

Policy Survey: 2023 climate and nature policy priorities for NSW

27 February 2023

Over the coming weeks, the Nature Conservation Council, the Total Environment Centre, and our member groups are running candidates' forums and distributing scorecards to assist environmentally conscious voters to understand the policy offerings of candidates and parties.

We take our responsibility to assess and communicate these issues seriously, and we are committed to working constructively to achieve the best outcomes for nature.

We'd appreciate your response to this survey by **Friday 3 March**, and please be in touch if there is any way we can assist you to respond. To make the survey less burdensome, we've limited it to the issues of most prominence for our members this election. If you don't have capacity to respond in that timeframe, we understand, and are happy to base our analysis on the policy positions on your website and your public comments.

Many thanks,

Jacqui Mumford
Chief Executive,
Nature Conservation Council of NSW

Jeff Angel
Executive Director
Total Environment Centre

HELEN CONWAY

COMMUNITY INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FOR NORTH SHORE

Climate and Energy

Policy detail	Response
1) Set science-based greenhouse emissions targets a. Ensure greenhouse emissions targets, and progress toward those targets, are assessed through an independent review process that has regard to Paris	I support the legislation of faster emissions reductions targets, with clear planning for all sectors of the economy and transparent reporting on progress.

<p>Agreement aligned temperature goals and emissions reduction scenarios.</p>	<p>I support <u>at least</u> a 60% Emissions Reduction Target (ERT) by 2030, 80% by 2035, and Net Zero by 2040. I am committed to ensuring a safe climate for ourselves, and our future generations with policy driven by science and the Paris Agreement</p> <p>It is essential that legislation provides for built-in monitoring and accountability. For example, regular reporting to Parliament and a Climate Change Joint Parliamentary Committee would strengthen monitoring, reporting and public confidence.</p> <p>I am committed to stopping new fossil fuel projects, and accelerating the transition of our economy away from fossil fuel exports to green industries including critical minerals and rare earth mining, and value added manufacturing.</p>
<p>2) Continue and accelerate the transition to 100% clean energy by 2030.</p>	<p>I am committed to an acceleration of investment in renewable energy projects and transmission infrastructure, so that we move to a high penetration of renewable energy as quickly as possible.</p>
<p>3) Address the cost-of-living crisis by implementing household energy efficiency package, including minimum efficiency standards for rental properties, solar on community and public housing, and additional rebates to help more households to get off gas and improve the efficiency of their home and appliances.</p>	<p>To electrify everything encouraging and supporting households to take up renewable energy sources of energy is a logical step. It is important this is done in an equitable way, that recognises the challenges of different socioeconomic groups, tenure and dwelling types. For example, the strata sector needs tailored assistance that recognises additional challenges.</p>
<p>4) Develop a gas decarbonisation roadmap</p>	<p>The Sustainability SEPP retains gas as a possible energy source for new developments, and this needs to change.</p> <p>I support the development of a gas substitution roadmap for NSW.</p>

5) Implement an offshore wind strategy for NSW	NSW is progressing onshore wind farms subject to considerations of environment and social impacts. However, there is an opportunity for NSW to work with the Federal Government to develop an offshore wind strategy, including offshore wind targets for NSW. This is currently a gap in NSW energy transition plans. Offshore wind offers opportunities to accelerate the transition to renewable energy.
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Koalas

Policy detail	Response
<p>1) Protect koala habitat by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Transferring core koala habitat to national parks, including the Great Koala National Park proposal (175,000 ha), the Sandy Creek Koala Park proposal (6988 ha), and the Georges River Koala Park proposal (4000 ha) b. Protecting the Sydney Koala Greenbelt c. Imposing stricter controls on land clearing including for urban development, throughout the Sydney Basin Bioregion d. Complete mapping of koala habitat by the end of 2023 e. Mandate the making of Koala Plans of Management to be gazetted by 2024 	<p>This is the critical decade to address climate change and biodiversity loss.</p> <p>The increase in land clearing, infrastructure construction and residential urban sprawl is now destroying habitat even of threatened and endangered species, including the Koala. Political compromises and deal making has left NSW with fragmented ineffective frameworks that cannot deliver biodiversity protection. Transferring key koala habitat to national parks, and creating a green belt supported with good mapping data would be some of the most effective steps that can be taken toward reversing the decline of this endangered species.</p> <p>Reviewing and strengthening laws on land clearing and planning and development should be a high priority in the next term of Parliament. Better resourcing to map koala populations, and plans of management are a prerequisite to evidence based policy and decision making. I would support additional resources to be allocated to Local Councils to develop and implement Plans.</p>
2) Maintain, expand and restore linking corridors by mandating minimum 250 m wide with average of 425m wide corridors through strategic and local plans and planning policies generally.	Yes.

<p>3) Remove development loopholes (ie. discretions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gazette an environmental veto (koala gateway) for koala habitat on all development applications, including state significant development by bolstering safeguards in assessment and determination processes. b. Address ongoing concerns with the operation and implementation of the Koala SEPP. c. Strengthening the 'serious and irreversible impacts' mechanism. 	Yes.
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3. Habitat protection and biodiversity

Policy detail	Response
<p>1) End native forest logging and transition NSW timber supply to 100% sustainable plantations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assess, value and maximise the role our public native forests play in reducing emissions and storing carbon dioxide. 	<p>There needs to be a planned transition away from reliance on logging native forest combined with adequate protection of native forest on private land. NSW has reached a turning point with the Black Summer Fires, and demonstrable impacts of climate change. Logging native forest increases fire risk and intensity. The use of native forest for co-burning as a renewable energy needs to cease before it becomes established. NSW needs to include recognition of native forest for carbon storage over the long term and provide structural adjustment and support where it is needed.</p>
<p>2) Reduce rates of land clearing to below pre-2016 levels</p>	<p>I am aware that the rate of land clearing has doubled since the government weakened environmental laws in 2017.</p> <p>The NSW Government must act to both protect against the destruction of wildlife habitat, and act to restore our biodiversity, by limiting the use of self-assessable codes for land clearing under the Biodiversity Conservation Act and the Local Land Services Act.</p>

<p>3) Reform the Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Prevent the use of offsets for development in the habitat of endangered and critically endangered species b. Ensure any future offsets scheme is based on best-practice principles c. Strictly limit offsetting to losses accrued as a result of genuinely essential and unavoidable development impact 	<p>Yes.</p> <p>In principle, I do not support biodiversity offsets for ecological purposes or as a greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategy. Any use of offsets should be strictly limited, supervised and evaluated.</p>
<p>4) Rule out raising the Warragamba dam wall, which would drown 4700 hectares of World Heritage-listed national parks.</p>	<p>The decision to raise the Warragamba Dam wall is reckless and unsustainable and should be rescinded.</p>
<p>5) Achieve the 30-by-30 target by adding 14 million hectares of protected areas by 2030</p>	<p>I support the protection of existing National Parks, and expansion of the National Park estate. National parks and reserve areas are the most effective way we have of ensuring nature is protected for future generations.</p> <p>Currently in NSW, 7.6 million hectares of land occurs in the National Reserve System (NRS), equivalent to just 9.6% of the total land area. Moreover, more than 60% of ecosystems have less than 15% of their area protected. This positions NSW as the second worst performing state in Australia on protected and conserved areas.</p> <p>Achieving significant progress towards protecting 30% of NSW would require not just a significant expansion of legal protection, but also revegetation and rewilding of millions of hectares of long-cleared lands. This would require significant investment from both state and federal governments.</p>

5. Waste and recycling (with Boomerang Alliance)

Policy detail	Response
1) Ban more single-use plastics.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Urgently review the Plastic Action Plan in 2023 and announce a new strategy, consistent with other advanced jurisdictions and targeting new single use items and including problem plastics in other key polluting sectors b. Incorporate reusable products and practices into the solutions agenda. c. Ban single-use foodware for dine-in at all food outlets d. Ban heavier plastic bags and adopt a reusables standard as proposed by the Boomerang Alliance. 	<p>I am very concerned that Australians generate more single-use plastic waste per capita than any other country in the world, and 4 times the global average.</p> <p>The NSW Plastics Plan has pushed back the second tranche of potential bans to 2025. This is limiting the impact of NSW's plastic reduction agenda. I would support an acceleration of the timeframe for reviewing products slated for potential bans - and extend this to a wider range of items to ensure NSW is aligned with the leading jurisdictions on single-use plastic bans such as WA and SA. This would incorporate items including heavyweight plastic bags, fruit and veggie produce bags, plastic lids and cups, coffee cups containing plastic, and plastic takeaway containers. I would also support a ban on the release of all balloons, which recognises that the release of balloons is littering, along with penalties for non-compliance. NSW has been a laggard on single use plastics. We now need a race to the top.</p> <p>We need to phase out problematic plastics and increase funding to create a viable market for recycling of soft plastics. A roadmap for plastic phase out is essential and funding is required to support the circular economy industry.</p> <p>A big part of the problem of plastic waste is the difficulty of reusing many types of plastics as the feedstock for new products.</p> <p>We need stronger incentives to reduce plastic in manufacturing and design. We need standards and legislation which work towards minimising the use of plastic where possible, while ensuring old plastics can be turned into new products rather than turning into waste.</p> <p>All the heavy lifting to date has been done at the consumer level. Whilst consumers have a role to play in the adoption of reusable plastic-alternatives (like reusable coffee cups), we need to enforce change at the industry level.</p>
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	<p>I support the development of a reusable standard for shopping bags, like the one proposed by the Boomerang Alliance.</p>
<p>2) Regulate packaging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure the Packaging Targets will be met and reject attempts by the packaging industry to use the voluntary approach. NSW should introduce its own mandatory product stewardship regulations if national arrangements are not forthcoming in 2023. b. Strengthen the Waste Strategy to mandate recycled content in products purchased by the government and for producers generally. c. Continue the Recycling Modernisation Fund 	<p>In 2018, Australia established national packaging “targets” for 2025, supported by the packaging industry and national government. These targets suggest that by 2025 all of our packaging should be able to be reused, recycled or composted, and 70% of plastic packaging should be recycled or composted. However, these are merely targets - they are not mandatory rules with an enforceable penalty. And in the three years since the targets were introduced, the percentages of plastic products being recycled, or the recycled content of plastics, hasn’t changed.</p> <p>It’s clear that we need mandated targets in NSW if we want to ensure real progress towards a circular economy.</p> <p>I support a strengthening of the Waste Strategy to mandate recycled content in products purchased by the government and for producers generally, to the maximum extent possible.</p> <p>I support the continuation of the Recycling Modernisation Fund.</p>
<p>3) Support plastic free programs and microplastic reduction strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide financial support for Plastic Free Places and AUSMAP b. Adopt microplastic reduction strategies 	<p>I am supportive of the work being done by communities and charitable organisations to help reduce single-use plastic packaging and work towards a circular economy.</p> <p>All levels of government have a role to play in providing funding support to organisations who will assist in meeting plastic reduction and sustainability goals.</p>

	I will support evidence based measures which are aimed at reducing the presence of microplastics in the natural environment.
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5. Planning and urban green space

Policy detail	Response
1) Implement the draft Design and Place SEPP, to put net zero strategies at the heart of urban planning, including EV ready apartments; deep soil to retain and plant trees; urban heat mitigation	Strategic planning is the role of Local Council and State Government working together, this should include open space, tree canopy, and climate protected and resilient neighbourhoods. The current Sustainability SEPP can be improved, drawing on earlier work by, for example, ending gas connections to new dwellings. The National Construction Code requires apartments to be EV ready from October 2023 and this should be adopted by NSW.
2) Reinstate the neutral or beneficial effect test on water quality (NorBE) on all developments in the Sydney drinking water catchment, including extensions and expansions.	Yes. I am concerned that the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act), and State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021, have been weakened to allow extensions of existing mines to satisfy water quality tests provided they have no more impact on water than the original development proposal.
3) Create the Sydney Blue-Green Grid identified by the Government Architect, including all remnant bushland of endangered and critically endangered ecological communities.	Yes and involve the Government Architect more closely in development of state planning policies that impact on residential development.
4) Maintain the mature tree canopy on public and private land. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Catalogue parklands and significant trees/canopy in the Sydney metro area b. Make information available digitally, live, and publicly. The quality of open spaces and significant trees/canopy should be measured via connectivity, tree type, 	Yes This is a very worthwhile project.

understory and grass cover and species to create a dashboard to assess the importance and ongoing management of the open space and canopy.	
<p>5) Prohibit the sale of parkland and ensure protection from adjoining developments.</p> <p>a. Establish an Open Space Defenders Office that is independent of government and can challenge rezonings, impacts and sales that are not in the public or environmental interest.</p>	The establishment of public interest law practice would improve access to justice for communities'. Local communities cannot be expected to have the expertise and to navigate the complicated legal frameworks that govern the ownership and control of public land.

6. Rivers and wetlands

Policy detail	Response
1) Commit to achieving the water recovery targets in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan by the legislated deadline of July 2024.	I share concerns about the way the current government has gone about developing floodplain water harvesting rights. I would support steps taken to achieve the deadline for the Murray Darling Basin Plan.
2) Fix the cap on the “drought of record” so that all drought data to the present day is considered in determining water allocations from public dams, including modelled future climate impacts on water availability.	Climate change means rainfall will become more unpredictable but experts advise that this dry continent will get dryer. The allocation of water for the environment and public health and safety during droughts is challenging. Developing more robust data on droughts and water availability is essential to preparing for fair water allocation in periods of emergency.
3) Improve First Nations access to water.	Yes.

7. Oceans

Policy detail	Response
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<p>1) Meet the 30-by-30 target of marine waters in sanctuary zones on a bioregional basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create marine parks, including sanctuary zones, for the Sydney and Eden bioregions. b. Return management of marine parks to the department of environment. c. Reinstate the sanctuary zones that have been cut since 2013. 	<p>Protecting ocean biodiversity is as important as addressing land based biodiversity issues. I fully support the expansion of marine parks, including sanctuary zones to the maximum extent possible.</p>
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