



**BLUE MOUNTAINS
GREENS
LOCAL CLIMATE
ACTION PLAN**

SEPTEMBER 2021

**THE
GREENS**

Blue Mountains Greens Local Climate Action Plan

Our climate has warmed to dangerous levels and the situation is getting worse. It is having an impact on all of us. State and federal governments are failing us – we're running out of time.

This situation has come about after two centuries of industrial development and our economy's reliance on the mining and burning of fossil fuels, producing greenhouse gas emissions.

Our Blue Mountains community has felt the consequences of climate change. In the 2019-20 bushfires 80% of the World Heritage Area was destroyed, with the loss of millions of native animals. Our local government area (LGA) now resembles a thin green strip sandwiched by thousands of hectares of burnt bushland. Climate scientists have linked these megafires with climate change. Unless global warming is reined in it is certain we will experience more loss and damage from extreme weather events. The impacts are damaging and they affect our health and wellbeing. The cost in dollar terms is high and rising.

The latest assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found emissions were already affecting weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. In Australia our climate has warmed dangerously and average temperatures above land have increased by about 1.4°C since 1910. Unimaginable new climate extremes confront us: record-breaking droughts and floods, heatwaves and unstoppable bushfires.

However, climate scientists also believe that we still have time to implement changes that can turn things around – stabilise the climate and see some cooling before the end of the century. If we can bring about immediate, large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, we can keep the earth's climate within the target of 1.5 degrees of warming to avoid irreversible climate catastrophe.

We are being seriously let down by state and federal governments. We need to push them to do much more. In the meantime, we must provide leadership and act locally. Local solutions to climate change lead to greener, healthier and more liveable communities that also protect and value our natural environment.

On Blue Mountains City Council, The Greens will always make climate action a top priority.

The Earth's forests and green places are carbon sinks, preventing warming and stabilising the climate.

We support and stand with the traditional owners of the land, the Dharug and Gundungurra people, the custodians of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, the Blue Mountains National Park and the Blue Mountains LGA. Their deep connection to the land and their belief that humans are part of nature, not separate from it, are an inspiration to us.

Blue Mountains City Council, with the support of Greens Councillors, has already taken action and reduced carbon emissions by 25% since 2015/16. It is on track to achieve net-zero emissions by 2025.

Greens Councillors have played a prominent role in proposing and supporting the following initiatives:

- declared a Climate Emergency, and advocated for state and federal governments to do the same
- joined the Cities Power Partnership
- committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2025, and a range of sustainability targets in the *Blue Mountains Community Strategic Plan 2035*
- enacted an *Environmentally Sustainable Design Policy for Council Buildings*, establishing best practice standards for new council buildings and large upgrades
- committed to incorporating the *Rights of Nature* into future operations and planning
- revised the Council's Investment Policy in 2017 to preference investments in Environmentally and Socially Responsible Institutions (ESRI), and in 2019 expanded the proportion of Council's investment portfolio that can be allocated to ESRI investments, and
- joined the 'Race To Zero' campaign to build momentum around the shift to a decarbonised economy ahead of COP26 in Glasgow.

The Blue Mountains Greens Local Climate Action Plan

Whilst progress is being made, we are in a climate emergency and we must act urgently, now. Blue Mountains City Council needs to be ambitious. The Greens on Council will continue to take action on council and within the community towards a zero emissions target for us all. Raising the level of ambition to address climate action in the new version of the Community Strategic Plan is a key strategy.

Our villages and our National Park, our Blue Mountains

Blue Mountains Greens Councillors will continue to:

- protect threatened species through supporting council's participation in the NSW *Saving Our Species* program
- work to protect, regenerate and rewild native bushland so that native bird and animal species can survive alongside suburbia, including by supporting Bushcare, Landcare and Swampcare programs
- take action to minimise the impact of feral animals such as cats and foxes
- work to increase the tree canopy across our city, including by lining residential streets with trees, and
- minimise removal of trees in reserves and on streets and private property.

Planning and infrastructure

Blue Mountains Greens Councillors will continue to oppose:

- high-density development which the NSW state government would like to impose on our "city within the World Heritage Area"
- developments which threaten the values of the National Park such as the leasing of the Katoomba Airfield, and the proposed zoo/hotel ('Croc Park') development at Wentworth Falls
- the raising of the wall of the Warragamba Dam, which will drown 6000 hectares of World Heritage area, including irreplaceable Indigenous heritage sites, habitat for endangered species, and the junction of the wild Kowmung with the Cox's river, and

- the Western Sydney Airport, particularly its impacts on the adjacent World Heritage area and proposed flight paths over the National Park.

Housing and building

Blue Mountains Greens Councillors will promote housing and infrastructure with lower running costs and reduced emissions by:

- supporting affordable, climate-friendly housing
- prioritising open spaces and bushland over excessive development
- planning for easy access to workplaces, services, recreation and the arts to reduce the need for travel
- ensuring public buildings and infrastructure adopt best-practice design by minimising energy and water consumption, generating solar energy, and using eco-friendly materials
- encouraging ecologically sustainable buildings in the community
- incorporating 'reduce, re-use, recycle' in building and maintenance and providing information services for the public to learn about these principles
- continuing to press for the adoption of Environmental Upgrade Finance for commercial ratepayers to adopt renewable energy, energy efficiency and other environmental improvements, and
- advocating that the State Government streamline relevant legislation to make Environmental Upgrade Finance available for residential properties, with appropriate 'responsible lending' safeguards, to enable more homes to undertake sustainability upgrades in the short term.

Renewable energy

On Blue Mountains City Council we will speed up the transition to renewable energy and reduce power bills by:

- by working with other councils to enter into a Power Purchase Agreement leading to cheaper renewable power and reducing our emissions footprint
- transition council's vehicle fleet, including waste collection, recycling and street cleaning trucks to become 100% renewable and zero-emissions
- fast-tracking plans to install:
 - solar panels and batteries on buildings owned by Council, residents and local businesses
 - solar hot water or heat pumps, and
 - solar and LED lighting for public buildings, car parks and street lighting. Around 36% of streetlights in the Blue Mountains are LED – this needs to be 100% as soon as possible,
- supporting community solar and wind farms
- supporting residents and business to reduce their emissions by:
 - undertaking a carbon audit to determine the sources of our community's greenhouse gas emissions
 - sharing a free solar-mapping tool with residents to aid the installation of maximum-efficiency solar panels on homes, and
 - employing and resourcing a Zero Carbon Community Coordinator to enable residents and small businesses to transition away from fossil fuels and towards net zero emissions,

- opposing any moves towards a 'solar tax'
- encouraging the establishment of a trial of community batteries, and
- signing the Fossil Fuels Non-Proliferation Treaty and calling on the state and federal governments to do the same.

Transport

Blue Mountains Greens Councillors will develop policies that prioritise the environment in the development of transport options, and promote public and community transport over private car ownership, reducing the need for fossil fuel vehicles by:

- working with the NSW government to develop a strategy to move freight from roads to rail
- supporting or providing user-friendly public transport, including a regular, electric bus service between Glenbrook and Mount Victoria and other village-based electric vehicle shuttle services, to reduce car travel
- improving and increasing safe transport and mobility options in consultation with women, the elderly, people with disabilities and care providers.
- advocating for ramps into train stations as an alternative option to steps
- promoting active-transport options, for example safe cycle- and walk-ways which connect major community facilities, hospitals, medical services, schools and shopping centres
- advocating for more frequent peak-hour fast trains between the Blue Mountains and Penrith, Westmead/Parramatta and the Sydney CBD
- providing adequate parking for cars and bicycles at train and bus stations
- providing solar-powered recharge stations for electric cars in villages and tourist areas, and
- allocating dedicated parking spaces to share car operators.

Tourism and the local economy

Blue Mountains Greens Councillors will prioritise economic resilience and diversity by:

- enabling local tourist businesses to operate more efficiently through improvements supported by Environmental Upgrade Finance
- prioritising, encouraging and advocating on behalf of low impact small-scale eco tourism
- supporting small independent shops and businesses that cater to local needs and services to reduce unnecessary travel
- repair and fully restore all walking tracks damaged by the 2019-20 bushfires, such as the Charles Darwin walk in Wentworth Falls
- attracting tourism activities to mid- and lower-mountains areas
- repairing and upgrading bushwalking and viewing platforms in mid- and lower-mountains regions, and
- lobby state and federal governments for the establishment of greater disaster recovery funding to provide for rapid reconstruction of infrastructure impacted by extreme weather events.

Waste disposal

Blue Mountains Greens Councillors will minimise the amount of waste being sent to landfill by:

- supporting well-managed resource recovery centres that promote reuse and recycling
- providing compost services for organic waste
- minimising food waste going to landfill – currently up to 40% – by including food organics in green bins through adoption of a ‘Food Organic Garden Organic’ or FOGO collection service
- increase encouragement and support for home composting, worm farms and environmentally friendly gardening practices
- running waste minimisation courses for residents
- using unavoidable methane emissions to produce energy and reduce costs
- introducing a rebate for residents to trial reusable nappies and sanitary products.
- banning single-use plastics on council land and in the wider community
- requiring more sorting of construction waste and consideration of disposal options, and
- continuing to work with all Western Sydney and regional councils in opposing the government's push for waste incinerators.

Divestment from fossil-fuels

Where Blue Mountains City Council finances are invested in banks or funds that support polluting fossil fuel industries, Blue Mountains Greens councillors will:

- audit how much money council has invested in fossil fuels, and
- urge council to further increase the proportion of the investment portfolio deposited in environmentally and socially responsible Institutions

Extreme events

Blue Mountains Greens Councillors will strive to ensure council is prepared to:

- warn the community of impending dangers, including by supporting the ABC's role in keeping the public informed during times of crisis
- provide safe places of refuge and emergency assistance
- protect infrastructure and council property
- quickly repair and restore council assets and services
- push for government action to reduce the dangers and destructiveness of disastrous bushfires by, for example, establishing an aerial fire-fighting fleet, providing greater support for the State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service and pursuing other options
- support the exploration of cultural burning practices, and
- ensure that bushfire management programs take into account the values and needs of wildlife and native plant habitat.

To achieve the aims of this local climate action plan, please consider [joining The Greens](#) and/or [donating to the Blue Mountains Greens](#) 2021 local government election campaign.