

A Sustainable Yass Valley

Councils and local communities across Australia are leading action on climate change and implementing their own adaptation, resilience and sustainability solutions. Yass Valley Council continues to deny climate change realities and to block a cleaner, sustainable future.

At the October 2023 Sustainability Advisory Committee meeting, the General Manager provided his response to an LG NSW/State Government survey on climate change adaptation. The survey response stated:

- ***Climate change is having “a great deal of impact”*** on Council’s operations and on the community;
- Extreme heat, drought, flooding are currently having a fair amount, or great deal of impact and that extreme cold and bushfires will be a future threat;
- Yet ***climate change adaptation is a “low priority” for Yass Valley Council***;
- ***No work has been done*** on assessing climate risks, adaptation and transition planning, understanding and managing climate change impacts; or setting targets to reduce risks and carbon emissions;
- No training, data collection or other forward-looking steps have been taken to plan for impacts;
- The ***Council does not engage with the community***, other councils or other levels of government on any matter to do with climate change adaptation;
- Council staff have no knowledge of, and do not use, any State Government resources or assistance available to councils to plan and manage climate adaptation; and
- ***There is a lack of internal (ie Councillor and staff) political will*** to do anything about these issues.

This cannot be allowed to continue. Our Council has clearly agreed to know nothing, and do nothing, about helping the community to adapt to, and manage the scientific and lived reality of Climate change.

Neighbouring Councils and rural councils across the State are taking carbon-reduction action while we are being left behind, objecting to renewable energy projects as a matter of adopted policy.

Working to a sustainable and carbon-neutral future must be part of Council’s every-day activities and thinking.

And it’s vital that the whole community should be engaged in developing capacity and the skills to tackle climate change.

The Greens have a long-standing commitment to community and community-based solutions. And we have elected representatives in State and Federal parliaments that can work with, and for, us and the Yass Valley community, to make the changes we need.



Your Greens Councillors will:

- Work collaboratively with all councillors and the community to create local change and adopt a clear path to energy and water efficiency, renewable energy use, resource re-use and sustainable transport options;
- Work actively with council and the community to develop education and behavior-change programs to support local residents and businesses in delivering on that path;
- Update and renew the Sustainability Policy and procurement policies to ensure they provide a clear path to sustainable Council operations;
- Ensure regular reporting on implementation of the Sustainability Policy and initiatives;
- actively support local community energy initiatives, like community batteries;
- work with local businesses and community groups to investigate and establish circular-economy opportunities (such as repair shops, Green sheds at tips, toy libraries and the like);
- advocate effectively at State and Federal level and work with other LGAs towards becoming carbon neutral.

We will actively steer Council towards:

- Placing sustainability at the centre of local planning and development decisions through Water Sensitive Urban Design, vehicle charging facilities, community energy sources, and the like;
- Adopting carbon neutrality into the design and construction of the new civic centre and facilities, including installing solar PV and battery storage;
- Undertaking energy efficiency audits and retrofits for all Council facilities, including improving or upgrading heating, ventilation and air conditioning;
- Reviewing the fitness of existing community facilities for longer-term community use.

And we will actively engage the community and business to embrace initiatives such as:

- Diverting organic and green waste away from landfill;
- Implementing 'zero kilometres' products and services and circular-economy activities;
- Electric vehicle and localised active-transport infrastructure (bike and walking paths) to put low emission and low-cost transportation within reach of the wider community;
- Education and information that supports residents in developing capacity and skills to measure and reduce their carbon footprint and carbon costs;
- Town tree canopy and greening strategies to draw down carbon and lessen the health risks caused by heatwaves; and
- Developing and implementing community-based energy schemes (such as community batteries) to give residents a real choice about their energy sources and costs.

TOGETHER FOR REAL CHANGE

ADRIAN CAMERON AND TANYA CULLEN FOR YASS VALLEY COUNCIL

