



# Peter Owen

## 2016 Environmentalist of the Year

**Peter Owen is Director at The Wilderness Society in South Australia. Over the past decade, he has been instrumental in the protection of vast areas of land and seascape including the Nullarbor Plain, South Australia's Offshore Islands, the Arkaroola Mountains, the Mawson Plateau and the declaration of the State's 19 marine parks – Australia's first representative marine park network outside of the Great Barrier Reef.**

Peter and his partner Lisa have two children, Audrey 4 and Hugh 2.

Peter studied at the University of Adelaide, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (1992) Graduate Diploma of Environment Studies (1998) and Bachelor of Law in (2002). He worked as a lawyer at the Environmental Defenders Office SA from 2002-03 and then as a Campaigner at the Conservation Council of SA from 2003-05.

From 2005-14 Peter was the Campaign Manager at the Wilderness Society SA before becoming the Director of The Wilderness Society SA in 2014, a position he continues to hold.

Since 2005, as Campaign Manager, and then Director, of The Wilderness Society SA, Peter has spearheaded some remarkable gains for the South Australia's environment.

In 2005, The Wilderness Society SA launched a campaign to protect the iconic Nullarbor Plain under the *South Australian Wilderness Protection Act 1992*. In 2013, over 900,000ha of the Nullarbor Plain was proclaimed a Wilderness Protection Area, the size of Yellowstone National Park in the US. The spectacular Bunda Cliffs and the intricate cave systems are protected within the area, and when connected to the Great Australian Bight Marine Reserve, creates a land and sea conservation estate of global importance.

Also in 2005, The Wilderness Society SA launched the campaign for marine protected areas in South Australia. In 2007, the South Australian Marine Parks Act 2007 passed the Parliament and then in 2009, the outer boundaries of 19 marine parks covering 44% of state waters were proclaimed by the South Australian Government. Finally, in 2014, zoning plans for each of the marine parks passed both Houses of the SA Parliament, creating highly protected sanctuary zones.

Thanks to pressure from the Wilderness Society SA, in 2011, South Australia's Offshore Islands were proclaimed wilderness protection areas under the *South Australian Wilderness Protection Act 1992*.

Some of the most important marine sanctuaries connect with the Offshore Island wilderness protection areas. The Pearson Islands Group Sanctuary, within the Investigator Marine Park and The Isles of St Francis Sanctuary, within the Nuyts Archipelago Marine Park, are considered the 'jewels in the crown' of South Australia's marine parks network. Connected to the Offshore Island wilderness protection areas, they create land and sea conservation estates of incredible significance: Australia's Galapagos!

In 2011 Peter won South Australia's top two Environment Awards.

He was named South Australian of the Year in the Environment Category for a list of remarkable achievements including the protection of the Nullarbor Plain, South Australia's Offshore Islands, the Arkaroola Mountains, the Mawson Plateau and the declaration of the State's 19 Marine Parks.

He also won the Conservation Council's annual Jill Hudson Award for Environmental Protection in recognition of his role in the protection of vast areas of land and seascape across South Australia, often under extremely difficult circumstances.

This was the first time both the State and Community Environment Awards have gone to the same person.

In 2013, Peter started work on a campaign to stop BP and other 'big oil' companies pushing to expand the fossil fuel industry into the Great Australian Bight, putting at risk one of the planet's most significant wilderness areas and a liveable climate.

Much of the recently proclaimed conservation estate across the Bight, including the Nullarbor and Offshore Island wilderness protection areas and the extensive marine parks network would be devastated by an oil spill disaster.

In January 2016 Peter was instrumental in establishing the Great Australian Bight Alliance to create a platform for people and organisations to stand together against fossil fuel mining in the Bight. The Alliance is growing quickly and the campaign is fast becoming an international issue.

Peter Owen is available for interview on 0423 550 018

<https://www.wilderness.org.au/articles/petes-journal>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/peter-owen-7b4b6032>

<https://www.wilderness.org.au/articles/wild-profile-peter-owen>