

BPN Questions for Candidates #NSWVotes2023

Response from Jordan Jensen, Greens candidate for Port Stephens

1. Do you believe the current NSW land use planning system strikes the correct balance between the voice of property developers and local communities?

NO – Bluntly, if it struck the right balance we wouldn't have a housing crisis and a potential mortgage crisis with the interest rate rises. Clearly the only people profiting at the moment are banks and developers, not communities and not individuals struggling to pay their mortgage or find a place to live. Recent changes have even further tilted the playing field against local communities by centralising more decisions and handing over compliance to private certifiers.

2. Do you believe State Planning Policies grant excessive decision-making discretion to the Minister for Planning?

YES - The Minister for Planning, through the Department, has increasingly taken control of both strategic planning and development control away from democratically elected local Councils, using a range of devices from SEPPS to regional panels and commissions. This discretion is increasingly being used to 'fast-track' major projects such as the Williamstown employment zone. The Greens will push for the Minister's discretion to be limited and planning decisions to be returned to local communities.

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 - The weak, token efforts of our government have done nothing to stop developments pillaging our land, our wealth, and our future. Any legitimate scientist not tied in with a vested development agrees there is a clear scientific consensus that human induced climate change poses an existential threat to

humankind and the natural world as we know it. Floods are worse, fires are worse, our soils are dying, there are less fish, what more evidence does our government need before it takes meaningful action? The Greens will push for much greater weight to be given to the impact of development on the climate in decisions at all levels, and sustainability requirements for both major project and smaller scale developments including individual dwellings.

4. Do you think the concept of “State significance” in NSW planning is applied correctly?

NO – It is used as a way of robbing locals of having a voice in stopping controversial projects by taking it out of community hands to be assessed and determined by non-elected bodies that are biased in favour of a development agenda that is not in the wider public interest.

5. Do you think the NSW Independent Planning Commission is sufficiently independent of the Government?

NO - The IPC (and Regional Planning Panels) operate in effect to pursue the State Government’s ‘growth and development’ agenda. We need an overhaul which means the people affected by developments get a say in how those are adapted or approved. Many aspects of the IPC and Panel system work against the real public interest, from the selection and appointment of Commissioners/Panel members to the operating procedures, which favour applicants and handicap community groups and the general public.

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

- Ensuring quality housing?

NO

The Greens believe that the entire framework for environmental impact assessment in NSW is broken:

- **Firstly because there is an unsustainable focus on pushing developments through as quickly as possible without adequate community and environmental consideration; and**
- **Secondly by allowing for environmental and social assessment to be undertaken by consultants hired and paid by the developers. If you're an "independent" consultant are you going to tell the person paying you, "sorry, this is in violation of community or environmental impact requirements, you can't do it."? Not if you want to keep getting paid! Assessments should be required to be undertaken by consultants who are independent and paid through fees charged to the developer by the state, local or federal government (depending on the project) so the consultant is safe to deliver an honest, unbiased report and be safe to know they are going to keep getting work.**

7. Should a responsible NSW climate response include the issuing of further coal and gas exploration licences?

NO - There is a scientific consensus that the planet cannot current levels of fossil fuel production and use let alone more! More fossil fuel developments means more subsidies being sent to technology we know is outdated and jobs that we know have a time limit when that same money could be being put into technologies and jobs of the future that put our nation ahead of the rest of the world, rather than behind.

The Greens are campaigning at all levels for no new coal, gas or oil projects to be approved anywhere in Australia, including NSW, so we can focus on technologies of the future. It is irresponsible and unfair to Australians to continue to invest in technology we know is damaging our health, ruining our

agricultural land, not providing cheap electricity, putting us behind the rest of the world in developing a stable, renewable powered grid.

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 – large scale land clearing must stop, and every effort be made to regenerate as much native vegetation as possible. Offsets are a system which is rorted and does not work as it is currently designed. There may be a very limited role for offsets where habitat loss is unavoidable, but only if the requirements, conditions, monitoring and enforcement are significantly strengthened. The Greens will push for a complete overhaul of the use of biodiversity offsets.

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

YES – The Greens believe that the EPA Act needs a complete overhaul or replacement, to place genuine ecologically sustainable development (ESD) at the centre of the planning system, along with reforms to environmental assessment and application and approval processes to increase transparency, accountability and genuine local control.

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 – The Greens will push for the next State Government to urgently commission an independent review of housing availability in NSW, to include consideration of financial dis-incentives for dwellings to be left vacant for prolonged periods so we can solve our rental crisis and building houses we don't need because foreign investors have hundreds of properties left vacant,

year round, as a way to build their own wealth thanks to our country's ridiculous tax incentives.

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?

NO - current policies of both the State Government and the opposition are completely inadequate to provide the required numbers of genuinely affordable dwellings, both for sale and for rent. The Greens will campaign for a much larger investment in government built and funded social housing, together with more rigorous conditions on developers to provide a significant number of genuinely and permanently affordable dwellings as part of all major new housing developments.

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