ban offshore exploration and mining of fossil fuels.
8. Build ocean and beaches resilience to climate disruption.



Details

1. Legislate to phase out single-use plastics

The community are fed up with plastic choking marine animals and littering our coastline, rivers, estuaries and beaches and have been driving the demand for change from the NSW Government and industry.

A June 2018 Senate Inquiry recommended State and Commonwealth Governments work to phase out single-use plastics by 2023.

The Greens recognise the need for legislation to back-up community action for change, particularly in relation to single use plastics.

Details:

- Introduce legislation, the ***Marine Plastics Reduction Bill 2018***, to set a target for plastic waste reduction and to phase out the most polluting single use-plastics.
- A renewed community awareness program about plastic litter and its impacts on the environment and wildlife, supporting and amplifying community campaigns and organisations
- Invest in infrastructure to ensure NSW has adequate recycling infrastructure to reduce plastics going into landfill by 90%.

2. Strengthen our network of marine parks and sanctuaries

The existing NSW Marine Park network has been undermined by cuts to Marine Sanctuary protections and years of delay in the implementation of the Marine Estate Management Action program.

The threat and risk approach to the management of the marine environment is not without merit, however the Liberal National Government has seen it as an opportunity to undermine marine parks protections, dilute enforcement and delay decisions to address key threats.

The Greens support a scientific approach to marine park creation and adequate resources to ensure these important areas are managed effectively and their rules enforced. We also support much greater involvement of local communities in adopting a caretaker role of their local marine parks.

Details:

- Support a goal of 30% of marine park areas as fully protected no-take marine sanctuaries
- Establish a Sydney Marine Park between the Central Coast and Illawarra
- Adequately resource the management and enforcement of marine parks
- Ensure critical habitat and threatened species outside of marine parks are adequately protected
- Build a public awareness campaign on the benefits of marine parks and marine sanctuaries, supporting and amplifying community campaigns and organisations.

3. River-to-Sea habitat restoration program

Whether in our rivers, estuaries, populated coastal environments or in the open ocean, the legacy of historical pollution, industrial and residential development and ongoing mis-use of the marine environment has left these environments damaged and degraded.

The River-to-Sea program will offer financial support to local communities to restore habitat to support the recovery and health of marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Starting with the coastal rivers and wetlands, we can work to protect the habitat and breeding grounds for marine species. We can restore their water quality. We can strengthen their resilience to the ravages of extreme climate events.

Some examples of programs that this fund could support include:

- mangrove regrowth
- retrofitting biodiversity-friendly hard barriers along foreshores to increase biodiversity
- Seagrass and seaweed regeneration programs

Details:

- A \$100m fund over four years to support tidal river, estuary and inshore marine habitat improvement programs across NSW. Priority would be given to community lead programs or those supported financially by local councils to maximise the value of the program. At least \$20m of this fund will be allocated to projects with a direct benefit to Aboriginal communities by way of employment opportunities, improving habitat in areas of cultural significance or improving habitat in traditional fishing grounds.
- Increase funding for the Environment Protection Authority to test water quality in major rivers and marine ecosystems and ensure compliance with environmental laws is monitored eg industry discharge into rivers



4. Recognise cultural fishing rights

The NSW Parliament passed laws in 2009 to officially recognise cultural fishing rights in NSW however the Act was never assented to, and those rights have never come into force.

Cultural fishing includes activities and practices carried out by Aboriginal persons for the purpose of satisfying personal, domestic or communal needs, or for educational or ceremonial purposes or other traditional purposes. The current law does not allow cultural fishing to include commercial purposes despite seafood trading was an important part of Aboriginal culture.

The uncertainty around cultural fishing rights has left many Aboriginal people facing prosecution and jail as a result of fisheries offences for activities considered by many as cultural fishing and part of native title rights.

The Greens will ensure cultural fishing rights are recognised in NSW law and take steps to correct the historical injustices relating to access to traditional fishing grounds and cultural practices including supporting greater Aboriginal involvement commercial fishing.

Details:

- Immediate ascent of Section 21AA of the Fisheries Management Act 1994 and recognition of native title rights over fisheries resources
- The allocation of an additional \$5m to the Aboriginal Commercial Fishing Trust to enable the purchase of fisheries quota to support economic development opportunities for Aboriginal fishers and communities
- The maintenance of the Aboriginal Liaison Officer program in all Marine Parks across NSW to support enforcement and cultural awareness programs
- Create a mentoring program for Aboriginal youth alongside the Liaison Officer program.



5. Remove shark nets and adopt a non-lethal approach to shark management

Hundreds of marine animals die each year in the 51 shark nets off beaches between Newcastle and Wollongong. The impact of shark nets impact has recently worsened due to shark net trials on the NSW North Coast.

There is no credible public safety argument in support of shark nets which have been shown to be ineffective at deterring or stopping human-shark interactions.

The Greens support a non-lethal approach to shark management which recognises the importance of sharks to ocean health while supporting broader beach safety programs.

Details:

- Invest in a non-lethal shark management program by redirecting the existing \$14m (3 year allocation) and ongoing funding for the bather protection scheme toward non-lethal measures including:
 - better resourcing volunteer and professional lifeguard services,
 - drone surveillance programs,
 - community awareness programs on how to reduce shark bite risks, and
 - the targeted use of SMART drumlines for improving our scientific knowledge of shark behaviors.



6. Support sustainable seafood in NSW

Approximately 90% of seafood eaten in NSW is imported. Much of it is unsustainable or is farmed in ways that has serious environmental consequences at a local level. By comparison, fresh, locally caught seafood is likely to be more sustainable and have a lower environmental footprint.

In order to change consumption behaviours to reduce the consumption of unsustainable seafood, there is a need to build consumer understanding of responsible seafood choices and the value of supporting sustainable local fisheries.

This will result in increased support for sustainable local fishing businesses and build recognition of the importance of marine environment health to the sustainability of the local seafood industry.

Details:

- Invest \$2 million over four years in brand development for local NSW seafood including incorporating the story and experience of sustainable local commercial fisheries in regional tourism and visitor promotion in cooperation with Destination NSW.
- Fully implement the recommendations of the NSW Commercial Fishing Inquiry in relation to the OceanWatch Master Fisherman's training program.
- Ensure wild-caught fisheries in NSW have access to Government funded and supported research to the same extent as aquaculture to improve the sustainability and long-term viability of wild-caught fisheries.
- Prohibit aquaculture within Sanctuary Zones and Habitat Protection Zones in NSW Marine Parks.

- Support mandatory country-of-origin seafood labelling for all seafood sold,
- Ensure all seafood served at functions or outlets at government buildings is from a sustainable local commercial fisheries in NSW, and its origin identified.

7. Ban all exploration and mining in NSW waters

There is currently a gas and oil exploration licence over an area of Commonwealth waters extending offshore from Stockton near Newcastle to Sydney's Northern Beaches. There has been active seismic testing and historical test drilling with more planned.

Offshore oil and gas exploration is inherently risky to the marine environment and local and migrating species. It also has significant impacts on the viability of local fisheries. There is no



place for such exploration at a time where a phase out of fossil fuels must occur to reduce carbon emissions.

Details:

- A ban on the exploration and mining of fossil fuels in NSW state waters
- A ban on the transport of petroleum and gas from new offshore oil rigs through NSW state waters
- Work with Federal, state and territory governments through COAG and lobby the Federal Government directly for a moratorium on any new permits for offshore oil and gas exploration in Australia.

8. Build ocean resilience to climate disruption

The oceans and marine life that inhabit it are on the front line when it comes to the impact of climate disruption. Coral bleaching has already been experienced in NSW Marine Parks and Sydney Harbour. Major storm events have caused significant beach erosion and species have begun a southward move that is changing the nature of marine environments. Ocean acidification is also expected to dramatically impact on marine biodiversity.

The Greens support urgent action to reduce the risks of climate disruption We also want to prepare the community to respond to coastal impacts that will arise from climate change. .

Details

- Map likely changes to habitat and threatened and vulnerable marine life in NSW waters to guide future plans
- Increase areas of 'Sanctuary Zone' protections to improve the capacity of the marine environment to respond to climate impacts.
- Ensure mangroves, seagrasses, salt marsh environments are protected from development impacts given their critical role in carbon sequestration and investigated opportunities to enhance degraded environments that could offer carbon sequestration benefits.
- Require all coastal councils to utilise the best practice sea level rise projections in coastal management planning processes to facilitate long term management of sea level rise impacts
- Adequately resource local governments to prepare communities for coastal impacts from climate disruption, including planned retreat,
- Transition to 100% renewable energy in NSW by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2040.