

Kooyong Climate Change Alliance

City of Boroondara Election 2024

Candidate Questionnaire

This questionnaire for candidates in the Boroondara election has been developed by the Kooyong Climate Change Alliance, a group of community organisations concerned about climate change including Lighter Footprints, ACF Boroondara and Move Beyond Coal Kooyong. The Alliance and its member organisations are non-partisan and will not be endorsing any candidates in the election.

The questionnaire has been developed to assist voters in understanding each candidate's commitment to the role Council can play in addressing climate change. The responses to the questionnaire will be used as the basis for a candidate scorecard for each Ward that will help voters make their decision. The scorecards and candidates' full responses to the questionnaire will be made available on our website and extensively advertised on social media. Printed scorecards will also be widely distributed to households during the voting period.

All the questions require a 'Yes', 'No' or 'Maybe' response, however candidates are also given the opportunity to make general comments. The comments will not affect the scoring, but will be available to voters via the website. Any unanswered questions will be given the lowest possible score.

Click on the relevant box ('Yes', 'No' or 'Maybe') to indicate your answer to each question. Please type any comments in the boxes provided, which will expand to fit your response if necessary.

Your Name:

Ward Contesting:

1. Climate Leadership and Advocacy

1.1 Do you agree that we are facing a climate emergency? Yes Maybe No

1.2 Do you think the Council should take a stronger leadership role in the community's response to climate change, increasing the ambition of its action on the climate? Yes Maybe No

1.3 The specific allocation for CAP implementation in the 2024-25 Council Budget is only \$1 million in a total budget expenditure of \$261 million (operating) and \$80.6 million (capital) and a projected surplus of \$14.4 million. Do you support an increase in the annual budget for CAP implementation, including an allocation for significantly more staff? Yes Maybe No

1.4 Do you support more proactive advocacy with other levels of government on climate issues by the Council (e.g. higher standards for all new housing to increase energy efficiency and minimise emissions)? Yes Maybe No

1.5 Do you have any other comments on Council Climate Leadership and Advocacy?

As a Councillor at Boroondara, I have stood firmly by the election commitments I gave in 2020. I supported the Climate Emergency Declaration. I supported the establishment of a Climate Advisory Committee and served on that Committee each year for the entirety of my council term. I supported the development and adoption of Council's first Climate Action Plan.

I support an increase budget allocation to achieve key environmental objectives. For example, in order to deliver key priorities, such as an increased tree canopy target of 30% and an increase in the land managed for biodiversity from 1 hectare per year, to 1.3 hectares per year, an increased allocation will be necessary. These targets cannot be achieved without additional funding, and I consider these to be a greater priority than some other measures in Council's approved budget.

Each tier of government in Australia, federal, state and local, needs to work together and do its part in taking meaningful effective action.

My own involvement in climate advocacy dates back many years and is not limited to local government. As senior federal government policy adviser in the mid 90s, I helped develop the first greenhouse gas reduction program targeted at industry, The Greenhouse Challenge, launched by the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating and which ran for about 20 years. As a former Director and Executive Committee Member at the City of Sydney Council, I developed the Council's first internal climate action strategy, which identified commitments and performance targets across each department of Council.

2. Policies & Actions on Council Emissions

2.1 Do you support using renewable electricity to power Council recreation centres/pools, abandoning the proposed use of gas at the Kew Recreation Centre and converting all other centres to renewable power? Yes Maybe No

2.2 Do you support increased Council effort to expedite the phasing out of gas at all its facilities, increasing the current target of 50% of facilities by 2030 to at least 85%? Yes Maybe No

2.3 Do you support faster transition of the Council fleet (including major contractors) to EVs, with all new light vehicles to be EVs and new heavy vehicles (e.g. rubbish trucks) to be EVs (or a zero emissions alternative) as soon as practicable? Yes Maybe No

2.4 Do you support a policy to ensure that all new Council facilities exceed current minimum standards for energy efficiency, have the maximum feasible number of solar panels and produce zero emissions?

Yes Maybe No

2.5 Do you have any other comments on Council Emissions?

As an example of what I achieved as a councillor, the Lewin Reserve Pavillion in Gardiner Ward (completed in 2024) is a 5-star green, architecture award-winning pavilion, embedded into the natural landscape with a rooftop terrace, outdoor amphitheatre steps and a multipurpose community space. The pavilion is naturally ventilated, uses an electric heat pump (no gas), has solar panels, and collects rainwater for reuse in bathrooms. To ensure this, I established a community reference group with local residents to work with the architects, Council and clubs to completely rework the original sub-standard design that had been first proposed by Council officers without any community consultation. I gave an election commitment that I would do this in 2020 and I stood by and delivered. It can be done.

I also want to make the point that in this term of council, we achieved net zero, which deserves recognition. It is an important step forward, particularly when compared to previous councils at Boroondara (where 'climate change' was not even to be mentioned). But more needs to be done. Business cases will however need to be developed, and presented to councillors, to ensure measures such as those identified in Section 2 above are properly evaluated and, if appropriate, delivered in the most efficient, effective and financially responsible manner.

3. Policies & Actions on Community Emissions

- 3.1 Do you agree Council should provide more visible and proactive free advice services to residents on emissions reduction/energy efficiency (e.g. pop-up information services, a shop front demonstration venue at busy locations)? Yes Maybe No
- 3.2 Do you support Council establishing a new program to support businesses to reduce their emissions, including free advice tailored to the business? (For an example, see [Bendigo](#) Council.) Yes Maybe No
- 3.3 Do you support development of a strategy to promote and support the community's rapid transition from gas to all electric renewable energy? Yes Maybe No
- 3.4 Do you support the introduction of Council subsidies for low income households to improve their energy efficiency and reduce their emissions (e.g. by installing solar panels)? (Subsidies could be in the form of direct grants or payment via rates; for examples, see [Merri-bek](#) or [Darebin](#) Councils.) Yes Maybe No
- 3.5 Do you support Council ensuring a significantly greater level of access to EV chargers (provided by Council or privately), including options for those with no off-street parking? Yes Maybe No
- 3.6 Do you support development of a strategy to encourage the use of alternatives to private vehicle transport in the municipality, including walking, bicycles and public transport? (This could be part of an update of the [Integrated Transport Strategy](#) (2006)) Yes Maybe No
- 3.7 Do you have any other comments on Community Emissions?

Council must take a leadership role in respect of community emissions and must do so in considered and financially responsible way.

As a councillor, I have dedicated my efforts where I have considered I might be most effective. For example, I have stood by my election commitment in 2020 to re-establish the Bicycle Advisory Committee, which I chair. We developed a new 10-year Bicycle Action Plan 2022-32 and I have personally developed and advocated for a new set of shared paths through Gardiner Ward. I am also advocating for active and sustainable transport on metro-wide basis in my capacity as Deputy Chair of the Metropolitan Transport Forum an advocacy group comprising councils from metro Melbourne and participants from the State Government and environment groups.

There are however many more opportunities where we need to do more. For example, we need to embed environmentally sustainable design measures in the Boroondara Planning Scheme, to ensure that new developments meet much higher performance standards. Our council has not done this, while leading councils have. We should also remove our ban on visible solar panels in street frontages in heritage precincts. This is restricting the installation of solar panels even on new housing builds and on homes that have no heritage value.

Council needs to take a leadership role in facilitating the roll-out of EV charging locations, however it

is not necessary for council to become an energy provider in order to do so. There are more far more financially responsible approaches that could potentially allow for a major, rapid and council-wide roll out of EV charging stations at at no cost to ratepayers.

The programs listed above, including those at other councils may be good ideas, but they must be robustly evaluated before committing to their implementation. I suspect there may be more effective measures at council's disposal.

4. Policies & Actions on Community Resilience and Adaptation

4.1 Do you support strengthening of the Council's new tree canopy target (27% by 2040 across public and private land in the draft *Tree Canopy Strategy*) and a well-resourced program to ensure it is delivered? Yes Maybe No

4.2 Do you support strengthening of the *Boroondara Tree Protection Local Law* (e.g. by requiring bonds from developers when significant or canopy trees are at risk during construction)? Yes Maybe No

4.3 Do you support more active Council advocacy for regulations/planning controls to maintain/improve tree canopy cover, including consideration of requirements at new buildings for minimum tree canopy cover, green cover and site permeability? Yes Maybe No

4.4 Do you support a more active community education program about preparing for extreme heat risks, and the development of a program to support vulnerable people (including the homeless) during periods of extreme heat? Yes Maybe No

4.5 Do you have any other comments on Community Resilience and Adaptation?

As your councillor, I have consistently supported strengthening our tree protection policy and our tree canopy policy. I have also advocated for the need to increase the amount of land managed for biodiversity each year and called for a report to be presented to the new incoming Council on increasing our tree canopy and biodiversity targets.

With ever increasing housing density and strata schemes envisioned for Boroondara, Council must prioritising the creation of new parks and green biodiversity corridors and shared paths. There are many such opportunities that we need to start strategically reviewing.

For example, I established the campaign to create a marvellous new park in Camberwell Junction on the site of a former carpark that council was using as a free commuter carpark for staff – a park completed in 2023 and now enjoyed daily by hundreds of local children. An additional major new park and flowing green space in Camberwell Junction is possible through the closure of Reserve Rd and its conversion to green open space. I have also said that Council should look at acquiring the former Hartwell Tennis Club site for the purposes of creating a much bigger park with biodiversity opportunities.

Council funds need to be targeted toward where they can be most effective. We need to start using

our Open Space Acquisition Fund and putting more money into this fund. Similarly, Council's capital works program should for example, be far more focused on creating new parks, and developing an enhanced network of shared paths and green biodiversity corridors across Boroondara. To drive this, we should look at developing a shared path strategy and action plan for the municipality. This would provide greater sustainable transport alternatives and contribute positively to community health and well-being while also providing an opportunity to extend biodiversity sites and corridors. A much enhanced program to assist residents turn nature strips into biodiversity sites could also be established.

5. Policies & Actions on Council Accountability and Democratic Processes

5.1 Do you support establishing a standing External Advisory Committee (including community members) to advise Council on climate action issues? Yes Maybe No

5.2 Do you support publication of agendas and minutes from all External and Internal Advisory Committee meetings (subject to confidentiality requirements)? Yes Maybe No

5.3 Do you agree that Councillors should be expected to hold well-advertised events at which their constituents can meet them in person at least once each quarter? Yes Maybe No

5.4 Do you support routine recording of all Councillors' votes on all motions at all meetings of Council, including Special meetings? Yes Maybe No

5.5 Do you support more meaningful public consultation on the Council Annual Budget, including opportunities for community input early in the process of formulating the budget? Yes Maybe No

5.6 Do you have any other comments on Council Accountability and Democratic Processes?

I support making Council's government practices much more open and transparent than they are at present. For example, we need to:

- overhaul our Budget consultation practices, which have gone from poor to effectively non-existent in the last term of Council. I have felt so strongly about this that I have abstained on two occasions from adopting the budget to publicly emphasise this point.
- facilitate greater opportunity for the community to ask questions, as our public question time procedures are too complex and too restrictive.
- end the practice of regularly using what can be described as 'gag motions' (formally known as 'put motions') to prevent councillors with divergent views from expressing their opinions.
- create a culture where councillors are freely encouraged to ask questions of Council officers and challenge their recommendations in Council and Committee meetings (not just in councillor briefings) and where councillors are allowed to engage in robust policy debate and express divergent views and opinions.

Where there is diversity among the elected councillors, as is the case at Boroondara, it is inevitable there will be dissenting views and opinions. Rather than silencing unwelcome views, councillors should encouraged to challenge each other's ideas and leverage on differences of opinions. Done well, this can improve the quality of decision making and avoid 'herd' thinking.

Assuming that a councillor has 'ticked the box' in terms of community engagement because they agree to a pleasant quarterly meeting, attended possibly by half a dozen supporters, is a woefully inadequate benchmark. Councillors should meet with all constituents (including those who are disgruntled) far more often than once per quarter and they should use the most effective and preferred means and location available, whether this be in person or by zoom etc. They should also regularly attend events and meetings of organisations and residents across their ward and the wider municipality. As councillors we must always be approachable, contactable and available to all constituents at all times. We cannot be allowed to hide behind a quarterly meeting with a few supporters.

There is an established convention at all levels of government (federal, state and local) in Australia for the recording of votes of individual elected representatives by calling for a 'division'. There are sound governance reasons for this convention, particularly as a majority of decisions are uncontested. The practice of calling a 'division' at Boroondara is actually very simple and straightforward– far more liberal than at other levels of government in Australia – and it is used regularly as and when desired or required. Restrictions that apply to the calling of divisions in other levels of Government do not apply in Boroondara.

6. Other Comments

6.1 Do you have any other comments on meaningful climate action in Boroondara?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!