

From: Jason Bendall jason@jasonbendall.com.au 
Subject: Re: Questions for Response from Landcare members
Date: [REDACTED]
To: Jessica Leck rlc@midcoast2topslandcare.org
Cc: [REDACTED]



Dear Jessica

Thank you for the opportunity to respond and sincere thanks to you and your team (staff and volunteers) for the important work you do for MidCoast 2 Tops Landcare.

My answers are included below.

Kind regards

Jason

Dr Jason Bendall
Independent Candidate for Myall Lakes
www.jasonbendall.com.au

Q1. Please introduce yourself to our community. Who are you, where is home and which party do you represent?

I'm Dr Jason Bendall, standing as an independent candidate for Myall Lakes. I am a local who grew up in Taree and now live in Black Head. I attended Chatham Primary School and Chatham High School completing my HSC in 1990. I am a Senior Staff Specialist Anaesthetist at Manning Base Hospital and the Director of Medical Services for NSW Ambulance. I have been Clinical Dean & Associate Professor of the University of Newcastle's Manning Clinical School, and still teach there now. I am a long term volunteer with St John Ambulance, having recently completed a term as State Commissioner. I enjoy playing tennis and walks in the incredible natural settings our region provides.

I am running on a campaign platform that includes policies regarding healthcare, equality, integrity and climate / environment.

For additional information please see my LinkedIn profile [DrJason.au/li](https://www.linkedin.com/company/drjasonau/)

For policy information please see www.jasonbendall.com.au/policies

The NSW Government support for the NSW Landcare program which employs 84 Landcare Coordinators, including 7 part-time Landcare Coordinators in the Hunter and Mid Coast region, is due to finish on 30 June 2023. An economic evaluation study has shown that the \$22.5 million investment covering the last 4 years has given NSW a total of \$86 million of benefit.

With the momentum generated by the program, Landcare is recommending a commitment to \$59 million in funding for the next 4 years to generate in the order of \$261 million in benefit. We are seeking a commitment from all parties leading into the upcoming NSW election, to ensure that the valuable work our local Landcare groups and support staff do to protect and repair our environment within the Hunter & Mid Coast Region can continue and grow. We have built a strong relationship with many project partners. Our community can't afford to lose this expertise, education, and extensive public benefit.

Q2. How do you, and the party you represent, propose to support Landcare in NSW going forward?

I would advocate for whoever is elected to govern NSW to fully commit to the \$59M of funding over four years. Given the state of our climate and the social and economic significance our natural resources have in our region, it's a no-brainer to support something that will return over \$4 for every \$1 invested. I agree profoundly that our community cannot afford to lose Landcare. I also believe that the employees, partners and the community need to have certainty of funding over more than one election cycle.

Mid Coast residents are experiencing, first-hand, the consequences of accelerated climate change: drought, fires and floods in quick succession. Landholders and the community will continue to experience unpredictable and threatening in the natural systems we rely upon for food and fibre production, biodiversity protection and quality of life.

Q3. How will you and the party you represent act to ensure that sufficient carbon reduction goals are met whilst also ensuring an equitable, sustainable transition for our businesses, workers, and the community?

Our region is ready made to be home to multiple community-owned and managed Virtual Power Plants. Not only will these increase the reliability of local energy supply, they will also build community resilience and substantially lower the need for fossil fuel powered energy. Currently small businesses in Smith's Lake are relying on individual generators to ensure adequate electricity supply – which is completely unacceptable given the technology is available to deal with this problem and simultaneously lower emissions.

We are a tourist hot-spot, and I would advocate for the roll-out of EV chargers across the electorate. It is outrageous that we only have 3 rapid chargers in an electorate with 3600km of roads. What makes it worse is that 2 of these 3 have not even been functional for months. We are missing out on tourism opportunities due to the lack of EV charging options. In addition to this I would advocate for the establishment of a zero emissions bus fleet, connecting the towns in our region through a transit network. We could be the first region in Australia to make all public transport emissions free!

Most critically of all, I would advocate to save Bulga Forest and have an immediate moratorium on native forest logging. This is vital for the environment beyond our region, but essential to ensure our unique flora and fauna aren't wiped out.

We must adopt strong economy-wide climate policies and realise a prosperous and sustainable future, full of opportunity for businesses, workers, farmers and the community.

Small businesses and communities must be supported to transition and it is governments role to make this easier to accelerate the implementation of ready-to-implement solutions.

Landcare conducts field days to educate volunteers and landholders across Mid Coast, many in rural areas, enabling the community to share knowledge and experiences. Most of our roads are badly impacted by flooding and ongoing moist conditions over the past few years which has put an unreasonable burden on the local Council to repair.

Q4. How will you and the party you represent address the dangerous state of our roads to improve our access and reduce driver and vehicle stress?

The blame shifting needs to stop. Our roads transport produce to ports and rail, are vital for emergency services provision and serve a major function for tourism in NSW. Therefore, our roads should have significant state government support. I would advocate for the government to take responsibility for the repair and rebuilding of our critical roads, and ensure that the funding for wasteful projects, such as the \$1B per kilometre pork-barrel tunnel being promoted by the Nationals for Katoomba, is re-allocated to needy regions, including ours. There is ample funding available, we just need a strong advocate that isn't limited by party allegiances.

Funding allocation needs to be needs based on needs and given Myall Lakes and Midcoast LGA feature prominently in NSW top worst roads we must be a priority. I do not see any evidence of the Nationals putting Myall Lakes first.

Landcarers do what we can to restore and enhance biodiversity and natural resources across the Mid Coast. It is widely recognised that protecting existing natural areas is far better value than battling to restore degraded landscapes.

Q5. What will you and the party you represent do to enhance protection of existing natural areas?

I will advocate for the full funding of Landcare.

I will work with other independents to ensure there are no new coal and gas projects in NSW, an urgent priority given the current government has approved 26 new coal and gas projects since the Paris Agreement which will emit 34 times our state's annual emissions over the course of their lifetimes.

Save our forests (including Bulga forrest) by ending native forest logging, following other states' lead in a move that will give koalas back their habitat and save the taxpayer tens of millions of dollars each year.

Along with other independents, I will protect our beaches by legislating to stop oil and gas mining off our coastline once and for all, as well as implementing smarter strategies to combat coastal erosion.

I will ensure the Local Environment Plan maintains our conservation areas, that local developments comply with planning controls, and that there is no further inappropriate development. I will support or introduce legislation to end "Zombie DAs" to ensure that developments meet current environmental standards not those of 30 years ago.

There must be openness and transparency on the negotiations between developers and local / state government and an end to using secret "stroke of the pen" changes to planning provisions which suit the developer and not the community or our environment.

Not being bound to any party ideology I will bring the community together to understand the benefits, risks, explore alternatives and consequences of inaction. This must include developers, local government, environmental advocates, traditional owners, communities and experts like ecologists such that our community makes informed decisions. As a medical expert I rely on input from other experts and I will do the same as your MP. Landcare will be a peak advisor to my electoral office if elected.

Further information on integrity in politics is available on my website www.jasonbendall.com.au/policies but in brief:

As our representative in the NSW Parliament I will establish:

- Quarterly Town Hall meetings for our community to voice their concerns directly to me
- Online consultation for all legislation directly relevant to our community
- A public display of my entire voting record, updated daily
- Make all deals in public so the community is constantly aware

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]