



# The Coalition's Policy for a Green Army

July 2013

## KEY POINTS

The Coalition will create a standing 'Green Army' that will gradually build to a 15,000 strong environmental workforce.

The Coalition understands that a stronger economy is fundamental to giving us the ability and the personnel to embark on environmental restoration, to lower carbon emissions and to develop cleaner technologies.

The Coalition has a strong track record of delivering on-the-ground environmental projects and tackling environmental issues head on.

The Coalition's Green Army policy will build to 15,000 young people, the largest standing environmental workforce in Australia's history, to provide real and practical solutions to cleaning up riverbanks and creek beds, re-vegetating sand dunes, re-vegetating mangrove habitat, and a host of other environmental conservation projects.

The Green Army will work with, and complement the work undertaken by, local land care groups, bush care groups, foreshore communities, Natural Resource Management (NRM) Groups, local catchment authorities and councils in their work restoring and protecting the local environment.

Our Green Army policy will not just deliver tangible benefits for the environment. It will boost workforce training and productivity by providing meaningful, practical and hands-on environmental skills and experience for thousands of Australians.

The Coalition believes in the importance of caring for the environment, both now and for future generations.



# INTRODUCTION

The Howard Government implemented the Green Corps programme in 1996 to employ young people in environmental projects to preserve and restore our natural and cultural environment.

The Green Corps provided young people with improved career and employment prospects through accredited training, on-the-project training and personal development while participating in environmental and heritage projects.

Over the life of the Green Corps programme under the Howard Government, participants delivered the following outcomes:

- propagated and planted over 14 million trees;
- erected more than 8,000 kilometres of fencing;
- cleared over 50,000 hectares of weeds;
- collected more than 9,500 kilograms of seeds; and
- constructed or maintained more than 5,000 kilometres of walking track or boardwalks.

Specific projects funded under the former Coalition Government's Green Corps programme included:

- the Peel Waterways Foreshore Protection and Rehabilitation Project, which focussed on improving the waterway health of the Peel-Yalgorup Wetlands system; and
- the Jarrahdale Heritage Park project, which focussed on implementing revegetation works to the Gooralong Brooke Foreshore.

Under the Rudd-Gillard Government, the successful Green Corps programme was replaced with the National Green Jobs Corps, which effectively re-classified unemployed people who continued to receive an income support payment, and was then abolished altogether.

A cleaner environment is an essential part of restoring hope, reward and opportunity for all Australians because we should leave our country in better shape than we found it.



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The Coalition will create a standing 'Green Army' that will gradually build to a 15,000 strong environmental workforce. We will create and properly resource the Green Army, as a larger and more lasting version of the former Green Corps. It will be Australia's largest-ever environmental deployment.

It will mark the first time that Australia has approached environmental remediation with the same seriousness and level of organisation that we have long brought to bushfire preparedness and other local and regional priorities.

Australia's unique landscape instils in us a deep appreciation of the fragility of the natural environment and the requirement to protect it.

The Green Army complements our 'Direct Action' approach to climate change.

Direct Action provides Australians with the opportunity for individuals, communities, organisations and companies to help address our environmental challenges.

Our Direct Action policy will ensure reductions in carbon emissions take place within Australia without slugging families, businesses and the economy with a great big carbon tax.

Our policies will make a real difference to improving the environment in our own backyard and addressing climate change.

Our vision for Australia is a country where, individually and collectively, we can more often be our best selves.

Australians are generous, decent, optimistic and committed people who want to do the right thing by those around them.



## THE PLAN

The Coalition's Green Army will build to 15,000 young people, the largest standing environmental workforce in Australia's history. The objective of the Green Army is to combat land degradation, clean up our waterways, provide real and practical solutions to cleaning up riverbanks and creek beds, re-vegetate sand dunes, re-vegetate mangrove habitat and a host of other environmental conservation projects.

The Coalition believes in encouraging hands-on, practical, grassroots environmental action as a means of fixing environmental problems, as well as tapping into the knowledge of local communities, encouraging them to identify and fix their own local problems.

This approach fosters teamwork, local ownership and community spirit.

The Green Army will provide funding to work with, and complement the work undertaken by, local land care groups, bush care groups, foreshore communities, Natural Resource Management (NRM) Groups, local catchment authorities and councils in their work remediating the local environment.

Importantly, the scheme will provide on the job training for young people.

Participants will receive a training allowance, as well as gaining valuable work skills and potential qualifications in different areas of environmental remediation.

Each project will be unique in its focus, with training tailored to specific local environmental priorities including:

- propagation and planting of native seedlings;
- weed control;
- re-vegetation and regeneration of local parks;
- habitat protection and restoration;
- improving water quality by cleaning up waterways;
- re-vegetation of sand dunes and mangroves;
- creek bank regeneration;
- foreshore and beach restoration;
- construction of boardwalks and walking tracks to protect local wildlife; and
- cultural heritage restoration.



There are a range of potential projects that have already been submitted for consideration to the Coalition including:

- **Weed eradication**

Undertaking weed eradication and fuel reduction activities in natural bushland reserves to improve native vegetation and reduce bushfire risk to homes close to bush areas on the fringe of metropolitan areas.

- **Coastal**

Protecting beaches from further erosion through the construction of sea walls and coastal stabilisation works.

- **River clearing**

Remediation projects along rivers by rehabilitating foreshores, stabilising riverbanks, reducing weed density to improve water flow and improving water quality.

- **Indigenous focused**

Local Indigenous communities working to maintain and protect local significant sites through weed management, cleaning up of local creeks, re-vegetation and regeneration of local parks.

- **Rural projects**

Restoration plans to link up old walking tracks through weed eradication, vegetation management, bush regeneration, protecting cultural sites and historic places, through activities including erosion control, fencing and revegetation works.

The work a person undertakes as part of a Green Army programme would normally be counted toward the requirements of a training course such as a Certificate 1 or 2 in land management, park management, landscaping or horticulture.

Green Army projects will run for up to 26 weeks (full-time). Projects will deploy nine participants led by a supervisor who will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the project.

Funding will be provided to each Green Army team for materials and equipment to allow participants to carry out their work.



The scheme is an opt-in programme initially for 17-24 year olds.

Participants can apply as school leavers and gap year students and the unemployed can also opt to join the Green Army as an alternative to Work for the Dole programmes.

Upon completion, there will be opportunities for participants to undertake further education and training or potential employment with councils, state and national parks, as well as undertake careers in the thousands of environmental businesses across Australia.

The Green Army programme will be managed by the Environment Department.

To streamline application processes for both potential projects and Green Army applicants, the Department will conduct project assessments once every six months.

Projects will be assessed on a merit basis against their environmental benefits, their contribution to the local community and their potential to enhance skills training for participants.

Participants will be assessed on a merit basis against their employment status, location relative to approved projects, commitment to skills training, and contribution to the community.

This workforce will be capable of supplying the skilled, motivated and sustained attention that large-scale environmental remediation needs.

The Green Army will be available on an ongoing basis (over and above the existing efforts of councils, farmers, volunteers and national parks personnel) to tackle the environmental tasks that most urgently need willing hands to do the job.

There are hundreds of organisations and local environmental groups across Australia that are already doing some of this work, mostly on a volunteer basis, and they deserve our recognition for making this country a better, cleaner and safer place. These groups, plus local councils, could submit conservation projects that require a significant labour force.

The Green Army will renew the type of work done through the Natural Heritage Trust under the former Coalition Government. Between 1997 and 2007, \$5.1 billion was invested to help more than 800,000 volunteers to support threatened species in over 1.4 million hectares of habitat; reduce pests and weeds across over 15 million hectares and help protect eight million hectares of wetlands.

Our Green Army will deliver tangible benefits for the environment, skills development for thousands of young Australians, and will strengthen local community involvement.



## THE CHOICE

The Coalition's Green Army will be Australia's biggest deployment of personnel for environmental restoration.

It will be the first time that we have approached environmental remediation with the same seriousness and level of organisation that we have brought to bushfire preparedness or other local and regional priorities.

The Coalition previously rolled out the successful Green Corps programme that saw over 17,000 young Australians participate in over 1,700 projects – projects that provided real benefits for the environment, tangible skills training for participants and strengthened local communities.

The Labor Government, by contrast, stripped the former Green Corps programme and transformed it into a programme where young long-term unemployed Australians were re-classified and continued to receive an income support payment, but with very little done to help the environment.

Labor's programme did little to motivate the long-term unemployed to move into employment. The programme was not designed to assist those specifically interested in conservation of our natural environment to participate.

Labor's approach to the environment is to hit families, businesses and the economy with a great big new tax that not only increases the cost of living, but according to the Government's own forecasting, will actually see an increase in Australia's carbon emissions by 2020.

The Coalition's Green Army programme will encourage hands-on, practical, grassroots environmental action as a means of fixing environmental problems, as well as tapping into the knowledge of local communities, encouraging them to identify and fix their own local problems.





## COST

The Coalition's Green Army will begin with 250 projects in 2014-15, building up to 1,500 projects in 2018-19.

By 2018-19, it is estimated that there will be a standing force of 15,000 people who will be taking part in the Green Army each year.

The Coalition's Green Army will cost up to \$50 million in the first year starting on 1 July 2014 and \$300 million over the forward estimates period (with total costs capped at a maximum of \$300 million).

It is expected that this will provide for over 1,500 Green Army projects over the forward estimates period.



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Opportunity.



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