

Questions For Candidates

Blue Mountains City Council

2016 Election



The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is providing a set of questions to candidates in the 2016 Blue Mountains City Council Election.

The answers to these questions will be published.

Questions have been grouped into five broad topic areas and are deliberately framed to provide a “yes” or “no” answer. The last question provides an opportunity to relate their conservation values.

Candidate's Name: Michael Begg

The Questionnaire

NB. Except Question 13 and “Personal conservation goals”, each question has an implicit preface of “**As a BMCC Councillor I will**”

Please answer each question with a “yes” or “no” in the green shaded box.

Natural areas - Bushland protection and restoration

1.	Support Council's current funding to Bushcare and Bush regeneration activities:	
	a) being maintained	yes
	b) being increased.	yes
	<i>(The 2016-17 budget for bushcare funds 1 full time and 6 part time positions and the bush regeneration budget supports 6 full time positions)</i>	
2.	Support an increase in the Noxious Weeds program by extending the number of catchments targeted each year, and by providing more private property weed education and advice.	yes
3.	Support Council maintaining its budget for bushwalking track maintenance and development, using Nature Based Recreation Licence Fees for additional work and actively pursuing opportunities for additional Commonwealth and State funding.	yes

Enforcement of Environmental Regulations

4.	Support Council taking a strong and consistent approach to enforcement of breaches of environmental regulations,	
	a) by taking legal action against illegal clearing of natural bushland	yes
	b) by initiating the establishment of a specialist environmental enforcement unit of suitably trained staff.	yes
5.	Support the development and implementation of a Council Land Encroachment Policy to address degradation of bushland reserves caused by the use of this land by neighbouring private landholders.	yes
	<i>(Currently there are issues of residents degrading Council bushland reserves adjacent to their properties by using the land to park vehicles, stockpile materials, locate trampolines, dispose of garden waste, or mowing etc.)</i>	

Waste

6. Support	
(a) the introduction of a financial incentive for residents to compost their own waste,	yes
(b) the re-introduction of Council educational programs to encourage a range of waste minimisation practices.	yes
7. Promote change to the waste collection systems for businesses in order to encourage reuse and re-cycling.	yes
<i>(Commercial properties are not provided with the same recycling services as residents, and there is no incentive for businesses to recycle waste.)</i>	

Planning and development

8. Support ensuring all the existing environmental protection measures currently included in the Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan 2015 (LEP 2015) are not undermined or removed in future amendments, including retaining:	
a) all existing provisions aimed at minimising environmental impacts of new development	yes
b) all areas currently mapped as Protected Areas.	yes
c) all areas currently zoned environmental protection (E2).	yes
<i>(The LEP 2015 governs how and where new development can proceed, and what environmental standards new developments must meet. This LEP must be reviewed and updated in the next few years.)</i>	
9. Oppose the State Government imposing a new housing target on the Blue Mountains, designed to increase the housing stock in order to accommodate Sydney's growing population.	yes
10. Oppose any future re-zoning of land aimed at increasing the areas available for medium density housing development.	yes
<i>(Some submissions during the development of LEP 2015, mainly from developers, advocated extending the medium density housing zone, R3, by rezoning land adjacent to the village centres. This is despite the Council Residential Strategy 2010 concluding that there is adequate vacant residential lots to meet expected population forecasts, and that current opportunities for medium density development are under-utilised.)</i>	
11. Protect the built heritage and large garden and bushland lots of the Blue Mountains townships by supporting the village precinct objectives and proposed R6 Residential Character Conservation Zone in LEP 2015.	yes
<i>(The Blue Mountains towns are famous for their large lot residential areas featuring older character housing, 'leafy green streets' and display gardens as well as natural bushland. Some submissions during the development of LEP 2015 opposed the introduction of R6.)</i>	
12. Oppose the introduction of the SP3 Tourism Zone which will increase the opportunities for large-scale, resort-style tourism development.	yes
<i>(Tourism in the Blue Mountains is currently characterised by locally owned and operated small-scale accommodation and nature- and heritage-based activities. This ensures that visual and natural amenity, environmental protection and World Heritage values are preserved, and that the tourist dollar stays in the local community.)</i>	

Will you publicly and strongly support Council's current position opposing:

13.	a) Coal Seam Gas exploration and extraction in the Local Government Area.	yes
	b) The transport of nuclear waste through the Blue Mountains.	yes
	c) The building of an airport at Badgerys Creek in Western Sydney.	yes

Personal conservation goals

If elected, what will you do for the environment? Outline one or more projects/issues that you intend to work on ? – limit 100 words.

The answers to the above questions show my personal interest in the protection of our environment.

Twice I have asked council to review the fees we charge for large events that impact our bushland areas and trails. I will pursue this matter again if I have support.

I would like to see more paid parking for tourist cars and buses around tourist hot spots to help fund environmental conservation works.