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Southern Grampians Council, Policy Platform 2024

Community Wellbeing

Key Policy: Linking Nature and Mental Health

The wellbeing of our community is deeply intertwined with the natural environment around us. By connecting people to nature, we can improve both mental and physical health, particularly in rural areas where access to mental health services is often limited.

- **Nature-Based Therapies:** I will work to integrate nature-based mental health programs, such as animal-assisted therapy and nature-based practices, into local health services. These therapies can benefit both humans and animals, fostering a compassionate and resilient community.
- **Youth Engagement:** Engaging our youth in nature-based conservation programs will help develop a new generation of confident, compassionate and environmentally conscious individuals. Through hands-on experience, young people will learn to appreciate themselves and protect the natural world.
- **Safe, Accessible Public Spaces:** I will advocate for well-maintained, safe public spaces where residents of all ages can enjoy physical activity, nature, and community connection. This includes parks, walking trails, and recreational areas that foster both physical and mental wellbeing.

Key Policy: Infrastructure and Road Safety

Safe infrastructure is vital for a thriving community. I will focus on improving road safety for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and wildlife.

- **Wildlife-Sensitive Road Infrastructure:** I will advocate for reduced speed limits in critical wildlife areas and the installation of wildlife crossings and virtual fencing to prevent vehicle-wildlife collisions. This will ensure the safety of residents and protect our unique wildlife.

- **Safe Roads:** Our roads have, for too long, been inappropriately signed and desperately need resurfacing. Getting our roads fixed so we can feel safe on them is a priority for me because it is a priority for you.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure:** I support infrastructure projects that balance modern amenities with environmental sustainability, ensuring that Southern Grampians remains a safe, beautiful place for both residents and visitors.

Animal Welfare

Key Policy: Care and Consideration for Animals

A compassionate community is one that respects and cares for the animals with whom we share our land. I believe we can foster an approach of kind-heartedness to animal welfare that benefits both people and the natural world.

- **Wildlife Protection:** I will work to implement wildlife crossings and install virtual fencing in key areas to protect our local wildlife from road accidents. In addition, community-driven wildlife rescue initiatives will help safeguard endangered species and reduce human-wildlife conflicts.
- **Fostering Compassion for Future Generations:** I believe that educating young people about the unique capacities and interests of different species of animals and their welfare alongside hands-on conservation efforts is crucial. By bringing youth into direct contact with animals and nature, we can inspire a new generation to care for all creatures.
- **Supporting Responsible Pet Ownership:** Through financially assisted mandatory desexing of pets, particularly cats, we can protect local wildlife and support responsible guardianship for family animals. These measures will foster a sustainable balance between humans, family animals, and the environment.

Environmental Sustainability

Key Policy: Protecting Biodiversity in the Grampians

The Gariwerd (Grampians) region is home to an extraordinary diversity of plant and animal life. Preserving this natural heritage is essential for the future of the area.

Biodiversity Conservation: I will prioritise efforts to protect rare and endangered species, such as the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby and the Powerful Owl, through habitat protection, reforestation, and community-driven conservation efforts.

Control of Introduced Species: Managing introduced species like Acacia Longifolia and foxes is critical to maintaining the region's ecological balance. Programs focused on weed removal and non-lethal meso-predator control will be central to my environmental platform.

Key Policy: Climate Change Action

Climate change presents a significant threat to both the environment and the livelihoods of the Southern Grampians community. I am committed to pushing for practical solutions that mitigate these risks and promote long-term sustainability.

- **Fire Management:** With bushfires becoming more frequent and intense, I will advocate for fire management strategies that protect biodiversity and human communities, including getting First Nations People onto Country. Genuine collaboration with local First Nations People to learn when, how and why to burn will ensure that we all become part of the solution to the bad fire problem in our area.
- **Water Resource Management:** I will work to protect local waterways and wetlands, ensuring sustainable water use and safeguarding these vital ecosystems for future generations.

Key Policy: Sustainable Tourism and Economic Growth

Our local economy can thrive through sustainable practices that protect the environment while creating new opportunities for growth.

- **Eco-Tourism and Local Business:** I will promote eco-tourism initiatives that highlight the region's natural beauty, attract visitors, and create jobs, while ensuring that tourism activities are low-impact and respectful of the environment. I also support local food production and sustainable agriculture, including plant-based farming.
- **Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples:** Indigenous knowledge is integral to environmental sustainability. I will collaborate with the Gunditjmara, Djab Wurrung, and Jadawadjali People to integrate cultural heritage law and lore with conservation efforts, creating a sustainable future for all.

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