

Yarra Langridge and Nicholls Ward Candidate Councillor Questions 2020

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Q1. Why have you decided to stand for the Yarra City Council? (200 words)

I have decided to run for Yarra City Council because I believe there is a need for a stronger independent voice within our current Yarra City Council. I know many members of our community are dissatisfied with the direction of the current Council and feel as though there is stronger representation of political party ideologies, rather than the wishes of the community. I am standing to change that balance and ensure the community voice of residents, families and those from all backgrounds are represented, regardless of the language they speak, their age, their sexuality their gender or even where they live!

I am not affiliated with any party and I am running to be a truly independent, community voice on Council.

Q2. Are you a member or supporter of a local group or organisation? (100 words)

I am a Doctor who has spent my entire working life advocating for public health outcomes through our public hospital and work closely with a number of medical clinics within Nicholls ward. I am not formally a part of these, but work closely and effectively with them as part of my professional life.

Q3. Have you been a participant in a local project or campaign? (200 words)

N/A

Q4. What experiences have you had with the Yarra City Council? (200 words)

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My experiences to be honest have been predominantly negative. From the ongoing battle to have the communities voice heard in Elizabeth Street Richmond, to challenging development applications and even mundane processes such as renewing parking permits or changing the size of my bins at home, I have found the processes to be difficult (and slow!)

It shouldn't be like this – it should be about people, delivering services, providing services and putting our residents, rate payers and businesses at the heart of everything we do.

Q5. What role does the community play in council decision making?
How can this be made more effective? (200 words)

The community has not been playing enough of a role in Council decision making. There have been so many examples recently where Council have been reluctant to involve the community in key decisions that impact our lives. Whether it be supposed trials on Trenerry Crescent Abbotsford or Elizabeth St Richmond or a large number of planning and heritage decisions, it's clear that the community voice hasn't been heard or listened to.

This must change. We need to engage the community – it doesn't have to be for months on end, but we need to find a way to gain valuable community insight into key topics. I believe this can be done through a blend of technology, old style door knocking and ensuring that a community has their say even if they don't have the internet or speak English.

Q6. How do you propose to communicate with the community if elected as a councillor? (100 words)

I propose to communicate through newsletters, through regular community meetings and through email and telephone calls as well as regular internet updates. I pledge to make myself contactable by everyone and communicate with you in the way that best works for you!

Q.7. What are your priorities if elected to the Council? (300 words)

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- Reform our community engagement to truly engage all members of the community
- Protect our heritage and ensure that any developments are done so with the support and for the benefit of the broader community
- Improve amenity and safety for residents
- Support our business community as we recover from COVID-19
- Ensure all modes of transport in Yarra are improved protecting the safety of residents, visitors and guests

Q8. The FRA has identified the following key priority areas - (500 words)

- Heritage Protection and Conservation
- Planning Permit Information and Advocacy
- Yarra Council Strategy, Policy and Guidelines
- Homelessness and Social Issues
- Climate Action

What priority would you give to each and how would you respond to your top 3 if elected as a councillor?

I believe all of these issues require my attention as a Councillor as not only do they impact Nicholls ward and Yarra more broadly, but they are at the very core of society, regardless of where you live or your socio-economic status.

However, my three immediate focus areas from this last:

- Yarra Council strategy, Policy and guidelines:
 - For too long this has been an area where the community has not been involved and Councillors and officers have made decisions and recommendations that have impacted all of us without appropriate input from the community
 - We need to ensure that the recently adopted community engagement strategy is utilised, rather than becoming a dormant policy paper
 - We also need to revitalise our medium-long term focus and strategy as a Council. I am not even sure what we

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stand for anymore and this must change, we must execute a vision that is aligned with the wishes of our community

- Heritage planning and conservation:
 - Simply put, our heritage is being eroded by over-development. We must curb this, we must refocus the energy, attention and effort of council to have heritage as a priority ahead of densification! I will advocate to protect our heritage, after all it is what makes us who we are!
 - I am in a unique position to push back on any over developments as I am not taking a single cent from developer and I never will. In fact my entire campaign is self funded!
- Homelessness and Social Issues:
 - Our community, statistically, is becoming less safe. I don't just see it on crime statistic report, I see it with my own eyes every day. We need to re-prioritise a focus on community safety, we need to ensure those that don't have a fixed address have somewhere safe to sleep and we need to invest in these things that are clearly not an attractive proposition or a vote winner for current councillors.
 - I am very conscious of the impact of the devastating economic ramifications from COVID-19 and I have no doubt that these issues are likely to get worse before they get better. But we need to redouble down on our focus and partner with community and state organisations to provide a safe place for our community and young families like mine to grow up!

Q9. What should be the role of Yarra City Council in relation to State and Commonwealth governments? (300 words)

I believe this needs to be a two-pronged approach. Firstly, we should be leading by example in key areas such as climate change, infrastructure development and community consultation. This is an opportunity for us to practice 'best-in-class' approaches and from there allow other councils to follow our lead.

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The second approach is visibility and advocacy. We must engage with and be a part of conversations, action groups, strategy plans etc... that are issues by the state and federal governments and ensure that we are not just represented, but over-represented and proactive in positioning ourselves to get the maximum benefit for the City of Yarra. This including things like funding and grants, legislation and broader representation around social issues including Climate Change.

Q 10. What relationship should the Yarra City Council have with neighbouring councils? (200 words)

This is an area I'm very passionate about – I think we need to drastically improve our relationship with neighbouring councils and look to work and partner with them on shared infrastructure projects including upgrades to major trails (such as the Capital City Trail) and other key community infrastructure.

This can and should of course go beyond infrastructure, I am not sure how closely we have policy discussions with other councils, but there is definitely an opportunity to collaborate and lead better in this environment.