



Nature Conservation Council of NSW

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008 MINUTES

Saturday 18th October, 2008

Welcome

Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair acknowledged that the conference was being held on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and paid respect to their elders past and present.

Apologies : Anne Lanyon, Judy Finlayson, Judy Messer, Futureworld

Admission of new members

Fiveborough and Tuckerbill Wetlands Trust
Friends of Kur-ring-gai Environment
Parramatta Climate Action Network
Save Tillegra Dam Groups
Baulkham Hills Shire Bushland Conservation Committee

Chairperson's Report

Don White presented his report.

Executive Director's Report

Cate Faehrmann presented her report.

Treasurer's Report

James Ryan presented the Audited Accounts for the year 2007-8 and gave his report.

Motion: That the Chairperson's , Executive Director's and Treasurer's reports be accepted.

Moved: Rob Pallin Seconded: Anne Reeves Carried

Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Carmel Tebbutt, addressed the conference during the proceedings.

CONFERENCE MOTIONS

National Parks, Wilderness and Land Management

1. Re-start the Stalled Wilderness Assessment Process in NSW

Submitted by the Colong Foundation

MOTION:

The NSW Government should conduct wilderness assessments and revise assessment processes consistent with Ombudsman recommendations and then take expeditious action to protect wilderness.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change needs to kick-start the wilderness protection process.

This Conference expresses its concern that assessment of wilderness nominations under the *NSW Wilderness Act* are not being progressed and **resolves** as follows:

1. That the NSW Minister for Environment and Climate Change and DECC take steps to re-start the stalled Wilderness Assessment Process;
2. That DECC allocate sufficient resources to meet its obligations under the NSW Wilderness Act, 1987;
3. That the recommendations made in November 2004 by the NSW Ombudsman are implemented as soon as possible, and in particular that the Ombudsman's recommendation that DECC should 'assess any future nominations for wilderness protection received from the complainants [the NSW environment groups] expeditiously under the new guidelines' is carried out, and that the Minister take steps to ensure that:
 - (a) Nomination of southern wilderness areas of concern made by the NSW environment groups in June 2005 is formally acknowledged under the *Wilderness Act, 1987*;
 - (b) New guidelines for wilderness assessment are revised to contain an open and transparent procedure that examines the 'relative merits of conservation and access issues in the summary and analysis report', as per Ombudsman recommendation 8.2 (i) of 2004;
 - (c) Revision of Guidelines for Assessing Wilderness be expedited;
 - (d) Assessment of the southern wilderness nomination is expedited in a manner consistent with the NSW Ombudsman's recommendations; and
 - (e) Wilderness assessment report for the southern wilderness areas of concern is placed on public exhibition no later than June 2010.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Write to the NSW Minister for Environment and Climate Change informing the Minister of the terms of this Annual Conference resolution and requesting that it be implemented.

Moved: Keith Muir

Seconded: Jim Morrison

Carried

2. Keep Our Wilderness Areas Free of Commercial Tourism

Submitted by Colong Foundation

MOTION:

That this Conference supports the *NSW Wilderness Act 1987* in keeping wilderness areas free from commercial tourism, and as places where visitors may go for self-reliant recreation

and to experience solitude and nature at its wildest. The Conference calls upon the NSW Government and the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to uphold the Wilderness Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act, and resist any proposals to amend either Act for the purposes of opening up wilderness areas to commercial uses.

PROPOSED ACTION:

NCC writes to the NSW Minister for Environment and Climate Change informing them of this resolution of the Conference and requesting that it be implemented.

*Moved: Keith Muir
Rob Pallin abstained.*

Seconded: Frances Bray

Carried

3. Protection of Lake Wollumbolla Catchment

Submitted by the Lake Wollumbolla Protection Association

MOTION 10A:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW agrees to write to the Premier of NSW requesting that the NSW Government commits to action within the life of this Parliament to protect Lake Wollumbolla and its catchment.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC writes to the NSW Premier with copies to the Ministers for Planning and Climate Change and the Environment. Letter to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts.

MOTION 10B:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW agrees to write to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, seeking his commitment to explore initiatives with the NSW Government to secure future protection of high conservation value lands in the Lake Wollumbolla Catchment, as part of the National Reserve System and to advance the listing of Lake Wollumbolla under the Ramsar Convention.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Write to Hon P. Garrett to explore initiatives to secure future protection of land of high conservation value in the Lake Wollumbolla catchment, and advance the listing of Lake Wollumbolla under the Ramsar Convention.

Moved: Frances Bray

Seconded: Rob Pallin

Carried

Motions 10A and 10B moved together.

4. Changes to the draft Forest Agreement and Forestry Operations Approval Review

Submitted by the North Coast Environment Council

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW endorses a position that the draft Terms of Reference for the Forest Agreement and Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA) Reviews should be amended to consider:

- climate change (and associated water implications);
- forest dieback;
- timber volumes;
- any protected area improvements arising from the above; and
- changes in threatened species and wilderness status

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC distributes media releases regarding the inadequacy of the Terms of Reference for the IFOA review.

That the NCC immediately begins to lobby relevant ministers to broaden the Terms of Reference for the IFOA Review.

That the NCC prepares a detailed submission regarding the inadequacy of the Terms of Reference and encourages and supports member groups prepare similar submissions.

Moved: Jim Morrison

Seconded: John Hibberd

Carried

5. Private Native Forestry

Submitted by the North Coast Environment Council

MOTION 12A:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW strongly endorse a position that any new Private Native Forests (PNF) Act must provide a mechanism to properly recognise all forest values – including carbon stores, water filtration, water volumes biodiversity habitat, connectivity – and provide incentives for conservation of those values.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC Executive Director seek a meeting with the new NSW Environment Minister to endorse the position that PNF Acts should provide a mechanism for recognising all forest values, as well as providing incentives for the conservation of those values.

MOTION 12B:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW oppose any Private Native Forests (PNF) Act that simply attempts to entrench the status quo by treating forests only as a timber resource to be exploited.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC seek a meeting with the new NSW Environment Minister to oppose any PNF Act that attempts to entrench the status quo of forests as timber resources only.

MOTION 12C:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW endorse a position that the Private Native Forests Code of Practice needs to improve if it is to be transferred to a new Act, or remains under the current Act, to exclude logging from riparian buffers and Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC), properly protect all old growth forests and require appropriate threatened species surveys or assessments prior to logging.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC meet with the new NSW Environment Minister to endorse an improved PNF Code of Practice, which excludes logging in riparian buffers and EECs, properly protect all old growth forests and require threatened species surveys or assessments prior to logging.

MOTION 12D:

Endorse a position that NCC involvement on the Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC) subcommittee on PNF should only continue if it is supported by a majority of environment groups working on the issue.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That NCC work closely with member groups with experience in the PNF issue and be guided by a majority decision of these groups regarding our continued support for the development of the new PNF Act and participation on the NRAC Subcommittee.

Moved: Jim Morrison

Seconded: Mark Selmes

Carried

6. Heritage Listing of remaining TSRs

Submitted by the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW supports the proposal to lobby the NSW State Government

- to Heritage List all remaining TSRs, (Travelling Stock Routes and the Travelling Stock Reserves) and to protect TSRs under planning legislation, (e.g. via a SEPP), to require that DECC requires an ecological assessment of conservation values, and the development and implementation of management plans prior to any disposal or change of use of TSRs, and
- that sufficient funding be provided to the Rural Lands Protection Boards to manage TSRs under their control.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Write to the State Government seeking Heritage Listing of all remaining TSRs, both the Traveling Stock Routes and the Traveling Stock Reserves and the other actions above.

Moved: Patrick Medway
4 against

Seconded: John Hibberd

Carried

7. Adequate Funding for TSRs upkeep

Submitted by the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW lobby the state government to provide adequate funding to keep TSRs in public ownership and end the practice of granting long term grazing permits.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Write to NSW State Government seeking adequate funding to assist in the upkeep of TSRs for the continued use for travelling-stock, and as essential wildlife corridors and for the protection of Aboriginal sites.

Moved: Mike Augee

Seconded: Jim Morrison

Carried

8. Crown Land Management in NSW

Submitted by NCC Executive.

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls on the NSW Premier to establish a Parliamentary Inquiry into the administration and management of the Crown Lands of New South Wales administered under the Crown Lands Act, with the objective of ensuring that these public assets are managed by a competent and professional authority to conserve their biodiversity and ecosystem service values, and ensuring that they remain in public ownership.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC writes to the Premier of NSW, with copies to the Minister for Lands, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and the Minister for Local Government, informing them of the Conference's decision and requesting that the Premier takes the actions necessary to establish the Parliamentary Inquiry.

Moved: Lorraine Cairnes

Seconded: Rob Pallin

Carried

DEFINITION

In this motion we use the term 'Crown Lands' to indicate those lands administered under the Crown Lands Act, in particular all unallocated Crown Lands, Travelling Stock Routes and Reserves, Recreation and other Reserves, Roadside and Railway-side lands, and similar lands. These lands do not include the National parks and other areas protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, and State Forest Estate.

9. Western Land Advisory Committee

Submitted by the NCC Executive Board

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW Annual Conference calls on the NSW Minister for Lands to appoint the Western Lands Advisory Council (WLAC) statutory position representing the interests of environment protection groups, as nominated by the NSW Nature Conservation Council, forthwith; **noting that** this position has been vacant for all of this year; and **noting that** the Minister has declined to make the required appointment from the two appropriately-qualified people nominated by the NCC; and further **noting that** during the time the environmental position on the WLAC has been vacant, an Inquiry into the Western Lands Act was set up, held, and reported on in the absence of any environmental representative on the WLAC, a key advisory body in this process.

Further, the Conference calls on the Minister to suspend all action arising from the Inquiry until there has been proper, transparent and adequate consultation with environmental organisations on the future management of the NSW Western Division.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC writes to the Premier of NSW, with copies to the Minister for Lands, the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, and the Minister for Local Government, informing them of the Conference's decision.

Moved: Lorraine Cairnes

Seconded: Anne Reeves

Carried

Mining & River Catchments

10. Moratorium on Mining in NSW River Catchments

Submitted by Nepean Action Group

MOTION

That the NSW State Government imposes a moratorium on mining in the protected Special Areas of Sydney's Drinking Water Catchments until a comprehensive interagency science and research assessment is completed. This would provide reliable information on mine impacts to water resources, conservation of river catchments, ecology and river processes can be carried out over a period of at least three years, as recommended by the Sydney Catchment Authority.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Support the Nepean Action Groups' call for a three year moratorium on mining in the Special Areas of Sydney's Drinking Water Catchment, draft copies to the three relevant Ministers and the Director Generals of DECC, DoP and DPI.

That the NCC endorse a moratorium on mining in protected Special Areas of Sydney's Drinking Water Catchments, as well as endorsing an interagency science and research programme, which provides reliable information on mine impacts to water resources and river conservation, to be carried out over a three year period.

Moved: Caroline Graham

Seconded: Jonathan Doig

Carried

11. Mining Protection Zones be retained in Metropolitan Catchments

Submitted by the Colong Foundation

MOTION

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW:

1. Calls for mining protection zones to be retained in the Metropolitan and Woronora Special Area catchments;
2. Calls for Protection Zones to continue to be used to prevent subsidence-related damage due to coal mining under environmentally or culturally sensitive features, such as cliffs, rock art, streams and swamps; and
3. Opposes the replacement of Protection Zones by Risk Management Zones (RMZs) as a means of regulating underground mining where "the identification of RMZs is not intended to represent either a determination of 'significance' or to suggest or require the exclusion of mining".

PROPOSED ACTION:

Write to relevant NSW Government Ministers informing them of the Council's resolution and requesting that it be implemented.

Moved: Keith Muir

Seconded: Jonathan Doig

Carried

12. Increasing the protection of wetlands and lowland ecosystems in Clarence Lowlands IBRA Subregion

Submitted by the North Coast Environment Council

MOTION

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW seek the support of the National Reserve System (NRS) in increasing the reservation of wetland and lowland ecosystems in the Clarence Lowlands IBRA Subregion through reservation of privately and publicly owned Endangered Ecological Communities (EECs).

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC lobby and write to the Department of Environment and Heritage in regards to the National Reserve System to secure the conservation of Clarence Valley wetlands and Clarence lowlands on both publicly owned State Forests and privately owned parcels of land.

That the NCC indicate that when substantial funding increases become available, the investment of NRS money in such purchases is an excellent means of protecting these nationally significant wetlands complexes.

Moved: Jim Morrison

Seconded: James Ryan

Carried

13. Water resource use and the mining industry

Submitted by the NCC Executive Board

MOTION

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW, noting that:

- a) Mining is one of the most intensive water extractive industries operating in Australia.
- b) Mining west of the Great Dividing Range has increased dramatically in recent years with the result that there are now over 100 mines in inland NSW, excluding coal-mines.
- c) Mining expansion is placing undue stress on the water resources of the Murray-Darling Basin at a time when much of inland NSW is still in drought, and is damaging rivers, wetlands and natural water aquifers as well as causing serious water pollution.
- d) Mining exposes the countryside to the potential risk of dangerous chemical spills via the transportation, storage and or inadvertent discharge of chemicals, for example cyanide used in extraction processes by many gold mines.

calls on the NSW Government to:

- 1) Place the long term ecological water security of rural inland NSW ahead of the short term profits of mining companies, by rejecting requests by mining companies for access to water.
- 2) Place a moratorium on any new water licences being granted to mines in the Murray-Darling Basin until an independent public study of the cumulative impact of mining on water resources and associated ecological systems in the Basin has been conducted and reported on.
- 3) Ensure that the NSW Minister for Water implements the commitment made by the previous Minister Nathan Rees (2 July 2008) to place an immediate state-wide embargo on new groundwater licences to protect water in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- 4) Ensure that water consumed by the mining industry is included in calculations of the Murray-Darling Basin Cap on diversions.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC write to the appropriate Ministers and relative departments, as well as copying the Commonwealth Government on letters.

Moved: Anne Reeves

Seconded: Lorraine Cairnes

Carried

Biodiversity and Species Conservation

14. Koala Plan of Management

Submitted by NSW Wildlife Council Inc.

MOTION

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls for the mandatory implementation of comprehensive koala plans of management by those local government authorities listed in Schedule 1 of the State of Environmental Planning Policy 44 (SEPP 44) Koala Habitat Protection and that it be a core responsibility of DECC to support this and fund it adequately.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC writes to the Minister for Planning, the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, and the Minister for Local Government, informing them of the Conference's decision and requesting they take the actions necessary for achieving, as soon as practicable, the preparation, adoption and implementation of CKPoMs by all local government authorities covered by SEPP 44.

A possible pathway for broader adoption may be the upcoming compulsory local environment plan (LEP) reviews or as part of regional planning strategies (and regional biodiversity conservation plans).

Moved: Lorraine Vass

Seconded: Patrick Medway

Carried

15. Protection of Blue Gum High Forest

Submitted by Hornsby Conservation Society Inc.

MOTION

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW

- (a) Lobby both the Federal and NSW Ministers for the Environment concerning:
- the fragmented nature of the Critically Endangered Blue Gum High Forest remnants in the Sydney bioregion;
 - the need for urgent action to incorporate these remnants into larger areas of bushland to ensure their long term viability; and
 - the necessity for funding of State and Council bodies for activities to revitalise and protect these valuable forest remnants.

(b) In particular, promote the need for:

- protection of the critically endangered areas of Blue Gum High Forest located on volcanic soils in Old Man Valley Hornsby NSW; and
- inclusion of Blue Gum High Forest remnants currently classified by Hornsby Shire Council as public parkland or residential areas e.g. the Blue Gum High Forest remnants adjacent to Berowra Valley Park under DECC management in the Berowra Valley Regional Park.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Letter to the Federal and NSW Ministers for the Environment to be prepared by Hornsby Conservation Society for consideration and approval by the NCC Executive.

Moved: Lucy Bal

Seconded: Nancy Pallin

Carried

16. Speed-bump installation

Submitted by the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc

MOTION

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW supports the proposal to lobby the NSW Government to install traffic calming measures including consideration of speed bumps and limiting speed to 50kmh on all roads through and adjacent to all National Parks in conjunction with the RTA.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Write to the State Government seeking a clear allocation of additional funds to install speed bumps and road-kill reduction signage in all national parks.

Moved: Patrick Medway

Seconded: Nola Stewart

Carried

17. Funding for a central answering service for wildlife rescue calls

Submitted by the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc

MOTION

A working party be established, convened by the NSW Wildlife Council, with representation from the NCC, WPSA, ORRCA, and NSW Wildlife Council, to research the practicalities and costs of establishing a state-wide wildlife rescue phone number through a central answering service with a view to developing a workable and costed proposal to put to the state government for funding purposes, as soon as is practicable.

PROPOSED ACTION:

- (1) NSW Wildlife Council to convene the working party.
- (2) Following the report of the Working Party, NCC to write to the State Government seeking a allocation of funds to install a central answering service for the appropriate wildlife rescue carer organisations.

Moved: Patrick Medway

Seconded: John Hibberd

Carried

Population and Climate Change

18. Population and Environment

Submitted by NCC Executive Board

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW:

1. Acknowledges the link between human population and the environment, recognising that humans use natural resources to meet their need for food, clothing, shelter and energy supplies etc., and that this results in resource depletion and environmental degradation, including the production of a range of pollutants. The resulting ecological footprint equates to the average per capita impact multiplied by the global population and per capita impact equals affluence times inefficiency of technology.
2. Affirms the need to work towards reduction and impact of human numbers for the survival of other species and their habitats and the resilience of Earth's ecosystems;
3. Believes that the size of the human population and its per capita demands need to be addressed both globally and locally throughout all parts of society;
4. Will promote the benefits to the planet of reducing our ecological footprint by smaller family sizes and reduced per capita consumption, achieved by humanitarian means; and
5. Will highlight, as relevant and appropriate, the above principle in its dealings with government and other bodies.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC adheres to the aforementioned motion in Population and Environment policy issues.

Moved: Nola Stewart

Seconded: Lorraine Cairnes

Carried

19. Population and Climate Change

Submitted by Sustainable Population Australia Inc. NSW Branch

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW write to the Federal government, reminding the government of Australia's support for the 1994 Cairo Conference of the UN on World Population and Development position that *all countries have a responsibility to stabilise their populations as quickly as possible*, and ask the Federal Government to:

1. Immediately reduce the planned increase of migrant intake, except on humanitarian grounds, to Australia (160,000 intake has been increased to around 300,000) back to its previous level (160,000), with further decreases in the future;
2. Remind other countries represented at the 1994 Cairo UN Conference of their commitment also to stabilise their populations.

The above actions being among the urgent steps needed to protect the environment and its biodiversity and resilience.

NCC's advocacy of greenhouse gas emissions reductions will consistently stress include the need for population stabilisation as a primary longer term Climate Change strategy.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC carries out the aforementioned motion by writing to the Federal Government.

Moved: Nola Stewart

Seconded: Patricia Bell

Carried

Against: James Ryan, Frances Bray

20. Lobbying the enactment of the Feed-in-Tariff Bill

Submitted by Parramatta Climate Action Network

MOTION:

THAT THE NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF NSW lobbies by all means to ensure the enactment of the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment (Feed-in-Tariff) Bill 2008 in order to provide major stimulation of renewable energy generation which will replace fossil fuel generated power. (? was there a discussion about the fact that this should be a gross feed-in tariff, I wasn't here for this bit but ParraCAN wanted this to be clear in the motion)

PROPOSED ACTION:

1. NCC lobby relevant politicians to push for adoption of the Bill and to lobby for a gross feed-in tariff, not net.
2. Raise a public petition in support of the bill.

Moved: Annie Nielsen

Seconded: Jonathan Doig

Carried

21. Solar Power Rebate

Submitted by Ryde Hunters Hill Flora & Fauna Preservation Society

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW is concerned with the Federal Government's decision to limit the rebate for installing solar power systems to households with incomes under \$100,000 and urges the Federal Government to reconsider the means test on the solar rebate to ensure that any changes to the policy in this area works to expand (rather than shrink) the size of the local solar PV power industry.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC makes representations to the Commonwealth and State Ministers for the Environment urging that the Commonwealth and State Governments implement policy changes to put these proposals into effect.

Moved: Brigid Dowsett

Seconded: Patrick Medway

Carried

22. NCC's policy on Greenhouse Emissions

Submitted by NCC Executive Board

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW adopts the policy positions outlined below.

1. Urgently working with the international community to identify emissions pathways for developed and developing countries to keep global warming as far below 2°C as possible, based on the best available science and with the lowest probability of overshooting this temperature.
2. Show international leadership in reaching an agreement to keep global average surface temperature rise to as far below 2°C as possible, and ultimately return to no more than 0.5°C above pre-industrial global average surface temperatures.
3. Set Australia on the right track, with immediate precautionary targets, in lieu of new emissions pathways, to reduce our domestic greenhouse pollution and to achieve near zero emissions as soon as possible that at a minimum:
 - a. Emissions peak and begin to decline by 2010
 - b. Halve our 1990 emissions by 2020; and
 - c. National carbon neutrality by 2040.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC adopts these policy positions on climate change, based on the position paper written by NCC Climate Change Team in May 2008, and use this policy as the basis for submissions and any policy dialogue or recommendations on climate change.

Moved: Rob Pallin

Seconded: Lorraine Cairnes

Carried

23. National campaign for 100% in 10 years

Submitted by the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre Inc.

MOTION A:

That the NCC take action on Climate Change by:

1. Acknowledging that the climate crisis has reached the level of a state of emergency; and
2. Directing its climate campaign to the goal of restoring a safe climate by publicly advocating emergency action to:
 - a. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to near zero as fast as humanly possible, and
 - b. Actively draw down atmospheric carbon to cool the planet

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC direct its climate campaign to focus public advocacy on acknowledging the climate emergency and taking emergency action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to near-zero as fast as possible and draw down atmospheric carbon.

MOTION B:

This conference calls on the NCC to:

1. Support Al Gore's challenge for the USA to reach 100% carbon free electricity within 10 years.
2. Work with other Conservation Councils across the country to build a national campaign with similar "100% in 10 years" demands for Australia; and
3. advocate for this goal to be the "ask" for future Walk Against Warming events.

Motions A and B have the same Rationale.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC support a national campaign in accordance with Al Gore's challenge of "100% carbon free electricity in 10 years", and make this goal a theme for Walk Against Warming.

Moved: Jonathan Doig

Seconded: Rob Pallin

Carried

24. Nature Conservation Council of NSW Climate Change Policy

The original policy was endorsed (in principle) by the 1992 NCC Annual Conference. This updated version was prepared for the 2008 NCC Annual Conference.

Moved for adoption: Rob Pallin Seconded Carried

1. DEFINITION

“Climate change” refers to long-lasting changes to world climate patterns (e.g. average temperatures, rainfall and incidence of severe weather events). It is widely recognised that current climate changes are being caused by a human-induced increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases.

“Greenhouse gases” include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, CFCs, HCFCs and ozone in the earth's atmosphere. Each of these gases is accumulating in the atmosphere at increasing rates due to human activity, and each is causing an increase in the temperature of the earth to a varying extent.

2. PRINCIPLES

The world is facing a climate emergency and must respond with genuine emergency action to restore a safe climate for all generations and all species.

2.1 The current level of emissions of greenhouse gases is ecologically unsustainable.

Atmospheric carbon levels are already destabilising our climate and must be urgently reduced.

2.2 The responsibility for reduction of greenhouse emissions is global, national, and local and cuts across all segments of the private and public sectors.

Australia has a special obligation to act given that we are responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than almost any other country per capita, and that our wealth has been partly built on emissions-intensive activity the result of which now threatens many poorer nations.

2.3 The solutions to the greenhouse problem are multifaceted and relate to a wide range of issues such as:

- Industrial development – both in Australia and overseas
- Energy production
- Energy use
- Transport
- Agriculture and forestry
- Waste management
- Consumerism
- Ecological sustainability
- Enhancement and protection of carbon sinks
- Population

- Technology innovation and adoption

2.4 Due to the immediacy of the problem, both reductive and adaptive responses are essential. It is necessary to reduce the levels of emissions, and it is also necessary to adapt to the impacts of the climate change that are inevitable due to the large accumulation of greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere, or that will be emitted before effective reduction takes effect.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

3.1 To recommend legislation, policy and procedural changes to all levels of government.

3.2 To recommend ways of bringing about attitudinal and behavioural changes in the community.

4. TARGETS

The world must act with extreme urgency, cooperation and commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions in line with keeping global warming as far below 2°C as possible, with the lowest probability of overshooting this temperature.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls on the Commonwealth government to:

4.1 Urgently work with the international scientific community to identify emissions pathways for developed and developing countries to keep global warming as far below 2°C as possible, based on the best available science and with the lowest probability of overshooting this temperature.

4.2 Show international leadership in reaching an agreement to keep global average surface temperature rise to as far below 2°C as possible, and ultimately return to no more than 0.5°C above pre-industrial global average surface temperatures.

4.3 Set Australia on the right track, with immediate precautionary targets, in lieu of new emissions pathways, to reduce our domestic greenhouse pollution and to achieve near zero emissions as soon as possible that, at a minimum:

- a. Emissions peak and begin to decline by 2010.
- b. Halve our 1990 emissions by 2020.
- c. National carbon neutrality by 2040.

Binding targets of this magnitude should be adopted by Australia as the minimum reduction required, based on best available information, and pursued with the urgency it deserves.

We recognise that industrialised countries such as Australia must lead the way in initiating reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the above targets must be seen as minimum and precautionary and may need to be further tightened if subsequent scientific evidence demands.

Anything less than this will ensure that industrialised countries remain reliant upon impoverished countries and future generations emitting disproportionately less than they do.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is not necessarily a negative target. More broadly and positively, Australia must aim to quickly move towards becoming a sustainable low-carbon society, via a radical re-imagining of our economy, institutions, energy and production systems.

4.4 Ensure that any carbon pollution reduction targets are binding on future governments, with the flexibility to increase, but not ease, our rate of emissions reductions.

4.5 Ensure that any long-term targets be supported by interim targets for periods of between one and three years.

4.6 Cease pursuing activities which contribute to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, such as the clearing of native forests, expansion of the coal industry and perverse subsidies for fossil fuel, transport and energy-intensive industries.

4.7 Commit financial and human resources to the development of performance indicators, precise milestones and ongoing monitoring of government performance on reducing emissions, with full public access and right to comment and review the effectiveness of the strategies in meeting the targets.

4.8 Ensure that the process and the results of any monitoring are open to the public with opportunity for comment and review.

5. STRATEGIES TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

The following sections discuss some of the measures which need to be adopted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Funding for such measures should come from revenue collected as part of a carbon price in the form of sale of emissions permits in an emissions trading scheme or a carbon tax.

5.1 The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW has submitted detailed comments and recommendations on the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. In brief, these are:

- 100% auctioning of permits, i.e. no free permits to be allocated
- Recognising the need to move away from a fossil-fuel and particularly coal-based economy, no assistance should be given to coal-powered electricity generators.
- Revenue from the auction of permits should be re-distributed to invest in low-carbon technologies (including renewable energy RD&D), assist low-income households, fund international mitigation and adaptation, fund development of education and training for green jobs and fund land stewardship payments and local adaptation measures.
- Assistance to households should be provided in ways that don't blunt the carbon price signal – eg. through energy efficiency, renewable energy and public transport infrastructure.
- Any international emissions credits imported by liable entities must be additional to the emission cuts Australia needs to make domestically.
- Sequestration of carbon from forestry activities must be rewarded separately from the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme - no opt-in credits for forestry should be allowed.
- No permit price cap should be set, though an appropriate floor price should be in place.
- No borrowing of permits from future years should be allowed.
- Complementary measures such as Mandatory Renewable Energy Target, National Framework for Energy Efficiency, and a Feed-in Tariff are still required.

5.2 Energy Production

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW recommends:

5.2.1 Extending the current Mandatory Renewable Energy Target to a minimum of 50% renewable energy generation by 2020 and for 100% as soon as possible.

5.2.2 Legislating a National Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff that meets the following criteria:

- a. The guaranteed price premium must be a minimum 3.88 times the cost of coal-fired power;
- b. Contracts should be made for a minimum 15 years;
- c. Connection of renewable energy must be a priority obligation for the distributor; and
- d. Qualifying generators must not include those already in operation or already participating in the MRET scheme – ensuring the tariff applies only to genuinely additional renewable energy.

5.2.3 Total Australian coal exports begin decreasing and instead Australia focuses on developing renewable energy and non-fossil-fuel-based low-emissions technologies to export particularly in the Asia Pacific Region.

5.2.4 Development and promotion of technologies that eliminate or have reduced dependence on coal-based energy. These technologies (e.g. renewable energy generation) must be fostered and funded in preference to the funding of research into carbon capture and storage.

5.2.5 The use of non fossil sources of energy such as solar, wind and geothermal power be vigorously promoted by fiscal, regulatory and marketing strategies.

5.3 Reduction and changing patterns of energy use.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW urges:

5.3.1 The NSW Government to cease extension of the electricity grid to remote areas of NSW where the provision of renewable energy would be more cost effective.

5.3.2 The faster introduction of effective standards and legislation for the design, manufacture, marketing and labelling of energy efficient:

- Housing
- Cars
- Appliances
- Public transport
- Industrial processes

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW recommends:

- Accelerated implementation, tightening and broader coverage of new buildings standards,
- Appropriate fiscal and other economic incentives and disincentives to accelerate the implementation of such strategies.

5.3.3 Reduction of energy use in the industrial sector by reducing consumption of manufactured goods, especially those which are disposable and non-essential.

5.3.4 The application of least cost utility planning strategies to promote energy conservation.

5.3.5 Legislate ambitious national and/or NSW energy efficiency targets.

5.4 Changes to Transport

Emissions from transport are responsible for 14% of our national greenhouse pollution.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls for:

5.4.1 An integrated transport system with priority being given to rail and other fixed track systems for the mass transport of people and freight, supported by mass transit systems on roads, and greatly upgraded sea, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

5.4.2 Urgent conversion of the freight industry away from road, to a rail based mode.

5.4.3 Removal of fiscal and other biases against rail and sea transport.

5.4.4 The evaluation of all government grants for transport to be carried out in terms of their greenhouse gas emissions.

5.4.5 The use of constitutional s.96 powers to promote, and immediately switch priority to, the expansion of rail based freight systems.

5.4.6 The expansion of public passenger transport systems based on core-rail modes and supported by road-based public transit.

5.3.7 Extensive new funding to reduce: private car use, urban congestion, demand for short-haul flights, travel times and costs.

5.5 Changes to Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture is responsible for 15% of current greenhouse gas emissions in Australia, including most of the methane emissions and a significant proportion of the nitrous oxide.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls for:

5.5.1 The promotion of alternative non-fossil fuel based energy within the agriculture sector.

5.5.2 The introduction of economic incentives for revegetation and agro-forestry, and a legislated end to broad-acre clearing of native vegetation.

5.5.3 Further research as to the relative contribution of greenhouse gases from the different sectors of agriculture, and research into how these emissions can be measured and reported with a view to including agriculture within the scope of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

5.5.4 Research as in 5.5.3 be well publicised and open to public comment.

5.5.5 A reduction in the use of inorganic fertilisers, and in particular, anhydrous ammonia.

5.5.6 Cessation of the practise of burning biomass (eg. stubble) without converting this to energy.

5.5.7 Large-scale revegetation of agricultural lands in the context of Total Catchment Management (TCM) and the promotion of agro-forestry "carbon sinks".

5.5.8 Expansion of mixed native species timber plantations with no further clear felling of native forests.

5.5.9 Legislation of ambitious targets to increase national forest cover in the medium-term.

5.6 Changes to Industry

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW recommends:

5.6.1 Mandatory energy-use reduction goals be set for all industrial and commercial energy consumers.

5.6.2 All such energy consumers be required to carry out an energy audit at least every five years.

5.7 Planning

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls on Governments to:

5.7.1 Establish comprehensive zoning plans to co-ordinate development and conservation.

5.7.2 Increase funding to ensure there is an adequate conservation system of parks, reserves, buffer zones, corridors, botanical gardens, zoos and gene banks for the purpose of maintaining biodiversity in response to climate change.

5.7.3 Develop integrated land-use planning systems that enable the economically efficient and environmentally beneficial use of present natural resources and limit the expansion of urbanisation and infrastructure development in outer suburban areas.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls on Local Government to:

5.7.4 Participate in Total Catchment Management planning in order to promote the more efficient use of water and the mitigation of the adverse impact of flooding, urban run-off and stormwater disposal in response to predicted instability of rainfall patterns.

5.7.5 Adopt greenhouse gas reduction strategies at a local level in terms of: land use and planning, energy efficiency in buildings, vegetation conservation and tree planting, waste reduction, transport infrastructure, etc.

5.8 Waste Minimisation

Waste minimisation should not be confined to material waste. Rather, it should also consider energy as waste and aim to reduce energy use.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls for:

5.8.1 Each level of government to adopt the NCC Waste Minimisation Strategy and implement the actions required of them.

6. ADAPTING TO GREENHOUSE IMPACTS

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls on the Federal Government to:

6.1 Take a leadership role in international efforts to mitigate the causes of and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

6.2 Review and adapt Australian aid programs according to changing needs, with priority for energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate change adaptation funding to developing countries, particularly in the Pacific Region.

6.3 Participate in planning towards international disaster and insurance strategies.

6.4 Review Australia's population numbers while having regard for our obligations to international refugee programs.

6.5 Support family planning education programs.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls on the State Government to:

6.6 Develop a public awareness program to ensure behaviours that will mitigate as well as adapt to the impacts of climate change.

6.7 Develop strategies to cope with predicted effects such as flooding, altered river flows and water supplies.

6.8 Develop and implement Total Catchment Management strategies that include provisions for the impacts of climate change.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls on Local Government to:

6.9 Develop strategic plans to identify and adapt to demographic changes and the consequent social impact in terms of infrastructure needs, community values and economic activities, for example, population shifts.

6.10 Encourage and support local organisations to develop educational and community awareness programs to help people become aware of the environmental and social implications of climate change.

6.11 Review local health, building and development codes in terms of their relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

7. INTERNATIONAL AND GLOBAL STRATEGIES

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW urges the Federal Government to:

7.1 Urgently work with the international community to identify emissions pathways for developed and developing countries to keep global warming as far below 2°C as possible, based on the best available science and with the lowest probability of overshooting this temperature

7.2 Show international leadership in reaching an agreement to keep global average surface temperature rise to as far below 2°C as possible

7.3 Provide assistance to developing nations to move to renewable energy systems and decouple their economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions growth.

7.4 Support debt-for-nature swaps with developing countries.

7.5 Support large-scale international afforestation programs.

7.6 Participate in aid programs that will demonstrate how tropical forests and other endangered habitats can sustain biodiversity and human livelihoods without being destroyed.

8. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW urges all levels of government to promote community awareness that individuals can make a difference by:

- Reducing the amount of energy used in the home,
- 4. Using alternative sources of energy,
- 5. Decreasing their use of cars,
- 6. Increasing their use of public transport,
- 7. Walking or riding a bicycle,
- 8. Avoiding plastics, polystyrene and aerosols,
- 9. Reducing, reusing and recycling products/materials - in that order of priority,
- 10. Rejecting unnecessary packaging,
- 11. Eating fresh rather than refrigerated, heated, or preserved foods,
- 12. Joining a local community climate action group.

As noted earlier, The Chairperson's, Executive Director's and Treasurer's Reports were accepted.

The Annual Report was accepted.

13. Amendment of the NCC Constitution to amend the mechanism for setting member fees and dues

Submitted by NCC Executive Board

MOTION

The following changes to the Constitution are recommended, to alter the existing mechanism for adjusting the member group dues from the present process of reporting and decision by the Annual Conference, to have the NCC Executive undertake this role, with notification to all member groups within one month of such resolution, and reported to the Annual Conference on any adjustments made.

CHANGE 1 - An additional clause in Section 6:

Section 6 (j) Changes to annual dues will be by resolution of the Executive, and notified to all member groups within one month of such resolution, and reported to the Annual Conference.

CHANGE 2 - a change to Section 15:

The existing relevant clause reads:

BUSINESS OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

"15. (a) The Annual Conference shall: . . .

(i) Receive and consider the recommendation of the Executive as to the adjustment of annual dues set out in the Schedule hereto."

Change the clause to read:

"(i) Receive advice concerning any decisions of the Executive to change all or any of the annual dues set out in the Schedule hereto."

Schedule 1

Schedule 1 of the Constitution states the current fees and dues and is automatically changed from time to time when any adjustment is made to the member dues; therefore no change to this Schedule is required to be authorised by the Annual Conference.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Amend the NCC Constitution in accordance with the proposals in the motion.

Moved: James Ryan Seconded: Lorraine Cairnes Carried

NCC Governance

25. NCC Guidelines for Funding

Submitted by the Colong Foundation for Wilderness

MOTION :

That this Conference, for reasons of good governance:

1. Requests the Executive of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW draft and circulate to member organisations a "Guideline for the Acceptance of Grants of Government Funds to the NCC", and that such draft guideline should set out a process of acceptance of all such grants by the Executive and ensure that all grants that are accepted are for purposes and on terms that fully accord with the NCC's Constitution, mission and policy,
2. After taking into account any comments or concerns expressed by member organisations, adopt the Guideline, and
3. Ensure that the Guideline is applied.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the Executive carry out the terms of the resolution.

Moved: Keith Muir

Seconded: Frances Bray

Carried

Executive election

The executive election was held and as there were twelve nominees, they were elected unopposed. The new executive members are:

James Ryan
Don White
Megan Kessler
Robert Pallin
Judy Messer
Kalina Koloff
Lorraine Cairnes
Nola Stewart
Anne Reeves
Jim Morrison (Northern)
John Jeayes
John Hibberd (Southern)

The meeting thanked Geoff Lambert for his role as Returning Officer and a letter of thanks will be sent.

Marine and Fisheries

26. State review of Shark Fisheries

Submitted by Bellingen Environmental Centre

MOTION: That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW calls on the State Government for an immediate moratorium on all commercial and recreational shark fishing in NSW until the NSW government has conducted comprehensive research into shark stocks and distribution off the east coast of Australia, to identify whether, and at what level, sharks can be harvested sustainably.

Moved: Megan Kessler

Seconded: John Hibberd

Carried

PROPOSED ACTION:

That NCC asks the NSW Government to establish a comprehensive review of the state of shark populations and shark fisheries in NSW, specifically, the scientific case for sustainability in the existing commercial shark fisheries.

That NCC campaigns for the immediate cessation of shark fishing in NSW until an appropriate review can be conducted.

Independence of Ecological Consultants

27. Independence of Ecological Consultants

Submitted by the North Coast Environment Council

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW writes to the NSW Government requesting that:

- the State Government guarantees “whistle-blower” protection for consultants who choose to speak out on principle, and continues to employ ecological consultants on an equitable basis.
- the State Government urge all other agencies to provide similar protection.
- Ecologist employment by State Government agencies should be from a pool of ecologists appointed by DECC according to qualifications and experience suited to the particular field in case, and paid not directly, but by developer contribution to a DECC fund. The product of consultancies should be peer-reviewed and consultants providing unacceptable efforts should be removed from the pool.
- a peer mentoring practice be applied, to ensure that necessary experience can be attained by newly-trained ecologists.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC writes to the Premier and Planning Minister in regard to the aforementioned motion.

Moved: Jim Morrison

Seconded: John Jeayes

Carried

LATE MOTIONS

1. Limited Speed for Boating

Submitted by the Bellingen Environment Centre Inc.

MOTION: THAT THE NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF NSW

Ask the NSW Government to introduce a 4 knot speed limit on all boating except emergency services on the Bellinger/Kalang Rivers to prevent further damage to the river banks and mechanical damage and wash effect from boats.

Moved: Megan Kessler

Seconded: Jim Morrison

Carried

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC ask the NSW Government to introduce a 4 knot speed limit on all non essential boating on the Bellinger/Kalang Rivers and use other appropriate measures to prevent further damage to the river banks and mechanical damage and wash effect from boats.

2. Conservation of Grey-Headed Flying Fox

Submitted by the Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc.

Motion: That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, in line with its policy on flying-foxes, calls on the NSW Government to cease issuing licences to commercial fruit growers to cull flying-foxes because

- the grey-headed flying-fox is listed as a vulnerable species;
- new research (University of Sydney) indicates that the current rates of mortality would lead to the species' extinction in 84 years (the quasi-extinction time);and
- decline in the population of flying-foxes threatens the loss of ecosystem services of pollination and seed dispersal for forests and woodlands.

PROPOSED ACTION

NCC joins with other conservation and wildlife organisations to lobby the NSW Government as above. NCC publicise on its website and via its member organisations the reasons that killing flying-foxes for fruit crop protection should cease.

Motion: Nancy Pallin

Seconded: Stan Wood

Carried

3. Protection of Seagrass Beds

Submitted by the Bellingen Environment Centre Inc.

MOTION: That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW ask the NSW Government

- to introduce, by way of Sanctuary Zones, protection of all seagrass beds and mangroves within Marine Parks in NSW;that a 4 knot speed limit be introduced on

- all boating other than emergency vessels and that no wash zones be established, to prevent further mechanical damage and minimise wash effect from boats; and that all anchorages within these sanctuary zones must be at fixed moorings.

Moved: Megan Kessler

Seconded: Lorraine Cairnes

Carried

The intention of the motion was accepted in principal and referred to the executive for detailing (NB – this was raised here because Lorraine was concerned about boat wash vs speed and there were issues raised about mangroves vs saltmarsh.)

BACKGROUND NOTES:

Seagrasses and mangroves are the primary nursery for the majority of fish species in our coastal waters. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that high-speed boating adversely affects seagrass beds and mangrove establishment especially within shallow and narrow estuaries. Conclusive research has shown that the turbulence from propellers can remove fish-eggs and invertebrates from seagrasses down to 5 metre depth. Dragging of an anchor through seagrass can adversely affect the viability of the bed.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC ask the NSW Government to introduce, by way of Sanctuary Zones, protection of all sea-grass beds and mangroves within Marine Parks in NSW

4. Marine Parks

Submitted by the Bellingen Environment Centre Inc.

MOTION:

That the Nature Conservation Council of NSW ask the NSW Government to introduce, by way of Sanctuary Zones, a minimum of 50% protection of all habitats within all the Marine Parks in NSW.

Moved: Megan Kessler

Seconded: Lorraine Cairnes

The intention of the motion was accepted in principal and referred to the executive for detailing. I didn't think the detailing issues was raised here

BACKGROUND NOTES:

The Marine Park Sanctuary Zone (NO-TAKE) is the only secure way of protecting the bio-diversity of the marine environment and should be the primary tool to achieve a sustainable future for the wild coastal fishery of NSW and to secure the protection of all marine live and their habitats.

35% of all the NSW MPs represent only 11% of the coastal waters of NSW. In Queensland approx. 20% of the east-coast is fully protected in (NO-TAKE) Sanctuaries.

PROPOSED ACTION:

That the NCC ask the NSW Government to introduce, by way of Sanctuary Zones, a minimum of 35% protection of all habitats within all the Marine Parks in NSW.

5. State Environmental Planning Policy for Threatened Species and EECs

Submitted by the Linnean Society

That NCC lobby the Minister for Planning to issue a SEPP requiring councils to prepare a plan of management (PoM) for endangered or threatened species (as defined in the schedules to the TS Act) and endangered ecological communities, in conjunction with the current LEP formulation and to review such PoMs whenever the LEP is amended.

Proposed Action:

NCC to lobby Minister for Planning (& DECC).

Moved: Mike Augee

Seconded: John Hibberd

Carried

6. Alienation of Crown Lands with native vegetation

Submitted by SERCA

MOTION:

The NCC strongly opposes any moves by the NSW Government to alienate any public naturally vegetated lands – or to privatise forest production or management – particularly state forests, TSRs and other naturally vegetated crown lands.

Moved: John Hibberd

Seconded: Jim Morrison

Carried

7. Abolition of Forestry Managed Investment Schemes

Submitted by NCEC

MOTION:

That the NCC advocates the abolition of forestry managed investment schemes and that resources are devoted to coordinating a national campaign to bring about economic and environmental reform in the plantation sector.

Action proposed:

That the issue is raised at next meeting of the Conservation Councils of Australia. The campaign should promote sustainable native plantations which do not clear native forests and other vegetation.

Moved: Jim Morrison

Seconded: Brigid Dowsett

Carried

8. EP&A Act (Part 3A Developments) ESD considerations

Motion:

That the NCC calls on the NSW Government to amend the EP&A Act to clearly require that ecologically sustainable development is a mandatory and relevant consideration under Part 3A of the Act.

Moved: Jim Morrison

Seconded: Anne Reeves

Carried

The meeting concluded at 4.20pm.