

COUNTRY LABOR

MCWAG QUESTIONS

1. What strategies would you pursue to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and promote the use of alternative energy sources in the Mid North Coast?

The County Labor Team fully supports the need for access to affordable energy supplied from increasingly renewable energy sources and a long-term, ecologically sustainable and efficient energy economy.

We understand that climate scientists are in agreement that climate change is real and no matter how small or large human contributions to carbon emissions are, reducing them is extremely important.

In relation to the work of Council, we will look at every opportunity to reduce Council's carbon footprint in order to reduce both costs and carbon emissions. We do understand that Council has already gone a long way in this regard, but we will be actively seeking out new opportunities. As with everything, any significant decisions will be based on rigorous business cases considerations.

Further, we will seek to encourage and facilitate local business investment in, and uptake of, local renewable energy production and storage, with appropriate community consultation. This would have the combined outcomes of reducing reliance on fossil fuels, improving business efficiency and stimulating local jobs growth.

The MidCoast Country Labor team fully supports the ALP target for at least 50% of Australia's electricity to come from renewable resources by 2030.

2. What is your position on mining in the water catchments of the Mid North Coast in particular the proposed expansion of the Rocky Hill Coal Project at Gloucester?

The Country Labor team is opposed to all mining in water catchment areas, including the proposed expansion of the Rocky Hill Coal mine near Gloucester.

We believe that the proposed mine expansion will take it far too close to the township of Gloucester and that this will have negative impacts on Gloucester residents and businesses, including – exposure to coal dust and consequential adverse impacts on health; exposure to noise pollution; destruction of a local waterway; reduction in property values; and loss of amenity.

Whilst a GTCC Councillor, Dr David Keegan initiated the GTCC objection to CSG extraction in the Gloucester Valley and as Chair of the Estuary and coastline Committee, he pushed for the Committee to expand its Terms of Reference to include the Manning Catchment, thereby addressing concerns of the effects of CSG mining on the Avon floodplain, and the Manning Catchment (the source of the Taree and Great Lakes water supply).

Claire Pontin was a very active participant in the anti-CSG activities in the Gloucester valley, is a committee member of MCWAG, a member of Groundswell Gloucester and supports their campaigns against the expansion of the mine. She has also personally

written to several NSW Ministers seeking the revocation of the Rocky Hill coal mine licences.

We believe that coal mining needs to cease but are cognizant of the likely impact on coal mining jobs. It is important, therefore that any moves to reduce coal extraction need to be supported by projects to expand other industries such as tourism and renewable energy production and storage. We see these as locally viable alternatives to coal mining in the Avon valley.

3. Will your group be promoting funding for the scientific function of the Water Services business unit of MidCoast Council (formerly MidCoast Water)?

Yes. We will be insisting that sufficient scientific expertise and function is retained to ensure that MidCoast Council can maintain its strong capability in measuring and controlling water quality and treatment functions and in its catchment management programs.

For 25 years John Weate was a Local Government Councillor on Great Lakes Council, where for most of that time he has chaired the Wallis Lake Coast and Estuary Management Committee.

The committee won the Theiss National Riverprize for catchment management in 2003.

John was a foundation director of the Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority from 2004 - 2013. The Authority won the National Riverprize in 2003.

From 2004 - 2013, John was a founding director of Wateraid Australia, the Australian water industry's aid and development charity assisting the world's poorest people gain access to clean water and sanitation. John's contribution to the cleanliness of Manning Great Lakes waterways is well documented.

Country Labor will maintain and improve on the excellent results of the 2016 Waterway and Catchment Report.

4. What strategies would you implement to address the impacts of climate change on the Mid North Coast?

See our response to Q1 in relation to carbon emissions and renewable energy technologies.

In addition, we are aware of other climatic/environmental impacts occurring in the MidCoast Council area that may be exacerbated by climate change, including the beach erosion and risk of inundation occurring in Old Bar and Manning Point.

We are also aware that a number of Council assets in the Great Lakes region (roads, carparks, footpaths, boat ramps and water and sewerage pipes), several areas of littoral rainforest, several tourist parks and a significant number of residential lots are in areas at risk of coastal erosion and/or wave runup and overwash.

We understand that Council is further investigating the possible risk from coastal erosion and inundation and doing cost-benefit analyses on the management options available for these communities before deciding on appropriate development controls. County Labor will ensure that Council undertakes significant on-going consultation with these affected communities.

It is essential that all Council decisions relating to coastal erosion and coastal and floodplain inundation be based on good scientific and environmental analysis, an understanding of community expectations and values, an understanding of the effectiveness and feasibility of possible technological solutions, and having regard to the assessed costs and benefits. Country Labor will insist on this.

It will also be necessary to ensure that Council is assiduous in seeking out available funding from State and Federal sources to assist with this work.

We also support other environmental sustainability activities including (where appropriate) greywater reuse, rainwater harvesting, sustainable building materials, community gardens, supporting local food producers, reducing food miles, improving air and water quality, and carbon sequestration.

All of the members of the Country Labor team all have “green credentials”.

- David Keegan and John Weate have worked on Council Committees and pursued Council policies that protect and enhance the environment.
- John Weate operates Community Resources which has a number of waste recovery, reuse and efficiency programs to help the disadvantaged.
- Claire Pontin has an Honours Degree in Ecology and worked in marine and aquatic research and natural resource management for State and Federal National Parks Services and Fisheries. She is an active member of the Labor Environmental Action Network which works within the Labor party to improve its environmental policies. Earlier this year she contributed to work on NSW Labor’s policies concerning electricity generation. She is currently working on a project to improve environmental legislation.
- Graham Robinson has an Honours Degree in Engineering and understands the technology that underpins renewable energy and advocates for the use of renewables.
- Gaye Tindall is a long standing board member with Community Resources, a social NFP enterprise which has an expanding number of reusable and waste recovery businesses.

Most notably, Soft Landings, a large and growing mattress recycling and collection enterprise. Along with Louise Collins both are strong practitioners and advocates for environmental sustainability.

We are keen to develop policies and actions that enhance our local and global environment. This is not a “protectionist” stance. We recognise the need for, and the desirability of, community and business development, however this must always be subject to appropriate environmental impact assessment.

The Australian Labor Party (incorporating Country Labor) has an exceptional record in environmental management and protection, including

- Ratifying the World Heritage Convention and establishing the Australian Heritage Commission (1972-75)
- Saving the Franklin River, Daintree rainforests, Tasmanian Wilderness and protecting the Antarctic from mining (1983-96)

- Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, initiating the whaling case against Japan and expanding the Renewable Energy Target (2007-10)
- Securing the Murray Darling environmental flows, developing comprehensive climate policy, extending the Tasmanian World Heritage Area and establishing the world's largest marine national park.

The MidCoast Country Labor team is proud of this history.

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