

**NSW State Election March 2015**  
**Blue Mountains Conservation Society**  
**Environmental Questionnaire to Candidates**

Concern for the natural environment has consistently been shown to be important to residents of the Blue Mountains. Hence, the following questionnaire has been prepared by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society to gain insight into candidates' environmental position and/or opinion on a variety of issues.

We thank candidates in advance for taking the time to complete the questionnaire and in so doing inform and respect the interests of voters in the Blue Mountains electorate. Both the questions and candidates' answers (or lack thereof) will be published widely by the Society throughout the Blue Mountains electorate in both electronic and print media.

We encourage candidates to answer clearly and succinctly, and to avoid political spin which does not enlighten the reader but may well antagonise them. The decent people of the Blue Mountains respect honesty and straight answers even if they do not agree with them.

Further, the Society recognises that over the course of a campaign policy positions can and do change. As such you may submit new versions of any question's answer to reflect your changed position.

Finally, candidates are also encouraged to provide both their personal position and their party's official position where there is a significant difference between the two.

Three broad areas are canvassed:

**Section 1:** The big environmental issues of our age: where you, as an individual and private citizen, stand on them; and what you personally have chosen to do in response.

**Section 2:** Issues with direct applicability to the Seat of Blue Mountains.

**Section 3:** Issues of State wide significance and applicability.

On our website ([bluemountains.org.au](http://bluemountains.org.au)), in the Vote for the Environment section, the Society has fully set out its environmental "Asks" of any incoming government. These Asks are numbered 1a , 1b, ... 3a, 3b, etc and come with Background material about the Ask.

In each question of this questionnaire, the relevant "Ask" will be cited to facilitate reference to the background material if required.

This document is provided as an MS Word compatible document, please enter your answers in the spaces provided preferably keeping them to 100 words or less. But simple straightforward answers such as "Yes" or "No" are also eminently acceptable where appropriate.

We estimate the questionnaire will take you (or policy staffer) approximately 40-60 minutes to complete. Thank you once again for your efforts.

**Please return your answer document to [president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au) by Monday 8th December 2014. Thank you.**

**Caveat:** Please note specific answers to individual questions are what this questionnaire is about. If we are sent, in lieu of considered answers, a letter of motherhood statements and the environment in general terms we will unfortunately have to consider it a non-response.

## Section 1.

**Your personal position on the big environmental issues of our age, and the actions you have personally taken in response.**

### Personal Question 1.

Do you believe Climate Change is real and represents a major threat to our world, and the fire-prone Greater Blue Mountains area in particular?

**Answer:**

### Personal Question 2.

Do you believe Climate Change is predominantly caused by human activity (that is, it is anthropogenic with very high certainty as stated by the IPCC<sup>1</sup> and CSIRO<sup>2</sup>)?

**Answer:**

### Personal Question 3.

In 1972 the landmark text *The Limits to Growth* ignited an ongoing public debate on the issue of continual economic and population growth in a world of finite resources. Focussing primarily on NSW, what broad-brush model of growth/change do you advocate?

- a) Business as usual, that is ongoing growth of both population and the physical economy
- b) Planned reductions in the rates of growth to achieve a steady-state population and economy
- c) Other scenarios of your own devising, but please avoid such logically inconsistent phrases as "sustainable growth"

**Answer:**

### Personal Question 4.

What demonstrable actions have you taken to minimise your personal and your household's environmental footprint?

**Answer:**

### Personal Question 5.

Over the last decade, looking beyond your own personal space, what are a few of the significant and demonstrable actions you have taken to protect, restore, or advocate for the environment?

**Answer:**

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1 IPCC 2013: "degree of certainty . . . *extremely likely*: 95-100% probability"

2 CSIRO scientists 2014: "a close to certain probability exceeding 99.999%"

## Section 2: Local Seat of Blue Mountains Issues

**Note:** The Society recognises that an individual, even if elected to Government, cannot single handedly guarantee legislative enactment or change. As such, throughout the questions below what we are really seeking is a clear commitment of "*support*", and in this context "*support*" of course includes real advocacy for the action mentioned, in both public forums/media and in your respective party rooms.

Also, some of the questions are more naturally phrased in the future tense, some more naturally in the present tense. Whichever tense is used, it should of course be taken to also imply the other where appropriate.

Background to all Society "Asks" can be found at: <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/election15-asks.shtml>

**Local Question 1.** (See Ask 1a for background)

Do you support the recently exhibited draft Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan?

**Answer:**

**Local Question 2.** (See Ask 1b for background)

Will you seek the deletion of the Blue Mountains, as an identified Metropolitan Urban Growth Area, from the Draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney?

**Answer:**

**Local Question 3.** (See Ask 2a for background)

Do you support an "Instant Action" fund of \$50,000 per annum for the Blue Mountains volunteer bush regeneration program to facilitate a quick response capability for urgent/unforeseen tasks?

**Answer:**

**Local Question 4.** (See Ask 3a for background)

Do you support the protection of the Gardens of Stone on the western escarpment of the Blue Mountains by creating new reserves over this spectacular pagoda landscape?

**Answer:**

**Local Question 5.** (See Ask 4a for background)

Do you support a 15% increase on the 2013/14 base funding/staffing levels for the Blue Mountains National Parks and Wildlife Service specifically to facilitate the protection of rare and threatened species? If not, what level of funding/staffing do you support?

**Answer:**

**Local Question 6.** (See Ask 5c for background)

Will you support legislation to enact a ban on both mining and gas extraction from all designated water catchment areas, as well as a similar ban on mining and gas extraction within one kilometre of significant water ways that feed these catchments?

**Answer:**

**Local Question 7.** (See Ask 5d for background)

Will you actively, and publicly, seek the removal of AGL's CSG exploration licence (PEL2) from all lands within the Greater Blue Mountains area? If so, how will you do it?

**Answer:**

**Local Question 8.** (See Ask 7a for background)

Do you support the NSW State Government providing funds to the City of Blue Mountains to facilitate the sorting, recycling, composting, and thermal treatment of waste?

If so, what level of funding do you advocate?

**Answer:**

**Local Question 9.** (See Ask 3d for background)

The Wollangambe River forms the Northern border of the Blue Mountains Electorate and is a declared "wild river" that flows through the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Peer-reviewed scientific testing shows that discharge water from the Clarence Colliery is polluting this "wild" river.

What steps will you take to protect the Wollangambe?

**Answer:**

### Section 3: State Wide Issues

**Note:** The Society recognises that an individual, even if elected to Government, cannot single handedly guarantee legislative enactment or change. As such, throughout the questions below what we are really seeking is a clear commitment of "support", and in this context "support" of course includes real advocacy for the action mentioned, in both public forums/media and in your respective party rooms.

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**State Question 1.** (See Ask 1c for background)

Do you support the endorsement of the [Community Charter](#) drawn up by the Better Planning Network, and the adoption of the details as listed in the [Community Charter Companion](#) ?

**Answer:**

**State Question 2.** (See Ask 2b for background)

Do you support the proposal that the NSW Government establish a centralised database for all agencies to record weed removal projects in NSW?

**Answer:**

**State Question 3.** (See Ask 3b for background)

Do you support the return of base funding and staffing levels for NSW National Parks to at least 2013-2014 levels, adjusted for both inflation and new areas added to the estate?

**Answer:**

**State Question 4.** (See Ask 3b for background)

Further to Question 3 above, do you support additional supplementary funding and staffing to NP&WS to address: the many new trial programs staff are having to coordinate, and the growing threats posed by climate change, rapid feral animal population growth, and noxious weeds?

**Answer:**

**State Question 5.** (See Ask 3c for background)

Do you support the permanent cessation of all programs related to "recreational" hunting / feral-animal control by "volunteer hunters" in NSW National Parks?

**Answer:**

**State Question 6.** (See Ask 5a for background)

Do you support a moratorium on all CSG operations in NSW until such time as the full framework of safeguards recommended in the NSW Chief Scientist's final CSG Report (30th September 2014) is put in place?

**Answer:**

**State Question 7.** (See Ask 5b for background)

Do you support the enactment of "No-Go zone" legislation to exclude mining and gas extraction from prime agricultural land and environmentally significant areas?

**Answer:**

**State Question 8.** (See Ask 5b for background)

Do you support the proposal that, beyond the "No-Go" zones, mining and gas extraction applications should be assessed on the basis of environmental, community, and economic considerations equally; and that economic gains must not be the "*principal consideration*" ?

**Answer:**

**State Question 9.** (See Ask 6a for background)

In the event of the collapse or watering down of the national Renewable Energy Target (RET), will you support the enactment of legislation at the state level to mandate a 20% renewable energy target by 2020 for NSW?

**Answer:**

**State Question 10.** (See Ask 6b for background)

Do you support a mandatory residential solar feed-in tariff? If so, in what form (gross or net), and at what approximate level (some examples: a fixed rate such as 15-20 cents per kWh, a relative rate such 10 cents below retail supplier peak kWh rate)?

**Answer:**