



Save the Nature of the Kimberley
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INC



CONSERVATION COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC.



THE
PEW
ENVIRONMENT GROUP

Media Release

Monday 22nd June 2009

WA Government must set bar high for Kimberley conservation strategy

A collaboration of major environmental groups today called for a dramatic change in the conservation management and planning for the Kimberley – saying the current *ad hoc* approach was putting one of the largest and intact natural areas in the world at severe risk.

The PEW Environment Group (Australia), The Wilderness Society, Environs Kimberley, WWF-Australia, Australian Conservation Foundation and Conservation Council of WA today delivered 29 recommendations to State Government as part of its consultation process on a *Science and Conservation Strategy for the Kimberley*.

Among the recommendations which the groups urged must be achieved in partnership with Traditional Owners are:

- Development of a comprehensive conservation and compatible development plan, which is based on a broadscale regional planning process and the best available scientific, traditional and local knowledge;
- Establishment of a comprehensive marine protected area network based on international best practice and substantial expansion of terrestrial protected areas: and
- Implementation a legislative framework for Indigenous ownership, leaseback, management and co-management of State conservation areas.

John Carey from the Pew Environment Group said a definitive and comprehensive plan of action was needed rather than just more funding for research. “We don’t want to see history repeat itself. There have been many conservation proposals produced by State Governments over the past 30 years, yet most have never been acted upon,” he said. “The Kimberley is as important to Australia, and the world, as the Great Barrier Reef, but doesn’t enjoy the same level of protection – with only 5.5% protected in parks and reserves and no coastal waters protected in any form of marine park.”

Josh Coates from The Wilderness Society said the current un-coordinated approach to conservation management and planning in the region simply does not work. “We need a region-wide protection plan based on the best advice from Scientists and Traditional Owners, which must clearly identify conservation-compatible and non-compatible industries. For example, the Government has identified just five marine areas for potential protection along the Kimberley coast. This is well below scientifically agreed targets and previous departmental recommendations and ignores the need to consider connectivity of habitats and ecosystems along the Kimberley coast.”

WWF-Australia spokesperson Paul Gamblin said “This is the moment for the Kimberley and its people – the chance to get it right. While environment groups welcomed the State Government’s \$9 million commitment for a conservation strategy, there is an urgent need for the Kimberley to be protected in this term of government. It is one of the great, relatively unspoiled environments left in the world and we need to see conservation action now, while also securing long-term employment for its communities through compatible development. To make this happen, resources must be committed to support meaningful, ongoing dialogue with Kimberley Indigenous people throughout the process.”

Environs Kimberley Director Martin Pritchard said "For over 40 years scientists have recommended that the Kimberley be protected but successive governments have failed to do so. The Barnett government now has an opportunity to rectify this."

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