

Sarah Hunter Vote Climate Questionnaire Responses 234 (Edited by candidate)

1. Name: Sarah Hunter
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3. Phone: 0457292446
4. Council: Nillumbik
5. Ward: Bunjil

6. **Are you nominated, supported, or backed in any way by a political party in this election? If so, which one?**
No
7. **Are you a member of a political party? If so, which one?**
No

8. **Why are you standing for (re)election to council? What are your top priorities if elected? (100 words maximum.)**
I am standing for election because I feel that council leadership, through the councillors, is critical. The council sets the agenda for a huge amount of what happens on the ground locally. My key promise is to champion on the ground programs to achieve the objectives of the new biodiversity strategy. These will include a rural roadside greening program, open space planting and positive support for residents to improve and manage biodiversity. I am also focused on good governance and transparency, and will advocate for better transport connections, sporting infrastructure, community programs, and solutions to local problems.

9. **What are three of your achievements in recent years? (100 words maximum)**
I played a significant role in ending soil dumping operations in Chapel Lane. I worked with my community, advocated at all levels of government and with environmental bodies, and took part in the VCAT process to seek repair of the land and waterways. I have co-ordinated and/or directly undertaken planting of 5000+ trees, shrubs, herbs and sedges on our farm. These have addressed land management problems including creek salinity, tunnel erosion and wind exposure. I have designed and built a solar electric operations centre for our farm which services 12V battery tools, incubation, washing and cleaning, and water pumping without use of fossil fuels.

CLIMATE

10. **Do you accept the research evidence from climate scientists that the earth is already too hot and we are outside the safe climate zone?**
Yes
Any comments?
Yes. This is simple. We are seeing the impacts of this on a global scale.

11. **Do you agree that we face a climate emergency?**
Yes.

12. If your council has declared a climate emergency, do you support this declaration?

My council has declared a climate emergency and I support this declaration.

Any comments? What are your priorities for emergency action?

Yes. My priority is implementation of the biodiversity strategy. A rural roadside greening program, together with planting within the more established urban forest programs can draw down carbon, repair ecosystems by increasing biomass and providing localised cooling. It contributes to resilience against extreme wind conditions (planting attenuates wind speed), and bushfire (appropriately selected and sited vegetation can reduce bushfire threat by conserving moisture, deflecting and absorbing radiant heat as part of a wind break and acting as a barrier to flying sparks and embers. Council should be providing leadership and education, and considering climate in its policies, procedures and advocacy.

13. If (re)elected will you initiate and/or support measures to educate residents and stakeholders about the climate emergency and put pressure on other levels of government to act? Any comments?

I will initiate. I am committed to real action and to empowering residents to understand positive actions that they and council can take to mitigate and repair climate and environmental damage. I am also committed to campaigning on the state and federal level. Due in part to an ethical position I have taken through my research at The University of Melbourne I am committed to not generating despair and distress in climate related education and advocacy. I am aware that grief related to environmental loss is a growing cause of depression, and I don't believe that it contributes to environmental gain.

14. Do you agree that it is now too late to restore a safe climate via emissions reductions alone and that additional measures, including drawdown and local cooling, are required?

Yes.

Any comments?

I am in support of a wide range of measures to support quality of life within a climate emergency. I support measures which have a win-win approach, benefiting people's financial bottom line, access to nature, care for animals and safety at the same time as dealing with the climate emergency itself.

15. Will you initiate and /or support measures to rapidly reduce the municipality's emissions towards zero, draw down carbon dioxide (eg planting trees), and increase the reflectivity of surfaces (eg roofs and parking lots)?

I will initiate.

Any comments?

Yes I will. These measures improve emissions but also contribute to quality of life, increasing comfort during extreme heat, and making our municipality more beautiful. As well as taking steps to protect the future of our young people and

those not even born, we are caring for animals and plants with no voice or power to represent themselves.

16. Will you initiate and/or support measures to protect vulnerable people and ecosystems within the municipality from dangerous climate impacts?

I will initiate.

Any comments?

Yes. The measures I have outlined above have some effect on protecting the vulnerable, but they are not enough alone. Elderly and socially or physically isolated people are amongst the most vulnerable to extremes of temperature, bushfire and severe weather events. Co-ordinated measures keep those people, and our wider community, including first responders, safe and supported.

PARTICIPATORY AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

17. Under the Local Government Act 2020 Community Engagement Policy, councils are required to use deliberative practices. What action will you take to involve a broad cross-section of residents in deliberating respectfully and effectively on important issues? For example, will you push for the use of Citizens' Assemblies to deliberate on contentious issues and/or to have input into the council budget? (100 words maximum)

Our Nillumbik community is engaged and informed but council does not have a good history of paying attention to the concerns paid by local people.

Particularly where this involves support and encouragement for council to do better on the strategic implementation of its own policies, council can do much better. Community consultation at present is very limited in its effectiveness. I am definitely in favour of meaningful democratic participation and open to the precise form that this should take.

18. Over recent years difficulties within some councils have resulted in the need for monitors, mediators and arbiters. The 2023 Arbiters Report on Darebin Council estimated that \$600,000 had been wasted in just two years to deal with these failures. There have also been issues in Brimbank, Glenelg, Hume, Knox, Moira and Yarra Councils. What would you do to ensure that your council deliberates effectively and respectfully? (100 words maximum)

I am not sure that I have the answer to this. I believe that it is really important to bring people along with the process and the decisions made. On a personal level I treat all people with respect and I am happy to explain my reasons for holding a particular position. I also think it is very important to emphasise the broader individual and community gains that come from measures which are initially designed to respond to a particular problem, for example those measures designed to improve climate resilience for isolated, elderly, or vulnerable residents also build community connection and improve mental health.

19. Do you promise not to accept campaign donations from property developers or gambling interests, directly or via intermediaries, in this council election

campaign?

Yes

- 20. Do you promise to support the introduction of a requirement that all gifts or donations larger than \$500 are declared in real time (similar to the measures adopted by the Melbourne City Council)?**

Unsure. I am very open to this idea.

- 21. The state government has imposed single-member wards on councils against the wishes of many councils and the recommendation of the Local Government Association. Do you support or oppose single-member wards?**

Unsure. Having read the discussion paper I understand the rationale for opposing single member wards. I am tentatively opposed to single member wards.

- 22. Dr Sonia Randhawa from the Sortition Foundation is running a one-hour Q&A session for council candidates covering Citizens' Assemblies and other deliberative processes. It's on Sunday 29 September starting at 5pm. Please register here if you'd like to attend. Will you attend this session?**

I can't attend on that date but would be keen to come on another occasion

- 23. Please provide a link to your candidate's statement or paste it below.**

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15XTUTeU4H/> My family and I are based in rural Bunjil. I work on our regenerative farm and in built environment innovation research at the faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at Melbourne University. Previously I was on the Nillumbik Environment Advisory Committee, President of Arthurs Creek District Landcare Group, and a local campaigner against the illegal Chapel Lane landfills which led to change in the Nillumbik planning scheme. I have secured multiple grants including a whole school science education visit to Healesville sanctuary for my children's primary school. I volunteer weekly in the Lort Smith Pet Therapy 'Youth' program with my beautiful dog, supporting marginalised young people. I will champion on the ground programs to achieve the objectives of the new biodiversity strategy. An ambitious rural roadside greening program, open space planting and positive support for residents to improve and manage biodiversity will lead to a healthier, more beautiful and climate resilient Nillumbik where indigenous birds and animals as well as humans will thrive. I will advocate within and beyond council for better transport connections, sporting infrastructure, community programs, and for solutions to local problems. I stand for good governance and transparency.