

# **AWAY FROM CONFLICT: A NEW PARADIGM FOR INDUSTRY, REGIONAL COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND TRADITIONAL OWNERS TO LOOK AFTER THE GREAT WESTERN WOODLANDS**

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## **Abstract**

The Great Western Woodlands of southwestern Australia is the largest remaining 'Temperate' woodland and shrubland on Earth. It is almost three times the size of Tasmania, and home to an extraordinary diversity of species including more than 3000 species of plant and hundreds of animal species, many of which are endangered. This region has deep cultural value for its Traditional Owners, as well as a significant mining sector which includes more than 40 operating mines and 100s of exploration tenements. The increasing recognition that the Great Western Woodlands extraordinary natural values are threatened by a range of factors including inappropriate fire regimes, climate change, weeds and feral animals and ad hoc planning means the future management of the region is at a critical stage. On one hand, we have the capacity to go down the well-trodden road which ends in significant tension between different stakeholders (i.e., where industry and 'environmentalists' attempt to lock each other out of parts of the region). On the other hand, we have the capacity to create a new paradigm for industry, regional communities and conservation, one that not only looks after the region's significant natural values, but also looks after the people who live and work in the region, including Traditional Owners. The aim of this talk is to outline why a new holistic approach for the Great Western Woodlands is necessary, how this could happen, and why this is a positive outcome for the regions' many stakeholders.

## **Biography**

Dr Alexander Watson is the Outback Conservation Manager for The Wilderness Society. He currently works as the Great Western Woodlands campaign manager to ensure the region is appropriately managed on the basis of good science and through listening to people who live and work in the region. An ecologist by training, Alexander conducted his PhD research in forest ecology, and has worked on conservation related campaigns including Albatross protection in New South Wales and better forest management in Canada.