



# AUSTRALIAN CITIES GREENWAYS INITIATIVE

## URBAN BUSHLAND TOO PRECIOUS TO LOSE

*The Greens' plan to protect and regenerate natural habitats in our cities*

Our rapid growth has come at a cost to our natural environment and we have witnessed an accelerated loss of our urban bushland, wetlands, and forests. Better protection for these remaining areas and a new network of green corridors throughout our cities and suburbs will improve the quality of life for all, and ensure wildlife and habitats too precious to lose are preserved for future generations.

The Greens believe we should have an economy that serves people and the environment, not the other way around. Yet our planning systems continue to allow development in our cities in an unnatural and unsustainable manner.

### > AN URGENT TIPPING POINT

Australia's cities have experienced rapid and uncoordinated growth that has resulted in the loss of precious natural habitats like forests, bushland, woodlands, wetlands, and grasslands. The city is where most of us live – but we are treating nature as something to see and experience outside the city.

The Greens believe in cities that are good for you, that protect and enhance natural environments which in turn nurture us through healthy air, clean water, and places to reflect and enjoy our natural world. Green spaces in cities act as lungs for the cities, and also promote our physical and mental health.

*“Just as we must carefully plan for and invest in our capital infrastructure – our roads, bridges and waterlines, we must invest in our environmental or green infrastructure – our forests, wetlands, streams and rivers.. Just as we must carefully plan for and invest in our human infrastructure – education, health services, and so on – we must also invest in our green infrastructure.”* - Maryland Governor Paris Glendenning, 1999

Our cities are also home to thousands of native species and rich biodiversity not found anywhere else in the world. Yet hundreds of species are listed as threatened with extinction. One of the biggest current threats is land clearing in urban areas<sup>1</sup>.

### > CITY GREENWAYS

The Australian Cities Greenways initiative is an ambitious plan to transform our cities.

The Greens will provide \$50 million per year to:

- **Introduce a new \$40m buy-back fund to purchase areas of high conservation value natural habitat in our cities.** This is a targeted injection of funding would fast track protection of critical habitats under threat from development or neglect.
- **Provide \$2m to assist the states develop Greenways plans through research, mapping, and planning** for ecological linkages and related infrastructure such as walkways and bike paths.
- **Introduce a federal moratorium on clearing of urban bushland** until each city has completed Strategic Environmental Assessment
- **Introduce a community grants scheme worth \$8 million** per year to enable local communities and neighbourhoods to contribute to the Cities Greenways project directly through plantings or community infrastructure (such as amphitheatres, Aboriginal interpretive centres, walking paths, and so on).
- **Add the Greenways network to our National Reserve System**
- **Establish an Urban Biodiversity Taskforce** within the Major Cities Unit, responsible for coordinating the Greenways initiative from a planning and infrastructure perspective.



## > WHAT WOULD THE GREENWAYS NETWORK LOOK LIKE IN YOUR CITY?

Greenways are connections across the metropolitan area that link up areas of natural habitat, while supporting other land uses such as conservation, transport (walking and cycling) and recreation. Greenways can range from small corridors created by local communities to large corridors that stretch across the many different landscapes of our metropolitan area.

The main goal of the Greens City Greenways initiative is to provide a new national framework for protecting and regenerating green space in our cities. It works at three scales:

- **At the metropolitan (and bioregional) scale** the most critical habitats under threat would be given permanent protection and a new network of dedicated walking and cycling paths that allow access to the Greenways
- **At the local street scale** a new 'urban forest' is regrown along the corridors in between areas of existing natural habitats and parks. The urban forests would be a city-scale green retrofitting effort to create green corridors of native trees and vegetation to stitch the cities' parks and natural habitats together. Greenways offer the opportunity to turn our local streets and verges into a series of biodiversity rich, linear parks
- **At the individual household level**, everyone would be able to contribute directly to the Greenways project through planting native species that increase biodiversity and provide habitats for threatened species in their 'back yards and front verges'.

Greenways will make our city greener, cooler in summer, more liveable, and provide a city-wide ecological link of natural areas for all to enjoy. Studies have shown that a connection to nature is good for our physical and mental health, and provides social and recreational opportunities that allow people to enjoy, care for and appreciate nature<sup>ii</sup>.

The Greens goal is for all residents of Australian cities to live within a 5 minute walk of a Greenway and a 10 minute bicycle ride of a protected reserve of regional significance.

## > SAVING OUR ICONIC SPECIES

Australian wildlife is under great pressure from our ever expanding coastal cities and towns. As reported on Four Corners in 2012, as our cities expand and bushland is cleared for new residential developments, the displaced wildlife does not move on but is lost altogether<sup>iii</sup>.

Even iconic species like koalas are being affected. Development in expanding suburbs around Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, the

Gold Coast and the Redlands of south-east Queensland is having a huge impact on local koala populations<sup>iv</sup>. Koala populations in NSW, Qld and ACT have dropped so rapidly that following a Greens' initiated Senate Inquiry into the health of our koalas, this iconic species has been added to our national threatened species list<sup>v</sup>.

Greenways in each city provide the best insurance at the metropolitan scale to save these species and others from the very real threat of extinction, and to provide vital corridors for food, habitat, and safe movement through our urban landscapes.

## > CASE STUDIES

City Greenways have been introduced in many cities including Singapore and New York. The greenway movement in Singapore began in the late 1980s as a proposal for an island-wide network of green corridors. Singapore capitalised on the under-utilised land along canals and beside major roadways for a pilot greenway project. The scheme has had strong public support and Singapore is now seen as a model for greenway planning for other rapidly growing cities in Asia<sup>vi</sup>.

In 2012 NSW Greens MP Jamie Parker presented a petition with more than 10,000 signatures in support of the *Cooks River to Iron Cove GreenWay* in Sydney's Inner West<sup>vii</sup>. The project was supported by four local councils and funded by the NSW Environmental Trust and is now complete. The Greenway provides an urban green corridor that has a safe walking and cycling path, recreational areas and hosts a variety of community and arts projects. It is also home to a range of wildlife including reptiles, birds, flying foxes, bats, possums, frogs and even an endangered population of Long-nosed Bandicoots.



Image 1: Sydney's Cooks River to Iron Grove Greenway map<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>i</sup> [https://audit.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/report2009\\_05.pdf](https://audit.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/report2009_05.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Wilson (1984) cited in Reeve et al (2011)

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2012/08/16/3569231.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> Darryl Jones "Koala Cul-de-sac? Development a dead end for wildlife" *The Conversation* 12/8/2012

<http://theconversation.com/koala-cul-de-sac-development-a-dead-end-for-wildlife-9047>

<sup>v</sup> Senate Inquiry into the status, health and sustainability of Australia's koala population [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate\\_Committees?url=ec\\_ctte/completed\\_inquiries/2010-13/koalas/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=ec_ctte/completed_inquiries/2010-13/koalas/index.htm)

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169204604001331>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.jamieparker.org.au/nsw-parliament-hears-10000-strong-petition-build-the-greenway-now/>

[http://www.ashfield.nsw.gov.au/page/greenway\\_sustainability\\_project.html](http://www.ashfield.nsw.gov.au/page/greenway_sustainability_project.html) ;

<http://www.greenway.org.au/index.php/about-the-greenway>