

Eden-Monaro Environment Alliance (EMEA)

Statement on Key Issues 2020

17 June, 2020

As the eyes of the nation are turned on Eden-Monaro, this by-election provides a rare opportunity to highlight the needs of the community and policies that will drive critical economic and ecological recovery for the region after the bushfires and the COVID pandemic.

We believe responses to the crises of fire and pandemic must be carefully designed to address the entwined needs for economic and ecological recovery of the NSW south-east.

We suggest addressing these challenges under three broad headings:

- Action on climate change
- Bushfire recovery
- Protecting our forests

Global warming is heating Australia and contributing to drought and bushfire disasters. The toll in Eden-Monaro is clear. Our collective health and wellbeing have been deeply affected by extreme weather, drought and fire. The devastating 2019-20 bushfires ripped through our community. The fires destroyed forests, homes and incomes and upended our lives. Many of us already face significant economic disadvantage.¹

Now we face an escalating economic crisis triggered by Covid-19. This has had a significant negative impact on the local economy but also provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a resilient and sustainable future.

There is strong evidence that prioritising climate action, renewable energy and nature-positive policies, investments and projects will create sustainable jobs.² We advocate for economic stimulus for the Eden-Monaro electorate that aids bushfire recovery, boosts the local economy and employment, particularly the tourism and renewable energy industries and deals with climate change.

This by-election, we want the candidates to publicly state their support for:

¹ NSW Council of Social Service 2020, Mapping Economic Disadvantage in fire affected communities. Available here: <https://www.ncoss.org.au/sites/default/files/public/policy/Key-Stats-Bushfire-Regions-Final-05-03-2020.pdf>

² Australian Conservation Foundation 2020, Recover, Rebuild, Renew: Lets make things right for people and our country. Available here: https://www.acf.org.au/recover_rebuild_renew_lets_make_things_right_for_people_and_our_country ; Garrett-Peltier 2017, Green versus Brown: Comparing the employment impacts of energy efficiency, renewable energy, and fossil fuels using an input-output model. Economic Modelling, Volume 61 in World Wildlife Fund 2020, Australian renewable export Covid-19 recovery package. Available here: <https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/climate/renewables/renewable-export-covid-19-recovery-package#gs.7soe3j>

Action on climate change

We must heed the lessons of the last 12 months. EMEA stands against propping up industries that endanger our planet and our lives. Eden-Monaro has the potential to become a leader in resilient, renewable energy. Let's set a better course and enjoy the health and economic benefits.

AMEA calls for:

- A legislated federal climate act, including interim targets on emissions reduction and renewables uptake
- An Energy Transition Plan for Eden-Monaro that drives community-based, clean-energy developments and modern, decentralised power grids
- Subsidies and programs that support improvements to the energy efficiency of Eden-Monaro homes and workplaces, including free support for vulnerable and low-income households
- 100% renewable energy in Eden-Monaro by 2030
- Government and Council car fleets to be electric by 2025

Bushfire recovery

Eden-Monaro deserves to be supported through to a full ecological, social and economic recovery from the fires, but initiatives need to be locally led. In the context of the additional challenges we now face triggered by Covid-19, there are opportunities to create thousands of jobs in bushfire recovery and resilience. Such an approach can have multiplying benefits for local businesses and suppliers.

AMEA calls for:

- A community-based advisory group to drive priorities for local evidence-informed recovery and bushfire preparedness
- Grants to improve the resilience of individual properties to fire
- Direct economic stimulus to ecological restoration and conservation works including:
 - Weed and invasive animal control
 - Bushfire damaged infrastructure repairs
 - Tree planting and habitat restoration
 - Funding for Indigenous rangers
 - Funding for private land conservation efforts
 - Coastal habitat restoration, plastics and marine debris clean-up

Protecting our forests

The preservation and regeneration of native forests is essential to the Eden-Monaro economy. Native forests have been severely impacted by drought, fire and unsustainable harvesting practices. As a result, the survival of species, ecological communities, natural landscapes and all of their associated ecosystem processes are at risk.

Mature native forests are our most effective carbon store and their wellbeing is essential to the mitigation of climate change. 80 percent of native forest available for logging burnt in the summer fires.

The remaining forest is essential as a refuge for native animals. They are essential to our shared history and culture and will support the growth of our nature-based tourism industry.

EMEA calls for:

- An immediate halt to native forest logging, suspension of the Eden and Southern Region Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) and a full environmental audit of the ecological impact of the 2019-20 fires
- A Plantation Forestry Industry Plan for 100% plantation-based forestry, and a government-supported transition for all workers, including trucking companies and mills
- No forest harvesting for briquettes in the electorate and a prohibition on the extraction of forest biomass for energy production

The Eden-Monaro Environment Alliance members

NSW National Parks Association NSW Nature Conservation Council South Coast Health and Sustainability Alliance South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA)	350 Canberra 350 Eurobodalla Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action Climate Action Monaro Coastwatchers Nature Coast Marine Group
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 <p>Nature Conservation Council The voice for nature in NSW</p>	 <p>Coastwatchers Eurobodalla's voice for nature</p>	 <p><i>Climate Action Monaro</i></p>
 <p>serca inc</p>	 <p>NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW protecting nature through community action</p>	 <p>SHASA Southcoast Health and Sustainability Alliance</p>