

Annual Review

2024-25

To protect, restore and sustain nature in Australia.



**Wilderness
Society**

Life. Support.

Welcome

This year, people across Australia proved that persistence protects nature.

From the red dunes of Munga-Thirri to the forests of Lutruwita / Tasmania, supporters, campaigners and communities defended places, challenged laws, and exposed destruction that can no longer be ignored. Together, we made real change: leases were cancelled, forests were saved, and governments were held to account.

Convenor's message

In the dedications section of Bob Brown's latest book, 'Defiance', is an inspiring quote from Howard Zinn, 'Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience...'

It reminded me very much about what the Wilderness Society does and why we exist.

Just like Howard Zinn, we often view protest beyond the law as essential for a functioning democracy—not a departure from it—and that it is people's obedience and their complicit agreement to destructive actions that is the core issue.

I cannot think of any other sector that highlights this more than ours.

It often seems like a lone voice to speak up for nature and to champion the right of wild places to exist—not for our benefit—but because of its own inherent value. And, given all we know, it seems insane today to watch the pace of destruction quicken; wrought by continually extractive practices and wielded by the actions of a tiny few.

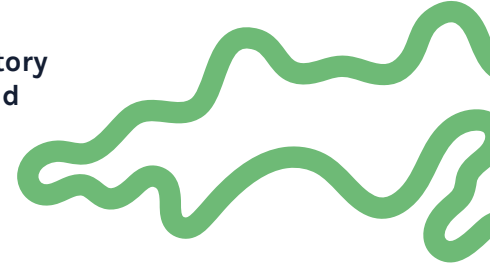
How and why does this happen?

This is why each and every Member, supporter and donor is so vital to all our work. Whether as a volunteer, regular giver, donor or as someone who has made the most profound commitment of all, as a bequestor—you are the engine that inspires us. You are the eyewitness and you are the voice that says, 'enough is enough'.

It wasn't easy. Political will wavered. Industry pressure intensified. But people power held strong, showing that when communities act, systems move.

This Annual Review is a record of that strength. It's a thank you to everyone who showed up, gave time, donated, shared, questioned, or refused to look away.

These pages tell a story you helped write, and the one we'll keep writing, together.



In the past year, you have helped us achieve:

- a very significant win in defence of threatened species;
- the creation of NSW's Great Koala National Park;
- winning a landmark legal case against Forestry Tasmania and the protection of 39,000ha of Lutruwita / Tasmania's forests;
- sustained pressure on big supermarkets to act on deforestation;
- the delivery in Victoria of three new national parks; and
- the rejuvenation and re-opening of our spiritual home, 130 Davey Street, Nipaluna / Hobart.

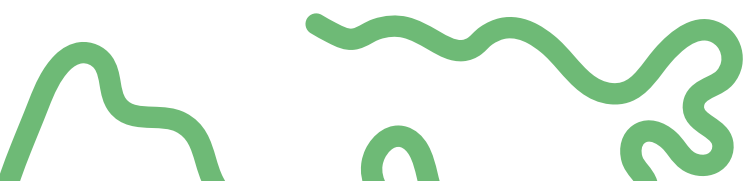
All these achievements are directly because supporters like you believe in a different story to what the status quo says.

On behalf of the Board, I'd like to commend Matt and the entire team at the Wilderness Society, and thank my fellow Directors for their wisdom and bravery. I'd also like to make a very special thank you to Amelia Young, our former National Campaigns Director, who dedicated decades to serve and delivered such a wide range of campaign wins during her time—thank you.

We are indeed living in interesting and intense times. But, as I reflect on our origin story, it was similarly interesting, intense and crazy back then. Rather than be overwhelmed by the pace of an ever changing world, we should focus on the kinds of things that don't change, such as the inspiring beliefs of an idealistic few.

We are needed more than ever, and I'd like to thank you for being there and for your continued support.

Karl Tischler
Convenor,
The Wilderness Society Ltd



CEO's message

This has been a year defined by courage and persistence—the two qualities that have always shaped this movement. Across deserts, forests and coasts, we've seen what happens when thousands of people act together with focus and resolve. From defending the Channel Country and Lutruwita / Tasmania's forests, to holding governments and corporations to account in courtrooms and boardrooms, this year has reminded us that protection is possible, and that progress comes from patience and persistence working hand in hand.

As an organisation, we've shifted from reaction to rhythm. We're no longer only responding to threats; we're setting the tempo for change. Our campaigners and staff have held their focus through political volatility and policy drift, ensuring that nature remains firmly on the national agenda. We've strengthened our strategic foundations—linking protection, accountability and people power in a way that makes change both durable and democratic. That means coupling community mobilisation with legal action, science with storytelling, and advocacy with the vigilance of citizen monitoring through tools like *Watch on Nature*. It's a strategy that sees every campaign as part of one purpose: transforming how Australia protects, respects and restores the living systems that sustain us.

Next year, the Wilderness Society turns fifty. It's not just a milestone—it's a moment to recommit. The landscapes we defend and the laws we seek to reform won't be secured in a single term of government or one burst of public attention. They will endure only through collective, long-term effort. That's why we continue to build a movement capable of lasting beyond any campaign cycle: a society of people who know that protecting nature is not a one-off act, but a shared rhythm that keeps life possible.

Thank you to every Member, donor, volunteer and partner who has stood with us. The work ahead is complex, but we know how to do it—together, with persistence, creativity and courage.

Matt Brennan
CEO,
The Wilderness Society Ltd



Farewell Amelia

After more than two decades with the Wilderness Society—and six years as National Campaigns Director—Amelia Young concluded her time with the Wilderness Society in 2025. Her leadership helped deliver landmark conservation outcomes across forests, rivers, oceans and cultural landscapes, strengthened partnerships with First Nations communities, and built new tools and strategies that continue to shape our work today. Amelia's commitment, clarity and courage have left a lasting legacy on the Wilderness Society and the movement for nature.

The wild places we defended

Across deserts, forests and coasts, we worked to defend the places that hold life together.

From the red dunes of Munga-Thirri to the cool mountain ash forests of Victoria and the ancient jarrah of Western Australia, our campaigns combined science, community and persistence to keep ecosystems intact. Each win—large or small—proved that protecting nature is both possible and powerful when people stand together for Country.

Desert defended: Munga-Thirri protected for good

This year the South Australian government formally cancelled oil and gas exploration leases across the 3.6-million-hectare Munga-Thirri / Simpson Desert National Park. It's the culmination of a long campaign to make sure Australia's largest national park is protected in practice, not just on paper. Together with partners and tens of thousands of supporters, we secured election commitments to retire the leases, kept public pressure on through billboards across Adelaide, and flooded decision-makers with messages urging them to honour their word. The result: the world's longest parallel sand dunes, the desert's ephemeral wetlands, and the cultural heritage of First Nations custodians are now safe from fossil fuel expansion.



Munga-Thirri - Simpson desert / Bill Doyle



Jarrah forests / Lewis Burnett

Jarrah forests: Strength in every tree pose

When the federal environment minister approved South32's plan to expand bauxite mining through the Northern Jarrah Forest—ignoring scientific advice and widespread public opposition—we made sure the decision didn't pass quietly. Alongside the WA Forest Alliance, we exposed the risks of opening thousands of hectares of irreplaceable forest to mining by South32 and Alcoa. Hundreds of submissions, coordinated community pressure and national media coverage kept the story in the public eye. In March, more than 460 people gathered in Kalamunda and online to break the world record for the most people holding tree pose—a show of strength and solidarity for these ancient forests and their Noongar Custodians. Together, we're standing firm for the jarrah and all it sustains.

A new era for Victoria's forests

This year marked a major turning point for Victoria's forests, with the state's five Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) finally terminated—ending decades of destructive logging deals between state and federal governments. The Wilderness Society has worked for years to reach this milestone, advocating through every consultation and keeping public attention on the damage these outdated agreements caused to forests and wildlife. When the government began “modernising” the RFAs in 2018, our campaigners pushed for stronger protections and mobilised supporters to make the community's views impossible to ignore. With the RFAs gone, Victoria now has a historic opportunity to protect, respect and restore forest Country—through lasting safeguards like the proposed Great Forest National Park in the Central Highlands and the Emerald Link along East Gippsland's forested coast.

Citizen science saves Tasmania's forests

In December, mapping analysis revealed that more than 39,000 hectares of Tasmania's protected native forests—some of the island's most biodiverse landscapes—had been earmarked for potential logging under a proposed government reclassification. The Wilderness Society's campaigners and volunteer citizen scientists, using *Watch on Nature* and on-ground surveys, helped expose the scale of the threat, showing that even reserved and conservation land was at risk. The public response was immediate, with national coverage and strong community pressure forcing the Tasmanian Government to take notice.

Critical Update: Victory for Tasmania's forest reserves (August 2025) After strong public pressure and expert analysis from citizen scientists and conservation groups, the Tasmanian Liberal government announced that its plans to open protected forests for logging would not proceed. The Wilderness Society welcomed the decision as a win for transparency, science and Tasmania's unique wild places.



Coast clear: A victory for communities and the sea

The federal government's decision to reject the Petroleum Exploration Permit 11 (PEP 11) brought long-awaited relief for NSW coastal communities from Newcastle to the Central Coast, who have fought for years to keep methane gas drilling out of their waters. The Wilderness Society stood alongside local groups, surfers, Traditional Owners and residents to oppose the project, raising the alarm on the environmental and climate risks, and calling for the end of offshore oil and gas exploration in Australian waters. This victory proves the power of persistent, community-led advocacy to protect the ocean and the coastal way of life it supports, and strengthens the case for a permanent ban on offshore drilling across the continent.

The systems we challenged

Protecting nature at scale means fixing the systems that keep destroying it. This year we took governments and corporations to task—from the Federal Court to the boardroom floor. We exposed regulatory failure, fought for stronger laws and showed that public accountability works. Through legal action, policy advocacy and citizen monitoring, we pushed for lasting change in how Australia governs, values and safeguards its natural world.

Offshore clean-up, not cover-up

This year, we kept pressure on Australia's offshore oil and gas regulator, NOPSEMA, to hold major companies accountable for cleaning up their industrial waste in the ocean. The Wilderness Society exposed plans by ExxonMobil and Woodside to abandon massive steel structures in the Bass Strait. We shone a spotlight on repeated spills and regulatory loopholes, and made the case for mandatory clean-up bonds to protect taxpayers and marine life from the costs of corporate neglect. Together with partners, we released expert legal advice confirming that leaving this waste behind could breach international law—raising the bar for environmental accountability offshore and pushing for clear, enforceable rules that match the scale of the risk.



Greater glider / Justin Cally

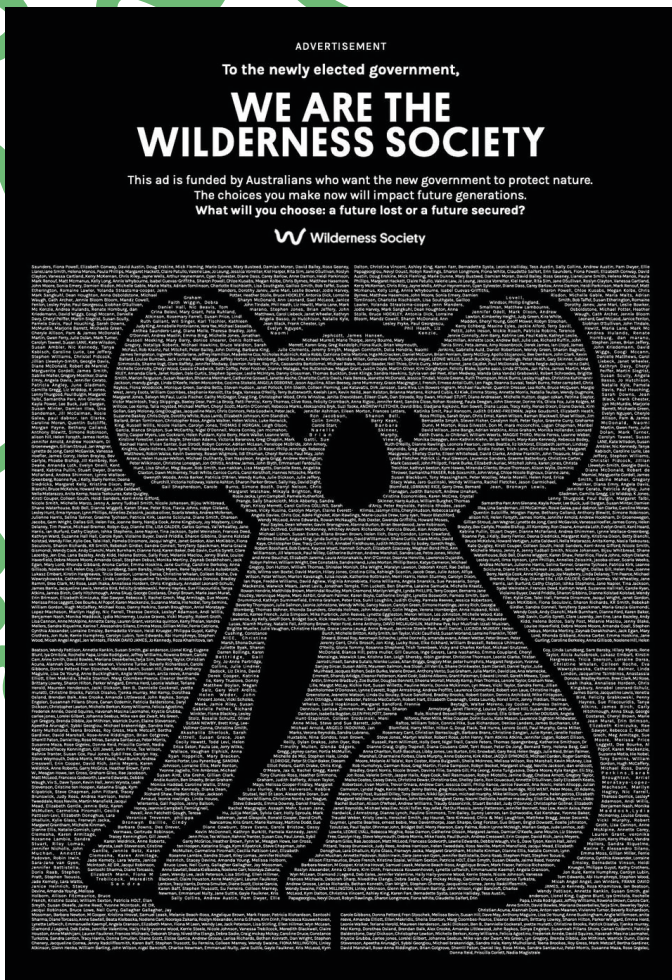
Law in action for threatened species

In March, the Wilderness Society launched a landmark Federal Court case to hold the Environment Minister to account for failing to make legally required recovery plans for threatened species. The case focused on 11 iconic animals, including the greater glider, ghost bat and Australian lungfish, whose survival depends on these plans. With the help of thousands of supporters, we raised more than \$548,000 to take the case forward. It became a national and international story, shining a light on government neglect and the urgent need to uphold nature laws that already exist. Together, we made sure that “must” really means must—that environment ministers, now and in the future, are legally compelled to protect the wildlife they're sworn to defend.

Critical update: We won! A legal victory for nature (September 2025) The Wilderness Society, represented by Environmental Justice Australia, succeeded in this landmark case, forcing the government to acknowledge it had failed to make mandatory recovery plans and to fix the breach. The outcome guarantees protection for hundreds of threatened species and confirms that existing recovery plans must be treated as ongoing, not expired. This win proves what's possible when we refuse to let extinction be a footnote. Australia's unique wildlife is safer because people stood up for it.



James Jones Jr / Shutterstock



Land clearing in Queensland / Wilderness Society



Land clearing in Queensland / Wilderness Society

Nature laws derailed—but not forgotten

In the final parliamentary week of 2024, the Prime Minister personally intervened to derail a deal his own Environment Minister had negotiated—scuttling long-promised “Nature Positive” reforms that could have strengthened Australia’s failing environment laws. The result: no reform before the 2025 federal election.

The weekend after the election, we put a full page ad in the Weekend Australian. The message was simple: Australians expect the new government to do its job—that means protecting the moss carpeted forests, mangroves and bushlands that Aussie wildlife call home.

This ad was funded by you, made up of your names, and made sure to highlight to the next government what we will do together.

If the government continues to fail to do its job to protect Australia’s unique bushlands and wildlife, we will continue to do our job. And that is to expose widespread environmental harm and hold neglectful governments and destructive industries to account.

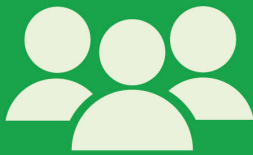
Together, we are the Wilderness Society. And when it comes to nature protection: we don’t back down.

Deforestation off the shelves

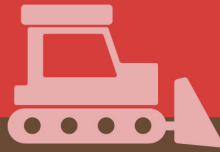
This year, more than 10,000 Wilderness Society supporters called on Coles and Woolworths to take deforestation off their shelves, demanding that everyday products like beef, packaging and timber pallets no longer come from the destruction of forests and bushland. In February, campaigner Adele Chasson delivered your message in person, unrolling a receipt listing every name behind the petition at Coles’ Melbourne headquarters. The pressure only grew from there. Volunteers rallied outside Coles and Woolworths stores and turned up at both companies’ Annual General Meetings, holding boards to account in front of their shareholders. Thanks to persistent, visible public pressure, the message is clear: supermarkets can’t profit from deforestation and still claim to care about nature.

The power we built

Real change is built from the ground up. This year, tens of thousands of people-powered campaigns exposed environmental destruction, defended Country and strengthened democracy. From volunteers using *Watch on Nature* to uncover hidden deforestation, to supporters challenging corporations in boardrooms and communities standing alongside Traditional Owners, people are shaping what protection looks like in practice. These stories capture the heart of that collective effort: connection, creativity and courage in defence of the wild.



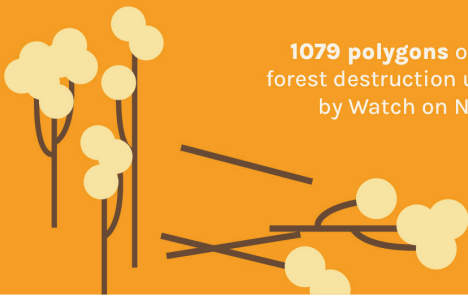
70,000 actions from
44,000 unique participants



11 referrals of potentially illegal
deforestation made to the
federal government



1500 media mentions



1079 polygons of native
forest destruction uncovered
by *Watch on Nature*



30 government
submissions made

Grounded in Country

We acknowledge that we work on First Nations Country that has never been ceded nor settled by Treaty. Our efforts reflect our commitment to be better allies. Across forests, deserts, rivers and coasts, our work continues to be guided by First Nations leadership and connection to Country. In the Kimberley, we supported the Martuwarra River Keepers in their efforts to protect the life-giving Martuwarra / Fitzroy River system. Along the Great Australian Bight, we stood with the Mirning people, whose enduring custodianship of Sea Country anchors the campaign to keep the Bight free from industrial exploitation. In Lutruwita / Tasmania, we joined Uncle Jim Everett and community members on the Bridge of Remembrance to reaffirm solidarity and shared responsibility for Country. Through *Watch on Nature*, we've also collaborated with Traditional Owners in the Northern Territory to monitor land clearing across the savanna, supporting local ranger groups with tools to defend Country in real time. These relationships—built on respect, consent and care—continue to shape how we campaign and how we listen.

Watch on Nature: citizens exposing deforestation

Watch on Nature, our people-powered deforestation monitoring platform, has become a national force for accountability—winning the 2025 Oceania Geospatial Excellence Award for Environment and Sustainability. Powered by thousands of volunteers and donors, the program uses satellite imagery, drones and on-ground verification to expose land clearing that corporations and governments would rather keep hidden. This year, drone missions across Queensland and Western Australia captured footage of bulldozers clearing bushland for beef and bauxite mining, footage viewed more than 350,000 times online and used to pressure decision-makers. In the Northern Territory, *Watch on Nature* uncovered more than 8,000 hectares of potentially unlawful deforestation in the Sturt Plateau savanna, habitat for the endangered Gouldian finch. Each discovery proves the same point: when destruction is visible, it becomes possible to stop.

Stories that grow defenders of nature

In 2024 we celebrated the Wilderness Society's *Environment Award for Children's Literature* 30th anniversary winners. The occasion marked three decades of recognising stories that help young Australians see, love and protect the natural world. What began in 1994 as a small celebration of nature writing has become a cornerstone of how we grow connection and care across generations.

We also proudly awarded the Karajia Award for Children's Literature, which honours First Nations authors and illustrators sharing stories of Country, culture and kinship. Together, these awards celebrate storytelling as both cultural heritage and strategy. Lasting protection for nature begins with the stories that shape how we see it.

2024 Award Winners Environment Award for Children's Literature

- *Fiction: The Littlest Penguin: and the Phillip Island Penguin Parade*
– The Penguin Foundation / Jedda Robaard
- *Non-fiction: The Trees*
– Victor Steffensen / Sandra Steffensen
- *Picture Fiction: Hope is the Thing*
– Johanna Bell / Erica Wagner

Karajia Award for Children's Literature

- *Picture Fiction: Nedingar: Ancestors*
– Isobel Bevis / Leanne Zilm
- *Non-fiction: In My Blood It Runs*
– Djujan Hoosan / Margaret Anderson / Carol Turner / Blak Douglas

In 2025, the awards entered their 31st year, shortlisting 23 remarkable children's books that celebrate the wonder of nature. Winners will be announced during Nature Book Week.

Twenty years on: Remembering the Gunns 20

Twenty years ago, woodchipping giant Gunns Limited filed a \$6.3 million lawsuit against 17 individuals and three conservation organisations—including the Wilderness Society—for their efforts to protect Lutruwita / Tasmania's old growth forests. The so-called *Gunns 20* case became a defining moment in Australia's environment movement: five years of relentless legal defence, solidarity and public resolve that ultimately saw the company's claims collapse. Two decades on, we honoured that courage and the right to protest it helped defend—renewing our call for strong anti-SLAPP protections so communities can keep speaking up for nature without fear of reprisal.



Looking ahead

The year ahead will ask us to be as steady as we are strong.

We'll keep testing the law and holding power to account, from the courts to the boardroom floor. Bigger challenges with the corporations driving deforestation and delay are on the horizon. We'll keep showing that accountability isn't optional when nature is on the line.

As the Wilderness Society turns fifty, we'll take a moment to celebrate what endurance looks like: five decades of people refusing to give up on wild places, truth or courage. But celebration doesn't mean slowing down. It means doubling down: on purpose, on persistence, and on the belief that change is still possible, because it always has been.

Thank you for being part of it.

Financials

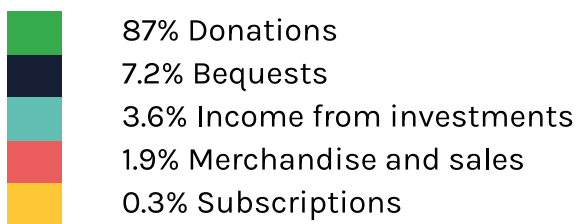
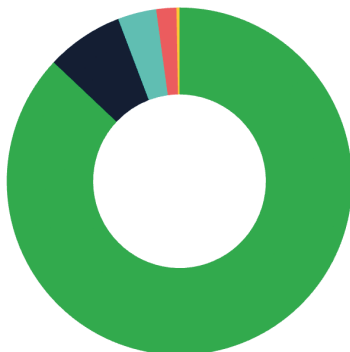
For the 2024/2025 financial year, the Wilderness Society delivered an operating deficit of \$259,310 (compared with a \$1,302,944 deficit in 2023/2024). The smaller deficit reflects disciplined financial management during a year of sustained investment in campaigns and organisational capacity. Expenditure on environmental programs and advocacy remained the organisation's key priority, while prudent oversight kept costs stable in a high-inflation environment.

Like many charities, the organisation continued to navigate challenging conditions for fundraising and donor acquisition. Despite this, a strong equity position and healthy reserves provide confidence for the year ahead. Careful budgeting, combined with responsible governance and oversight by the Board, ensures the Wilderness Society remains well-positioned to keep investing in its purpose: protecting, promoting and restoring Australia's wild nature.

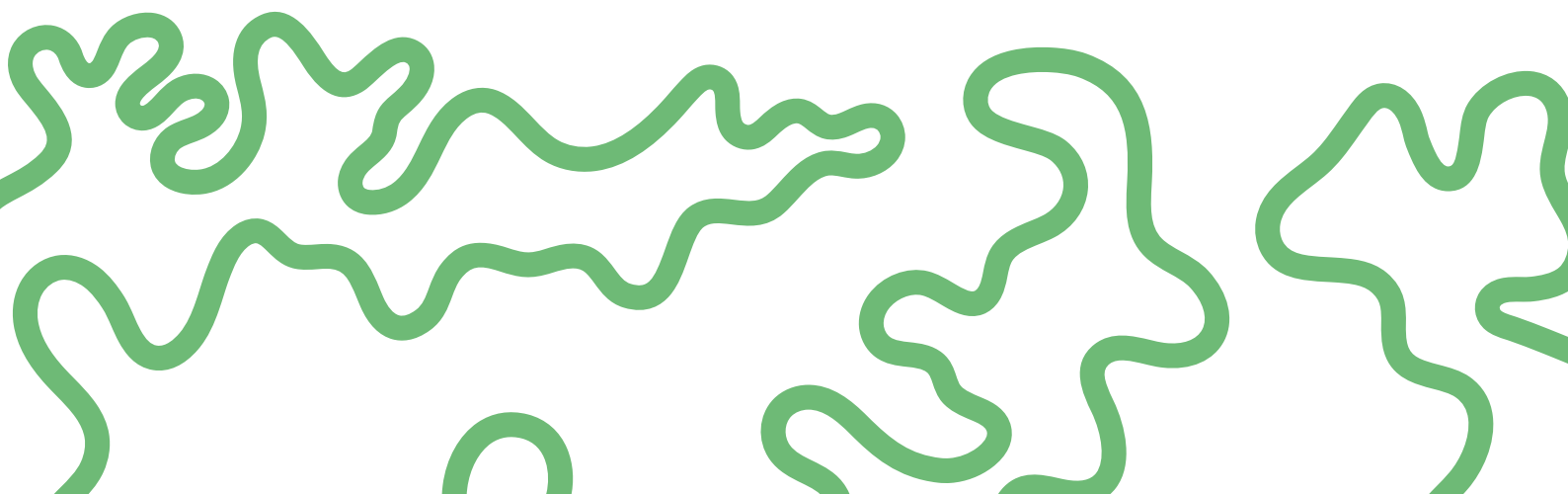
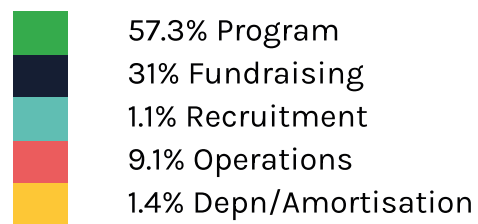
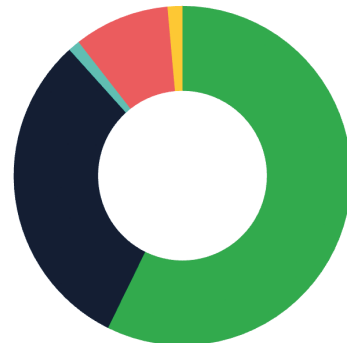
This financial information is extracted from the full consolidated financial report for the year ended 30 June 2025, which can be accessed at wilderness.org.au/about/reports-and-financials

Matt Brennan
CEO, The Wilderness Society Ltd

Revenue



Expenditure



Financial results

(for the year ended 30 June 2025)

	2025	2024
Income from fundraising, donations, bequests and grants	\$ 10,603,212	\$ 10,903,403
Investment and other non-operating income	\$ 397,693	\$ 421,299
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 11,000,905	\$ 11,324,702
LESS: EXPENSES		
Environmental campaigns and programs	\$ 6,449,332	\$ 6,194,728
Recruitment of new supporters	\$ 127,024	\$ 1,713,015
Fundraising expenses - staff, appeals, supporter and costs	\$ 3,494,282	\$ 3,240,442
Governance, finance and operations	\$ 1,028,639	\$ 1,250,630
Depreciation and amortisation	\$ 160,938	\$ 228,828
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 11,260,215	\$ 12,627,643
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	(\$ 259,310)	(\$ 1,302,941)
Other comprehensive income	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	(\$ 259,310)	(\$ 1,302,941)

Financial position

(for the year ended 30 June 2025)

	2025	2024
Total Assets	\$ 9,902,338	\$ 10,704,288
Less: Total Liabilities	\$ 2,114,547	\$ 2,657,188
NET ASSETS	\$ 7,787,791	\$ 8,047,100
Accumulated Surpluses	\$ 887,669	\$ 641,940
Reserves	\$ 6,430,593	\$ 6,926,031
Non-controlling interest accum. surpluses	\$ 469,529	\$ 479,130
TOTAL EQUITY	\$ 7,787,791	\$ 8,047,100

