

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)

As I have been a part of the everchanging and cosmopolitan Fitzroy area, I have come to appreciate the importance of community interaction and sharing views with the local residents. I would love to be part of Yarra's progress and decision making.

I grew up in Abbotsford during the 60's and I am still working and running businesses in Fitzroy and Collingwood. One of my business ventures was starting up a restaurant in Brunswick Street that has become an iconic landmark for over 30 years. I believe that I have the right background and foresight to action changes especially supporting our vibrant small businesses and protecting our heritage laneways and buildings.

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

I have been a member of the Fitzroy Residents Association for a few years and admire the groups' knowledge and determination to protect Yarra.

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

My main project involvement was my objection in 2014 of an illegal take-over of a council laneway/thoroughfare by two wealthy businesses. I rallied support from locals to stop Council from subsequently selling the laneway to the illegal occupants. I have just been informed that after a 6 year battle of appeals in the Supreme court, it has dismissed the hearing and the laneway will be re-opened to the public.

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

In the 40 years of running businesses here in Fitzroy & Collingwood, I have had numerous dealings with Council for a wide variety of issues including: planning, renovations, liquor licensing and footpath trading permits. Also, an objection for the removal of a crossover in front of our property which forced us to engage a consultant in order to avoid being charged for it. Another issue was the request by council to remove an iconic sign on our building which had been there for approx. 30 years which we again contested and finally saved the sign.

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

Currently, I believe the community still does not play a major role in the decision making even though it is encouraged for residents to question and put in submissions.

From my experience, it is made more effective by having representation by influential and knowledgeable people and community groups that will persistently voice the issue.

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

There are numerous avenues for communication and regular updates that I will endeavor to make available to suit everyone. For example, direct telephone line, emails, zoom meetings, facebook and other social media platforms.

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

First, in this tough period of Covid I would never allow rate rises. I want to help businesses get back on their feet by the waiver of business trading permits such as footpath trading, liquor licensing etc and help employ locals, especially the young.

Secondly, tougher control measures to save our heritage buildings and preserve our history and "laneways"! (Illegal demolitions should be more severely punished than just 'a slap on the wrist' or fined, in order to try to deter this from happening).

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Of course transparency will be another priority together with the current issues as well. Better and more informed consultations are needed with the residents on every issue before the implementation of those changes are made by council.

I look forward to working with other councillors on all issues.

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?

Heritage Protection & Conservation together with Planning permits are a concern of mine due to the need to keep the character of our municipality and the prevention of further sales of our heritage laneways and the demolition of our old buildings. Perhaps some sort of an incentive strategy from council would encourage developers to actually practice the environmental sustainable requirements.

I will be working very closely with other councillors who have more experience with addressing the serious issues of homelessness and climate action in Yarra.

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

I will need to look into this more deeply, however, I believe that local councils should work together with State & Commonwealth governments. One area that concerns me is that the State government appears to favor major developments which restricts Yarra council's ability to object to unsuitable developments especially when we are trying to protect our characteristic heritage areas and buildings.

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

It is vital for Yarra council to work closely with other leading councils to have the power to lobby State and Federal Governments as well as on issues such as amending planning schemes and carbon emissions across Victoria.