

BLUE MOUNTAINS SUSTAINABILITY FORUM FORUM SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



JON DEE

Jon Dee is a passionate advocate for sustainability and social causes. He first gained recognition in 1988 when he founded Rock Aid Armenia, a charity dedicated to earthquake relief. In 1991, he co-founded Planet Ark with tennis great Pat Cash, leading the organisation for 15 years in its mission to promote environmental initiatives. In 2007, Jon, Pat, and Tina Jackson launched DoSomething, where he continues to serve as Managing Director. In 2013, he partnered with Olivia Newton-John to co-found One Tree Per Child, a global reforestation initiative. Jon also hosted the TV show Smart Money, which aired on Sky News Business Channel from 2015 to 2018, focusing on how sustainability can improve business profitability. Since 2017, he has delivered over 200 sustainability-focused segments for ABC Radio, through his series Good News With Jon Dee.



NINA GBOR

Nina Gbor is the founder of Eco Styles and a leading voice in sustainable fashion and education. As a sustainability educator, speaker, consultant, and eco stylist, Nina collaborates with media, councils, organisations, schools, and community groups to drive systems change towards a circular economy in Australia. Holding a Master's degree in International Development from the University of Bristol, she also designs and teaches short courses in sustainable fashion at RMIT University, while guest lecturing at universities both in Australia and abroad. Nina's expertise in circularity and waste reduction has led her to work on successful projects and campaigns, including her role as an impact consultant and contributor on ABC TV's award-winning show, War On Waste. She is also the founder of Clothes Swap & Style, a platform dedicated to reducing fashion and textile waste by promoting clothing swaps.



PHILIP SPIERS

Philip Spiers is the driving force and founder of the Blue Mountains Sustainability Festival, and a passionate advocate for environmental stewardship. With a deep commitment to fostering community engagement and creating a greener future, Philip is dedicated to promoting sustainable living practices throughout the Blue Mountains region. His vision for the festival is to unite the whole of the Blue Mountain community: residents, businesses, environmental experts and organisations, and Council, to create lasting change and inspire and enable action towards a more sustainable and eco-conscious future.



ERIC HOLOWACZ

Eric Holowacz is the Manager of Arts and Culture Services at Blue Mountains City Council. He began his career with the South Carolina Arts Commission and Spoleto Festival, later serving as Executive Director of a local arts council. After moving to Wellington, New Zealand, he helped establish Toi Poneke and an international artist exchange. As Founding Executive Director of The Studios of Key West, he built it into a leading artist colony. Eric has led various arts organizations, including Cairns Festival and Sedona Arts Center, and most recently served as CEO of the Katherine Regional Cultural Precinct, overseeing a \$7 million upgrade. Eric specialises in innovative arts programming and community engagement.

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ROB MORRISON

Rob Morrison is a Masters-qualified economist leading a team of experts in climate change mitigation and adaptation. He collaborates with government, industry, and NGOs to create innovative programs transitioning communities towards net zero and a circular economy.

As a specialist in sustainability, community engagement, waste management, and project implementation, Rob's work spans multiple sectors including energy, transport, and climate adaptation. His leadership fosters creative solutions to real-world challenges, driving projects that deliver tangible environmental and societal benefits.



SUSANNE RIX

Susanne Rix is the founder of the Edible Garden Festival and Trail and has developed the "Superworking" program, a method for achieving peak performance without stress, based on research into successful and resilient leaders. This program has been implemented nationally and internationally, showing significant benefits like reduced staff turnover, increased promotion rates, and improved employee engagement. Susanne is also the author of "Superworking," published by Simon and Schuster, and has written extensively on health, leadership, creativity, and resilience. She leads leadership development journeys into the Himalayas, convenes conferences on wellness in the workplace, and is actively involved in peace circles and climate action projects.



LIZ BASTIAN

Liz Bastian is the Senior Program Lead of the Planetary Health Local Action Program at Blue Mountains City Council and the founder of The Big Fix Ltd, a registered charity. The Big Fix fosters a culture focused on planetary health by designing and retrofitting systems to support all life. Since its inception in 2007, The Big Fix has developed new models for media, education, and business, operating initiatives like Blue Mountains Pluriversity, Blackheath Community Farm, and The Lithgow Sprint. The organisation acknowledges the traditional custodians of the Blue Mountains, paying respect to Aboriginal Elders past, present, and emerging.



MANU PRIGIONI

Manu Prigioni is the co-founder and coordinator of Farm It Forward Inc., where he leverages his role as a socio-environmental 'practivist' and 'pracademic' to foster sustainable practices on the land of the Darug and Gundungurra people. With a diverse background in social enterprise, sustainable design, visual arts, permaculture, and community governance, Manu has pursued studies at UTS, UNSW, TAFE National Environment Centre, and Soil Food Web Inc. She is currently a PhD candidate at the UTS Graduate Research School, focusing on Social Service and Transition Design.

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RHIANNON PHILLIPS

Rhiannon Phillips brings a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience to the local farming scene. With a BA in Animals and Veterinary Bioscience (Hons) from Sydney University and a background in agriculture from her upbringing and travels, Rhiannon spent eighteen months working on farms across the east coast and in Alice Springs before starting full-time farming at Hebron Farm in Lower Portland during the Covid pandemic. This experience led her to establish Mountains Gourmet, driven by the desire to reduce her commute and capitalize on local opportunities. Now managing three plots in the mid-Mountains, including one at Lawson, Rhiannon cultivates about half an acre for the Blue Mountains Food Co-op, Canva, local businesses like Black Cockatoo Bakery and Canton Palace, and offers veggie boxes. She values the support of volunteers and chooses low-maintenance crops to manage her workload effectively.



ANNE CRESTANI

Anne Crestani has been a dedicated professional in the community sector for nearly 25 years, with over a decade of experience leading teams and projects focused on psycho-social disaster recovery services for bushfire and flood-impacted communities across the Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains, Lithgow, and Mid-Western LGAs. Her expertise extends to developing and delivering disaster readiness training programs for both the community sector and local government, including the award-winning Walk With disaster preparedness E-tool, which received the NSW Resilience Award in 2019. Currently, Anne is spearheading the Resilient Villages project, which empowers communities to design and implement their own localized resilience action plans (RAPs). This initiative emphasizes the importance of engaging local skills, knowledge, and lived experiences in crafting effective adaptation strategies.



JAMIE LOVICK

Jamie Lovick, a resident of the Blue Mountains, has been a dedicated member and volunteer of the Australian Electric Vehicle Association, serving as the NSW secretary for several years. With a strong interest in improving infrastructure and advocating for sustainable transport, Jamie actively participates in numerous sustainability and transport-related events. His efforts focus on demystifying the experience of living with electric vehicles and promoting their benefits.



BRETT BOND

Brett Bond, a Blackheath resident for over 30 years, is a dedicated firefighter with FRNSW Katoomba. Over the past 20 years, Brett has transitioned to an all-electric lifestyle and meticulously managed a modest solar system, resulting in significantly reduced bills and even achieving a credit balance.

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LIZ BARCLAY

Liz Barclay brings a wealth of experience from her 30 years in the Independent Schools sector in Sydney, where she served as Head of Drama, and her subsequent roles in Community Development and as Producer for the Blue Shorts Film Festival. Now focusing on creative writing, theatre, and film, Liz's current project is the short dramatic film *Charlie's House*. This film delves into the poignant moments when a 9-year-old must pack a bag and support her older sister and father as they evacuate their home ahead of an approaching bushfire. Set against the stunning backdrop of the Megalong Valley, the story centers on Charlie's bravery and agency as the family faces the uncertainty of whether they will ever return home.



ROY TASKER

Roy Tasker is the Chief Scientific Advisor at Planet Ark Environmental Foundation, where he applies his extensive background in chemistry and multimedia visualization to address climate and sustainability issues. With 33 years of experience as a chemistry education professor in Australia and the US, Roy now focuses on helping people understand and act on scientific challenges related to the climate crisis and circular economy. As an Adjunct Professor at Western Sydney University, he continues his research on virtual reality and interactive learning resources. Roy has also received the Prime Minister's Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year and is currently based in the Blue Mountains, promoting environmental action.



VICKI EDMUNDS

With a background in Library and Community services within local government, Vicki Edmunds has significantly contributed to the Blue Mountains Libraries, overseeing a refurbishment program that led to the opening of the new Katoomba Library in 2012 and the Springwood Library in 2023, which features high-end second-hand furniture. Having worked across various levels of government, Vicki has a deep understanding of their approaches. Passionate about the local community, she is dedicated to building community capacity and served as the Recovery Manager for Blue Mountains City Council during the Black Summer Bushfires (2019-2020).



ANNETTE CAM

Annette Cam, a long-time resident of Lawson, was elected president of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society at the 2023 AGM and re-elected in 2024. With over 50 years of voluntary work in ornithology, Annette has contributed to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme, NSW and SA National Parks and Wildlife Services, and Bush Heritage. A former public-school secondary science teacher, she served as Principal at Windsor High School and Wilcannia Central School before retiring.

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JO FIELDING

Jo Fielding has lived in the lower Blue Mountains for 18 years, experiencing two significant bushfire events. In 2020, she transitioned to a new career as an NDIS Plan Manager with Belong Blue Mountains before joining Springwood Neighbourhood Centre to work on a Blue Mountains-wide Recovery & Resilience project. Her work involved connecting people with bushfire resources and support, launching a local preparedness website, and running inclusive bushfire preparedness activities. Trained in person-centered emergency preparedness (PCEP), Jo continues to advocate for emergency readiness and now works in community development at Springwood Neighbourhood Centre..



EM YALI

Em Yali is a Blue Mountains-based dancer and physical performer who recently completed the first artist residency at the Katoomba Resource Recovery and Waste Management Facility. With training under renowned practitioners Emily Cooper, Emma Saunders, and Sarah Boulter, Em's work explores the AFAB non-binary neurodivergent experience. Their practice blends movement improvisation, character work, and experimental exploration, focusing on physical, spiritual, and emotional environmental relations. Incorporating costume and soft sculpture, Em creates a universal visual language, evolving through collaborations with artists like Emma Saunders, Sarah-Vynn Vassallo, and Jan Walter.



MAJA BASKA

Maja Baska is a freelance photographer living on Darug and Gundungurra country of the Blue Mountains, and also works on Eora lands of Sydney and surrounds. With 19 years of industry experience and a Fine Arts background, her creative work specialises in lighting and capturing portraits, headshots, food, and events.

After an assignment to document Em Yali's recent artist residency at the Katoomba Resource Recovery and Waste Management Facility, Maja proposed situating her own photography project at the site—based on identifying unique objects from the waste stream and capturing them as a series of still life images.

Maja also works with a range of creative and corporate businesses including University of NSW, University of Sydney, Stockland, Creative Australia, NIDA, City of Sydney, MTNS MADE, and Blue Mountains Cultural Centre. Combining a fascination with the science of harnessing light and the idea of using photography as a way to understand people, her captivating visuals and unique images go beyond the ordinary with a pronounced otherworldly quality.