



National Parks Association of NSW Strategy 2023 – 2027





National Parks Association of NSW Inc.

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OUR MISSION

Protecting nature through community action

OUR VISION

A NSW where at least a third of its landscapes, waters and seas are legally secure and actively managed for conservation purposes. A network of natural areas, connected by habitat corridors, where nature thrives, people coexist with nature, and communities respect, enjoy and nurture the land. An NPA that provides leadership and advocacy to see this vision come to fruition.

WHAT WE VALUE

- The National Parks Association of NSW (NPA) was founded in 1957 on the conviction that humanity has a deep need for, and responsibility towards, natural places and all of the biodiversity, ecosystems, waters, landforms and heritage they contain.
- We respect that all land in NSW is Aboriginal land and acknowledge First Nations peoples' continuing custodianship and connection to the land and waterways.
- We derive our strength from our members and supporters, share knowledge and experience of nature enthusiastically and have a commitment to evidence-based research.
- We respect our members and have a governance structure that encourages their active participation in decision making, conservation action and the election of office holders.



SITUATION

The period covered by the last strategic plan, NPA Strategy 2018-2022¹, witnessed a truly shocking deterioration in the condition of nature across the globe.

During these five years the long-predicted impacts of a heating climate and habitat loss became all too real. In NSW, years of record-breaking drought saw massive loss of aquatic life as rivers ran dry, and culminated in fires that changed lives forever, burning more than 40% of the forest estate. The fires ended with an equally record-breaking series of destructive floods. A half decade that provided grave testimony to the increasingly unstable climatic systems produced by global warming.

These climatic stresses added to the habitat loss and fragmentation resulting from urban development, agriculture, infrastructure networks, invasive species, mining and the continuing diversion of inland waters. The impacts on our biodiversity have been devastating, with populations of once common native species in sharp decline and a steadily growing number of extinctions.

A dire situation, but one that generated a glimmer of hope. After years of inadequate action and in the face of impending environmental disaster, governments have finally started to take genuine notice of the perils of climate change and species loss. Heightened by pandemic isolation, there has been increasing awareness of the importance of natural places for people's health and wellbeing.

Improving ecosystem protection helps stabilise the changing climate by sequestering and storing

atmospheric carbon. The eucalypt forests of the Great Divide, old growth rainforests, alpine bogs and the wetlands, are some of the largest carbon stores on the planet. Protecting these ecosystems from disturbance, damage or development, and where necessary restoring their condition to a more natural state, is an essential part of combating both the climate and extinction crises.

There are growing international calls for a significant proportion of our land and seas to be managed for the primary purpose of nature conservation. The High Ambition Coalition, which now includes more than 50 nation states, including Australia, describes this movement as '*a global deal for nature and people with the central goal of protecting at least 30 percent of the world's land and ocean by 2030. The 30 by 30 target is a global target which aims to halt the accelerating loss of species, and protect vital ecosystems that are the source of our economic security*'.

The Australian Government formally adopted the 30by30 target in 2021.

Which land tenures and management approaches are the best way of delivering on the 30 by 30 targets will be the subject of vigorous debate over the coming years. What is beyond question is that the gold standard for conserving nature in the long term is the national parks, nature reserves and marine sanctuaries that make up our Protected Area Network.

It has taken nearly 150 years for Protected Areas to reach 10% of NSW, so even if some other tenures are counted against 30by30 the challenge of reaching 30% by 2030 cannot be overstated.

¹ <https://npansw.org.au/what-we-do/our-structure/npa-strategy-2018-2022-3/>



OUR PRIORITIES

NPA commits to focusing our efforts and resources over the next 5 years on protecting, restoring and connecting natural areas across NSW, promoting, experiencing and appreciating nature and building a respected, resilient and vibrant organisation.

Protect, restore and connect natural areas across NSW

Why

The climate and biodiversity crisis facing our planet, and the increasing awareness of the importance of natural areas, brings into sharp focus the need to expand our Protected Areas, ensure their legal protection, and restore their ecological functioning.

Objectives and actions

30 by 30 is implemented in NSW

NPA is committed to the expansion of the NSW network of national parks and reserves (Protected Areas), to a minimum of 30% of all terrestrial and marine bioregions by 2030. This will be done in accordance with Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative reserve selection principles, with a particular focus on habitat connectivity, biodiversity conservation, natural ecosystem processes and climate adaptation.

Our actions:

- Initiate a revision of Protected Area mechanisms and categories, especially for lands that require significant restoration and rehabilitation, starting with convening a major conference on the future of protected areas.
- Campaign to build the social licence and bi-partisan political support to:

- Transfer State Forests, high conservation value Crown Lands (eg. Travelling Stock Routes and intertidal zones) and high conservation value freehold lands purchased on the open market to the Protected Area Network.
- End logging in all public native forests and transfer these forests into the Protected Area Network, with priority to be given to the forests of the proposed Great Koala National Park, Pilliga, Jervis Bay, Southeast region and Barrington to Hawkesbury region.
- Establish fully 'no take' Protected Areas in all five marine bioregions, totalling at least 30% of NSW State waters; restoring all revoked sanctuary zones; and rejecting the application of resource management models to Marine Protected Areas.
- Identify and reserve highly under-represented bioregions of Western NSW.
- Establish new reserves on the Cumberland Plain, including the Georges River Koala Park and at least two additional reserves of 200 ha or more.
- Contribute to 'whole of landscape' initiatives to conserve species, habitats and biodiversity, particularly those that provide connections between, or water flows into, existing or proposed Protected Areas.
- Build respectful and productive alliances that recognise both shared and divergent interests with First Nations people, local communities, other conservation organisations and government to achieve these objectives.



Maintain and improve the condition of NSW Protected Areas

NPA is committed to the maintenance (and where necessary restoration) of natural ecosystem processes, biodiversity and cultural heritage in Protected Areas and other high conservation value lands and waters across NSW.

Our actions:

- Campaign against proposals that threaten their integrity;
- Advocate for adequate resources for their professional management;
- Demand sufficient allocations of environmental water for water dependent ecosystems in regulated catchments;
- Seek improved funding for core conservation programs such as fire, pest, weed, threatened species recovery, rather than vanity projects such as tourism facilities and inappropriately located re-wilding sites;
- Advocate for the closure and rehabilitation of inappropriate infrastructure and facilities in Protected Areas, including defunct utilities and roads, tracks, trails and structures that are not expressly identified in a Plan of Management as essential for operational or visitor purposes; and
- Campaign against new overhead transmission lines being constructed in Protected Areas.

Improve legal protections for nature in NSW

NPA is committed to improving planning processes and legal protections against inappropriate development and activities in Protected Areas and other high conservation value lands and waters in NSW

Our actions:

- Expose breaches of existing environmental laws;
- Collaboratively develop policy proposals for legislative and regulatory improvements to the environmental laws and planning processes applying to Protected Areas and other sites of high conservation significance; and
- Build political and community support for legislation, policies and regulatory decisions that improve nature protection, condition and status.

Caring for country

NPA supports the reasonable expectations of First Nations peoples for an integral role in the care and management of their traditional estates and country. We acknowledged that First Nations people's culture, knowledge and involvement are integral to the care and management of their traditional estates and country

Our actions:

- Advocate for the adoption of appropriate joint management models for NSW Protected Areas;
- Support the return of existing Protected Areas to First Nations people ownership; and
- Support the integration of traditional cultural knowledge, expression and practices into land management generally, in consultation with First Nations people.

Promote, experience and appreciate nature

Why

NPA's conservation goals are ambitious and rely upon the efforts of our supporters. We need to retain and expand our supporter base and help build their skills in advocacy, community engagement and enjoyment of nature.

We know that connections with nature must be reforged with each new generation, and that new types of experiences are required to attract a broader base of supporters. Enriching outdoor experiences are not only beneficial to personal wellbeing, we know that those connections lead to support for the conservation of natural places.

Objectives and actions

NPA is committed to expanding our nature-based activities so that individuals and communities from multiple generations and diverse backgrounds have the opportunity enjoy nature.

Our actions:

- Continue to deliver a premier bushwalking program across NSW through our highly respected walks leaders;
- Implement leadership training, support and succession programs for walks leaders;
- Continue to deliver an engaging variety of nature-based publications, on-ground conservation activities, information sessions and discussion groups that encourage communities to value nature; and
- Implement a structured Member and Supporter Development program for current and prospective members and supporters that covers walks, bush skills and leadership; ecological, landforms, land management and bush regeneration skills; and nature conservation advocacy. This program will require cooperative effort across the organisation as well as external collaboration.



Build a respected, resilient and vibrant organisation

Why

This strategy relies upon NPA remaining a well-respected, resilient and vibrant organisation that provides appropriate services to our supporters, influences government, builds community support for Protected Areas, demonstrates sound governance, offers opportunities for supporters and staff, generates the resources required to meet our purpose, and achieves our strategic priorities. Our strength comes from our local members across the state who contribute countless hours to our activities while supported by skilled staff. There remain many supporters and potential supporters with key skills and expertise who, with consistent and flexible encouragement, would also contribute to the work of NPA.

Objectives and actions

Resource base

NPA needs to increase the future resource base available for the work described in this strategic plan by expanding membership, volunteer and staffing capacity, and funds.

Our actions:

- Ensuring the structured Member and Supporter Development program is promoted, attractive and available to a new younger generation of members and members of diverse communities.
- Ensure effective administration of the Member and Supporter Development program through dedicated staff support and efficient use of systems.
- Implement a volunteer development and management approach to encourage program participants to become active contributors to the work of NPA.
- Continue to seek new sources of donations and bequests.
- Continued provision of effective support for branches and committees, including assistance with representations to ministers, submissions, campaign and project development, media, mapping, information, citizen science and financial support.
- Providing new members with opportunities to contribute to NPA activities, advice and advocacy.

Governance

NPA requires sound governance that meets legislative and community expectations and provides a solid foundation for NPA to carry out its mission.

Our actions:

- Overhaul, update and more clearly articulate NPA's governance arrangements to support its long-term growth, influence and future.
- Deliver effective support to State Council, the Executive, branches and our committees.
- Implement best practice in our compliance with legislative requirements applying to charities and Non-Government Organisations.
- Ensure strict compliance with work, health and safety standards in all NPA operations, including the activity program, workplaces and events.

Leadership

NPA is committed to maintaining our status as experts in Protected Areas and other areas of exceptional conservation significance

Our actions:

- Effective agenda setting engagement with all levels of government, community-based advocacy and a strong and diverse media profile;
- Encouraging a new generation to take on leadership roles within the organisation; and
- Enhance our profile and effectiveness as advocates for nature through collaboration and partnership with local communities, conservation organisations.
- Maintain relevant expertise, capabilities and capacity in our employed workforce.



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This strategy is ambitious, but the intertwined climate and extinction crises demand great ambition. It is not a time for caution but a time for bold action. NPA will make a significant contribution with the expectation that its actions will:

- Reverse or slow the loss of biodiversity, native vegetation cover and ecosystem services such as clean water and carbon sequestration;
- Improve the health and resilience of ecosystems in the face of a rapidly changing environment;
- Slow the net growth in NSW's greenhouse gas emissions by sequestering carbon in intact ecosystems (particularly forests, woodlands and wetlands) in well managed protected areas;
- Expand the level of understanding, appreciation and contact with nature with more people experiencing delight in nature's variety and wonder, and becoming more highly motivated to support its protection and conservation.;
- Leave a world worthy for future generations where bushland, waterways and seas are esteemed and valued as essential for health, wellbeing and the conservation of native plants and animals;
- Catalyse radical reforms to environment, planning and natural resource management laws that affirm and enforce society's fundamental responsibility for protecting nature; and
- Fortify NPA as a robust, rigorous and proactive organisation that provides its supporters with flexible avenues for engagement.

