

Climate Change Policy

Climate change has a disproportionate impact on rural communities. Benambra sits within the most bushfire prone area in the world, and its economic reliance on agricultural production makes the region extremely sensitive to drought. As the ones who are most impacted, we stand to benefit most from strong government action on climate change, and we will pay the highest price for inaction. Climate change is Benambra's fight, but with a plan we can be ready for it.

Renewable Energy

Benambra has some of the best solar resources in Victoria. We are leading Victoria in rooftop solar installations, and we're world leaders in micro-grids. We need to bring these strengths together in a sensible regional plan that facilitates North East Victoria's swift transition to a clean energy future.

The Hume Renewable Energy Roadmap is a region wide planning process funded by the Victorian Government. A regional plan has the potential to fast track the development of large solar farms in strategic, community supported locations across the region. It has the potential to fast track the commercial deployment of smart-grid technologies, improve the rate of residential solar uptake, and coordinate the local renewable energy sector for the best local outcome.

I will support the planning stage of this project and will work with stakeholders to ensure the plan has community support, and practical application. Too often we see plans and strategies go unused, and I will fight for long term funding to ensure the Roadmap can be applied.

Carbon Storage and Landcare

Australian agriculture is already being impacted by climate change. In Benambra, rising temperatures will impact our cherry, wine and stone fruit industries. At the same time as our farmers have come under increasing pressure, Landcare funding for on farm climate mitigation projects has been decreased. We need a carbon fund to pay farmers for carbon stored on farmland. Such a fund would allow farmers to diversify revenue streams, and inject funds into our struggling landcare groups.

Climate change mitigation isn't just about renewable energy. If elected, I will advocate for the inclusion of a dedicated Carbon Fund in the Victorian government's Climate Change Strategy. Such a fund would both benefit our farmers and landcare sector, and assist in climate change mitigation. A Carbon Fund is a necessary addition to the Victorian Government's Renewable Energy Target.

JENNY O'CONNOR

Bushfire Readiness Funding

Rural communities bear the brunt of bushfires. As these increase in frequency, size and intensity their ongoing impacts are becoming increasingly apparent. Benambra communities have faced serious bushfire in 2003, 2006/7, 2009, and 2015, and the bushfire season is growing longer. It is clear that bushfire is now a large part of our lives. We need government funding that not only helps us recover from bushfire, but helps us prepare for the next one. We need ongoing support to help rural communities better understand bushfire, to be able to make clear choices, and to create a shared plan.

Rural local government areas are most at risk of bushfire, and are least capable of raising funds to assist the community in its disaster preparation. Emergency management coordinators are typically employed part time and are spread across multiple priority areas. It is clear that the Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program needs to be increased in high risk areas so that at-risk communities can be supported to prepare themselves for bushfire and other natural disasters.

I will fight to ensure the extension of the Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program beyond 2020, and lobby for increased funding, with a larger proportion directed to our communities in North East Victoria. I will work with Benambra's local governments, bushfire focused foundations like Into Our Hands Foundation, and local communities, to ensure community led planning for bushfire and other natural disasters is funded and supported.