

**Australian Conservation Foundation ♦ The Wilderness Society ♦ Friends of the Earth
♦ Conservation Council of WA ♦ Conservation Council of South East Region and
Canberra ♦ Environment Victoria ♦ Environment Centre of Northern Territory**

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ATTENTION: Political, Resource and Environment Reporters

Environment groups disappointed by Democrats policy free preference agreements

Environment groups today expressed their disappointment at the Australian Democrats policy free approach to their preference negotiations with the Coalition and Labor announced yesterday.

Environment groups have consistently urged the minor parties, including the Democrats, to ensure that preference agreements achieve key environmental policy outcomes from the major parties.

Given that the environment is central to Democrat policies and that we've made a number of representations to them, we are disappointed that the Democrats have apparently failed to achieve environmental outcomes in their preference agreements with both major parties.

In fact it is clear that the environment has not been considered at all in these negotiations. This is evidenced by Democrats agreeing to preference:

- the liberal candidate in Wentworth who, as the Government's appointment to the Chair of the World Heritage Committee, has played a pivotal role in preventing international efforts to protect the natural and cultural heritage of Kakadu World Heritage from threats posed by the Jabiluka Uranium Project. He has also led the Government's attempts to water down the World Heritage Convention.
- Labor in seats such as Richmond, Eden Monaro and Paterson without achieving policy changes protecting native forests from woodchippers and charcoal and electric furnaces in these electorates.

At a number of meetings with the Democrats, environment groups have consistently urged them to achieve their own environment policy outcomes in preference negotiations.

Prior to the election the groups had forwarded to all political parties policy priorities requesting they commit to:

1. ratify the Kyoto protocol and have national laws with targets to cut greenhouse pollution, to improve energy efficiency and to increase renewable energy use
2. use national laws and funding to control land clearing, and boost efforts to tackle salinity and repair the country
3. protect old growth forests, our marine environment and Cape York, the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu
4. go nuclear-free by halting a second reactor for Sydney and preventing new uranium mines and nuclear dumps
5. show environmental leadership at home and to the world

Although the groups acknowledge that preference discussions are a matter for political parties, the Democrat preference agreements were described as a lost opportunity for environmental protection.

Further information and comment:

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