

Yarra Langridge and Nicholls Ward Candidate Councillor Questions 2020

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

I want to give back to Yarra.

I live, shop and play in Yarra. I use our libraries, open spaces and sporting facilities. I interact with many community members and I understand how important council services are for people. From new born children to the elderly and those living with disability council provides a range of services that enhance people's lives. Our public housing estates are a key part of our identity and must be maintained.

Yarra is a great place for people to visit. Friends with young children love coming to Yarra to enjoy our playgrounds, coffee and local shopping strips. The ease with which Yarra welcomes people contributes to our easy-going nature. Whether you are taking children under five for a cake or enjoying fine dining there is a place for everyone.

Yarra's welcoming and diverse community is an attraction we need to nurture. We have some of the most established LGBTIQ+ entertainment venues and we need to work hard to ensure we maintain safe spaces for all our community and those who visit us.

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

I play cricket with the Clifton Hill Cricket Club (CHCC). Three years ago, a group of self-motivated and committed women came together and decided to self-organise the first women's cricket team in the 50-year existence of the CHCC. One day I was down at Rammo St and one of the founding women players and I had a chat. I joined the inaugural Women's First XI.

Three years and three grand finals later I am Vice Captain of the second Women's XI and we have a thriving junior girls competition. I have found a great community in the cricket club and want to extend this welcoming

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approach to all, regardless of ability or means, to participate in the sport or recreational pursuit they choose.

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

The re-development of the Sambell Lodge aged care facility is an important part of Yarra. Advocating for change is not simply about saying you will support an important issue but acting. As a Labor party member, I supported the progression of this re-development through VCAT.

Now, as we take stock of where we are in COVID the importance of facilities like Sambell Lodge that provide a safe haven for our vulnerable people are amplified. In other development proposals I have supported the inclusion of affordable housing in Yarra and should I be elected, will continue to do so.

I have engaged a group of LGBTIQ people and businesses located in the Yarra City Council to make a submission to the Whole of Victorian Government LGBTIQ Strategy and the Yarra LGBTIQ+ Strategy. As Yarra develops, we need to maintain the diversity and heritage that makes Yarra a welcoming place. I will engage with local communities to progress these opportunities.

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

I have attended Council meetings to observe how council officers operate and have chatted to council workers at the recycling depot, those who water our trees, mow our lawns or run our leisure facilities. I am an avid reader and have used our libraries extensively.

Before our last lockdown we were fortunate enough to have a [#BingeBundles](#) delivery from our fabulous [#YarraLibraries](#). For me,

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books are crucial to understanding how the world is for people whose life experiences I do not share. Our libraries provide the community with so many opportunities to learn, to convene, and to explore.

The [#BingeBundles](#) our Yarra libraries have organised through the temporary closure period have provided much needed support for those who are learning and for those who seek an escape. Our libraries and librarians have done a fantastic job adapting to changing circumstances and keeping us connected. As a Councillor I will work hard to keep our libraries as the vibrant spaces they are and accessible to everyone in our community.

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

Participatory engagement is key to decision-making at council.

Significantly, the Traditional Owners and broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities provide us with knowledge and guidance and this enduring contribution is a significant element of Yarra.

In so many ways our homes and our community define us. Community is about residents feeling an emotional attachment and belonging and local government is an important place shaper in this context. How our community interacts with council is important to how we develop Yarra as a welcoming and diverse place to live, work and visit.

Community associations are important conduits between council and residents. Community associations shape priorities for council and open up spaces for conversations, debate and importantly the development of respectful and lasting relationships.

I will make myself available to community members to discuss issues and navigate ways through council processes so that people's voices are heard.

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

As outlined above participatory engagement is a key process for listening to residents, understanding priorities, planning for change and developing risk management strategies for contingencies that may arise over the next four years.

I will engage with our representative groups in various forms to ensure people with diverse interests and abilities are included. This includes the use of newsletters, listening posts, online and face to face forums. The key to these interactions are genuine engagements such that a respectful exchange of ideas can occur.

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

This new council will likely be sworn in as we begin to come out of COVID. The pandemic has changed the way we live, work and play. While it has presented us with many challenges it also presents us with opportunities. Listening to how residents see ways in which Yarra can re-build will be a priority for me.

Maintaining and building our important services is another key focus for me. Working across all levels of government to attract funding for local services will assist us in providing jobs and spaces for people to come together socially and for our traders to begin the re-building process.

Engaging our young people in activities that assist in developing their leadership, problem-solving and relationship building skills is a further focus.

Healthy living is a priority for me. Connecting our bicycle paths to provide safe access for cyclists and pedestrians is an issue I am passionate about. I have announced that should I be elected I will work with the community and member for Northcote Kat Theophanous and

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the Minister for Transport to complete the Farm Road link in Alphington on the Darebin-Yarra Trail.

For a full suite of policies please see Yarra Labor's commitments to the community - <https://yarralabor.org/>

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?

All the issues mentioned by the Fitzroy Residents Association are key to a vibrant Yarra. Yarra has over 40 strategy documents that directly address issues that are important to Yarra.

From a high-level perspective, the council plan sets out the aspirations for Yarra. It will be the role of the newly sworn in council to consult with residents and traders to develop the new four year council plan. In this regard the development of this key strategy is an important document containing the overarching direction Yarra will take after the 2020 election.

Policy and guidelines set out how councillors are required to conduct themselves. The code of conduct for councillors and internal codes of conduct set standards. Local government is consistently the most trusted level of government (<https://cpd.org.au/2017/12/what-do-australians-want-discussion-paper-december-2017/>) and for good reason. People feel connected to those whom they can identify with in their community. People rely on their local government to pick up their bins, fix the potholes or create the business opportunities that provide

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jobs and shopping and social experiences. This trust is reinforced by residents knowing there are expectations of councillors and council officers.

In this sense policies and guidelines provide clarity to those who interact with council. Similarly, council personnel also have certainty as to their rights to respectful treatment. These are foundation documents that reinforce fair and equitable treatment for all.

A second priority for me is homelessness and social issues. In Yarra we have a proud history of inclusiveness. I will continue Yarra's support for our diverse community by advocating for more affordable housing. I will work with communities to develop programs identified to improve social connections such as homework clubs that encourage our young people to learn in supportive environments. Our child care centres provide much needed assistance that enable our residents to work.

I will continue to work with local groups to address other issues such as working with the community in a deliberate and strategic way to manage graffiti and ensure our vibrant street art continues to be a feature of Yarra.

I fully endorse Yarra's climate emergency plan. I will work with council to meet the targets set out in the plan. Moreover, I will work with local groups to continue to improve Yarra's response to addressing climate action. I support the 'development contributions plan' that applies a levy on new residential, commercial and industrial development. In addition, I will advocate for green spaces in development applications.

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

At a micro level local government plays a central role in service delivery. At a macro level, state and federal governments provide funding for these services. The relationships between all levels of government are thus critical to council acting in the best interests of the community.

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During this campaign I hosted an event with Terry Moran AC to discuss what a Yarra post COVID-19 recovery could look like. I was motivated to get such an eminent thinker as Terry as I believe local government are well suited to identify and deliver the services our people need.

Local government can contribute to a jobs led COVID recovery by developing strong partnerships with government in service delivery. Local employment can also create more income for our traders and revive our local shopping strips and activity centres. And these achievements must be underpinned by decent work. For those in their 20s and 30s insecure work, wage theft and underemployment has been their experience. We need to change this and local government can provide a way out.

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

Yarra is in a unique position to work collaboratively with other councils to share knowledge and contribute to place making programs. As mentioned previously I have committed to work with others to build bicycle infrastructure that shares boundaries with other councils. Working with other councils to improve the physical environment for all Victorians is the responsible thing to do.

Addressing increased housing stock is another area where I believe councils can work collaboratively to achieve change. Yarra has developed a social and affordable housing policy (<https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/about-us/social-policy-and-demographics/social-and-affordable-housing>) which I endorse. If elected I will work with other councils to share the knowledge and lessons of Yarra's commitment to caring for some of our more vulnerable citizens so that we improve the lives and well-being of all Victorians.