

Connecting science to public policy

Securing the health of Australia's environment in a changing climate

Our purpose

The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists is an independent group of eminent experts working to secure the health of Australia's land, water and biodiversity in a changing climate. Established in 2002, we have a national reputation for providing trusted advice to decision-makers and leaders on practical, long-term, evidence-based solutions for Australia's major environmental challenges.

Our Members comprise leading Australian scientists, lawyers and professionals with expertise in climate science, water management, biodiversity conservation, sustainable business and natural capital markets. We have the interdisciplinary expertise across land, water and climate needed to advise on complex multi-faceted environmental challenges. We work closely with governments, industry, communities including First Nations, media and NGOs to advance our shared goals.

Our impact

Our work spanning over 20 years has led to significant policy advances with measurable outcomes for the environment, communities and the economy.

Highlights of our recent work include:

- Launch of the **Blueprint to Repair Australia's Landscapes**, the most comprehensive roadmap of its kind, setting out the science-based actions and 30-year investment needed to restore Australia's degraded river systems, biodiversity, soils and coasts; and
- Release of the in-depth **review of the state of the Murray Darling Basin**, to inform the upcoming review of the Basin Plan.

Earlier achievements in the Wentworth Group's long history include:



National water reform Catalysing the 2004 National Water Initiative, *Water Act 2007* and \$10bn Water for the Future program. Securing 450 billion litres of water in the Murray-Darling Basin as part of the 2023 *Water Act* amendments. Stronger regulation of floodplain harvesting in NSW.



Integrated landscape management Collaborating with then Premier, Bob Carr, to develop a new landscape model in NSW, including establishment of Catchment Management Authorities and science-based, native vegetation regulations.



Carbon farming Working with then Queensland Premier, Anna Bligh, and CSIRO, to build a strong public policy case that led to the Commonwealth *Carbon Farming Initiative Act 2011*. Improving integrity of the carbon market through the Commonwealth's independent review.



Environmental accounting Developing the landmark Accounting for Nature® model, which contributed to the UN System of Environmental Economic Accounts and the National Strategy for Environmental-Economic Accounting.



National law and policy reform Providing evidence at Senate Inquiries and Royal Commissions, resulting in strengthening of the *Nature Repair Act 2023* and *Restoring Our Rivers Act 2023*, and improvements to Australian carbon market offset integrity standards.

The opportunity

Australia has national ambitions to reach net zero carbon emissions, become nature positive, grow a sustainable agricultural sector and close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

Yet successive reports show our environment is in a poor and declining condition. Coming decades will be increasingly challenging as the impacts of climate change, habitat degradation and biodiversity loss intensify.

If we are to turn our ambitions into reality in a warmer and more unpredictable world, we need to secure a healthy and resilient natural environment. This requires strong leadership, sustained investment and effective action across government, business and the community at a scale and scope never seen before.

With a national reputation of 'speaking truth to power', the Wentworth Group has a crucial role to play in:

- Providing practical, independent, evidence-based advice to decision-makers across the political spectrum;
- Putting forward agenda-setting policy solutions to address land and water management challenges;
- Synthesizing and communicating the science to fill critical data gaps, hold governments to account and empower leaders in government and the community with the latest science.

The Wentworth Group needs ongoing, core funding to continue to connect science to public policy to secure the health of our land, water and biodiversity in a changing climate.

Our priorities

The Wentworth Group has the following 12-18 month priorities:

PRIORITY 1. Water reform in a changing climate.

Secure river health and support communities and industries to adapt to a more extreme climate, by:

1. Ensuring the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is on track to being implemented in full and delivering long-term outcomes for river health;
2. Synthesizing scientific evidence and briefing governments to ensure best available evidence is used to inform the upcoming review of the *National Water Act 2007*, National Water Initiative and the Murray Darling Basin Plan; and
3. Undertaking original research to help align our policies and laws with the Global Biodiversity Framework targets for the protection and restoration of freshwater ecosystems.

PRIORITY 2. Protecting and restoring landscapes. Realise opportunities for integrated landscape management, by:

1. Ensuring land sector reforms, particularly in NSW, achieve the Government's longer-term ambitions for a nature positive, net zero emissions economy;
2. Catalysing support for the practical, evidence-based solutions outlined in our *Blueprint to Repair Australia's Landscapes* (see below); and
3. Informing the implementation of biodiversity and climate commitments at all levels of government.

PRIORITY 3: Championing Caring for Country.

Recognise the central role of Indigenous peoples in effective environmental management and the value of Traditional Knowledge in stewardship of our lands, waters and biodiversity, by:

1. Amplifying the voices and aspirations of our Indigenous Members and ensuring our work remains culturally informed; and
2. Working closely with leading Indigenous organisations to help advance their goals for stewardship of Country.

PRIORITY 4: Build the capacity of next generation science-policy leaders. Inspire and support early career researchers including Indigenous scholars to 'bridge the gap' between science and public policy, by:

1. Hosting an annual, 3-day intensive Master Class for high performing PhD students and Early Career Professionals in natural resource sciences with an interest in public policy.
2. Growing our expert Leaders Network, an active network for early career researchers to exchange information and develop relationships that will assist them in solving interdisciplinary challenges.

"We all have an obligation to care for Country, to ensure it is abundant so it can sustain life. If Country is not healthy neither are we, our environment should be full of diversity and abundance so that we can all rejuvenate and heal."

– Teagan Shields, Arabana woman and Wentworth Group Member.



Our latest **Blueprint** demonstrated that restoring Australia's landscapes is achievable, affordable and in the national interest, and can be done while boosting productivity and supporting jobs. Six years in the making, it is the most ambitious and detailed blueprint in the Wentworth Group's history, mapping out a thirty-year program to reverse landscape decline and improve climate resilience through 24 practical, tangible, costed and proven actions requiring an investment of only 0.3% of GDP.

This is one of a series of agenda-setting blueprints that put forward long-term transformative proposals for reform. This Blueprint was well-received by governments at all levels and has already been used by non-government organisations to inform budget submissions. It received widespread media coverage and interest from Natural Resource Management bodies, NGOs, First Nations' organisations and businesses. Behind the blueprint sits a carefully considered strategy for influencing decision-makers and catalysing change. Our focus now is to continue the journey from report to reality.

How your support for the Wentworth Group will make a difference

As an independent, not-for-profit organisation with Deductible Gift Recipient status, we rely entirely on the generosity of donors who share our passion for long-term conservation of Australia's natural environment.

With your support, we can drive transformative, enduring land and water reforms in Australia. Funds of \$800K per annum would cover our core costs and enable the Wentworth Group to deliver our high-impact work program. This would support a CEO, Director, Water and Landscapes Policy Analysts, an Indigenous Liaison Officer, a Media and Communications Specialist and an Administration Assistant, and cover travel costs and overheads.

We do not accept funding from government. Your support will allow us to continue to remain a trusted source of expert advice to decision-makers to advance solutions for Australia's most pressing natural resource challenges.

Every dollar invested in the Wentworth Group leverages significant added value through the generous pro-bono contributions provided by our Members and the board of directors.

Wentworth Group Members



Prof Justine Bell-James, TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland. Director, National Environmental Law Association. Climate change and environmental law, expert in legal mechanisms to protect, manage and restore coastal and marine ecosystems.



Dr Matthew Colloff, Fenner School, Australian National University. Ecologist and taxonomist, with extensive knowledge of ecology and management of the Murray-Darling Basin, focus on climate change adaptation.



Mr Mike Grundy, Former Research Director, Soil and Landscapes, CSIRO. Adjunct Professor, University of Sydney. Spatial soil and landscape science and its application to agricultural and forest production, environmental protection, systems approaches to complex problems.



Prof Lesley Hughes, Ecologist, Macquarie University. Councillor, Australian Climate Council. Leading authority on impacts of climate change on biodiversity and implications for conservation. Lead author on IPCC Working Group II.



Prof David Karoly, School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Melbourne. Councillor, Climate Council. World leading climate change scientist, focused on detecting and attributing climate change and its role in extreme climate events, and impacts and solutions.



Prof Richard Kingsford, Scientia Professor and Director, Centre for Ecosystem Science, UNSW Sydney. River ecologist and conservation biologist whose research has influenced the policy and management of many of Australia's river systems.



Prof Martine Maron, Professor of Environmental Management, University of Queensland. Internationally recognised for her research on biodiversity net gain policy and the design and consequences of biodiversity offsetting.



Prof Bradley Moggridge, Indigenous Water Science and Associate Dean, University of Technology Sydney. Proud Kamilaroi man with extensive experience in water policy and cultural science, advisor on sustainable water management on Country and globally.



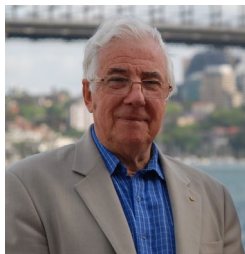
Prof Jamie Pittock, Fenner School, ANU. Board member, NRM Regions Australia and WWF Australia. Sustainable management of water, environmental governance, climate change adaptation, energy and food security in Australia and overseas.



Prof Fran Sheldon, Head of School, Environment and Science, Griffith University. Member, Australian Rivers Institute. Interested in relationships between hydrology, physical geomorphology and ecology in river systems including Murray-Darling & Lake Eyre Basins.



Dr Teagan Shields, Indigenous Ecologist, Curtin University. Proud Arabana woman with extensive experience in strategic policy reform, who believes the answer to the conservation issues facing Australia lies in the Indigenous-led use of Traditional Knowledge.



Prof Bruce Thom AM, Geographer, University of Sydney. Founder & Director, Australian Coastal Society. Leading expert in the field of coastal studies and the Australian coast. Former chair of Commonwealth State of the Environment Committee.



Mr Martijn Wilder AM, Managing Partner & Co-Founder, Pollination. Chair, National Reconstruction Fund Corporation. Pioneer in climate change law and finance, focused on the transition to net zero and nature positive.

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