



Environmental Sustainability

DID YOU KNOW?

Australia is the second highest producer of waste per person in the world (approx. 650 kilograms per person); this is second only to the USA, (approx. 715 kilograms per person) (www.transpacific.com.au/asset/cms/Documents/Australian Waste - The Facts.pdf).

The price we pay for electricity and gas has increased by 120% in the last decade, and 26% in the two years to Jan. 2013, despite the repeal of the Carbon Tax

- the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) reported a 23% increase in complaints from March to September 2012; and high electricity bills continue to dominate customer complaints;
- increasing energy prices are regressive and impact disproportionately on people in receipt of fixed and low

incomes and vulnerable population groups, who may forgo a significant and rising amount of their incomes on energy;

- as a consequence, many households in NSW are struggling to pay high electricity bills.

Lack of suitable and affordable public transport can be a significant barrier to participation - the impact of a lack of transport services on disadvantaged groups, that is transport disadvantage - is highly concentrated in Western Sydney

- almost 2 out of 3 (58.2%) of the people living in transport disadvantaged areas were located in Western Sydney (some 700,000 people).

Our Goals

In October 2013, the Blue Mountains witnessed the devastating fall-out from three major fires burning in the region; overall, 196 homes were destroyed and 185 damaged. The ramifications of that emergency continue to this day.

Respected scientific bodies (nationally and internationally) predict the incidence and severity of extreme weather events (and hence, family tragedy and displacement) will rise in the coming decades. We look to government for policies which will mitigate climate change effects and help families and communities adapt; as well as the enactment, for any future emergencies, of the very effective Recovery process initiated by Ministry of Police & Emergency Services (MPES) in the wake of the 2013 disaster.

-  Environmental sustainability is made a state and local priority: including effective waste, land, invasive pest, biodiversity, and water management.
-  Safe, affordable, nutritious food for everyone; and a Kitchen Garden in every home / school / community for those who wish to be involved in growing their own food.
-  Reliable, regular, safe and affordable public transport; and genuine incentives to ride/walk/share/take public transport.
-  Rejecting Coal Seam Gas mining in the BM National Park, or adjacent to sensitive ecosystems or water catchments.
-  Utilising energy policy to actively encourage renewable, non-polluting energy production, including equity in treatment

of the clean energy supplement (in NSW the clean energy supplement is being regarded as assessable income for the purpose of determining social housing rents, despite Centrelink written notification that it is "a tax-free payment and does not count as income for social security or family assistance purposes").

-  Energy markets which are affordable; with consumer protections and improved consumer information about the energy market & sustainable energy options.
-  A climate change policy where the polluters pay for reducing carbon pollution.

What We're Doing to Achieve Our Goals

-  **Blue Mountains – a 'Slow' City:** Cittaslow (pron. "Chitta-slow") is an Italian idea developed from the Slow Food movement. Cittaslow towns take the time to identify what is important and special about that town and its surrounding area, and put in place strategies to preserve their unique qualities, making life better for everyone. The Blue Mountains was formally declared a Cittaslow in March 2007, and co-operates on a wide, collaborative front with, for example:
 - BM community 'foodi' organisations keeping locals up to date with seasonal produce and where to find/harvest it;
 - running hands-on workshops; and 'Crop & Swap' initiatives;

What We're Doing to Achieve Our Goals (cont.):

- BM tourism, including Heritage & Art Walks and the Blue Mountains Artists Studio Trail; & *Slow Shopping Trail for Fashionistas* Guide;
- the 'A Kitchen Garden in Every Blue Mountains Home' project, with BM nurseries/garden centres giving away free Planting Guides & seedlings/seeds each spring;
- several BM Community Gardens and street gardens;
- many and varied local celebrations and Festivals.

Mind the Gap: Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre (BANC) and the Getting Around in the Community (GAIC) Project, in partnership with the Blackheath Community Alliance, interviewed 840 Upper Blue Mountains residents in early 2013 about their need for public transport. At present, there are gaps of up to and sometimes more than two hours between trains during the day between Katoomba and the west. The lack of a regular service adversely affects the community who need to be able to access employment, follow education, attend appointments, or shop. A resounding majority said that they wanted a train service that was at least hourly (*Mind the Gap* report), the same frequency as that 'enjoyed' by the rest of the Mountains.

Community Gardens:

- **North Katoomba Community Garden:** "We grow fruits, nuts, vegetables, flowers, and ornamental plants by following the essential principles of organic agriculture in working as much as possible with natural processes for soil building and conservation, pest management and heirloom variety preservation. The Gardens were founded

on the current site in 1995; they are on public land and open for visitors to enjoy every day."

- **Mid-Mountains Community Garden:** by contrast, is designed as a demonstration garden "to illustrate the possibilities for food production in an average BM backyard", using organic & sustainable principles for growing fresh produce.

BM Renewable Energy Co-operative: is a volunteer group of people, working together to create community-owned renewable energy projects right here in our unique World-Heritage listed area. In September 2011, a public forum on renewable energy was organised by Permaculture Blue Mountains, Climate Action Blue Mountains and Transition Blue Mountains. While the idea of a community energy project in the Blue Mountains had been talked about previously in these sustainability-oriented groups, the forum provided momentum to move the idea forward. The objectives of BM Renew are to create a community-owned renewable energy future, by:

- creating decentralised locally owned renewable energy generation (through a combination of commercial-scale and domestic solar photovoltaics (PV) – the immediate focus; waste-to-energy (pyrolysis); and wind turbines);
- bringing affordable renewable energy to our community, at the same time as returning financial benefits;
- informing, engaging and activating our community about our energy potential.

✓ How is State Government Contributing to These Achievements?

- ✓ The NSW Government has **policies covering energy efficiency and resource efficiency for government agencies**
 - **Government Resource Efficiency Policy (GREP);**
 - **Waste reporting;**
 - **Energy Efficiency Action Plan (EEAP).**
- ✓ **The NSW Department of Environment & Heritage has interactive tools** available on their website for citizens and businesses to assist with **understanding and adapting to** climate change impacts: <http://climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/>.
- ✓ **Transport for NSW with RailCorp, Roads and Maritime Services and the State Transit Authority has developed the Transport Environment and Sustainability Policy Framework** to realise our environment and sustainability commitment. It addresses environmental issues at all levels of planning, policy development and project delivery – leading to better environmental sustainability outcomes and reduced environmental impacts across our cities, towns and suburbs.

