



Cr Darriea Turley AM  
President – Local Government NSW

Tuesday, 21 February 2023

### **2023 NSW Election Priorities**

Thank you for your correspondence outlining Local Government NSW's 2023 Election Priorities.

The Greens NSW plan for local government will put communities first and return power to local councils.

A decade of Liberal-National government has gutted local government in New South Wales. Local councils have been starved of the resources needed to sustain decent levels of service, and to improve local resilience to economic and environmental challenges.

Communities deserve to have a say in local development and to benefit from a system that plans to improve communities, not maximise developer profits.

The Greens will put communities first, restore local government and give people a say in the future of their community by:

- Putting power back into the hands of the community by abolishing compulsory planning panels and restoring local democracy.
- Giving impacted communities the opportunity to vote to de-amalgamate their councils.
- Funding community infrastructure with a developer profits tax.
- Giving local councils financial security through increased state government funding.
- Ensuring strong anti-corruption measures for local councils, including prohibiting anyone with developer or real estate interests from running for council or holding office.
- Avoiding future construction disasters by abolishing the private certification system and reinstating publicly accountable building certifiers employed by local councils.

I'd like to commend you on your platform and respond in some detail to the issues you have identified.

## **1. FINANCIAL STABILITY**

The Greens absolutely support measures that will improve financial stability for local councils. The Liberal-National Government would rather hand out pork-barrelled grants for their own political gain than provide regular, predictable funding for local communities.

But as we look to recover from climate-fuelled disasters and economic shocks, financial stability for councils has never been more important.

The Greens will make it easier for councils to adjust rates in response to local conditions, and shift the burden of funding emergency services and disaster recovery away from local ratepayers, back onto the state government. We will ensure councils can secure the funds they need to get on with the job of delivering for their communities.

We support the five specific initiatives to address financial stability for councils that you have put forward in your platform.

## **2. RESILIENCE TO NATURAL DISASTERS**

Over the past four years our communities across New South Wales have been hit with drought, bushfire, flooding and a global pandemic. Local government will be central to leading community led recovery to build back better.

The Greens will make sure the NSW Government works with local councils on the ground to resource and implement local action plans, supporting business and community recovery initiatives. This will include assistance for people seeking to rebuild or relocate a home or business that has been impacted during a natural disaster.

We support the three specific initiatives to enhance local resilience to natural disasters that you have put forward in your platform.

## **3. ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Local Government in NSW owns and manages billions of dollars of assets. As our communities grow, so does the need for new and improved local facilities - and so does the need to make developers who profit from growth pay a fair share towards the cost of building and maintaining these services.

The Greens will make sure developers pay by taking a share of the windfall gains created when land is rezoned for more intensive uses, and giving directly it to councils to meet local infrastructure needs.

Not only will this levy allow councils to properly manage, maintain and improve existing assets, but it will enable them to introduce new services and facilities like affordable housing, child care centres, parks and playgrounds to our growing communities as well.

We support the three specific initiatives to strengthen the resilience of the road network and other infrastructure that you have put forward in your platform.

#### **4. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**

Access to secure and affordable housing is a fundamental human right - and right now we're in the middle of a crisis with young people and workers priced out of the places they need to live.

The Greens will require local planning rules to deliver genuine affordable and not-for-profit housing with each new residential development, and allow strict restrictions on short-term and holiday letting through local planning controls.

We'll make sure new homes are built to the Gold Level standard as well, to make sure they're comfortable, liveable and accessible for people with disability, and to all occupants without the need for modification as a households' needs change.

We support the intent of the three specific housing and homelessness initiatives that are proposed in your platform, but we need to go further, faster. We'll require all new residential developments to include at least 30% ongoing affordable housing, legislate to ensure at least 10% of all new dwellings built in NSW will be public and not-for-profit social housing, and establish an empty homes levy to encourage homes to be put to their best use.

#### **5. ENVIRONMENT AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY.**

The climate emergency threatens our safety and health, our sources of water and our capacity to grow food, and the air we breathe. If we continue to mine and burn coal, oil and gas, we'll face increasing bushfires, heatwaves, floods, droughts, coastal flooding and catastrophic events.

We'll also feel the economic stress: we'll pay more for food, insurance, health services and energy bills. The climate crisis will also worsen inequality - with those already marginalised experiencing the worst impacts of a warming planet.

Despite the climate crisis NSW contributes two thirds of Australia's thermal coal exports making it the 4th largest coal exporter globally.

In this critical decade for climate action, we need to keep coal and gas in the ground, and rapidly shift to renewable energy. That's why the Greens have a plan to immediately ban the construction of new coal and gas infrastructure and phase out coal and gas by 2030.

Waste minimisation, recycling and resource recovery are important local council services. But as we've seen with the collapse of REDCycle's soft plastics recycling centre, we can't rely on partnerships with private companies and a non-existent market for recycled materials to make our waste miraculously disappear.

The Greens will make a significant investment in the recycling industry to fix this problem once and for all. We'll redirect the \$600 million in waste levies that the state government already collects, and we'll make sure there's demand for recycled material by mandating preferred purchasing agreements across state and local government agencies.

Biodiversity is a vital component of a healthy and functioning environment but in NSW it is declining at unprecedented and catastrophic rates. Nationwide, the population of Australia's animals and plant groups has declined on average 50-70 per cent since 1985 and NSW has contributed significantly to this decline through major infrastructure, native forest logging and land clearing.

The NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme was supposed to guarantee that plant and animals lost to development would be offset through new and dedicated protected areas but this scheme has fundamentally failed to achieve this goal. A report by the Auditor General and a parliamentary inquiry found that the offsets scheme was not fit for purpose and that the system was failing to achieve net-zero losses or like-for-like offsets.

Unless a proper system to protect biodiversity is implemented, 50% of all threatened species will be extinct in 50 years time. This situation cannot be allowed to go on.

## **6. INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT**

We support the development of an agreement between local councils and the NSW Government that places the parties in a relationship as equals to deliver great outcomes for our communities.

## **7. STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

The Greens know that without equitable access to essential infrastructure, services, facilities and programs some communities will flourish while others can be left behind. We absolutely support the equitable and strategic distribution of resources to ensure those who need it most are properly supported.

We support the four specific initiatives for stronger communities that you have put forward in your platform.

## **8. RURAL, REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH**

All NSW residents should have access to quality public health services, regardless of their postcode.

Communities in rural and regional areas often struggle to access the care they need due to a decade of poor funding and mismanagement of regional health by the Liberal-National Government.

The Greens will invest in the NSW regional health system and make free and accessible healthcare options available to all residents of regional NSW.

We'll support health workers choosing to live in the regions, fix the broken locum system, expand assistance for patients who need travel support, address the barriers to junior doctors choosing to become GPs, and establish a Rural and Remote Health Commissioner to monitor and report on the performance of NSW Health in providing health care to regional NSW. And we'll support state-of-the-art telehealth facilities in rural and remote health services where this supports but does not replace on-site staff.

## **9. PLANNING**

Local government is central to grass-roots democracy - it is the level of government closest to you. But under successive Labor and Liberal governments council powers have been eroded and access to decision makers at the local level has been taken away.

Under the Greens plan for local government:

- Local residents will be guaranteed the opportunity to speak at council meetings about an item on the agenda
- The code of conduct will clearly allow Councillors to make public statements that are critical of council decisions
- Local planning powers will be returned to metropolitan councils
- Community members who make a submission on a planning issue will have standing in the Land & Environment Court
- Councils will be at the heart of local planning for climate change

We support the three specific initiatives for planning that you have put forward in your platform.

## **10. SKILLS AND LABOUR SHORTAGES**

Councils are an integral part of a community's local workforce, but at the moment many are struggling to attract and retain the skilled workers they need. This puts local services,

facilities and infrastructure at risk, and delays important projects like fixing local roads after major storms.

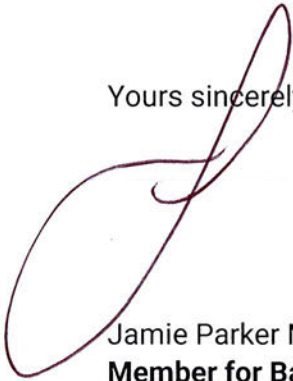
The Greens will invest in initiatives to attract and retain skilled workers to local government. We'll revitalise TAFE and other training institutions to make sure there's a strong focus on education, improvement and skills development, so that local councils can continue to play a leading role in developing and supporting your local workforce.

We support the five specific initiatives to address skills and labour shortages that you have put forward in your platform.

We look forward to working with Local Government NSW and local councils across the state to put communities first.

If you have any questions about the NSW Greens policy platform please do not hesitate to contact me on 9660 7586 or at [balmain@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:balmain@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark red ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop that starts at the top, goes down and left, then loops back up and right, ending with a small flourish.

Jamie Parker MP

**Member for Balmain, NSW Parliament**

**Greens NSW spokesperson on Local Government**