



## Gabrielle de Vietri

Greens Candidate for Yarra  
Langridge ward

E: gabrielle.devietri@vic.greens.org.au  
P: 0422741940  
FB: @gabrielle.de.vietri  
W: <https://greens.org.au/vic/lga/yarra>

### **Q1. Why have you decided to stand for the Yarra City Council?**

The City of Yarra has sustained me in so many ways - it inspired me as a young emerging artist; it supported me as a sometimes-struggling parent; my community uplifted me through ordinary days, through celebrations and through grief; the river has replenished and restored me. I feel so lucky to live in such a wonderful place, but as urban density increases, as we feel the effects of climate change, and as we struggle to recover from the pandemic, we need bold, principled and optimistic action from our local representatives.

I've worked on community campaigns, on creative projects of social transformation and as a paralegal helping refugees navigate their way through Australia's immigration system. I am running for Council so that I can contribute to positive, meaningful change that you can see and feel. I want to give back to Yarra, to help grow and nourish our communities, to make this a city where no-one is left behind and to protect our precious urban ecology that gives everything life.

### **Q2. Are you a member or supporter of a local group or organisation?**

I am a co-director of A Centre for Everything, an independent platform for creative, political community-building in Collingwood. I have exhibited in and co-managed not-for-profit artist spaces across the City of Yarra. I volunteer for Refugee Legal, Collingwood, providing services to refugees and people seeking asylum.

I am also a member of PBS Radio, Bicycle Network; a Champion with Streets Alive Yarra; a member of Yarra Riverkeeper; a board member of CLIMARTE and a committee member of Victorian Women Lawyers.

### **Q3. Have you been a participant in a local project or campaign?**

I'm proud to have been involved in the successful community mobilisation against the East-West toll road. In collaboration with other community members, I organised local protest actions, safety training, legal workshops, non-violent direct action workshops and community discussions to prevent the toll road and increase public transport.

As an artist and community organiser, I have organised and held Yarra-based events leading creative climate change and human rights activism. I organised the Art / Politics / Action symposium which saw artists from around the world converge in Yarra for seminars, workshops, presentations and collaboration.

Earlier this year, between lockdowns, Sophie Wade (who is now a fellow Greens candidate in Nicholls ward) and I petitioned Yarra Council to expand the footpath on Smith St, to allow for outdoor dining, safer pedestrian, public transport and bike access, and more street trees.

#### **Q4. What experiences have you had with the Yarra City Council?**

My first interaction with a Councillor was as a resident in relation to inappropriate development in the area over a decade ago. I was astounded that a Councillor (it was Amanda Stone) would spend so much time consulting with me with what was a comparatively minor issue. That interaction gave me insight into the incredibly generous ways in which Councillors can connect with and support residents.

As an artist for the last 15 years, I have received support from the City of Yarra to create work, present exhibitions and hold events. The City of Yarra was also instrumental in bolstering the community's fight to preserve the Keith Haring mural, in which I was involved. The City of Yarra also supported a public event that I organised and convened at the Melba Spiegeltent, in my role as an artist and community organiser.

Council's transport planning and advocacy has been very important to me over the years. As a cyclist, I feel grateful to the Council every time I notice an upgrade to local cycling lanes! I was in frequent communication with the Council during the community fight against the East-West toll road, and the City of Yarra's strong representation of residents was instrumental in the success of this community campaign.

I feel proud to live in such a progressive area, but having attended many Council meetings, I feel that there is space for more collaborative and ambitious actions. I have the energy and the dedication to strengthen that progressive legacy.

#### **Q5. What role does the community play in council decision making? How can this be made more effective? and Q6. How do you propose to communicate with the community if elected as a councilor?**

We are lucky to have incredibly democratic decision-making processes at the local government level. Thanks to Greens on Council, meetings are live streamed, community members can speak with councillors directly, participate in feedback surveys before, during and after decisions are made, they can ask questions, make submissions and speak at Council meetings.

However, recent issues have revealed that for some areas of the community, there is a gap in accessing those democratic processes, and I believe that the Community Engagement Strategy goes some way in addressing those lapses in communication. We need accessible,

linguistically and technologically diverse outreach with community members to invite them to contribute not just when there is a problem but in developing the liveability of our city.

Yarra Greens have established weekly online listening posts so that we can hear from and respond to residents about what is important to you. If elected, I would continue regular drop-in sessions to stay in touch with community concerns and community needs. I'd also love to see more forms of deliberative democracy - citizen panels, local panels for local problems, more transparent democracy, and an education and access campaign to let residents know that they can be involved in the key decisions about their local area.

#### **Q.7. What are your priorities if elected to the Council?**

1. A priority is to make Yarra a place where everyone can walk, ride or wheel to where they need to go, with safe and accessible pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and an expanded urban forest. Yarra must develop a bold and future-proof Integrated Transport Plan, and actively preempt the increase in private transport uptake when COVID restrictions ease. I support an integrated network of best-practice protected bike lanes, 20-minute neighbourhoods, 30km zones, traffic filtering and calming mechanisms, the allocation of street space for pocket parks and increased bike parking. I will strongly advocate to the State Government to commit to building a fit-for-purpose bridge at Walmer Street, and to complete the Gipps St ramp project.
2. I will support our local communities to build back better during and after the pandemic. That includes supporting our local business communities by revitalising our high streets with creative celebrations, outdoor dining, wider footpaths and accessible public transport. It includes advocating for our public housing communities so that they can access the services they need, are protected by a Charter of Rights and their issues addressed by a dedicated Public Housing Ombudsman. It also includes support for our creative communities, with more and better funding for artists and arts organisations, the activation of our local streets with festivals and cultural events, and investment in large scale creative projects to draw visitors and stimulate our communities.
3. I will work hard to create a climate-safe future through a quick and fair transition to renewable energy, fossil-free transport and a circular economy. Climate emergency planning touches all areas of local government's operations, and will be considered in every decision I make.

#### **Q8. The FRA has identified the following key priority areas**

- **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 of these priorities are critical for Yarra Council as we grow and change.

### Climate Action

Thanks to Greens on Council, Yarra has declared a climate emergency, but the actions under the first year of the plan have been deferred due to COVID expenses. Greens on Council will ensure that having declared an emergency, the Council continue to treat it as such. I will ensure that climate action is adequately addressed at the first budget review, and that its considerations are incorporated into planning decisions and reform, in decisions around transport and placemaking, in advancing the waste revolution, and in creating more open spaces and tree canopy. Mitigating and building resilience to climate change must go hand in hand with our recovery from COVID.

### Planning Permit Information and Advocacy

Part of the role of a Councillor is to direct residents to appropriate channels of information within Council. In the planning arena, there is also much to be done to ensure that the planning process supports local residents. As it currently is, the process is lawyer- and developer-friendly, and does not permit Council to adequately support the interests of people or the environment. I will advocate for planning reform to redress this imbalance.

### Heritage Protection and Conservation

The cultural heritage in Yarra is deep and diverse. This area is of great significance firstly to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, and continues its cultural significance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including the local Parkies. The public housing community in Atherton Gardens has applied to list the buildings for their cultural significance, and to prevent the threat of further sell-offs of public housing property or demolition by the State Government. And the World Heritage Environs Area which includes the Royal Exhibition Buildings and Carlton Gardens is a beautiful artefact which needs protection and conservation.

In a more general sense, I am keenly aware that there is a great deal of tension between accommodating new development as urban density increases, and preserving the heritage of Yarra. I will work diligently to represent the community's interests, preserve the things we love about Yarra, and to help shape a growing city.

### Yarra Council Strategy, Policy and Guidelines

Proper processes, adherence and understanding of the local and state policies that underpin decisions, and respect for those processes and guidelines by Councillors is essential to a well functioning and collaborative representative team.

The Yarra Greens are keen to develop a long-term 20 year vision and plan for Yarra in collaboration with the community. This will help shape and guide decisions now that will have a lasting impact on our collective future. A long term vision is critical as our population grows and as we face the challenges of climate change.

### Homelessness and Social Issues

I will work to make housing more affordable for everyone in Yarra, to reduce homelessness and support those living on low incomes. The Yarra Greens will advocate to the State Government to:

- build more and better public housing to accommodate the 80,000 people currently on the waiting list;
- establish a charter of rights for public housing tenants

- Maintain and upgrade existing public housing, ensuring that residents have enough space to live in and that amenities are in good, functioning order;
- Ensure that our multicultural communities and public housing residents have access to high quality, culturally and linguistically appropriate services in collaboration with Council and community organisations.

Additionally, we will:

- Promote the importance of significant open space in public housing estates;
- Oppose any selling-off, redevelopment or privatisation of public housing by the State Government, including the conversion of public housing into social housing;
- Promote tenant participation in decisions about public housing services.

The Yarra Greens policies that address these priorities can be found here:

<https://greens.org.au/vic/lga/yarra>

## **Q9. What should be the role of Yarra City Council in relation to State and Commonwealth governments?**

There are so many opportunities for advocacy to the State and Federal governments, and advocacy is a crucial part of the Council's role.

I will advocate for planning reform so that development better meets the needs of the community and the environment. I will advocate to mandate and enforce ambitious environmental standards for new developments, including

- meaningful on-site renewable energy generation, building efficiency;
- maximum parking provisions, secure bike parking, electric charging facilities;
- more green space, water harvesting, organic waste handling and better recycling.

I will make principled decisions that shape and support a growing city, while addressing the urgent responsibility to keep global warming in check.

Other opportunities for advocacy are in stopping the sell-off of Yarra's public housing and pushing for more and better public housing for the many thousands of people on the waiting list. I will advocate to state and federal governments for legislative reform to reduce and prevent gambling harm. I will advocate for a huge State investment in more recycling facilities at a state-wide level, and for the State Government to fund a metropolitan bike strategy.

## **Q10. What relationship should the Yarra City Council have with neighbouring councils?**

I am excited to work with our neighbouring Councils to develop strong action and advocacy networks in arenas such as climate change, active transport, planning, biodiversity and in caring for our waterways.

Councils are in a strong position to collectively advocate for stronger climate action at State and Federal Government levels, as well as demonstrate the benefits and pathways in reaching a climate-safe future. I look forward to working on this with Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action, a collective of nine councils.

To streamline and improve our state bicycle network, we need collaboration and communication between municipalities, especially on key projects such as rebuilding the Walmer Street bridge.