



# QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CANDIDATES in NSWVotes2023

BPN invites responses from candidates and registered parties/groups to the questions below, which aim to provide information for voters on where they stand on the need for reform of the Planning system in NSW.

Please complete the questionnaire by indicating YES or NO to each question and, preferably, inserting comments in support (The easiest way to do this is to just edit this word document).

Please return the questionnaire, as soon as possible but by 20 March at the latest, to [bpn@betterplanningnetwork.org.au](mailto:bpn@betterplanningnetwork.org.au)

BPN intends to publicise the responses we receive, to provide guidance for voters interested in planning reform. We will also publicise non-response.

## BPN Questions for Candidates #NSWVotes2023

- 1. Do you believe the current NSW land use planning system strikes the correct balance between the voice of property developers and local communities? YES NO x Please discuss why.

The current system allows natural systems to be destroyed hand over fist, especially here in our Electorate of Maitland where we see intact and remnant bushland disappearing every day. Our local communities have not been listened to by both State and Local governments in most areas of concern.

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- 2. Do you believe State Planning Policies grant excessive decision-making discretion to the Minister for Planning? YES x NO Can you provide any examples which illustrate your view?

Yes – the current system allows far too much weight on executive government decisions and very much less on local considerations or experts in the field. The main example here is of course energy developments, ie coal seam gas and coal mining development but there are ample examples of other types of developments that communities are opposed to such as overdevelopment of housing areas.

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- 3. Do you regard it as a priority for the next NSW Government to address climate impacts of developments more comprehensively under the planning system? YES x NO If yes, please detail what policies you have adopted and what initiatives you will pursue if elected.

NSW Greens have brought in many attempts to legislate for climate change impacts and have been stymied in most cases by both major parties – there have been some minor wins for the environment auspiced by Greens.

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- 4. Do you think the concept of “State significance” in NSW planning is applied correctly? YES NO x Can you provide any examples which illustrate your view?

State significant development seems to be designed to take away the voice of the community – as in the case of coal mining, with a state significant development the power is given these days to the so-called ‘Independent Planning Commission’ – which ensures that the final say is done inside the state Planning Department without recourse to a full and transparent inquiry.

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5. Do you think the NSW Independent Planning Commission is sufficiently independent of the Government?  
YES NO x Please give examples.

The IPC is not independent of the Planning Department at all, as I can attest after attending and speaking to on many occasions on behalf of Hunter Environment Lobby Inc to object to yet another development or expansion of an open cut coal mine which destroys forests of endangered species of both vegetation and fauna.

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6. In your opinion does environmental impact assessment of planning developments in NSW meet community expectations in relation to the following?

|  |     |      |
|--|-----|------|
| - Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage?                 | YES | NO x |
| - Protecting post-European cultural heritage?              | YES | NO x |
| - Preventing irreversible harm to natural environment?     | YES | NO x |
| - Taking into consideration flood risk?                    | YES | NO x |
| - Protecting tree canopies in urban and regional contexts? | YES | NO x |
| - Preventing sterilisation of peri-urban food bowl?        | YES | NO x |
| - Ensuring quality housing?                                | YES | NO x |

7. Should a responsible NSW climate response include the issuing of further coal and gas exploration licences?  
YES NO x Please detail what policies you would support and which initiatives you will pursue if elected.  
Coal and gas licences must not be issued to any other developments in Australia – the existing ones will already tip the balance to take the climate into dangerous territory.

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8. The 2022 auditor general’s review of the NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme concluded the scheme failed to protect NSW environment. Will you support an overhaul of the scheme, so that Positive Conservation Outcomes are assured? YES x NO

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9. Is it time for a root and branch review of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*?

YES x NO If yes, what do you think the scope of such changes should be, and who should be responsible for this review (e.g. NSW Productivity Commission)? If no, please explain why not?

A thorough review is needed of this Act – it has been gutted of its original meaning and has no teeth now.

The Productivity commission may be a good start however we’d like to see what peak environmental bodies like NCC as well as peak law organisations like EDO have a say too.

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10. Many properties, particularly foreign investment properties, are reported to remain vacant. Do you support a government audit and introduction of financial disincentives for residential property owners who leave their property vacant for more than six months in order to encourage delivery of more housing to the rental market? YES x NO If yes, do you have specific suggestions?

I'd also like to see empty shops in shopping centres occupied by community start ups like art, dance, theatrical enterprises too – councils could have the power to double the rates if they are empty over 6 months and so on.

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11. Current NSW affordable housing policy includes bonus development as an incentive for developers to deliver some affordable housing but the housing only remains affordable for 15 years. Is this in your opinion a sustainable solution to the affordable housing crisis?      YES      NO      What is your policy on affordable housing?

That fits with our policy on affordable housing.

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Response from Maitland Greens