

Environmental role – a natural fit



Barry Traill

Course graduated from: BSc majoring in Zoology

Year of graduation: 1984

Job: Director Pew Environment Group – Australia

Career: Conservation advocate in environmental groups including the Wilderness Society.

Reflection: “Most conservation and environmental problems require quality science to frame them, but in most cases social and political change is required to fix them.”

“I think I’ve added value for conservation by doing advocacy rather than pure research.”

When the global Pew Environment Group wanted to spread its operations to Australia in 2007 they knew exactly who to head hunt as the new director.

Barry Traill was a high-profile environmental campaigner, a professional who’d notched some impressive results in his 25 years in the field.

Traill knew he wanted to become an environmental campaigner early in life. He’d always been interested in wildlife as a boy growing up in Gippsland.

“And because I was interested in it, I became interested in looking after it and conserving it,” he says.

First conservation campaign at 17

At the age of 13, Traill resolved to study zoology at university. At 17 he was involved in his first conservation campaign to protect some bush adjacent to his hometown Morwell. “It failed!”

Traill started at Monash in 1982 following a year spent cycling around Australia compiling records for the nation’s first bird atlas. He deferred later for a year to

do voluntary conservation work in Western Australia and New Guinea.

His first environmental win came in 1986 whilst at Monash, saving old growth forest in South Gippsland.

Traill completed his PhD into nectar-feeding birds at Monash in 1996 after nine years, supporting himself as he studied with contract work doing biological surveys.

“I loved doing scientific research,” he says, “but I think I’ve added value for conservation by doing advocacy rather than pure research.”

He has worked for several environmental organisations, including the Wilderness Society for seven years, and has co-led some of the country’s most successful conservation campaigns.

Traill is particularly proud that he helped get legislation introduced in 2004 to curb tree clearing in Queensland, which was being carried out at “Amazonian rates”.

He has continued the wins with the Pew group. Pew was part of an alliance of organisations that celebrated the announcement last year of a new marine park

network around Australia – the world’s largest.

Creation of marine park a victory

Traill says the recent creation of the Great Kimberley Marine Park, protecting the humpback whale breeding areas, was another triumph.

The organisation is supporting a grassroots movement by Aboriginal people to spread indigenous stewardship over vast outback areas.

“There are huge areas of emptiness in outback country – it’s emptier now than it has been for 50,000 years – without the management which is needed to control fires, and control feral animals and noxious weeds.”

Traill works from his home in rainforest in the Sunshine Coast hinterland when he’s not on field trips to some of Australia’s most spectacular wilderness areas, “one of the great things about work!”

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