



Wildlife Queensland

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Wildlife Queensland Policy: Population

Scope

This policy establishes the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland's (WPSQ's) view on major issues relating to population policy. It sets out goals, actions and guiding principles to provide effective management of this issue.

Context

WPSQ acknowledges Australia has a tropical monsoon climate in the north, a temperate to Mediterranean climate in the south, and a vast arid interior. It is the second driest continent with its fresh water and ground water resources having a limited capacity. Drought is a recurring feature over most of the continent. Generally soils tend to be shallow and infertile. Yet Australia supports one of the most biologically diverse series of ecosystems on earth with a unique range of flora and fauna. In slightly more than 200 years there has been a dramatic increase in human population and a significant increase in human activity that has had a major impact on the environment. Ecosystems have been lost and others continue to disappear. The continued loss of ecosystems and the component species is totally inappropriate and is doing irreversible damage to the earth. The earth's natural resources have their limits and they are not infinitely expandable.

Positive initiatives, such as recycling and water conservation, are being adopted by the community but the present population is not living in an ecologically sustainable way. Still, Australia's consumption of natural resources per capita is among the highest in the world and is steadily increasing. Energy consumption per capita in Queensland continues to rise while occupancy rates for dwellings fall. Clearing rates of native vegetation are still among the highest in the developed world. Emphasis is being given to the short-term economic gains while environmental costs are not being accounted for appropriately. Until consumption rates of our natural resources are reduced, a range of mechanisms needs to be considered in order to protect our biodiversity.

Australia is a signatory to both The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21. These protocols clearly establish the nexus among natural resources, development and population and the need for ecological sustainability. There is an obligation on Australia and its component states and territories to reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate population policies. To address these challenges there is a need to develop simultaneously resource demand minimisation strategies and population policies. Wildlife Queensland acknowledges there is an obligation for Australia to develop an appropriate population policy.

Goals

Any developed policy, to be acceptable to WPSQ, must ensure the following goals.

- The population is maintained at a level that is ecologically sustainable.
- The policy ensures that there is no discrimination within the population on the grounds of ethnicity, colour, sexuality, beliefs, wealth, skills or age.
- There is no negative impact upon Australia's biodiversity in any form either as an individual program and in its cumulative effect with other programs.
- The Australian Government's Humanitarian Program is retained and enhanced.
- A number of mechanisms such as family planning, education and immigration to manage population growth are incorporated in the policy.

Actions

- While acknowledging a population policy may incorporate a range of mechanisms, WPSQ embraces and gives in-principle support to the concept of a population policy that ensures our population is maintained at a level that achieves ecological sustainability and addresses the issues raised.

WPSQ also:

- Promotes the use of an ecological accounting tool such as the ecological footprint concept and quality of life indicators by all levels of government and particularly local authorities in planning strategies and schemes;
- Advocates the use of practicable resource conservation and energy efficient measures to minimise per capita use of resources and encourages relevant research;
- Educates the community about the effect of population size and carrying capacity on the loss of biodiversity and the resulting impact on lifestyle;
- Encourages organisations and individuals with like-minded philosophy to lobby government to produce an appropriate population policy to ensure a sustainable population and to incorporate population management into all applicable policy development and planning having regard for the issues outlined;
- Supports individuals and groups strongly committed to the adoption of a population policy availing themselves of any legal opportunity to promote the concept.

Guiding principles

- All Australians have a responsibility to support maintaining a population level that is ecologically sustainable.
- ESD principles are met; the precautionary principle is satisfied; intragenerational and intergenerational principles are met.
- WPSQ recommends that the concept of the ecological accounting tool – the ecological footprint – underpin the design and performance measurements of the policy.

Approved by Council Date 31 / 05 / 2005.

APPENDIX

Definitions

Agenda 21: Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be globally, nationally and locally by organisations of the United Nations System, Governments and major groups in every area in which humans impacts on the environment. For more detailed information it is suggested starting at <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda/index.htm>

Biodiversity: The variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part, and includes diversity within species and between species and diversity of ecosystems.

Ecological footprint: It is a measure of the “load” imposed on the natural environment by a given population and represents the land area necessary to sustain current levels of resource consumption and waste discharge by the population. In other words it is the corresponding area of productive land and aquatic ecosystems required to produce the resources used and to assimilate the wastes produced by a defined population at a specified material standard of living wherever on earth that land may be located.

Ecological Sustainable Development(ESD): Using, conserving and enhancing the community’s resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased. Core values of ESD:

- To protect the biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life support systems;
- To provide for equity within and between generations;
To enhance individual and community wellbeing and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations

Ecosystem: A dynamic complex of plant, animal, fungal and micro organism communities and the non-living environmental interacting as an ecological unit.

Humanitarian program: This program comprises two components: offshore resettlement program for persons overseas, and onshore protection for those people already in Australia who arrived on temporary visas or in an unauthorised manner, and who claim protection. For more information see <http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/60refugee.htm>

Precautionary principle: This principle is that the lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing a measure to prevent degradation of the environment if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage.

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development: Resulting from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, 1992 a proclamation was made with respect to all peoples and the need to protect the integrity of the global environment and development system. The declaration encompasses some 27 principles covering a broad range of topics. Principle 1 states” Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. For more information see <http://www.unep.org>