DR HEENA SINHA CHEUNG | INDEPENDENT FOR BOX HILL

Climate & Environmental Action Plan

A practical, evidence-informed plan for a healthier, greener and more affordable Box Hill electorate

2 November 2026 • Detailed policy companion • heena4boxhill.com.au

My approach Climate action is not a separate luxury. It is about health, energy bills, liveable neighbourhoods, safer journeys, natural assets and the future our children will inherit. I will not reinvent work already done by community experts; I will listen, collaborate, press for delivery and publish progress.

Status of this document The commitments below are my policy proposals and advocacy priorities. Pilot concepts, site selection, funding and timeframes are subject to technical assessment, community input and government approvals; no new project is represented as funded or approved.

At a glance: seven commitments

- Make cheaper clean energy accessible to renters, apartment residents and households unable to install rooftop solar.
- Test community solar on suitable public land and investigate shared/stacked solar solutions for multi-unit buildings.
- Protect mature tree canopy, biodiversity and accessible public open space while planning for more housing.
- Pursue a transparent, independently tested and safely remediated future for the former Box Hill Brickworks site, prioritising public parkland.
- Deliver safe, connected walking, cycling and public transport journeys, including the Hawthorn–Box Hill corridor and station approaches.
- Treat extreme heat, flood exposure and insurance affordability as prevention and public-health priorities.
- Restore genuine participation in major planning decisions and publish progress, evidence and spending decisions.

Authorised by Dr Heena Sinha Cheung, Level 4, 830 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill VIC 3128.

1 Cheaper power, clean energy and fair access

What I have heard Families are concerned about energy bills. Residents of rentals and apartments may not control a roof or have the upfront capital to switch appliances. The clean energy transition must work beyond detached owner-occupied houses.

Actions

1. Pilot a community-solar model on suitable public land, subject to landholder agreement, grid studies, planning approval and a financial model that delivers measurable benefits to participating households. Test council or community partners, not a pre-selected site.
2. Work with owners corporations, community housing providers and experienced installers to identify feasible shared rooftop / “stacked” solar models for apartments. Test shared generation, metering and equitable bill credits rather than claiming every apartment can install its own panels.
3. Help eligible owners corporations access the existing Solar for Apartments program and track local barriers such as roof space, strata approval, grid connection and embedded networks. Ask the State to address gaps for high-rise and other excluded buildings.
4. Advocate targeted electrification and insulation assistance for lower-income households, renters and people with health-related cooling needs; work with local community organisations on trusted, multilingual advice.
5. Assess community batteries only where they are economically and technically justified, with transparent network benefits, ownership, maintenance and distribution of savings.

Evidence and delivery context Solar Victoria reports rebates of up to $2,800 per apartment and $140,000 per building under Solar for Apartments, with revised eligibility; program requirements and exclusions still apply [1]. Victoria’s 100 Neighbourhood Batteries program identifies lower bills, network benefits and resilience as objectives, but notes that efficiency or other approaches may sometimes be cheaper [2].

What residents should be able to measure Number of sites assessed; number of viable proposals; households and renters reached; expected versus actual annual bill savings; grant applications and approvals; emissions estimates and complaints resolved.

2 Climate-smart planning, tree canopy and local nature

What I have heard Surrey Hills, Mont Albert and Blackburn residents have raised concerns about mature trees, local character and how decisions are made. Gardening groups, creek-restoration volunteers and environmental advocates are already caring for biodiversity and neighbourhood places.

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Actions

6. Seek stronger, durable protection of significant mature trees and habitat, using planning controls, a sound local tree-protection law where legally available, and clear assessment and replacement standards based on canopy outcomes rather than sapling counts alone.
7. Require the impact on canopy, shade, flood risk, solar access, biodiversity, walking routes and public open space to be assessed and explained in major state-led developments.
8. Partner with groups restoring creeks, local gardening networks and First Nations land-care experts; support modest, reliable grants, tools and coordination rather than relying solely on unpaid volunteers.
9. Target additional shade and permeable landscapes along school, shopping, bus-stop and station routes; track canopy survival, not just planting announcements.

Evidence and legal context Whitehorse Council states that interim SLO9 ceased on 16 June 2026 following statewide canopy-tree controls; this does not mean every tree is unprotected. The remaining protection must be checked against each property and applicable planning controls [3]. Victoria's 2024 Climate Science Report projects more intense heat and short-duration extreme rainfall [4].

What residents should be able to measure Canopy cover and retained mature trees; permits and exemptions explained; survival rates of new plantings; shaded walking links; water-sensitive design implemented; volunteer groups supported.

3 Box Hill Brickworks: parkland, safe remediation, public confidence

What I have heard Residents want access to meaningful green space and reassurance about the former Brickworks site's environmental condition. At a community forum, an older resident spoke about simply wanting a place for neighbours to share a barbecue—a reminder that planning is about everyday connection as well as buildings.

Actions

10. Advocate state-led acquisition and remediation for publicly accessible parkland, with transparent options, costs and responsibilities, while acknowledging that the final approach needs lawful, independently assessed decisions.
11. Commission or publish independent contamination, landfill-gas, surface-water and groundwater assessments; disclose an understandable risk-management and remediation strategy, with ongoing monitoring and appropriate restrictions if needed.

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12. Protect relevant heritage and design habitat, shade and safe community gathering areas into any parkland plan; test delivery in realistic stages so remediation and public safety are not bypassed.
13. Publish funding, timelines, decision points and an accessible community participation process. Do not promise that contaminated land can be made safely available instantly or cheaply.

What residents should be able to measure Independent reports released; remediation milestones; monitoring findings; hectares of safe accessible open space; heritage outcomes; published cost and schedule updates.

4 Connected Box Hill: walking, cycling and public transport

What I have heard Safe, continuous journeys matter for children, older people, people using mobility aids, local traders and commuters. Broken links around stations, schools, Box Hill Hospital and shops make active transport less attractive.

Actions

14. Support Bicycle Network's Gimme 5 proposal: dedicate 5% of the Victorian transport budget to Strategic Cycling Corridors, with published expenditure and delivery reporting.
15. Seek a staged, funded pathway for the Hawthorn–Box Hill trail and protect its corridor; do not assert a final alignment or project cost without detailed design.
16. Prioritise safe crossings, continuous footpaths, accessible bus stops and secure bicycle parking around Box Hill station, hospital, schools, the Institute and surrounding shopping centres.
17. Require SRL and other major works to maintain safe, accessible temporary walking and cycling routes for the entire construction period, with quick rectification of hazards.
18. Coordinate with council, disability advocates, traders and transport agencies; publish a small list of priority missing links and annual progress against them.

Evidence and delivery context Bicycle Network and the Metropolitan Transport Forum have endorsed the Gimme 5 proposal and report that many planned Strategic Cycling Corridors lack a dedicated delivery funding stream [5]. The 5% allocation is an advocacy proposal, not an existing budget commitment.

What residents should be able to measure Missing links funded and completed; safer crossings delivered; continuous accessible routes during construction; walking/cycling counts and safety evidence; improvements in reliable bus connections.

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5 Climate resilience, health and insurance

Why it matters My public-health background shapes how I see climate policy. Extreme heat and poor housing conditions create preventable health pressures; extreme weather can worsen hardship, especially for people already struggling with insurance premiums or household costs.

Actions

19. Ask health, council and community services to identify local heat-vulnerable people and gaps in cool, accessible public spaces; prioritise shade, water, outreach and cooling access in existing neighbourhood infrastructure.
20. Promote climate-risk and flood-ready development: appropriate drainage, permeable surfaces, shade, usable green space and building resilience rather than shifting risk to neighbours.
21. Work with financial counsellors, insurers, councils and consumer advocates on understandable information about insurance affordability and practical home-resilience improvements; seek fairer national and state responses where powers overlap.
22. Prioritise stable community-service and neighbourhood-house funding as part of emergency preparation and early intervention, not an afterthought.

Evidence A Monash-led study estimated that heat exposure was associated with around 10,920 emergency department visits and 4,574 hospital admissions annually in Victoria, based on analysis of hot-season data from 2014–2019 [6]. The Housing Resilience Action Plan 2030, involving Financial Counselling Victoria and other partners, sets out practical approaches to resilient housing and affordable insurance [7].

What residents should be able to measure Cooling/shade projects delivered; buildings and services participating in resilience work; published heat- and flood-risk assessments; insurance/community outreach and available assistance.

6 Housing that adds homes and strengthens liveability

My position We need more housing, including homes people can afford and homes close to work, study, health services and transport. But more dwellings alone are not an adequate test of success if growth erodes shade, accessible open space, services or genuine community influence.

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Actions

23. Support well-located affordable and social housing, with infrastructure capacity and evidence of need considered alongside yield. Advocate practical accessibility and universal-design outcomes.
24. Seek explicit solar-access, energy-efficiency, heat, canopy and stormwater assessment for major developments; protect feasible renewable generation for existing and future residents.
25. Press for published reasons and accessible opportunities for public scrutiny when ministers or state pathways override ordinary local planning processes.
26. Ask that cumulative neighbourhood impacts—not only one development at a time—are assessed for transport, schools, health services, local businesses and green space.

What residents should be able to measure Affordable/social dwellings delivered; building efficiency and accessibility; new open space and protected solar access; infrastructure upgrades; published cumulative-impact and consultation reports.

7 A community voice with enforceable accountability

My position Being invited into a room is not the same as being included. In a multilingual electorate, consultation must reach people who are often absent from traditional planning meetings, including renters, apartment residents, older people and people with disabilities.

Actions

27. Advocate a legislated 90-day consultation period for major state planning decisions affecting Box Hill, with defined exceptions for genuine emergencies and a clear explanation of how submissions influence outcomes.
28. Publish plain-language and translated information, accessible maps, in-person sessions and alternative participation formats; use trusted community partners without asking them to provide unfunded translation or outreach.
29. Seek restoration or strengthening of third-party appeal and review protections where appropriate; require published reasons for ministerial overrides, costs and risks.
30. As an independent MP, publish regular local progress reports: commitments, government responses, outstanding issues, meetings and the evidence behind decisions.

What residents should be able to measure Participation across languages, age groups and housing tenures; number of submissions and response rates; decisions changed in response to community evidence; regular public progress reporting.

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How I would work to deliver this in Parliament

First 90 days Convene local councils, residents, community groups, public-health and transport experts; seek agency briefings and publish a short list of practical first decisions. Establish a baseline and publish what information is still missing.

First year Put priority questions and proposals to relevant ministers; work across parties for feasible funding and legislation; press for technical feasibility work on solar pilots, safer crossings and the Brickworks; report regularly on results.

Across the term Track funded projects, statutory decisions and measurable outcomes. Update proposals in response to independent evidence, costs and community input. Explain where government has declined action and what options remain.

Limits and responsibilities A single lower-house MP cannot unilaterally change planning law, approve an energy project, commit government funds or direct councils. My commitments are to advocate, scrutinise, negotiate, propose legislation where feasible, mobilise partnerships and report publicly on progress.

Evidence and reference notes

Sources below support the factual context. They are not endorsements of this action plan. Program eligibility, budgets and statutory requirements should be checked again when implementation decisions are made.

[1] Solar Victoria, Solar for Apartments
https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/apartments

[2] Victorian Government, Neighbourhood batteries
https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/grants/neighbourhood-batteries

[3] Whitehorse City Council, SLO9 / Amendment C219
https://whitehorse.vic.gov.au/planning-building/whitehorse-planning-scheme/schedule-9-landscape-overlay-amendment-c219

[4] Victorian Government, Victoria's Climate Science Report 2024
https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/victorias-climate-science

[5] Bicycle Network, Gimme 5 campaign / MTF endorsement
https://bicyclenetwork.com.au/newsroom/2026/07/16/metropolitan-transport-forum-endorses-gimme-5-campaign/

[6] Monash University, heat exposure and hospital presentations, 13 April 2026
https://www.monash.edu/medicine/news/latest/2026-articles/over-15000-victorians-attend-hospitals-every-year-because-of-climate-change-related-heat-exposure-study-finds

[7] Housing Resilience Action Plan 2030 (2026), FCVic and partners
https://fcvic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/tli-report-digital.pdf

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[8] Victorian Government, Victoria's Climate Change Strategy and 2035 target
https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/victorias-climate-change-strategy

[9] Solar Victoria, April 2026 apartment-solar program outcomes
https://www.solar.vic.gov.au/solar-apartments-extended-help-more-victorians-save-energy-bills

Policy provenance and transparency

This plan expands existing Heena for Box Hill policy materials, including the campaign's published priorities and transport commitment, together with community listening across Surrey Hills, Mont Albert, Blackburn, the Brickworks, local gardens and waterways, neighbourhood houses and transport advocates. It is an advocacy and implementation framework, not a claim that the projects described have been approved or funded.

For truth • For justice • For community.

Dr Heena Sinha Cheung | Independent Candidate for Box Hill | heena4boxhill.com.au

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8 Statewide climate, forest and biodiversity commitments

This supplementary section records additional statewide policy positions alongside the 30 local actions in the original plan. It does not replace or amend those actions. These are advocacy commitments; legislative changes, budgets and delivery depend on parliamentary processes, independent evidence and consultation.

Emissions targets and fossil fuel expansion

I support Victoria's legislated emissions reduction targets of 45-50% below 2005 levels by 2030, 75-80% by 2035, and net zero by 2045. I support transparent reporting against these targets and investment in renewable energy, storage and electricity infrastructure. I oppose new or expanded coal and gas exploration and extraction projects and support a planned transition away from fossil fuels.

Coal power station retirement and a fair transition

I support the planned retirement of Yallourn and Loy Yang A alongside reliable replacement generation, storage and appropriate system-security measures. Workers and regional communities must not be left behind: I support funded retraining, recognition of transferable skills and employment pathways into renewable energy, energy infrastructure and related industries. This statement does not set a new closure date for Loy Yang B.

Native forest protection and closing logging loopholes

I support expanding legally protected areas of native forest, prioritising threatened-species habitat, biodiversity corridors and ecologically significant forests. I oppose commercial native forest logging continuing through loopholes, exemptions or alternative classifications, including where activities labelled as salvage, restoration or community safety facilitate commercial timber extraction. Forest operations should be transparent, independently scrutinised and subject to ecological safeguards. Genuine evidence-based bushfire risk reduction, ecological restoration and Traditional Owner-led cultural land management must be distinguished from commercial logging.

Why protecting our native forests matters to me

My commitment to protecting Victoria's native forests is not just about policy documents or emissions targets. I have visited Toolangi Forest with Friends of the Forest, where I had the opportunity to learn more about concerns surrounding native forest logging, biodiversity loss and the future of these ecosystems.

That experience reinforced for me why protecting our forests requires more than announcing the end of commercial logging. We must also examine what continues to happen under exemptions and alternative classifications, and whether forest management activities genuinely serve their stated environmental or community-safety purposes.

I believe the public deserves transparency about how our forests are managed, what evidence informs those decisions and how threatened habitats are protected. Protecting native forests is also about respecting Traditional Owners' knowledge and connection to Country, supporting people restoring ecosystems, and ensuring future generations inherit healthy, thriving forests. For me, forest protection is not simply about preserving what remains. It is about taking responsibility for what happens next.

Paid environmental protection and restoration jobs

Protecting our environment requires more than words of appreciation. I support increased funding for skilled, paid employment and training in ecological restoration, biodiversity conservation, habitat protection and sustainable land management, including opportunities for Traditional Owners, young people and regional communities. Programs should report measurable ecological outcomes.

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Invasive species and biodiversity

I support coordinated, evidence-based programs to manage invasive weeds, pest animals and other invasive species threatening native ecosystems. Programs should prioritise vulnerable habitats and threatened species, use humane methods that minimise harm to non-target species, monitor ecological outcomes, and work with Traditional Owners, councils, Landcare groups and conservation organisations.

Delivery and accountability

I will advocate, seek evidence, scrutinise proposals and report publicly on progress, consistent with the implementation and limits set out on page 7 of the original plan. These statements do not represent funded or approved projects.

Supplement dated 2 November 2026. Read with the Climate & Environmental Action Plan dated 2 November 2026. This supplement records the candidate's policy positions; it does not imply endorsement by any organisation.

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