

## Borough of Queenscliffe Questions - Isabelle Tolhurst

Prior to Webinar via email:

**1. What skills do you bring to the role of Councillor – skills that would make you a good representative for the Borough of Queenscliffe?**

If elected, I will bring a fresh perspective and independent thinking to the Council. Through my professional work as a writer and editor I have developed strong communication and collaboration skills which I believe will support me in achieving my vision of a more consultative and collaborative Council. I have good project and time management skills, have managed large budgets, and can work with a range of stakeholders to deliver outcomes to deadline.

**2. In your view, what are the key matters that the Bellarine community want addressed in the Distinctive Areas and Landscapes (DAL) Statement of Planning Policy, and as a Councillor, how would you support the community in having these matters appropriately addressed?**

Some key issues that emerge from the DAL SPP are below, with my approach to having them addressed if elected:

- **Concerns about overdevelopment** - If elected, I will work with community to ensure that planning mechanisms and controls minimise overdevelopment, protect our unique heritage and environment, but still support population growth
- **Protecting habitat** - If elected I will support community-led action on environmental management, ensuring sites of environmental significance can be preserved and enhanced over time
- **Greater recognition of Wadawurrung people, accurately recognising our dual history.** If elected, I would support deep collaboration with Traditional Owner groups to determine culturally appropriate ways of recognising sites, Elders and stories of significance

**3. The Borough is unique in terms of heritage, its current economic situation, and limits on its income. What do you see as its priorities in the next four years, and how would you work to address these?**

Some top priorities for the Borough of Queenscliffe in the next four year term are:

- **Improving community consultation and increasing council transparency.** If elected, I will bring the community in from the inception of ideas, plans and proposals, and suggest making changes to the way community can engage with Council at monthly meetings. A new council has the capacity to amend the governance rules which dictate the procedure for managing questions from the public, and I believe this needs urgent redress to ensure there is productive debate and exchange between council and community.
- **Supporting our community to emerge from COVID in a position to thrive.** If elected I will push for the Community Grants scheme to be reinstated, even increased, to ensure that community organisations and arts projects survive COVID and beyond. I will look to extend

fee discounts or waivers for traders and local businesses, ensuring they can get back on their feet with ease.

- **Taking action and backing community-led action on climate change and environmental management.** If elected, I will support the implementation of the Climate Emergency Response Plan as core council business. I will also urge council to join the Australian Coastal Councils Association, which is the only body to represent coastal councils at a federal level.
- **Protecting cultural heritage.** If elected I will celebrate and protect our heritage by seeking to develop strong shared spaces strategies. These can activate spaces so that our history is preserved while our futures enriched. For me, cultural heritage also includes recognition of, and collaboration with, Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung people, and I look forward to increasing their role in telling the story and identity of this place.

**4. What do you see as the key actions which the Borough of Queenscliffe can take to prepare the community for the impacts of climate change and sea level rise?**

I am committed to taking action on climate change in pursuit of the Borough being a leader in this area. Some key actions I would take are:

- Implement the Climate Emergency Response Plan as core council business.
- Join the [Australian Coastal Councils Association](#)
- Support uptake and rollout of renewable energy sources in pursuit of carbon neutrality.
- Ensure the Community Vision, required under the LGA 2020, captures the community's aspirations for community-led climate action.
- Collaborate with other councils, Traditional Owners, community groups, businesses and schools so the Borough becomes a climate action leader.

**5. Management of the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve is especially significant to Borough residents. What do you see as the way forward?**

I see the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve as an area of immense opportunity for the Borough and our community. The way forward should respect agreed planning and heritage applications but consider that this is a site that the community expects action on. With better consultation and input from a broad group, I believe this space can serve the community, attract visitors and celebrate our cultural heritage in a genuinely unique way.

**6. My question is to all candidates and is for them to nominate their top priority climate emergency initiative for the Borough?**

If elected, my top priority for responding to the climate emergency we are faced with is to see that the Climate Emergency Response Plan is implemented as core council business. If implemented this way, forming a key consideration

**7. We like councillors to provide an independent, locally based commitment to matters in the Borough. We also do not want our council to be used as a training opportunity for aspiring State and Federal party politicians. We seek assurance from you on these points and then ask: Are you or have you ever been a member of or are you in any way linked with any political**

party?

I am an independent and if elected will bring a fresh perspective and independent thinking to council matters. I have no aspirations for state or federal level politics and was previously a member of the Greens party.

**8. How will you expedite action to implement the plans for the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve?**

I am committed to ensuring the implementation of plans for the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve meets community expectations in regards to deadlines while also ensuring this process is thorough and consultative. The benefits of expediting this action should be considered in light of COVID - and thinking about how the space can serve the community, attract visitors and celebrate our cultural heritage simultaneously.

**9. A number of candidates reference the importance of the 'community' and listening to the community. What specific ways or forums will you involve and actively engage the community in a participatory democracy setting that promotes good community interaction and decision making?**

If elected, one specific way I will seek to actively engage the community in participatory democracy is by proposing the Council take questions without notice in monthly meetings. A new council has the capacity to amend the governance rules which dictate the procedure for managing questions from the public, and I believe this needs urgent redress to ensure there is productive debate and exchange between council and community. Submissions to council on projects and plans should also be made publicly available for review to increase transparency. I would like to be part of a change where Council is seen as a true collaboration of community. As per my campaign, in which I have listened deeply to the concerns of thousands of residents, if elected, I will listen and I will act.

**10. What do candidates see as the important heritage issues in the Borough and what specific heritage support or programs will you provide in your role as councillor?**

I am committed to supporting programs that protect and celebrate the heritage of the Borough of Queenscliffe, including the Queenscliffe Heritage Advisory Service and the Queenscliffe Heritage Restoration Fund. The Heritage Review of 2019 provided an important opportunity for the community to learn about heritage but also identified that heritage is a range of elements that make our Borough special - landscapes, buildings, people, environments. Where heritage programs celebrate this, and include recognition of Traditional Owners, I support them.

**11. In a rate capping environment where do see council making efficiencies and savings and in particular whether you have a set of financial skills or understandings of the budgetary processes?**

One area I believe council could make savings in is by reducing the use of external consultants. One benefit of our small community is the ability to engage people and understand perspectives with

relative ease. In terms of financial skills and understanding of budgetary process, I currently work at a not-for-profit running a national media program for young people which requires collaborative development of strategy and management of budget with executive directors and our CEO. Formerly I worked for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, supporting the roll-out of a \$190 million international volunteer program with staff and volunteers in 26 countries across the Indo-Pacific. I believe this experience positions me well for the role of councillor.

**12. Planning is such an important element of the Borough work. What is your attitude to the current planning controls in the Borough?**

Planning controls and systems should serve the history, heritage and environmental distinctiveness of the Borough while allowing for growth and accommodating the needs of the community now and into the future. Any changes to planning controls should consider that they set a precedence

**13. Council seems to not have community consultation 'not quite right' - ie. Destination Queenscliff, R.V Dump point . The result being much community angst and ultimately wasted finances that could have been put to better use. What actions can you commit to better Community Consultation?**

If elected, I am committed to engaging the community from the inception of plans and projects. I would also like to see community consultation improved by changing how council engages with the public in monthly meetings. The new council has the capacity to amend the governance rules which dictate the procedure for meetings. Better community consultation could also be achieved by using a range of methods and technologies to engage people - phone, online surveys, town halls, letter drops - and meeting people where they are able to contribute.

**14. The Borough is unique - Australia wide - for Heritage attributes. Can you commit to a strengthening of Heritage Protections if you are elected?**

I am committed to protecting and celebrating the heritage of the Borough of Queenscliffe, including recognition of and collaboration with Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung people. To me, history and heritage are living, and our heritage sites and places of significance can be deeply enhanced by community use. This is a special part of our identity and should be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

**15. I would like to know if your focus as a councillor would be on global warming and climate change? Or on traditional council achievement targets such as management of rate spending, our beaches, roads, parks and gardens and delivery of community services?**

For me, these issues aren't mutually exclusive. The maintenance and improvement of traditional council areas like roads, rates, rubbish can be addressed and indeed improved through the lens of environmental sustainability. The protection of beaches, parks and gardens should absolutely be considered in the context of a changing environment due to climate change. With this lens, we can also likely deliver long-term cost efficiencies. Overall, if elected, I am committed to delivering outcomes for the Borough across all these areas.

- 16. As COVID restrictions ease, hopefully in the coming weeks, we can expect many more Victorians visiting and holidaying our coastal areas. We expect the numbers to be far higher than past years as travel restrictions will continue for some time. This may create an opportunity for local businesses to recoup from the harsh economic year 2020 has delivered. The flip side of this is increased pressure on the environment and community, especially our beautiful beaches. Respect for by-laws by locals and visitors alike is essential to protect the fragile environment we all adore. Would candidates like to comment on how they would approach the balance between respecting and protecting local coming and environment while at the same time encouraging visitors to the area?**

If elected, I will propose Council create a Community Safety Strategy which considers the wellbeing of our people, but also our environment, during what is likely to be a time of heightened visitation as COVID restrictions ease across the state. As it pertains to protection of the environment, this could include increased signage of delicate or protected environments, extended communication with community and visitors about the importance of our environment and landscape, and, if resources permit, increased patrols to ensure by-law compliance.

- 17. Non-resident ratepayers contribute a large proportion of rates. How will candidates improve communication and involvement with this important sector of our community?**

If elected, I am committed to improving communication and consultation with all our community, including non-resident ratepayers, who comprise a significant part of the Borough's people. This could be achieved by meeting people on the platforms and spaces where they are most able and likely to engage, and using a range of methods - phone calls, online surveys, town halls, letter drops, Zoom meetings - to ensure there is more equitable communication and participation.

- 18. The ONE3225 - a boundary change - has been discussed on and off for several council terms. It is not being mentioned tonight. Where will it come in the list of priorities?**

My understanding is that the various elements of a boundary change - cost, benefit, timeframes etc. - are currently being considered by the Victorian Government's Essential Services Commission. If elected, I am open to this being made a priority should the community see it as a pressing issue needing action.

- 19. Given that the council has declared a Climate Emergency and have committed to developing a climate Emergency response plan in partnership with the community after receiving a petition signed by over 1000 residents, would you if elected fully support this process?**

Yes. If elected I am fully committed to implementing the CERP as core business. I would like to see the Borough of Queenscliffe become a leader in climate change action and ensure the preservation of this place for many future generations.

- 20. We need a collaboration between the past and future. We need a long term vision to stimulate our local economy and engage the community. How do you plan to achieve this?**

By consulting with our community to understand what their needs and ambitions are out of COVID. By ensuring that the Community Vision - an essential part of the Local Government Act 2020 - reflects our community's aspirations. By exploring options to celebrate our cultural heritage and history by imbuing it with more modern parts of the Borough's identity - arts, food, retail, literature, music. If elected I would love to contribute to the development of a shared space strategy that engages the community, attracts visitors and celebrates what makes us unique. I believe that by preserving and protecting our past we can enrich our future.

**21. Assuming that you are interested in the heritage issues in Queenscliffe, what are your thoughts on the recently published Heritage Review by Lovell Chen?**

I am committed to protecting the heritage of the Borough, but have not read the Lovell Chen Heritage Review. If elected, I will seize the opportunity to expand my knowledge on the heritage of our town.

**22. Major strength of Queenscliffe is it's Heritage. The proposed Hub does not seem to feed into this objective. The site is such a pivotal opportunity to enhance Heritage. What are your views?**

This is one I would like to hear from you on! Excluding concerns about the removal of a 24-hour access toilet, how would you like to see heritage enhanced in the Hub? Noting the plans attempt to preserve and celebrate as part of the design.

**23. Would you consider using the talent in our community rather than spending money on consultants who are not actually familiar with our Borough?**

Yes. I believe one of the benefits of being a small community is the ability to engage them and ensure that projects and plans reflect the wants and needs of community. There is enormous experience and expertise in our community and if elected, I look forward to using it to contribute to the betterment of the Borough.

**24. You all talk community ....our largest demo group, and pay the most rates, what then is there is a priority for our + 65 year old rate payers?**

I am committed to delivering outcomes for all members of our community, including of course, those over 65 years.

**25. A solar park in Murray road? What is this? Has our local community been consulted?**

I am not aware that this is a project that has been confirmed or progressed.

**26. What is the one project / cause you will champion if elected?**

If elected, I will champion the reinstating and reimagining of the Borough's Community Grants scheme. This scheme should support community organisations and arts projects through COVID and beyond, so they are in a place to thrive when restrictions ease.

**27. What reporting mechanisms would you put in place to improve accountability and tracking of progress to the community on Council plans and commitments?**

If elected, I am committed to increasing council transparency and improving community consultation. The Local Government Act 2020 mandates that community accountability and engagement policies be implemented to govern the term of councillors, which is a strong step towards improved accountability.

**28. Regarding Swan Bay, what actions would you undertake to prevent it drying up in years to come?**

The protection and preservation of Swan Bay should be considered as part of the council's overall environmental and sustainability policies, and aided by the implementation of the Climate Emergency Response Plan. Specific actions should be determined by engaging community, experts and Traditional Owners this unique environment is protected.

**29. What would be your strategies to provide inclusiveness, and support, to the local LGBTQIA community?**

I am a signatory to the Rainbow Local Government campaign and committed to fostering a Borough that is inclusive, responsible and accessible to LGBTQIA+ people. Strategies to achieve this could include starting an LGBTQIA+ reference or advisory group to council, flying the rainbow flag, and promoting LGBTQIA+ awareness days.

*Should voters want to chat further about anything mentioned here, I welcome the opportunity to chat on [isabelletolhurst2020@gmail.com](mailto:isabelletolhurst2020@gmail.com) or 0423 777 904.*