



## Environs Kimberley questionnaire for candidates for the seat of Kimberley for the 2017 WA State Election

Seven questions for candidates for the seat of Kimberley

The following candidates responded:

- Josie Farrer, Labor
- Liz Vaughan, Greens
- Rob Houston, Nationals
- Kai Jones, Independent

No response was received from:

- Warren Grotorex, Liberal
- Keith Wright, Pauline Hanson's One Nation
- Graham Chapman, Independent
- Ryan Albrey, Flux Party

### PROTECTING THE FITZROY RIVER

**1. Do you think the National Heritage Listed Fitzroy River, its floodplains and its tributaries should be protected from dams and large-scale irrigated agriculture?**

**Josie Farrer, Labor**

A McGowan Labor Government will:

- Create the Fitzroy River National Park which will extend the Geikie Gorge National Park along the Fitzroy River to the north and along the Margaret River to the east.
- Support the protection and development of a management plan for the Fitzroy River to ensure the health of the river and provide a basis for sustainable economic development.

- Not allow the Fitzroy River or its tributaries to be dammed.

The national park will be jointly managed by the traditional owners and the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Under the joint management agreement, traditional owners will be able to exercise significant control over their traditional lands, create sustainable economic enterprises in their own right and in partnership with private and Government entities.

WA Labor will work with Traditional Owners and other stakeholders to ensure the protection of the National Heritage and other significant cultural and environmental values of the Fitzroy River and provide a basis for sustainable economic development.

**1. Do you think the National Heritage Listed Fitzroy River, its floodplains and its tributaries should be protected from dams and large-scale irrigated agriculture?**

**Rob Houston, Nationals**

Yes. The Fitzroy River was National Heritage Listed for its environmental and cultural values and this requires that any development proposal that may impact on these values needs to be assessed under the EPBC Act.

I do not support the damming of the Fitzroy River and would oppose any proposal that has a significant impact on the Fitzroy River and the environment that it sustains.

However the Fitzroy River catchment area encompasses a large portion of the Kimberley and I do not think that any political party should completely rule out agriculture development. Rather we need to support balanced and sustainable development which creates economic opportunities, particularly for Indigenous communities but which does not have a detrimental impact on the environmental and cultural values of the region.

The Nationals WA through their Water for Food project are endeavouring to do this and in particular are encouraging proponents to work in partnership with traditional owners to develop strategic, mosaic agriculture projects across the Kimberley.

**1. Do you think the National Heritage Listed Fitzroy River, its floodplains and its tributaries should be protected from dams and large-scale irrigated agriculture?**

**Liz Vaughan, Greens**

Yes. The Fitzroy River is of high environmental and cultural significance to the people of the Kimberley. If the River, its floodplains and its tributaries were to be dammed, it would cause irreparable damage to the delicate ecosystems and cultural heritage of the area. The WA Greens stand with the Walmajarri, Bunuba, Nyikina Mangala, and Gooniyandi traditional owners and support the Fitzroy River Declaration 100%. Like other precious places in the Kimberley, the WA Greens believe this important river system – one of the last remaining wild rivers in Australia – must be protected and would absolutely support proposals to do so, including a Fitzroy River National Park.

**1. Do you think the National Heritage Listed Fitzroy River, its floodplains and its tributaries should be protected from dams and large-scale irrigated agriculture?**

**Kai Jones, Independent**

Yep. Raparapa (Fitzroy River) is vital for the ecosystems and eco-cycles which it feeds. Altering it sufficiently, either directly or indirectly, will adversely affect the ecosystems and eco-cycles which depend on it, including humans. Our kids and grandkids will have to deal with the outcomes of our actions, having Raparapa on the National Heritage List must\* ensure the area and ecosystems exist for many generations to come.

\* Governments are known to change things like Heritage Listings for their own purpose, ie for Roe 8 to happen the state Government removed Indigenous middens and other landmarks from the Heritage listing. Some of these landmarks are older than the pyramids, so who was expected to benefit from the project?

## **MARINE PARKS TO PROTECT THE KIMBERLEY COAST**

**2. Do you think the Buccaneer Archipelago and Adele Island should be protected in a world-class marine park?**

**Josie Farrer, Labor**

A McGowan Labor Government will continue to implement a mosaic of national parks to protect the outstanding natural and cultural values of the broader Kimberley including a network of marine sanctuary zones.

WA Labor will include the thousand islands of the Buccaneer Archipelago and the fringing coral reefs that surround them. The rights and aspirations of Traditional Owners will be respected through strong consultation including on the boundaries of marine parks and by providing opportunities in management, science and tourism.

**2. Do you think the Buccaneer Archipelago and Adele Island should be protected in a world-class marine park?**

**Liz Vaughan, Greens**

Yes. To surrender on marine protection, our oceans will remain vulnerable to pollution, overfishing, oil and gas exploration and climate change. All the science points to the value of marine protected areas in supporting and protecting marine environments, marine birds and mammals and replenishing fish stocks. There is an excellent case for the expansion of current marine parks in the Kimberley to include both the Buccaneer Archipelago and Adele Island, creating a world class marine park and unrivalled protection for our Kimberley marine environments.

**2. Do you think the Buccaneer Archipelago and Adele Island should be protected in a world-class marine park?**

**Rob Houston, Nationals**

Yes. The Great Kimberley Marine Park has been a fantastic conservation initiative and has been well supported by the WA Nationals Royalties for Regions program. I would support the creation of a marine park in the Buccaneer Archipelago and Adele Island and the management of areas of high bio-diversity within the marine park in partnership with Traditional Owners. The Nationals WA have proposed a \$610m regional tourism fund which will transform tourism in the Kimberley and a pristine and spectacular Kimberley coastline is an important drawcard for the region which should be protected and promoted.

**2. Do you think the Buccaneer Archipelago and Adele Island should be protected in a world-class marine park?**

**Kai Jones, Independent**

Yes. For fundamental and conceptual reasons similar to question 1.

## SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS RANGER GROUPS

**3. Do you think state government investment in Indigenous Ranger groups in the Kimberley should be increased significantly?**

**Josie Farrer, Labor**

A McGowan Labor Government will invest an additional \$20 million over the next 5 years into the WA Indigenous Ranger Program to look after WA State Parks, Indigenous Protected Areas and indigenous tenures.

WA Labor will negotiate with Traditional Owners for the joint management of pre-existing conservation estate in the Fitzroy River region. We will support ranger teams to work both on and off reserve as required to preserve the values of the parks and surrounding lands.

**3. Do you think state government investment in Indigenous Ranger groups in the Kimberley should be increased significantly?**

**Liz Vaughan, Greens**

Yes. The Indigenous Rangers Program is one of the most successful programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The program offers unique environmental benefits, and also offers social, community, cultural, health and economic benefits.

The Greens WA would like to see 15 year contracts given to existing ranger programs to ensure certainty of funding past the four year election cycle, meaning rangers can get on with their jobs. We'd also like to see the creation of 66 new Ranger Parks out of over 5 million hectares of idle pastoral land purchased by the state more than 20 years ago, which would facilitate at least 212 new ranger positions. Any future National Parks created in the Kimberley must be done so through consultation with Traditional Owners to create Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and management plans that include Indigenous Rangers.

**3. Do you think state government investment in Indigenous Ranger groups in the Kimberley should be increased significantly?**

**Rob Houston, Nationals**

Yes and no. I strongly support the Indigenous Ranger groups and believe that it is one of the most successful programs in the Kimberley. As more joint management agreements are concluded through the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy we will see State government funding in Indigenous Ranger groups increase.

However as the core funding for the Indigenous Ranger program is currently from the Commonwealth, I think the State government should be a little bit careful to try and step in and assume responsibility for funding Indigenous rangers as this may give the Commonwealth cause to step back from this commitment.

I think we also need to be careful about changing the current successful model where Indigenous rangers are employed through the KLC and PBCs to a model where they become State Government employees answerable to senior DPAW staff based in Perth. I understand that this is not necessarily supported by Traditional Owners and the loss of autonomy and an appropriate cultural fit may compromise the success of the program. Rather the State Government should look at opportunities to partner up with Indigenous ranger through fee for service work as part of the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy and through integration of Indigenous Ranger groups into the commercial industries.

**3. Do you think state government investment in Indigenous Ranger groups in the Kimberley should be increased significantly?**

**Kai Jones, Independent**

Yes. Indigenous Rangers work usually goes largely unsung, but they do great research, background work and action on the ground throughout WA, NT and Qld with feral pigs, aquatic issues and other valuable ecological management:  
<http://www.klc.org.au/land-sea/kimberley-ranger-network>

## MORATORIUM AND VETO ON FRACKING

**4. Would you support a moratorium on fracking and veto rights for Traditional Owners in the Canning Basin?**

**Josie Farrer, Labor**

There will be a moratorium on commercial fracking under a WA Labor Government until there has been an independent public inquiry. Following an inquiry a decision will be made about the appropriateness of fracking in this region.  
Any decision on fracking in the Kimberley will only be made with the approval of Traditional Owners.  
The public inquiry will examine environment, health, agriculture, heritage and community impacts (including full analysis of lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions).

**4. Would you support a moratorium on fracking and veto rights for Traditional Owners in the Canning Basin?**

**Liz Vaughan, Greens**

Yes. The WA Greens do not support the practice of fracking, period. Even more important for the Kimberley is that we stop any exploration in our National Parks and our precious places in the Canning Basin, something facilitated by the former

government. We will stand 100% with communities who have voted in opposition to fracking and believe their community autonomy should be recognised in legislation, something we will push for in the next term of government.

Gas fracking has been shown to contaminate water with toxic chemicals, once they're in the system there's no way of cleaning them up. People rely on clean, freshwater across the Kimberley not just to drink but also because it's essential to keep species like Barramundi and Cherabin healthy. In addition, I wholeheartedly support the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including supporting the veto rights for Traditional Owners in the Canning Basin.

**4. Would you support a moratorium on fracking and veto rights for Traditional Owners in the Canning Basin?**

**Rob Houston, Nationals**

Yes. The WA Nationals passed a resolution at our State Conference supporting the right of landholders to have a veto over fracking. Whilst it is not yet clear exactly how landholders will be defined in legislation, in the Kimberley I would support the rights of Traditional Owners to also have a right of veto over fracking.

The WA Nationals see agriculture/food production and tourism as the industries of the future in the Kimberley and are more focused on what we can do to support this type of development. We have committed over \$1 billion to support the development of these industries. The economics of petroleum at the moment and the lack of infrastructure in the Kimberley make it unlikely that onshore gas production is going to be commercial now or in the future.

**4. Would you support a moratorium on fracking and veto rights for Traditional Owners in the Canning Basin?**

**Kai Jones, Independent**

Yes, people who live on the land must have the right to veto someone's request to dig up that land, especially when it's culturally or ecologically sensitive.

Additionally, understanding that current technology requires resource extraction for many industries and products, including materials required for infrastructure, housing and renewable energy products, and responsible and reasonable resource exploration with community support is required for this and related purposes.

[http://kaijones.info/?page\\_id=49](http://kaijones.info/?page_id=49)

## PROTECTING THE KIMBERLEY FROM LARGE-SCALE LANDCLEARING

**5. Would you be in favour of laws to prevent large-scale landclearing in the Kimberley?**

**Josie Farrer, Labor**

WA Labor was critical of the Barnett Government's relaxation of clearing regulations in 2013 under the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 introduced by the former WA Labor Government. We believe that properly administered, the regime can be effective in protecting native vegetation and in government would ensure the oversight is consistent and effective.

**5. Would you be in favour of laws to prevent large-scale landclearing in the Kimberley?**

**Liz Vaughan, Greens**

Yes. The protection and conservation of biodiversity in the Kimberley is essential for the wellbeing of all life, including human life. Any reduction in biodiversity leads to economic and social costs for the Kimberley people and the reduction of Western Australia's biodiversity has dramatic impacts on the resilience and stability of ecosystems. The Kimberley is especially unique as it is one of the last truly wild places we have left; the tourism value of this alone is without equal, and the future prosperity of the region depends on this above all else. Further large scale land clearing, including habitat compartmentalisation for onshore oil and/or gas practices, is something we oppose wholeheartedly.

**5. Would you be in favour of laws to prevent large-scale landclearing in the Kimberley?**

**Rob Houston, Nationals**

No. I do not support "large-scale" landclearing in the Kimberley although I am generally supportive of the development of mosaic agriculture and horticulture projects. I also think the current mechanism for assessing smaller scale proposals to clear land in the Kimberley is inefficient, lacking in understanding of the Kimberley environment and can be uncommercial for producers.

If elected, I would support replacing the current system of proposal by proposal piecemeal assessments, with larger, regional assessments of flora and fauna which would allow a more accurate and reasoned assessment of proposals to clear.

We should also recognise that the Kimberley is a vast and diverse region and there are areas within the Kimberley where you would not permit clearing and there are areas within the Kimberley where the environmental impact of clearing land is minimal and can be managed.

**5. Would you be in favour of laws to prevent large-scale landclearing in the Kimberley?**

**Kai Jones, Independent**

Yes. Additionally, our Government(s) must not abuse our tax money for inappropriate purposes, i.e. use our tax money to send the riot squad to act as security for the interests of private corporation(s) and issuing move on notices to traditional owners, especially when approvals haven't been granted to begin site works. Sounds logical, right, but Government actions demonstrate otherwise.

## **SUPPORT FOR BUSHFOOD INDUSTRY**

**6. Would you support government investment in the bushfood industry, e.g. growing and harvesting gubinge?**

**Josie Farrer, Labor**

At its heart, A McGowan Labor Government will protect the rights of Traditional Owners to their land and sea Country. We will recognise rights through improved consultation, recognition of indigenous leadership in land management, supporting participation in economic activities on Country, and the joint vesting of marine parks.

If the economic activities proposed by Traditional Owners include development of the bushfood industry, WA Labor in government would consider these proposals as part of the normal budget process.

**6. Would you support government investment in the bushfood industry, e.g. growing and harvesting gubinge?**

**Liz Vaughan, Greens**

The rapidly expanding bushfood industry should be supported because it encourages the sharing of knowledge between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, creates job opportunities and promotes sustainable food farming and the reduction of food miles. That being said, any investment and expansion of the bushfood industry must be done in very close consultation with Traditional Owners. There is a cultural aspect to bushfood that must be recognised and respected, therefore a balanced approach must be taken to ensure the industry gets off on the right foot and benefits local communities and people.

**6. Would you support government investment in the bushfood industry, e.g. growing and harvesting gubinge?**

**Rob Houston, Nationals**

Yes. I would support government investment into the bushfood industry but I think there also needs to be commercial rigour applied. There is growing demand

for bushfood and there is enormous opportunity for Government to support industries of the future. I would see bushfood as being part of the agriculture industry and I understand that the potential of Gubinge and other bushfood has been explored through the Water for Food project.

**6. Would you support government investment in the bushfood industry, e.g. growing and harvesting gubinge?**

**Kai Jones, Independent**

Yep, harvesting gubinge and similar bush food could create strong, long term, local economy and potentially put the Kimberley on the domestic and international (bush foods) map. Bush foods are also likely to be far less resource intensive than non-local foods.

## SUPPORT FOR CONSERVATION RESERVES

**7. Less than 10% of land in the Kimberley is protected under legislation in conservation reserves. Would you support a significant increase in such reserves if Traditional Owners supported them?**

**Josie Farrer, Labor**

WA Labor's commitment to create the Fitzroy River National Park will be in close consultation with Traditional Owners. WA Labor will work with Traditional Owners and other stakeholders to ensure the protection of the National Heritage and other significant cultural and environmental values of the Kimberley and provide a basis for sustainable economic development.

A McGowan Labor Government will also deliver a credible science-based process for the establishment of future marine sanctuaries in the Kimberley.

**7. Less than 10% of land in the Kimberley is protected under legislation in conservation reserves. Would you support a significant increase in such reserves if Traditional Owners supported them?**

**Liz Vaughan, Greens**

Yes. The conservation of natural areas is the only permanent way to protect the biodiversity, cultural heritage and threatened species, to ensure we have a healthy and stable life support system for the future of the Kimberley. The WA Greens would absolutely support further conservation areas for the Kimberley, such as the Fitzroy River or to fill in the gaps in the region's marine parks.

Creating conservation reserves and IPAs would create job opportunities for local people and Indigenous Rangers, boosting the overall economic prosperity of the region.

**7. Less than 10% of land in the Kimberley is protected under legislation in conservation reserves. Would you support a significant increase in such reserves if Traditional Owners supported them?**

**Rob Houston, Nationals**

Yes and no. I would support further protection of Kimberley land but I think we need to recognise and respect that Traditional Owners do not necessarily want to transfer land that they have fought hard for recognition of into the State conservation estate.

There is land within the State conservation reserves that is effectively unmanaged and there is land that is UCL or exclusive possession native title that is very well managed.

In the Kimberley I think we need to adopt a tenure blind approach and look at the outcomes that are being achieved rather than just chalking up a certain percentage of land as conservation reserves. I do think that a proactive, sub-regional approach to assessing land-use should be promoted and that this will enable better outcomes both in terms of supporting Kimberley appropriate development and protecting important environmental and cultural values in the land.

**7. Less than 10% of land in the Kimberley is protected under legislation in conservation reserves. Would you support a significant increase in such reserves if Traditional Owners supported them?**

**Kai Jones, Independent**

Yes. The Kimberley is one of the last untouched regions in the world, it's one of the many things which makes it so unique and special. Let's keep it that way so our grandchildren and visitors can continue enjoying it for generations to come. When Government(s) genuinely engage with Traditional Owners and provide as many tax breaks and investments in eco and bio-tourism as they do in mining then we have a chance at genuine, long term, local economy without destroying the place.

"Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints."