

QUEENSLAND ELECTION 2024

Protecting Our Great Barrier Reef How do the party policies compare?

An independent assessment of party policies by the Australian Marine Conservation Society

About us

The Australian Marine Conservation Society is a national environmental organisation representing more than a quarter of a million people across the country. We are proudly independent, non-partisan and funded by donations from the community. Our purpose is to advance the protection of our marine environment. We do not promote or oppose political parties or direct people how to vote, but offer independent policy assessments of where the parties stand on the big issues facing our Reef and our oceans. We have fought to protect the future of the Great Barrier Reef for almost 60 years.

How have we assessed the policies of the main parties?

AMCS wrote to the ALP, LNP, Greens and Katter parties to let them know what's needed to protect our Great Barrier Reef in the next term of government.

The Australian Labor Party, the Liberal National Party and the Greens responded to the substance of our letter and we have independently assessed their position and commitments based on their responses as well as published policies, statements, and election announcements. We have rated each party on how well they have met the policy commitments required to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

These ratings are:

Fully: The party has fully committed to policies that will address the issue.

Partly: Significant commitments have been made, but not sufficient to fully address the issue.

Minimal: Some action or a few commitments have been made, but it's far from sufficient.

None: No commitments made, with the party opposing the policies required to address the issue.

Unclear: There are mixed messages about or not enough information on the commitments sought, making the position unclear



Commitment made:  **Fully**  **Partly**  **Minimal**  **None**  **Unclear**


AMCS assessed the parties across five key issues that are threatening the Great Barrier Reef and which the next Queensland government will hold the power to tackle. The areas assessed within the AMCS 2024 Queensland election scorecard are:

- 1) **Protect the Great Barrier Reef from climate change by committing to the development, resourcing and delivery of a clear plan across all sectors of the Queensland economy to meet the legislated 75% by 2035 Emissions Reduction Target.**
- 2) **Protect the Great Barrier Reef from climate change by committing to the development, resourcing and delivery of a plan of how to achieve the legislated renewable energy targets of 70% by 2032 and 80% by 2035, including the closure of publicly owned coal fired power stations by 2035.**
- 3) **Reduce water pollution entering the Great Barrier Reef by committing to retain and enforce water pollution laws and invest in wetland restoration.**
- 4) **Reduce water pollution by increasing the protection of native vegetation through retaining the current Vegetation Management Act, improving the effectiveness of compliance efforts and protecting native vegetation along watercourses and in degraded areas.**
- 5) **Protect threatened species by delivering the phase out of commercial gillnets from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area by June 2027**

1) Protect the Great Barrier Reef from climate change

Commit to the development, resourcing and delivery of a clear plan across all sectors of the Queensland economy to meet the legislated 75% by 2035 Emissions Reduction Target.



Party	Policy announcements	Summary	Assessment
ALP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ALP passed the Clean Economy Jobs Act in April 2024, which commits Queensland to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2035. As part of this, the government must report back on Dec 31, 2024 with a plan for cutting emissions across all sectors in the Queensland economy. In a response from the party (October 10, 2024) to our policy request, the ALP reiterated its commitments to implementing plans to achieve the emissions reduction target, including their energy transition plan to phase out coal fired power by 2035, and transitioning Queensland's energy grid to renewable energy, which will account for 20% of the emissions required to achieve 75% reduction. To date, Queensland has delivered a reduction of 35.3% emissions. 	<p>The ALP introduced and legislated the 75% emissions reduction target and has committed to deliver a plan to cut emissions by 2035 = Commitment fully made</p>	
LNP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voted to legislate Queensland's 75% by 2035 emissions reduction target in April 2024, which requires the government to deliver sector plans that illustrate how emissions will be cut across the QLD economy. On the 3rd of September at the Queensland Community Alliance Election Assembly, Opposition leader David Crisafulli stated support for Net Zero by 2050, but did not reference the target of cutting pollution by 75% by 2035. When asked what he could commit to before the election, Mr Crisafulli stated, "<i>We've already said Net Zero by 2050.</i>" 	<p>The LNP voted to legislate Qld's target of 75%. Since then, the LNP has put out mixed messages on coal-fired power combined with</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On October 10, 2024 the Opposition leader agreed when asked a question if coal fired power stations would run indefinitely. ¹ On October 11, 2024 opposition leader David Crisafulli refused to confirm the party's support for the target, instead referring to support for net zero by 2050. A response from the party (October 11, 2024) to our policy request, did not reiterate a commitment to cutting emissions by 75% by 2035. It did refer to a plan but not in relation to the 75% target, "<i>The LNP will reduce emissions and reach Net Zero by 2050 by working with industry sectors to develop achievable and practical plans. These plans will outline the Queensland Government's role and actions to support the reduction of emissions over the next decade.</i>" 	<p>a lack of reference to a sustained commitment to 75% by 2035, or a clear plan to deliver it = Commitment unclear</p>	
<p>Greens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced The Qld Climate Transition Bill to the Queensland parliament in 2023 to legislate a 75% emissions reduction target by 2030, reaching net zero by 2035. The Bill proposes a plan as to how to reduce emissions by 75% by 2030, and also seeks to establish a new statutory authority to develop and implement a strategic climate transition plan that ensures consultation, compensation, training and job opportunities for workers and local communities affected by the transition away from fossil fuels. Voted to legislate Queensland's current 75% by 2035 emissions reduction target, and as part of this legislation, the government is required to deliver sector plans that illustrate how emissions will be cut across the QLD economy. Propose to create a Queensland Climate Transition Authority to consult and work with affected workers and communities on a fair transition plan to phase out fossil fuel exports by 2030. 	<p>The Greens moved the introduction of a Bill with a more ambitious ERT and plan, including phasing out coal. They also voted for the current legislation = Commitment fully made</p>	


¹ Phasing out coal fired power stations and replacing them with renewable energy by 2035 will cut Queensland's greenhouse gas emissions by 20%. Without this phase out Queensland will not be able to meet the 75% emissions reduction cut.

2) Protect the Great Barrier Reef from climate change

Commit to the development, resourcing and delivery of a plan of how to achieve the legislated renewable energy targets of 70% by 2032 and 80% by 2035, including the closure of publicly owned coal-fired power stations by 2035.


Party	Policy announcements	Summary	Assessment
ALP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ALP passed the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act in April 2024. The plan lays out a vision for Queensland’s energy future, provides a clear pathway to clean, reliable and affordable power for generations, and sets a target of 80% renewable energy by 2035. The ALP released the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan in 2022, which outlines how the state will transition to renewable energy and includes a commitment to phase out publicly owned coal fired power stations by 2035. A response from the party (October 11, 2024) to our policy request, stated, <i>“Our plan is to replace coal with 80% renewables by 2035, and we have made that law.”</i> The ALP has committed \$26 billion to deliver the Queensland Jobs and Energy Plan. 	<p>The ALP has developed and invested in a plan to achieve the renewable energy targets commitment to phase out publicly owned coal fired power stations = Commitment fully made</p>	
LNP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LNP voted no to the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act in April 2024, which legislated a renewable energy target of 70% by 2032 and 80% by 2035 In her response speech to the Bill, Shadow Energy Minister Deb Frecklington stated, <i>“To make it really clear, the LNP does support renewable energy.”</i> and <i>“The LNP supports the targets, but we</i> 	<p>While the LNP has expressed support for renewable energy and suggested some alternative energy</p>	



	<p><i>cannot support to legislate them when there is no credible pathway to achieve them.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On the 11th of October, Opposition leader David Crisafulli confirmed that the LNP would repeal the legislation for the renewable energy targets. <i>“We never backed the renewables target, and that legislation should be repealed,”</i> he said. ● The LNP will not support the main energy storage proposal for reaching the renewable energy targets by 2035. They instead propose to investigate smaller hydrogen projects. ● On September 4th at the Queensland community alliance, the Opposition leader commented, <i>“We didn’t sign up for the renewable energy target set by the state because we don’t believe there’s a credible path to get there. I will not promise these things I do not believe are possible.”</i> ● On October 10, 2024 the Opposition leader agreed when asked if coal fired power stations would run indefinitely. ● On October 11, 2024 Shadow Energy Minister Deb Frecklington posted an article titled “LNP says coal here to stay for long term” with a commitment to the maintenance of coal fired power plants. It is unclear if this applies to coal fired power in the long term beyond 2035. ● A response from the party (October 11, 2024) to our policy request did not state a commitment to renewable energy targets by 2035 or any commitment to phasing out coal-fired power stations. 	<p>solutions, repealing of the targets in partnership with commentary of indefinite extension of coal fired power, means the LNP has made no commitment to address the issue, and opposes the policies required = No commitment</p>	
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<p>Greens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Greens voted yes to the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act in April 2024, which legislated a renewable energy target of 70% by 2032 and 80% by 2035 ● In the response from the party (October 8, 2024) to our policy request, Leader of the Qld Greens Michael Berkman provided the following commitments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stop new coal and gas mines. ● Invest in 100% public renewables by 2030. ● Invest an additional \$65.3 billion to double the pace of Labor's energy transition. ● Fund publicly owned renewable energy generation and battery storage. ● Rule out extending the life of coal-fired power stations. ● Close existing State-owned coal-fired power stations by 2035 at the latest. ● Create a new Queensland Climate Transition Authority to consult and work with affected workers and communities on a fair transition plan to phase out fossil fuel exports by 2030. 	<p>The Greens have committed to investing in 100% renewable energy and committed to closing coal-fired power stations by 2035 =</p> <p>Commitment fully made</p>	
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3) Reduce water pollution entering the Reef

Commit to retaining and enforcing the water pollution laws and invest in wetland restoration.

Party	Policy announcements	Summary	Assessment
ALP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ALP introduced the Reef Protection Regulations in 2019. In a response from the party (October 10, 2024) to our policy request, they confirmed their commitment to the regulations and their enforcement. • In 2021 the ALP allocated \$289.6 million to 2025-26 to continue the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program, including some minimal investment in wetland restoration projects. • The ALP has developed the Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy to guide wetland science, planning, coordination and management in the Great Barrier Reef catchments, but has not committed to funding its implementation • To date, investments and commitments have largely focused on supporting farmer practice change, rather than wetland restoration. • A response from the party (October 10, 2024) to our policy request stated, <i>“If re-elected a Miles Labor Government would support full investigation and trialling with landholders of new fertiliser technologies that reduce nitrogen runoff in Great Barrier Reef catchments and would consider funding any successful trials in next year’s budget.”</i> This statement is welcome but at this stage it is unclear how it will contribute to reducing water pollution. 	<p>The ALP has committed to retain and enforce the reef regulations, which form a significant part of Queensland’s efforts to reduce water pollution. Despite releasing a wetlands strategy, the majority of investment in reducing water pollution has been in farmer practice change = Commitments partly made</p>	

<p>LNP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voted against a Bill to repeal the Reef regulations in 2021 • A response from the party (October 11, 2024) to our policy request confirmed “<i>The LNP has no plans to change the Reef Protection legislation.</i>” • A response from the party (October 11, 2024) to our policy request, stated the LNP will “<i>increase our support to these (BMP²) programs.</i>” • There has been no commitment to enforcing the Reef regulations and improving compliance, which are needed to reach 50% of the water quality targets to cut nitrogen pollution.³ • The LNP committed \$117.84 million to support Queensland’s Natural Resource Management (NRM) program. In a letter from the party (11 October 2024) the LNP identified this money will go towards projects such as fencing riparian vegetation and supporting annual report cards on river health and water quality. While a positive initiative it is unclear how much of this investment will be put towards wetland restoration. 	<p>Commitment to maintaining the regulations is positive, but there is a lack of clarity on its enforcement. BMP investment must be in conjunction with well enforced laws. NRM funding is positive but further details required and how much the investment will be targeted at water quality improvements = Minimal commitment made</p>	
<p>Greens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a response from the party (October 8, 2024) the Greens stated that the party will, “<i>...commit to retaining and enforcing water pollution laws, with increased compliance activities particularly targeting areas with high levels of non-compliance such as beef cattle grazing.</i>” • The party has committed \$2 billion to reducing water pollution, however the plan requires updating to be in line with the recently updated Scientific Consensus Statement. 	<p>The Greens have committed to retaining and enforcing the water pollution laws and would invest \$2 billion into halting water pollution, which includes</p>	


² Best Management Practice

³ The Reef regulations were introduced in 2019 because of the low uptake of voluntary measures, resulting in an increase in participation in BMPs. However, without enforcement there is less incentive to join BMP to avoid regulations and participation would likely drop.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A letter from the party (October 8, 2024) stated, “<i>We have long championed investment in the Reef, and support new investment in wetland restoration which could be funded by our plan to tax big mining corporations fairly.</i>” 	investment in wetland restoration = Commitment fully made	
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4) Protect Native Vegetation

Increase the protection of native vegetation through retaining the current Vegetation Management Act, improving the effectiveness of compliance efforts and protecting native vegetation along watercourses and in degraded areas.

Party	Policy announcements	Summary	Assessment
ALP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ALP strengthened the Vegetation Management Act (VMA) in 2018, which reduced clearing in the State by 50%. However high clearing rates continue, due to a loophole in the VMA, known as category X. The ALP has not committed to strengthen the laws to address this loophole. The ALP established the Native Vegetation Scientific Expert Panel in March 2022 to help understand the factors behind land clearing. They have committed to 10 of the 12 recommendations in full, including better enforcement. The ALP announced \$140 million to incentivise landholder participation in an emerging natural capital market to reduce clearing and protect native vegetation⁴. 	The ALP strengthened Vegetation Management laws, but clearing still remains. While \$140 million commitment to incentivise farmers to not clear is positive, it is unclear how long this will take to deliver outcomes =	



⁴ Natural capital and carbon farming projects are still an emerging management response and can take significant time to get off the ground. There has been a slow uptake from farmers and any changes in clearing would likely be several years away.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a response from the party (October 10, 2024) to our policy request, the ALP stated they <i>“have developed a new carbon method which will incentivise holders of Category X land to be paid rather than clear, and committed to providing landholders with free carbon baselines, making their entry to the carbon market cost free to accelerate uptake.”</i> 	Commitment partly made	
LNP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At a press event on September 4 Opposition leader, David Crisafulli stated that, <i>“We are not changing vegetation management. I am not going back to the days of the pendulum going to and fro on government changes. It sends uncertainty.”</i> The LNP has not made a direct commitment to enforcement of the Act, as the Opposition Leader has stated, <i>“You’re not going to constantly see tightening and some of the crazy policing of vegetation management rules.”</i> There has been no direct commitment to address clearing in Category X, where 80% of clearing occurs. A letter from the party (11 October, 2024) referenced their commitment to fund NRM groups to undertake water quality projects, such as fencing riparian vegetation. While a necessary and welcome initiative it does not address the question of how they will protect riparian vegetation from clearing, which continues to be high because of the loophole in the VMA. 	The LNP has committed to not change the VMA, but has not committed to enforcement of the Act, or to any plan for protecting vegetation in Category X = Minimal commitments made	
Greens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a response from the party (October 8, 2024) to our policy request, the Greens committed to strengthen the Vegetation Management Act by tightening loopholes and reviewing the currently unregulated ‘Category X’. This is also outlined in their Biodiversity and Environment policy. 	The Greens have committed to increase protection of native vegetation by closing loopholes in laws and	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In their response, they also committed to support increased resourcing for compliance and enforcement, in particular to protect native vegetation along watercourses and in degraded areas. 	<p>increasing enforcement in key areas = Commitment fully made</p>	
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5) Protect threatened species and improve fisheries sustainability

Deliver the phase out of commercial gillnets from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area by June 2027.

Party	Policy announcements	Summary	Assessment
ALP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ALP introduced the Fisheries and Other Legislation (Structural Reform) Amendment Regulation 2023, and provided a \$100m package to phase out gillnet fishing from the Great Barrier Reef by June 2027. On 1 January 2024 gillnet licences were reduced from 240 to 28 temporary NX licences, which expire in June 2027, and a network of large Net-Free Zones were introduced to protect threatened species. Strict conditions require improved net attendance and electronic monitoring cameras to obtain accurate data and improve survival of threatened species entangled in nets. 	<p>The ALP introduced new laws and invested in the phase out gillnets, and has started implementing actions to protect threatened species = Commitment fully made</p>	
LNP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LNP do not have a clear party position in regards to phasing out gillnets from the GBR by June 2027 A response from the party (October 11, 2024) to our policy request did not make it clear whether they will implement the gillnet phase out by 2027. The response states: “<i>The LNP will commit to funding world class Research and Development into new fishing methods and fisheries to replace the vacuum left from the phase out of gillnetting in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.</i>” 	<p>It is unclear where the party stands, as there has been no official statement or clear comments from elected party members. There have been negative statements on the</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There have been non supportive statements by the Oodgeroo candidate, and a motion by a state council branch to remove the proposed gillnet phase-out. 	gillnet phase out from a candidate and state branch = Commitment unclear	
Greens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a response from the party (October 8, 2024) to our policy request, the Greens have committed to completing the phase-out of gillnet fishing from the Great Barrier Reef by no later than June 2027 	The Greens have committed to phase out gillnets from the Reef = Commitments fully made	