

# Annual Review

## 2020-2021

To protect, restore and sustain nature in Australia.





The Dandenong Ranges, Victoria | Matt Tomkins.

# From the Board

***What a challenging year it's been! I'd like to thank all of our staff and volunteers for steering the organisation so successfully through these difficult times, and our supporters for being with us all the way.***

This year the campaigns team delivered a new approach to our work protecting, promoting and restoring nature across the continent. It was endorsed by Directors across the Wilderness Society as being critical for our continued continental drive. It is now operating effectively to help protect the wildlife and places we love.

Core to this plan continues to be the integration of grassroots organising and campaigning, with a focus on strengthening community voice in the face of the disproportionate power of vested interests. Our local Movement For Life teams are an enormous resource and have continued to deliver outcomes despite the restrictions posed by COVID. The Wilderness Society is supporting local groups protecting nature in their communities, while more broadly driving change at a systemic level.

There has never been a more critical time for communities to have a voice in environmental decisions. We face a climate and biodiversity crisis that poses great risk for nature and humanity. If we are to get businesses and governments to make the urgent changes required, we need grassroots groups working all over the continent to hold them to account.

It is exciting to see children wanting to support the Wilderness Society and become active in caring for the environment. This year it was inspiring to hear that one of our supporters, Rhiannon, made a donation on her 9th birthday instead of receiving gifts as part of her possum-themed party! This was the second year running that she's done this. We want to inspire more children and

families, something we are doing through our annual Environment Award For Children's Literature, which in 2020 was bigger and better than ever.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to pay my deepest respects to Coral Robinson, who is stepping down from her Director's role on the Board this year. An Honorary Life Member of the Wilderness Society, Coral has been an active member for over 25 years. From successful shareholder activism in Tasmania through to her work on the Board and contributions to governance and finance in particular, we will miss her calm and wise counsel.

Our supporters' time, passion and financial support throughout the pandemic have been key to prosecuting our campaign plan and delivering real impact for nature and communities. Together, we are well placed to continue to protect, restore and sustain nature in the years ahead.

*Leanne Craze*

**Leanne Craze AM**

Convenor, on behalf of the Board  
The Wilderness Society



# The CEO's view



**The world is rapidly changing, but one constant is nature forever being encroached upon.**

Destructive industries continue to impose on our forests, bushland, waterways and oceans—often against the wishes of communities and First Nations. Our approach has evolved to push back against this undue influence. To build the power of community in environmental decisions requires us to take full advantage of our campaign centres, supporters and volunteer groups all over the country. We know that when we reach out to this wonderful community of people, without fail, we receive an eager response. This inspires and emboldens us all to find new ways to keep advocating for the protection of nature—to change the mindless systems that government and industry are stuck in.

A highlight for me this year was the way we questioned the viability of the oil and gas industry, with the inherent risks it brings to both biodiversity and climate. We identified issues that increased the financial risk for new fossil fuel exploration, by:

- Putting pressure on the industry to clean up its ageing offshore infrastructure and ultimately seeing new legislation making the fossil fuel industry liable for its orphaned oil rigs, not the taxpayer.
- Exposing the mindless release of new offshore exploration areas, which puts more ocean wilderness at risk from seismic blasting every year.

**Throughout the last two years we have seen how rapidly the world can change. This same order of change is required now to protect wildlife and unique places under increasing threat from climate change, bushfires, habitat destruction and deforestation.**

We are confident that our creative campaign agenda will stop government and industry weaseling out of making the right decisions for the health of nature and communities. By building community power, change for nature and climate will continue to accelerate.

Believe me when I say, the people who make up the Wilderness Society are often too focused on protecting nature to take time to celebrate their successes. But I know how hard our people work, and how creatively we campaign for change, and it's your generous support that makes every win possible.

I want to finish by thanking everyone for their continued support in what has been a difficult time. We have been able to stay connected, to keep making a difference despite the challenges. Together we will continue our critical work to protect nature, the wildlife and places we all love. We hope everyone will be able to get out into nature again soon.



*Matt Brennan*

**Matt Brennan**  
CEO, Wilderness Society

# The year in campaigns



Image: Lily Weinberg.

***Our new continental campaign plan has enabled us to sharpen our efforts to protect and defend nature—encouragingly, creative strategies arising from our plan are already delivering results.***

Across our campaigns, we seek to establish and strengthen genuine dialogue with First Nations people. The rights and aspirations of Traditional Owners to determine what happens on living cultural lands and seas must be respected and understood by government and corporate decision-makers—which means we must respect and understand as well. For years now we've worked with the Mirning for protections for their lands and seas across the Nullarbor and in the Great Australian Bight. Alongside Traditional Owners we're advocating against the siphoning of billions of water from the Martuwarra/Fitzroy River, which for Traditional Owners is a living, ancestral being. These are two examples of our organisational commitment to be the best First Nations ally we can and must be.

Healthy communities need healthy nature. But there is a concerning trend of community disempowerment in government and corporate environmental decisions. As such, a key campaign focus is to support and amplify voices of communities and First Nations in decisions about nature and climate. When people are empowered to exercise strong community rights, there are better outcomes. For example, when coastal communities exercised their right to say no to Big Oil in the Bight, successive companies were forced to abandon their oil drilling plans. But those rights must also be enshrined, and activated.

To realise environmental, industrial and development decisions that truly consider the needs of nature and communities, the disproportionate power of vested interests exploiting forests, rivers, deserts and oceans must also be reduced. Over the past year we targeted the fossil fuel industry's ability to operate without being held responsible for its impacts. Our work raised questions about the viability of exploration and mining projects that threaten the globally significant natural and cultural values of some of this continent's most iconic places—like Wollemi, where new coal mines are proposed adjacent to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, and Kati-Thanda/Lake Eyre Basin, where life-giving wetlands and rivers are threatened by gas mining.

As part of this campaign work, and thanks to the rapid and formidable response from our supporters, the Australian Government removed the World Heritage listed Ningaloo and Gutharraguda/Shark Bay from last year's acreage release. Ending the annual, mindless release of lands and seas for fossil fuel expansion is vital to protect wilderness from fossil fuels, and to halt global heating—which has disastrous impacts for nature, as occurred through the Black Summer bushfires.

After successive bushfire events and decades of deforestation, this continent's forests and bushland need care and support to recover and thrive. Australia's nature laws still aren't strong enough to protect these remarkable ecosystems with astonishing diversity unparalleled on a global scale: whether jarrah forests throughout the lands of the Noongar nation or the towering Gondwanan trees in lutruwita/Tasmania, or habitat for wildlife found nowhere else on Earth, like the warnda/greater glider. We are tackling this work with a renewed, continental focus that complements visionary protected area proposals and hastens better corporate and business choices around forest destruction.

Looking to 2022—with a shared continental campaign plan, sound governance and finances, and an active supporter base—we are confident in our position to accelerate our campaign achievements for nature. We look forward to working with you in this new era for the Wilderness Society.

Yours for nature,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Amelia Young'.

**Amelia Young**  
National Campaigns Director

## National Community Organising Manager Damian Ogden on a successful year for our community organising teams.



It's been a privilege watching people connect within their localities, conversations start and friendships form, in what has been a successful year for our grassroots community teams. More than ever, Australians are coming together because vested interests are trampling communities, nature and the amazing wildlife that calls it home.

What's been inspiring has been the way our community teams played a crucial role across so many of the Wilderness Society's campaigns. It's clear from the great outcomes we've achieved that decision-makers are finding it hard to ignore the people!

Movement For Life has worked over many years to elevate the national campaign for new nature laws and ensure communities' concerns about

the extinction crisis are heard by decision-makers and in the recent Review of Australia's environment laws. One of the key ways we have done this is by developing relationships with Federal MPs, resulting in 45 meetings with Federal MPs (26 with the LNP) between 2019 and 2021. Now, the passage of the Morrison Government's weak nature laws through the parliament has been disrupted—in part thanks to this work.

To realise outcomes like this, volunteers have been skilling up. In the past year we've held workshops on submission writing, training on meeting with your MP and engaging the editor of your local paper. So far, around 1,500 people have completed courses, including in community organising, facilitated in part by our leaders who stepped up to become trainers. We will continue the steady growth of our Movement For Life community organising teams to deliver even better outcomes for nature in 2022.

# Nature & Climate



## JUNE 2020 – Court case launched to save Lake Malbena

In our continuing work to protect Lake Malbena we launched a Supreme Court challenge to assess the underlying process that would allow private development in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. **Update:** the Supreme Court recently found in our favour!



Halls Island in Lake Malbena | Grant Dixon.



Loggerhead turtles at Ningaloo | Jenita Enevoldsen.

## AUGUST 2020 – A big win! Ningaloo, Gutharraguda/Shark Bay safe once more

Our supporters delivered a huge win for the protection of World Heritage-listed Ningaloo and Gutharraguda/Shark Bay. Nearly 7,000 community members signed our submission opposing oil and gas expansion near these important marine icons, forcing the government to withdraw the proposed exploration sites.

[Read the full story](#)

## SEPTEMBER 2020 – Queensland's Land Restoration Fund rolls out

After a concerted campaign effort, in 2017 the Queensland Government committed to implementing a \$500m Land Restoration Fund. Funding of pilot projects commenced in 2019 and the first major funding round of over \$90m was released in 2020. This funding round is a crucial step for protecting and restoring biodiversity and the management of the state's carbon emissions. To date, around \$97 million has been injected into 28 projects from the outback to the rainforest, koala habitat, and Great Barrier Reef catchments.



# System change



## Australians want real safeguards for nature

In November 2020, Campaigner Suzanne Milthorpe gave evidence to a Senate Inquiry on Australia's failed nature laws, the EPBC Act. In January 2021 the long-awaited Samuel Review into the state of our national nature laws was released. Over 30,000 people made submissions into this review calling for reformed national nature laws. Our expert report outlining the failures of the Regional Forest Agreements helped inform Samuel's recommendation that these decades-long logging deals should be subject to rigorous national standards. Our supporters' hard work in getting submissions into the review ensured many of their concerns were reflected in the final recommendations. And our community leaders' tireless efforts helped ensure that the Morrison Government's devolution agenda to weaken national nature laws is still yet to pass Parliament.

[Watch Suzanne's update on the New Nature Laws campaign](#)

Movement For Life met with the Member for Higgins (Vic), Katie Allen MP. Dr. Allen listened as they outlined their concerns about our ineffective national nature laws.



## JANUARY 2021 – K'gari/ Fraser Island fires submission

We continue to keep an eye on K'gari/ Fraser Island, with a recent review of the response to last summer's devastating fires there echoing our calls for nature to be a bigger part of how governments and communities prepare and respond to these events.

## FEBRUARY

Together  
High Con  
This past  
wildlife th  
logging in

Image: Nick

# Community



## Emerald Link

Projects took shape across the Emerald Link proposal for East Gippsland, including the development of the Sea To Summit Forest Trail. The Victorian Government committed \$1.5 million to plan and establish the Sea to Summit with scoping for trails underway.

[Read more about how we're delivering this conservation economy project](#)

## The Fight for the Pilliga continues

We've been working closely with the Gamilaraay people to protect the Pilliga Forest. Thanks to unwavering commitment from our supporters, the disastrous prospect of coal seam gas in the Pilliga forest remains on the national agenda. Together with the Gamilaraay and For Wild Places we launched the Pilliga Ultra to raise awareness and funds to fight Santos's Narrabri Gas Project. The ultra-run will now take place next March due to COVID, as we continue to stand up for this biodiversity hotspot.

## AUGUST 2020 – SEQ Koala Conservation Strategy

The Queensland Government announced a suite of major improvements to the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy. Well over half of the submissions on the draft Strategy came from Wilderness Society supporters. Faced with the overwhelming power of those collective voices, the government took many of our recommendations on board, including a target to increase vital habitat.



Image: Lily Weinberg.



Read More  
[features.wilderness.org.au/AR-2020-21](https://features.wilderness.org.au/AR-2020-21)





### DECEMBER 2020 – Wollemi campaign garners incredible support

Over 15,000 people signed our petition to stop proposed coal mines from happening right on the doorstep of Wollemi National Park and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. And then over 10,000 supporters added their name to our expert submission! The people are clear: new coal mines are madness in the 21st century, let alone anywhere near World Heritage.

### APRIL 2021 – We launched '7 ways to protect WA's most valuable natural asset'

The WA team launched a report: 7 ways to protect WA's most valuable natural asset. It formed part of our ongoing campaign to safeguard the state's unique bushland and forests. **Update:** In September 2021 the WA Government declared an end to native forest logging from 2024.

 **Watch Campaign Manager Patrick Gardner discuss the report's significance.**



### JUNE 2021 – Government announces decommissioning levy

We've been raising the alarm on the risks from old offshore fossil fuel infrastructure that urgently needs decommissioning. It's a costly issue the industry was trying to ignore or offload onto the taxpayer. That pressure has worked! We've helped secure a \$1 billion levy on offshore fossil fuel production to pay for existing clean-up bills and legislation to make companies liable into the future. It's a big outcome for our ocean wilderness.

 **Read campaigner Tim Beshara's thoughts on what this means for the industry**

A southern right whale and her calf swimming at the head of the Great Australian Bight.



Image: Brad Leue Photography.

### JUNE 2021 – After The Fires report

With allies, we called for a halt on logging in eastern Victoria's conservation Value forests affected by the Black Summer bushfires. This year, logging re-commenced in green, unburnt forests—refuge for what survived. We continue to campaign for an end to native forest logging in Victoria to be brought forward from 2030.



Clemann

### State elections in Tasmania, Queensland and WA

This past year saw three state polls. In Queensland we backed in strengthened state deforestation laws and expansion of funding for managing land for carbon and biodiversity. In Tasmania we continued to advocate against the privatisation of World Heritage. This forced the two major parties onto the record, and independents supporting the integrity of World Heritage sites. In WA, our community organising teams made it clear to all candidates the importance of protecting high conservation value forests—through the power of story and meetings with MPs.



### JUNE 2021 – Nearly 10,000 people oppose the mindless release of fossil fuel exploration acreage

Almost 10,000 people added their names to our submission to the government opposing the release of new fossil fuel acreage, which takes place without public consultation. People are demanding a complete overhaul of this mindless annual handover of more and more of our marine environments to the fossil fuel industry. Because of our early work on this issue, other groups and political parties are also calling for change.

 **Watch Campaign Manager Jess Lerch discuss this important work**

With the release of exploration acreage off the Twelve Apostles, this illustration formed part of an effective social media campaign.

### OCTOBER 2020 – Protecting Home Tree in the Florentine Valley

The community came together to walk deep into the ancient forests of the Florentine Valley, encountering lutruwita's/Tasmania's famous giant trees. Sadly, these trees sit in a logging coupe that was due to be cleared the following summer. After taking people to visit this beautiful forest, and petitioning the Tasmanian Government to protect Home Tree—a 400-year-old stringy bark—logging in the coupe was later suspended.

 **Read about this life-saving, magical walk**

Members of the public admire Home Tree.



Image: Bill Doyle.

### MARCH 2021 – A journey with the Mirning

South Australia Director Peter Owen joined Mirning Elder and Whale Songman, Bunna Lawrie, on an incredible journey to the Mirning's sacred caves on the Nullarbor Plain. We featured Pete's story in Issue #009 of Wilderness Journal.

 **Read the full story**

Uncle Bunna Lawrie and Peter Owen approach Murrawiginie Cave.

### APRIL 2021 – Kooparoona-Niara/Great Western Tiers national park

We called for the establishment of the Kooparoona-Niara/Great Western Tiers national park proposal in lutruwita/Tasmania. If established it would be the state's first First Nations-managed national park that would also involve the national park land being returned to the ownership of the palawa-pakana people.



Image: Rob Blakers.

# We welcome:



**Gabrielle Appleby**  
Tas | elected 26 November 2020

As a Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of New South Wales, Gabrielle brings legal professional qualifications to the Board, as well as extensive experience in Board governance. A focus of her work has

been the accountability and integrity of the government and judiciary, and constitutional change to give structural power to First Nations people.



**Andrew Barker**  
Vic | elected 26 November 2020

A supporter for many years, Andrew believes the Wilderness Society has a unique opportunity in the years ahead to really drive change. He has worked in senior financial management roles for over 15 years, and together with

non-profit Board experience, his financial, strategic, governance, leadership and analytical skills will prove invaluable. To ensure the Wilderness Society has maximum impact, he thinks the challenge lies in being clear on the strategy, while making sure it is delivered with careful financial and risk management.

# We farewell:



**Coral Robinson**  
NSW and ACT | re-elected  
22 November 2018

An Honorary Life Member, Coral has been an active member for over 25 years. Using her considerable financial skills, Coral became a shareholder activist with the

Wilderness Society. She played a pivotal role in a successful shareholder campaign involving the Tasmanian logging industry. It was a milestone result that created momentum for subsequent campaigns targeting investment in old growth logging. She then used her expertise in finance, planning and governance to assist the Wilderness Society Sydney before giving her invaluable experience to the Board. She leaves us this year, and will be missed by Directors and staff alike.

# Existing members:

**Leanne Craze AM**  
NSW and ACT | re-elected  
22 November 2018

A member of the Wilderness Society since the late 1980s, Leanne has over 30 years' experience establishing and supporting the development of both fledgling and established NGOs.

**Sam Rando**  
NT and SA | elected  
28 November 2019

In the late 1970s, Sam helped found the Victorian branch of the Wilderness Society. He has worked alongside First Nations people in every state and territory, gaining expertise in staff, project and financial management.

**Lisa Roberts**  
VIC | elected 28 November 2019

With an engineering background in catchment management, experience in public relations, and 16 years in the local government sector, Lisa has a passion for transparency and a strong knowledge of governance.

**Amanda Branley**  
WA | elected 22 November 2018

A graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors with a Masters in Leadership and Management, Amanda held various governance roles at the Wilderness Society WA before joining the Board.



**Read more about the Board at:**  
[wilderness.org.au/about/people](http://wilderness.org.au/about/people)

# The financials from Jen Rowe, CFO

*In 2020–2021, the Wilderness Society continued to face the ongoing impact of COVID on the way we work and our finances. Due to the resulting uncertainty, the Board adopted a rolling budget strategy during the financial year 2020–2021. This ensured continuous and close monitoring of the financial position as fundraising programs continued to be affected, and operating expenditures were heavily constrained.*

*As a result of the reduction of expenditures, the Wilderness Society has produced a surplus that further shores up our financial footing, and supports our new continental campaign plan. We are building financial confidence to keep doing our important work regardless of the challenges, COVID or otherwise.*

In 2020–2021, total fundraising income decreased only slightly on the prior year because it was held up by a large increase in bequest income received. The detrimental impact of COVID on the operations of

our fundraising program to recruit new supporters was significant. Investment in acquisition of new supporters fell by almost 30%; this was offset by investment into testing new fundraising initiatives which we hope to roll out in coming years.

Spend on our environmental campaigns and programs increased as a proportion of total costs, but was down 4% in dollar terms on the prior year largely due to COVID constraints on our purpose activity. However, we increased reserves that will support future growth of environmental campaign and program spend.

We continued to increase our operational efficiency, and as a result reduced our governance finance and operating costs to 9.6% of total expenditures, compared to 10.2% in the prior year and 11.6% in the year before that.

This financial information is extracted from the Full Consolidated Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2021.



**Read the full report at:**  
[wilderness.org.au/about/reports](http://wilderness.org.au/about/reports)



Jarrah forest near Dwellingup, WA | Jenita Enevoldsen.

# The financials from Jen Rowe, CFO

## Financial results (for the year ended 30 June 2021)

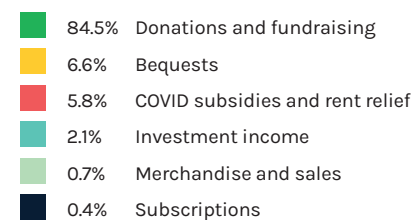
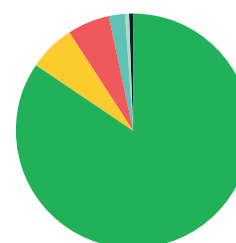
|                                                            | 2021                | 2020                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Income from fundraising, donations, bequests and grants    | \$11,318,754        | \$11,446,819        |
| Investment and other non-operating income                  | \$966,683           | \$713,237           |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                                        | <b>\$12,285,437</b> | <b>\$12,160,056</b> |
| <b>LESS: EXPENSES</b>                                      |                     |                     |
| Environmental campaigns and programs                       | \$4,405,502         | \$4,612,641         |
| Recruitment of new supporters                              | \$1,178,384         | \$1,672,243         |
| Fundraising expenses – staff, appeals, supporter and costs | \$2,621,232         | \$2,557,556         |
| Governance, finance and operations                         | \$903,163           | \$1,036,238         |
| Depreciation and amortisation                              | \$230,749           | \$300,989           |
| Interest costs                                             | \$22,692            | \$21,574            |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                                      | <b>\$9,361,722</b>  | <b>\$10,201,241</b> |
| Net surplus/(deficit) for the year                         | \$2,923,715         | \$1,958,815         |
| Other comprehensive income                                 | \$-                 | \$-                 |
| <b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>                          | <b>\$2,923,715</b>  | <b>\$1,958,815</b>  |

## Financial Position (for the year ended 30 June 2021)

|                                           | 2021               | 2020               |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Total Assets                              | \$10,450,999       | \$8,072,256        |
| Less: Total Liabilities                   | \$3,512,197        | \$4,017,500        |
| <b>NET ASSETS</b>                         | <b>\$6,938,802</b> | <b>\$4,054,756</b> |
| Accumulated Surpluses                     | \$1,793,466        | \$1,651,640        |
| Reserves                                  | \$4,881,885        | \$2,021,981        |
| Non-controlling interest accum. surpluses | \$263,451          | \$381,135          |
| <b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>                       | <b>\$6,938,802</b> | <b>\$4,054,756</b> |

This financial information is extracted from the Full Consolidated Financial Report for the year ended 30 June 2021 which may be accessed here [wilderness.org.au/about/reports](https://wilderness.org.au/about/reports)

### Revenues



### Expenditure

