



Center for Democratic and  
Environmental Rights

## **“Local Recognition of Rights” Award Bestowed on Local Governments in Australia and Northern Ireland**

### **Awards Recognize “Rights of Nature” Resolutions**

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November 8, 2021: Today, the [Center for Democratic and Environmental Rights \(CDER\)](#) announced its [Local Recognition of Rights Award](#) recognizing Australia’s **Blue Mountains Council**, and Northern Ireland’s **Derry City and Strabane Council** and **Fermanagh and Omagh District Council**, for their policies on the rights of nature. CDER is a non-governmental organization in the United States which supports the growing movement to recognize and enforce the legal rights of nature.

In April 2021, the Blue Mountains Council, in New South Wales, became the first government in Australia to incorporate rights of nature principles into its operations, following a 2020 Council vote to “investigate integrating the Rights of Nature into future operations and planning.”

In June 2021, the Derry City and Strabane Council became the first government in Northern Ireland to adopt a resolution recognizing the rights of nature, followed in July by the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

The resolutions of the local governments begins a process of integrating the rights of nature into operational practices, planning processes, and long-term decision making.

**Dr. Michelle Maloney**, the National Convenor of the [Australian Earth Laws Alliance](#), said, "This is an exciting step forward for public policy in Australia. For the first time, we're seeing a government entity seriously consider how to shift from the Western legal approach of treating nature as just a resource or object to be managed solely for human purposes, toward recognizing nature as a living community, with its own rights to exist, thrive, and regenerate." Michelle is assisting the Blue Mountains Council in considering how to incorporate the rights of nature into its operations and planning, and how to connect rights of nature approaches most appropriately with First Nations Peoples law and culture in the Blue Mountains.

**James Orr**, Director of [Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland](#), said, "This is a historic moment for the environmental movement here. The resolutions recognize that we are part of a biogeographical continuum and that is why it is important to work with all neighboring councils to work together to protect the River Foyle and its tributaries, our shared oceans, the air we all breathe and share, our peatlands and our mountains. Well done to Derry and Strabane District Council and the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council for once again being environmental justice leaders." Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland is engaging with Council members on next steps to engage their communities on this.

**Mari Margil**, CDER's Executive Director, stated, "It is our pleasure to be able to bestow our Local Recognition of Rights Award onto these local governments in Australia and Northern Ireland. We applaud the local officials who drafted and voted to adopt these resolutions, and we look forward to the next steps taken to implement them. We are proud to support these efforts around the globe, and to recognize groundbreaking local governments which are embracing the shift from our current environmental regulatory system to one based on the recognition of the rights of nature."

The Local Recognition of Rights Award is given to local governments which recognize new civil, political, or environmental rights at the municipal level. The first recipient of the Award was the [City of Irvine, California](#), in 2020, for its adoption of a local law recognizing the right of residents to be free from second-hand smoke.

More information about the Award may be found here:  
<https://www.centerforenvironmentalrights.org/local-recognition-of-rights>.

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