



<u>Policy Approver:</u>	Board
<u>Policy Owner:</u>	Chief Executive Officer
<u>Policy Lead:</u>	Chief Regenerative Officer

Inclusive Conservation Policy

Our policy on sustainable development, human rights, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, gender equality, disability inclusion and environmental management in all our programs and projects in Australia and overseas.

Positive ecological and social outcomes are strongly associated with higher levels of stewardship by Indigenous Peoples and local communities and their institutions, demonstrating equity through inclusive conservation practice should be advanced both for ethical reasons and because it enhances conservation effectiveness. To successfully regenerate nature by 2030, we must work with partners to challenge and dismantle old power structures, respectfully engage with and learn from Indigenous and local knowledge systems, prioritise the values and perspectives of First Nations Peoples, and support the participation and leadership, of people who may otherwise be excluded or marginalised on the grounds of gender, sexuality or sexual characteristics, disability status, age, race, ethnicity or other social status. We support the shift towards community-based management and a regenerative economy for all, and we advocate alongside those people who live closest to the nature we seek to regenerate.

We recognise that inclusive conservation is a dynamic thematic focus, and this Policy reflects our position today. The organisation-wide practice of this Policy aims to evolve, guided by our Strategic Plans and Constitution, as we pursue our ambition towards people-centred conservation and decolonisation.

1 Introduction

This policy sets out our commitment to:

- (a) inclusive conservation approaches that deliver wellbeing and equitable outcomes for people, advance climate justice, as well as restore and regenerate nature; and
- (b) recognise and promote the agency and leadership of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and other groups experiencing marginalisation,

through the design, implementation, learning and adaptive management of programs and projects.¹

2 Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

¹ For our organisational level commitments to inclusion, gender equality and diversity in our workplace, human rights and safeguarding vulnerable individuals including children, please refer to WWF-Australia's Code of Ethical Conduct, Safeguarding Policy and Workplace Gender Policy.



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- (a) all our personnel (being our directors², employees, interns, students on vocational placement, volunteers and independent contractors and consultants); and
- (b) all our partner organisations and their personnel involved in our activities and work.

The application of this policy to our partner organisations is described further below in clause 4.3.

3 Policy Statement

3.1 General

- (a) Compliance with this policy and the law are conditions of working or undertaking any form of business with or for us. Any breach of this policy is a serious matter that may cause harm to individuals and communities and compromise our status as a charity and/or our funding for our work.
- (b) A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action (including dismissal) and/or termination of a partnership or an agreement.

3.2 Sustainable Development

- (a) We are committed to programs and projects that contribute to long-term, sustainable change at community and broader systems levels.
- (b) We recognise and promote the agency and leadership of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and other groups experiencing marginalisation.
- (c) We are committed to the participation and empowerment of primary stakeholders, particularly the communities with which we work. We are committed to accountability to the people in the communities in which we work, including those directly involved in, and affected by, our programs and projects.
- (d) We seek to understand the needs, aspirations and expectations of different stakeholders and groups within communities and pursue locally-driven projects/programs, with the active engagement of those who are vulnerable or experiencing marginalisation.
- (e) We are committed to design, monitoring, evaluation and learning in all our programs and projects that is based on thorough analysis of environmental and social contexts, high-quality scientific evidence, and active involvement of communities with which we work.

² If our Board has adopted a separate policy regarding the subject matter of this policy, then that policy takes precedence with respect to our directors.



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- (f) We are committed to providing program and organisational information in appropriate and accessible forms and, where relevant, in local languages to primary stakeholders, partner organisations and donors.
- (g) We are committed to the social, economic and environmental sustainability of our programs and projects which continue to provide benefits to people and the planet well beyond our direct involvement.
- (h) We ensure that any advocacy activities we are involved in are evidence-based, accurately represent the perspectives and interests of the communities with which we work and do no harm or increase the level of risk faced by those communities.
- (i) We ensure locally appropriate, safe, discreet, accessible and child-friendly processes are in place for primary stakeholders to contribute their ideas, feedback and complaints during all phases of programs and projects (see Complaints Handling Policy).

3.3 Promoting Human Rights

- (a) We recognise that human rights are central to achieving effective and equitable conservation and development outcomes. They are universal, inalienable, interdependent and interrelated. Everyone is born with and possesses the same human rights, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, indigeneity, race, age, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, religious or political affiliation, disability, poverty, socio-economic status, caste, class, displacement, or any other status.
- (b) We are committed to respecting and promoting internationally recognised human rights, to promote a human rights-based approach to conservation, and to integrate such an approach in our programs and projects . We work to incorporate our commitments to human rights in our communications and advocacy.
- (c) We recognise the need to make special efforts to prevent harm to people and groups who are often marginalised or particularly vulnerable to infringements of their rights, and to support the protection and fulfilment of their human rights within the scope of our work.
- (d) We are committed to protecting the rights of children and recognise children as a social group often excluded or marginalised in development processes. We recognise the rights of children to express their views freely in all matters affecting their lives. In the context of our development work, we seek opportunities to safely and meaningfully facilitate the participation of children and, where appropriate, incorporate their perspectives into the design and implementation of programs and projects.³

³ See our Safeguarding Policy for more detail regarding safeguarding vulnerable individuals (including children) .



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- (e) In our work, we encourage governments to respect, protect, and fulfil their obligations to rights holders by preventing, investigating, punishing and addressing any human rights violation.
- (f) We support the improvement of governance systems that can secure the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the context of our work, including elements such as legal, policy and institutional frameworks and procedures for equitable participation and accountability.
- (g) Without putting at risk its staff, partners or environmental defenders themselves, we seek to promote the responsibility of duty-bearers at local and national levels to secure civic space and protect the human rights of environmental defenders.
- (h) We recognise that the promotion of human rights in the context of conservation programs and projects involves complex issues. In considering the human rights dimensions of our work, we are open to dialogue with partner organisations, local communities, and bodies representing the interests of marginalised groups and vulnerable people.
- (i) We expect our partners to respect human rights and reserve the right to withdraw from the partnership if this expectation is not met.
- (j) For more detailed principles on human rights, see WWF Network Statement of Principles – Human Rights⁴.

3.4 Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- (a) We are committed to making special efforts to respect, protect, comply with and promote the collective and individual rights of Indigenous Peoples, including customary as well as resource rights, in the context of our programs, projects and other conservation initiatives. We work to incorporate our commitments to the rights of Indigenous Peoples in our communications and advocacy.
- (b) We respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination and to define and pursue their own social, economic, environmental, and cultural development priorities for their well-being and for the protection of their territories and resources.
- (c) We respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples over the lands, waters, and resources that they customarily own, occupy and or use.
- (d) We recognise that Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands, territories, other resources and cultures, including the right to require that States obtain their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) before the approval of any project affecting those lands, territories, and resources.

⁴ See https://wwf.panda.org/principles_and_safeguards/.



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- (e) We endeavour to work with locally-recognised representatives of Indigenous groups to design and implement programs and projects that meet conservation and development objectives. We support the rights of Indigenous Peoples to improve the quality of their lives and benefit directly and equitably from the biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources within their territories or other benefits realised from their intellectual property and traditional knowledge, which we seek to support within the scope of our work.
- (f) We respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to practice, teach, and share their traditional knowledge and practices, cultural heritage and languages.
- (g) In our work, we encourage governments to respect, protect, and fulfill their obligations regarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- (h) We seek to support Indigenous Peoples to exercise their rights and to hold duty-bearers accountable.
- (i) In instances where multiple local groups claim rights to resources in Indigenous territories, we recognise the primary rights of Indigenous Peoples based on historical claims and long-term presence, with due regard for the rights and welfare of other stakeholders.
- (j) We recognise the right of Indigenous Peoples not to be removed from the territories they occupy. Where their relocation is considered necessary as an exceptional measure, it shall take place only with their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and in full respect of national and international laws and conventions which guarantee the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- (k) We recognise the rights of Indigenous Peoples living in voluntary isolation and/or initial contact to their lives, lands and territories, and to freely decide to remain in isolation, maintain their cultural values, and freely decide if, when and how they wish to contact and/or integrate with the outside world. We seek to avoid contact or encroachment on the territories of Indigenous Peoples living in isolation or those in initial contact in line with their cultural values and practices.
- (l) We expect our partners to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and reserve the right to withdraw from the partnership if this expectation is not met.
- (m) For more detailed principles of partnership with Indigenous peoples, see WWF Statement of Principles – Indigenous Peoples.⁵

3.5 Gender Equality

- (a) We are committed to advancing and integrating gender equality and equity across our programs and projects, embedding gender responsiveness. We

⁵ See https://wwf.panda.org/principles_and_safeguards/.



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work to incorporate our commitment to gender equality in our communications and advocacy.

- (b) We promote an enabling environment for all individuals and groups to be included, represented, respected, engaged and heard regardless of their gender and intersecting identities.
- (c) We are committed to mainstreaming gender across our programs and projects, including through:
 - (i) Gender disaggregated social and economic data, indicators and targets.
 - (ii) Genuine consultation with those who may otherwise be excluded due to their gender, and incorporating a gender perspective in understanding the contexts in which we are working and how that impacts program design and implementation.
 - (iii) Where appropriate, seeking to empower women and others who may be marginalised due to their gender and help to address the structural barriers to their voice, participation and leadership.
- (d) In our work, we encourage governments to respect, protect, and fulfill their obligations in the area of gender equality.
- (e) We seek to support the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and actions to address the causes of gender inequality. We will take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate, as far as possible, the risks of harmful conduct motivated by gender inequality or discrimination related to our work.
- (f) We strive to partner with gender-focused global, national and local organisations to help us grow our knowledge, build our capacity and strengthen our strategies for disability inclusion across our programs and projects. We expect our partners to respect gender equality and reserve the right to withdraw from partnerships if this expectation is not met.
- (g) We aim to periodically assess our gender equality practices and the practices of our implementing partners at least every three years.
- (h) For more detailed principles of gender equality, see WWF Network Statement of Principles – Gender Equality.⁶

3.6 Disability Inclusion

- (a) We endorse the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol. We recognise people with

⁶ See https://wwf.panda.org/principles_and_safeguards/.



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disabilities as active agents of change, capable of claiming their rights and making decisions about their lives based on their free and informed consent.

- (b) We are committed to embedding disability-inclusive approaches across our programs and projects, including through:
 - (i) Pursuing a twin track approach that aims for mainstreaming disability inclusion and implementing disability-targeted activities.
 - (ii) Culturally-appropriate disaggregation of social and economic data by disability indicators and targets.⁷
 - (iii) Genuine consultation and engagement with local Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPD).
 - (iv) Adapting program and project design and implementation to facilitate the participation of, and equitable benefit sharing with, people with disabilities.
 - (v) Our environmental and social safeguarding activities.
- (c) We strive to partner with OPDs and global, national and local organisations to help us grow our knowledge, build our capacity and strengthen our strategies for disability inclusion across our development and conservation work.
- (d) We will periodically assess our disability inclusion practices and the practices of our implementing partners at least every three years.

3.7 Environmental Management

- (a) We are committed to promoting a culture of mutually beneficial environmental stewardship among our partner organisations and other stakeholders.
- (b) We seek to assess the environmental impact of designs and implementation processes of our programs and projects, including whether further work is required.
- (c) We seek to promote programs and projects that use sound environmental and ecological practices, based on science and traditional knowledge, and do not produce adverse environmental impacts.
- (d) We aim to periodically assess our environmental management practices and the practices of our implementing partners at least every three years.

⁷ WWF-Australia encourages, at a minimum, the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions for establishing an appropriate baseline for informing disability-inclusive program/project design.



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4 Policy in Practice

4.1 What we mean in this policy

In this policy:

- (a) By “**accountability**” we mean the processes through which an organisation makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities and delivers against their commitments.⁸
- (b) By “**activities and work**” we include:
 - (i) our programs and projects; and
 - (ii) activities resourced by us.
- (c) By “**disability**” we mean people with disabilities, including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- (d) By “**free, prior and informed consent**” we mean a right held by Indigenous Peoples to give or withhold their consent to projects that affect their land, territories and natural resources. The decision to give or withhold consent must be made free from force, intimidation, manipulation, coercion or pressure. Consent must be asked for prior to approval of specific projects. The decision to give or withhold consent must be an informed decision based on having information about the project that is fully understood.
- (e) By “**gender**” we mean socially constructed roles and relationships between men, women, boys, girls, transgender and non-binary people, and people with diverse gender identities, which affect their abilities and incentives to participate in society. Particularly in development, this can lead to different project impacts for people of different genders.
- (f) By “**gender equality**” we mean equal opportunities and access to resources and outcomes. Achieving gender equality requires pursuing gender equity, and the removal of structural inequalities that are embedded in every society.
- (g) By “**gender perspective**” we mean taking into account gender-based differences when looking at any social phenomenon, policy or process. A gender perspective focuses particularly on gender-based differences in status and power, and considers how such discrimination shapes the immediate needs, as well as the long-term interests, of people of different genders.
- (h) By “**implementing partners**”, we mean a subset of partner organisations that deliver conservation and aid and development activities and work funded by,

⁸ *Pathways to Accountability, the GAP Framework One World Trust, 2005.*



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or through, us with a range of specific roles, responsibilities and obligations agreed to and monitored between us.

- (i) By “**inclusive**” we mean a process through which all groups of people contribute to creating opportunities, share the benefits of programs/projects and meaningfully participate in decision-making. This will usually involve facilitating efforts to address the barriers to the full participation of vulnerable or marginalised people.
- (j) By “**marginalised**” we mean a person or group who is isolated, pushed to the edge, treated or considered as unimportant, insignificant and powerless.
- (k) By “**participation**” we mean a process through which stakeholders can influence and share control over initiatives, and over the decisions and resources that affect those stakeholders.
- (l) By “**partner organisations**”, we mean:
 - (i) any WWF offices or entities around the world;
 - (ii) third party contractors, sub-contractors and consultants;
 - (iii) personnel (being directors, employees, interns, students on vocational placement, volunteers and independent contractors and consultants of the above),that are involved in our activities and work.
- (m) By “**primary stakeholders**” we mean those whom we seek to support, work with and directly benefit through development initiatives. The women and men, boys and girls, and those with diverse gender identities, who are driving, participating and directly affected by our initiatives. They may also be known as beneficiaries, local communities, or local people.
- (n) By “**sustainable development**” we mean meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- (o) By “**vulnerable individual**” we mean a person who is often marginalised or particularly vulnerable to infringements of their rights because of their membership of a particular group or another reason. This includes any child or individual who is or may be unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background.

4.2 Responsibilities

- (a) **Policy Approver:** accountable for approving this policy, including approving after formal reviews.
- (b) **Policy Owner:**



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- (i) accountable to the Policy Approver for overseeing the implementation and overall compliance with this policy;
 - (ii) ensures this policy is regularly reviewed (at least every three years or earlier if warranted); and
 - (iii) delegates the implementation, training, maintenance and monitoring of this policy to the Policy Lead.
- (c) **Executive team:** responsible for role modelling behaviour consistent with this policy.
- (d) **Policy Lead:**
- (i) responsible for the implementation, maintenance and monitoring of the policy at an organisational level, including through appropriate procedures, training and reporting;
 - (ii) supports the Policy Owner to review this policy; and
 - (iii) manages risk and compliance issues related to this policy.
- (e) **All of our personnel:** must be familiar with, comply with and implement this policy, and manage risks of breaching this policy.
- (f) Detailed responsibilities can be found in our Policy Lifecycle Stages, Roles and Responsibilities (see Annexure A to the Policy Governance Framework).

4.3 Partner Organisations

We will require our partner organisations to immediately disclose to us any risk that may constitute a violation of this policy or prevent its implementation in relation to our activities or work and outline the steps they propose to take to resolve or otherwise deal with the risk.

5 Availability of this policy

We will ensure that this policy is available to download on our website and intranet.

6 Relevant laws

- (a) *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
- (b) *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth)* and *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulations 2013 (Cth)*, in particular ACNC External Conduct Standard 3 (s 50.30 of the above Regulations).
- (c) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
- (d) *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- (e) *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*



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7 Related policies

- (a) Code of Ethical Conduct
- (b) Workplace Gender Policy
- (c) Complaints Handling Policy
- (d) Speak Up Policy

8 Revision History

Action:	Approver Name:	Title:	Signed:	Date:
Approval and adoption of policy by the Policy Approver	Board of Directors			27 Aug 2024
Revision				