

Questions for Borough Candidates.

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?

I bring my legal expertise and strong management, communication and teamwork skills to the role.

I am currently working part time as a Legal Manager for Property and Strategy at a large international healthcare company and am a former Senior Associate from one of Melbourne's largest law firms.

My expertise is in areas of law core to Council's functioning including property, development and construction, and I have a special interest in planning and environmental issues.

I manage a team and am responsible for legal property risk for the company's Australian portfolio, which includes over 450 different sites. I collaborate well with others to get transactions done particularly under time pressures and communicate effectively particularly when providing advice, negotiating and drafting documents.

Essentially I am the company's representative and advocate in its best interests, as I would the Borough if I were elected to Council.

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?

I am not fully across the intricacies of the DAL process to date, but understand the key matters to be:

- protecting our heritage, our natural environment and its biodiversity;
- enhancing our local economy, character of townships and transport options; and
- ensuring that development is controlled and in-keeping with current landscapes.

I would support these being addressed in the DAL by, as is appropriate:

- drawing on my experience as a property lawyer and in acting for different Government agencies;
- advocating for these matters to be fully incorporated into the DAL;
- ensuring that the DAL is properly incorporated into our Planning Scheme and making any other necessary changes to our Planning Scheme; and
- ensuring that Council makes decisions and takes action in accordance with the DAL.

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?

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I don't think we need any new major projects - the Borough is pretty great as it is - but we do need to focus on protecting, and building on, what we have.

I believe we need to keep the momentum going with the community-led Climate Emergency Response Plan. In particular, I am keen to see:

- new target dates for both the Council and the community to achieve carbon net-zero emissions;
- a greater conversion to renewables and storage; and
- a further switch to electric vehicles and the installation of electric vehicle charging stations in public spaces.

I think we also need:

- further revegetation and conservation initiatives;
- education for both locals and tourists, so we all take ownership in preserving our natural environment; and
- new recycling ideas like discounted compost bins for residents, or kerbside organic waste bins, and a split between plastics and glass.

To help our businesses and organisations recover from the economic impact of COVID-19, I suggest we could:

- follow-through with the proposed support and stimulus packages;
- cut red tape;
- support increased outdoor dining and establish greener spaces;
- help with COVID-safe plans;
- support our wonderful arts and cultural organisations; and
- advocate for new public transport options, like exploring whether the Port Phillip Ferry could continue on from Portarlington to Queenscliff.

I believe we should look to change the crossing on Hesse Street into a zebra crossing so pedestrians have right-of-way, and create more safe crossings around the Borough, particularly on the King Street/Flinders Street/Bellarine Highway stretch, as these roads can be treacherous for pedestrians, particularly for the nippers in summer.

For children, I think we also need:

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- an improved skate park;
- a new BMX track in a suitable location; and
- a designated space for our playgroups, the toy library and other activities.

A 24 hour toilet at the Hesse Street shops is likely a must, as are more dog bag dispensers in Queenscliff and bins in Point Lonsdale.

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 no climate change expert, but consider some of the key actions could be as follows:

- hold the line, with strategic planting of dune revegetation and seawall-type infrastructure (including around Swan Bay);
- avoid major development in low-lying areas;
- manage a strategic retreat from low-lying areas;
- carefully consider planning applications for alterations or extensions to existing buildings in the low-lying areas;
- ensure land use and development planning aligns with and integrates sustainable, resilient water management practices; and
- adapt to drought and the reduced availability of surface water and groundwater.

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

I suggest that Council could maintain the Reference Group during the entire planning and construction phases until all the restoration works are complete and reignite the Reference Group if any further changes or improvements are proposed to the site in the future (and if any audits of the site are considered necessary).

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

Top initiative is the reduction of Council's and community's carbon emissions to net zero.

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?

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I do not have any current aspirations to be a State or Federal politician.

I am happily employed part-time as a lawyer and am looking to be appointed as a Councillor to contribute to our great community.

I have never been a member of, or any way linked with, any political party.

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

I am not across the exact status of the project, but understand it is still in the statutory approvals stage.

If I am appointed to Council, I will look to have a briefing from the CEO to consider next steps.

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, I will finalise the new Community Engagement Policy required under the Local Government Act 2020 as a priority.

I am also keen to find new ways to engage with the community.

The Council's Facebook Page is great, but what about also using Instagram, Twitter and YouTube (for example, for updates on projects)?

I suggest we also look to potentially establish 5 x Advisory Groups, one for each of the current strategic objectives. Each group could consist of community members with appropriate expertise, representatives from relevant community organisations, Council staff and other interested persons. The groups could meet with the Councillor responsible for the particular portfolio every month and discuss current issues and possible outcomes.

Another idea is around key projects. Firstly, at the beginning of a certain major projects, we could hold specific workshops which include presentations from Council, expert guest speakers and open discussions with the community. And secondly, throughout projects, we could conduct regular webinars with project leads with Q&A sections and feedback opportunities.

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 believe we should give greater acknowledgement to our traditional owners, the Wadawurrung.

I support:

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- more acknowledgements of the Wadawurrung at events and Welcome to Country ceremonies;
- more indigenous events, like for National Reconciliation Week;
- education programs for our schools about the Wadawurrung, their culture and sites of significance;
- greater signage around the Borough noting our traditional owners and areas of significance;
- the use of more Aboriginal flags; and
- the use of Wadawurrung names for places and streets in the Borough.

A great suggestion was also made to me recently that we could design a new flag for the Borough, one that includes reference to our traditional owners and run this as part of a school competition so that children are educated about our traditional owners at the same time.

Our trees need to be looked after, that is why I will look to support further Avenue of Honour tree planting and the establishment of a significant tree register.

I believe we should also look to expand the use of our heritage buildings (in a controlled and protected way), so that we celebrate their historic value more and generate income to help maintain them in the future. For example, we could have greater tourism activities at Fort Queenscliff, the Maritime Museum and the Queenscliff Train Station, from modern interactive experiences to drinking and eating opportunities.

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?

I am not across the exact details of Council's spending, so cannot properly comment.

However, I understand that there may be an opportunity to save money on consultants' fees by ensuring full and effective community engagement upfront on any new projects and by drawing on the expertise we have in our local community.

I have good financial skills and budgetary understanding. In my role as Legal Manager for Property and Strategy, I am part of the team that delivers on property objectives to meet financial targets and am responsible for managing external legal spend across the property portfolio.

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

I have not had an opportunity to review the current planning controls in detail.

However, I support a review of the controls and where necessary, an update to ensure proper land uses, design and development in the Borough.

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

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wasted finances that could have been put to better use. What actions can you commit to better Community Consultation?

As above for my response to question 9.

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

Based on my current understanding of our heritage protections, yes.

Questions from the Webinar (unanswered)

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?

I think we can focus on both, particularly as they are not mutually exclusive.

I believe that taking action on climate change can have socio-economic benefits too.

For example:

- (a) by facilitating a greater switch to renewables, we can reduce electricity bills in the mid-to-long term;
 - (b) by planting more trees, we can improve the amenity and enjoyment of our parks and gardens; and
 - (c) by improving our paths and bike tracks in a bid to reduce motor vehicle use, we can encourage more people to undertake physical activity, lessen the health-damaging effects of air pollution and make the roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
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?

Finding the right balance is essential.

For our environment, I think we can look for ways to bring tourists (as well as locals) along on the journey, with:

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- (a) better education and signage about the peninsula's environmental and biodiversity values and the importance of protecting it – for example, around the habitats for rare and endangered birds and what happens if rubbish ends up in our oceans;
- (b) giving local accommodation providers information on our environment which they can pass onto their guests; and
- (c) new environmental events for the Borough around say Earth Hour, Plastic Free July, National Threatened Species Day and Clean-Up Australia Day.

We also need more bins in public areas (particularly Point Lonsdale foreshore), more dog bag dispensers (particularly on Hesse Street) and greater signage about “what not to do”.

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

I am not sure whether Council already takes steps to specifically communicate and involve this part of the community.

If elected, I would need to investigate this further and obtain feedback from these ratepayers as to how they would like to hear from Council and participate in its operations.

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?

I am not fully across the history of this issue.

With limited knowledge, I think that the boundary extension would be a “nice to have” but is perhaps not essential to Council’s functioning.

I understand it was put on the back-burner in 2017, as Council was trying to weigh up whether the extension of the boundary would be worth it, in that whether the increase in rates Council would obtain would outweigh the costs Council would have to incur in managing the extended area and the potential risks to Council of being responsible for that extended area.

We could revisit the issue, factoring into the equation the benefit to the Borough of having all of Point Lonsdale within its boundary, in terms of community and environmental, planning and heritage controls.

In the meantime, Council could focus on (which it may already be doing):

- (a) having a strong working relationship with the Councillors of the Bellarine Ward of the City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) and the planners and environmental consultants at CoGG who are responsible for the balance of Point Lonsdale;
- (b) actively monitoring the management of the balance of Point Lonsdale and providing feedback where deemed appropriate and necessary; and

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(c) engaging in joint initiatives with CoGG in relation to Point Lonsdale as a whole, particularly with respect to environmental, planning and heritage matters.

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, I believe that mitigating and preparing for climate change is a top priority for the Borough.

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 ?

I think we need to focus on effective communication with our traders and community.

We will need to put in place a plan as to how we are going to bolster our local economy.

This will require some new ideas, perhaps some events which will be fun for the community too? What about:

- a Food & Wine Festival;
- a Fishing & Boating Expo;
- a Tour de Bellarine that ends in the Borough;
- a White Night;
- an Antique Fair;
- a Colour Run;
- a big outdoor screen that shows sports events like the Australian Open; and
- an outdoor theatre show in Summer?

I think we could capitalise on our heritage sites as mentioned in my answer to question 10.

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 believe that heritage issues are really important for the Borough.

However, I have not read this recent Heritage Review, but will look to review and consider it.

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?

Great question - I agree that a major strength of Queenscliffe is its heritage.

However, I have not had an opportunity to review the plans for the proposed Hub in detail as of yet to answer this question.

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

Definitely. Drawing on the expertise in our community should be one of our first options.

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

See above the suggested priorities outlined in my response to question 3, which will be, in the most part, a benefit to all of our community members.

25. A solar park in Murray road ? what is this ? has our local community been consulted?

I am not aware of this.

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

Action to mitigate and prepare for climate change.

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

I believe that the potential establishment of 5 x Advisory Groups referenced above in my response to question 9 could assist in improving accountability and tracking progress.

I think we could also have a “live” project database on Council’s website which is updated monthly and not only lists details about the projects with a current update (as it does now), but also has tracking against milestones and targets.

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

I would defer to experts on this.

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

A potential strategy could be the establishment of a LGBTQIA Steering Committee or Advisory Group to promote inclusion across the Borough including its businesses.

Thanks-you for attending the Webinar. The answers you provide will be posted on the relevant community Associations websites, and social media sites.

We would appreciate your answers by Friday the 16/10/20 – so we can post them up for voters.