



CONSERVATION NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

Volume 22, No. 2, March, 1990

Registered Australia Post Publication No. VBH-1752

1990 ACF ELECTION GUIDE

Vote for the Environment

The green vote may well determine the result of the Federal Election on March 24. Your vote will not only decide who is in government but will also affect the future of our environment.



All illustrations by Mark Evans

INSIDE

- ▲ Your Vote – ACF Election Policy
- ▲ Questionnaire: how the parties scored
- ▲ The Parties, The Issues, The Policies

The ACF believes that this election is an important opportunity to show our political parties that being environmentally responsible is not just a matter of image and rhetoric but a question of commitment to clear strong policies which will give Australia an ecologically sustainable future.

To determine its position on this election the ACF has conducted a careful and comprehensive evaluation of the parties. This broadsheet presents the results of our evaluation and offers a guide on how to Vote for the Environment on 24th March.

ACF supports Democrats, Greens

On the basis of the questionnaire results and a careful examination of policies and records for each party the ACF has decided to support the Australian Democrats, the Western Australian Greens and the United Tasmania Group (UTG) in the House of Representatives and the Senate. [The UTG, of which Bob Brown is a member, established one of the world's first green parties.]

Preferences to Labor Party

The ACF also recommends that the Labor Party receive your next preference.

This decision was taken because on key environmental areas there are critical differences between the two major parties. They include Kakadu, the continuing Commonwealth management of Uluru, enrichment of uranium, land use planning of Cape York, protection and listing of the National Estate, the integrity of National Parks, and the Federal government's willingness to use its powers to protect Australia's environment, even in the face of State opposition.

ACF ELECTION GUIDE

Supplement to CONSERVATION NEWS – March 1990

THE PARTIES, THE ISSUES, THE POLICIES

The following is a synopsis of the positions of the major parties taken from the ACF questionnaire, policy documents and verifiable media comment by party spokespersons.

Given that the Australian Democrats, the Jo Valentine Greens, the Irina Dunn Greens and the United Tasmania Group supported all of the questions put to them, we have concentrated almost exclusively on the positions, records and differences between the ALP and the Coalition.

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY



All parties support an International Biodiversity Convention. In answer to our call for a major increase in funding for comprehensive biological survey of Australia to be completed by the year 2000, both the ALP and the Coalition agreed, subject to funding being available in order to achieve the target date.

ALP: Will produce a national strategy which guarantees protection of all Australia's species of flora and fauna. They will spend \$4 million over first two years of 10 year program.

COALITION: Will establish Endangered Species Unit to identify endangered species and threatened habitats. "We will encourage States and Territories to explicitly ban, by legislations, any logging and mining in our system of proposed Priority National Parks" (*Senator Puplick, 2nd March, 1990*). ▲

GENETIC ENGINEERING

DEMOCRATS: Support regulations to control genetic engineering and abolition of the right to patent all genetic material, including plants and animals.

ALP: Undecided on these issues pending a Parliamentary Inquiry.

COALITION: Supports the need for uniform national regulations on genetically engineered organisms, but will allow the patenting of genetically engineered plants and animals. ▲

AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

Both ALP and Coalition have agreed to maintain the autonomy of, and increase funding to, the Australian Heritage Commission. Whilst the ALP expressly rejects economic criteria being attached to National Estate listings, the Coalition does not. ▲

ANTARCTICA

Both the ALP and the Coalition support the declaration of Antarctica as a wilderness park, opposing any mining or similar activity there, and will work to persuade other treaty parties to support the declaration. ▲

NATIONAL PARKS



ALP: Opposes mining, mineral exploration, grazing and logging as well as inappropriate tourist development in all National Parks where such activity would adversely affect the prime function of the park. Will not excise any areas to allow such activities.

The ALP will undertake comprehensive land use planning for Cape York Peninsula that gives high priority to key conservation and Aboriginal areas, and institute a moratorium on all major developments. The Coalition opposes this.

COALITION: Will introduce the grading of National Parks. They assert that States have prime responsibility for the creation and management of National Parks, but "by agreement" with the states, the

Coalition will establish a system of Priority National Parks of critical importance in preserving genetic diversity. Logging, mining and other inappropriate activities will be banned from these parks. The question of exploration or mining in other national parks is to be determined by each State. They would transfer management of Uluru and Kakadu National Parks to the NT Government. ▲

KAKADU



ALP: Have extended Kakadu National Park to take in 98% of the Conservation (mining exploration) Zone, and withheld approval for Coronation Hill and El Sherana mine prospects pending a Resource Assessment Commission inquiry. They will nominate Stage 3 for World Heritage listing.

COALITION: Opposed the recent inclusion of the Conservation (mining exploration) Zone into the Kakadu National Park. They would allow the Coronation Hill mining project to go ahead immediately, and would allow exploration over both the areas of Stage 3 and Stage 2 of the Park, though they state that they would not allow mining production in Stage 2. ▲

WORLD HERITAGE



ALP: During this past term in government the Labor party has successfully nominated the tropical rainforests of north Queensland and an expanded area of south-west Tasmania (including large tracts of tall forests) to the World Heritage List. It enacted the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act, and amended it in 1988, to protect all World Heritage areas. (The Coalition voted against this legislation.) Labor will continue to ban any activity which threatens the World Heritage values of any place inscribed on World Heritage List. Supports Shark Bay WA nomination. Will maintain or increase existing boundaries of World Heritage areas.

COALITION: Will not propose sites for World Heritage Listing without the co-operation of the states. Will not maintain and enhance the powers of the Commonwealth to protect World Heritage areas under the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act. "Any sites proposed for further consideration will be evaluated by a joint Commonwealth-State study and an early decision made about their future in relation to World Heritage Listing" (*Environment Policy, February 1990*). Will maintain or increase existing boundaries of the World Heritage areas. ▲

ABORIGINAL ISSUES

ALP: Supports the Commonwealth's primary responsibility for land rights in the Northern Territory, and Aboriginal ownership of Uluru and Kakadu National Parks.

COALITION: Would hand over Commonwealth's primary responsibility for land rights in the Northern Territory to the NT Government. They opposed Aboriginal ownership of Uluru National park, and would transfer control of Uluru and Kakadu from ANPWS to the NT Government. ▲

TROPICAL RAINFORESTS

Both the ALP and the Coalition are undecided about the use of rainforest derived wood products in Federal Government activities or banning the import of all tropical timbers, except those derived from long-term sustainable harvesting of non-primary forests or plantations. Both oppose multi-lateral development agency funding for projects destroying tropical forests and the use of Australian foreign aid for such purposes. ▲

FORESTS



Here the differences between the parties are substantial because of their differing views on the role of Commonwealth intervention in State control of forestry activity. The ALP has been prepared to use its export licence decisions and World Heritage powers to pressure states to modify forestry plans, especially with respect to National Estate listed forests. The Coalition rejects using available Commonwealth powers in the national interest to override state plans to log forests in the National Estate. Both major parties are committed to a national forest management strategy.

COALITION supports a phase out of large scale clear felling in native forests, whilst the ALP remains undecided. Both give qualified support for a move to eucalypt hardwood plantations. The ALP is

committed to the identification and protection of forests with high conservation value. The Coalition offers only qualified support for that proposition.

The ALP also says it will use the Trading Incorporations head of power in the constitution to expand its control over the protection of National Estate forests. It has not done so to date. In addition, they have provided a qualified yes to the phase out of export wood chipping in 1995, whereas the Coalition has said no to each of those propositions. ▲

URANIUM MINING



A critical difference between the two parties was found in their uranium policies.

ALP: On the issue of licensing any new uranium mines, the ALP is undecided pending a review of its policy. Labor rejects the option of developing a nuclear industry in Australia, including uranium enrichment.

COALITION: Will give the Northern Territory government full powers over NT uranium mining according to Senator Bronwyn Bishop, Coalition Federal Affairs spokesperson (*NT News, 19th January, 1990*). Coalition will approve the licensing of new uranium mines, including Koongarra and Jabiluka (*Peacock, 28th February, 1990*), subject to adequate environmental controls and strict international

safeguards. National party support the establishment of a uranium enrichment industry for Australia. The Coalition opposes the re-incorporation of Koongarra and Jabiluka uranium deposits into the Kakadu National Park, whilst the ALP is undecided on the issue, pending the outcome of their uranium policy review.

DEMOCRAT: All existing uranium mines will be closed immediately; no new uranium licences will be granted; and the export of uranium will be prohibited. ▲

GREENHOUSE

Both ALP and Coalition have offered qualified support for a 20% reduction in Greenhouse gas emissions by the turn of the century and 50% by 2015. ALP offers support for a National Energy Efficiency strategy based on 'least cost' principles, whereas the Coalition support is qualified by their unwillingness to be limited by those principles. ▲

POLLUTION ISSUES

Both parties will investigate the options for the development of a 20 year Environment Plan and conduct a toxic hazardous waste audit to assess waste production and disposal in Australia.

ALP: Has offered qualified support for the establishment of a Federal Environmental Protection Agency whilst the Coalition opposes this. ▲

CONSTITUTION AND LEGAL ISSUES

The parties were asked to promote increased Commonwealth powers to protect the environment over a range of areas, including pollution and degradation of land, air or water; the use of nuclear materials; and protection of nationally or internationally significant areas and of endangered species.

ALP: Agreed. In addition it has been prepared to use Commonwealth powers to protect some National Estate areas, and International Treaty powers to protect World Heritage areas. It would consider a referendum addressing the constitutional powers of the Commonwealth over the environment. It has used Foreign Investment Review Board powers to protect Shelburne Bay in Queensland. The ALP was also prepared to use these powers to protect the Wet Tropics and Daintree Rainforest in Queensland, and to stop the Franklin Dam.

The ALP, using its foreign investment review powers, would subject the proposal for the CRA coal fired power station in the proposed Mt Lesueur National Park, in WA, to rigorous environmental tests.

COALITION: Gave qualified support for increased powers arguing that the Commonwealth already has the capacity to act. They do not oppose the 'proper exercise' of such powers, but do not clarify this. They reject 'improper' use of the external affairs powers of the constitution to interfere with land use decisions of the states. The National Party has stated that it "will not use the Commonwealth's external affairs power to override state sovereignty in ... (any) regard" (*Election '90 Policy Statement*). The Coalition has said that it will not seek to intervene on the Mt Lesueur proposal, and indeed has plans to dismantle the Commonwealth Foreign Investment Review Board proposals, which have direct bearing on other high conservation areas such as Shelburne Bay silica sands.

DEMOCRAT: Supports Constitutional referendum to give the Commonwealth greater powers over environmental matters. ▲

LAND DEGRADATION



There has been a pleasing bi-partisan recognition that land degradation must be urgently addressed. The ALP's Landcare initiative for \$320 million over the next decade is supported by the Coalition who have promised an additional \$23 million for the first year. A major concern, however, is the National Party commitment to re-introducing Drought Relief which in many instances exacerbates land degradation problems. ▲

Unless specified otherwise, all text written and authorised by Phillip Toyne, 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy, 3065.
Printed by Mat Graphics, Pty Ltd, 107 Foster Road, Notting Hill, 3149.

ACF ELECTION GUIDE

Supplement to CONSERVATION NEWS - March 1990

