

Darebin Council Elections 2020: Questions for Candidates

23rd September, 2020

Dear Candidate,

Below is a list of questions compiled on behalf of Darebin community groups; Darebin Progress Association, Darebin Residents Group, Save THE Preston Market and Darebin Appropriate Development Association.

The aim is to supply our members answers to question most important them in the hope it will aid their voting choices in the upcoming council election.

We have aimed to keep the impost on your time to a minimum by posing most questions for yes or no answers with some also asking how you might achieve the answer as a Councillor.

Your answers will be posted, unedited, on our websites and Facebook pages for maximum coverage to our members across Darebin.

Please leave a YES or a NO and remove or cross out the answer you don't want.

GENERAL RESPONSE

Name: Jim Shen

Ward: Central

Please tell us in 50 words the main reason you are running for Council and your top three issues you want council to adopt

I am running for Council because it is time to have fresh ideas from someone with a non-bureaucratic, objective and creative systematic problem-solving approach to issues. I believe that we need to start focusing on the people and depart from a vested interest driven approach to governance.

1. Saving the Preston Market - ensuring that the market stays the way we know it. Retaining the footprint, its heritage and local trader topography and character.
2. Ensuring that council prioritises economic recovery by strengthening its bread and butter responsibilities in services and jobs.

3. Strengthening planning controls and implementing greater community consultation.

GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

One of the glaring weaknesses of the majority of current councillors has been their inability/failure to accept that they represent the community. The following questions require a simple yes/no/how answer to demonstrate your commitment to important democratic procedures.

1. Will you support complete transparency in issues affecting the community?



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YES	
HOW?	
Reinstating previous objection processes to empower people to be part of decisions that affect them, review planning scheme and ensure public involvement.	

2. Would you guarantee regular meetings with the community by all means available?

YES	
HOW?	
set up regular meetings with community groups to discuss issues and plans, maintain open communication lines with community stakeholders	

3. Will you actively consult with community groups prior to any local by-laws being enacted?

YES	
HOW?	
maintaining open dialogue with community groups and ensuring transparency in council decision making processes	

4. Would you restructure Public Question Time to allow questions directly to Councillors?

YES	
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5. Will you support a review of the Council newsletter to make it more informative, regular and representative?

YES	
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6. Will you ensure Advisory Committees recommendations are heard in General Council meetings?

YES	
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7. Will you work for the community and not to serve any political party?

YES	
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8. Will you insist on an annual staff survey and make it available to the community?

YES	
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9. Will you listen to the Community's opinions when motions for spending and approvals for planning are brought before Council?

YES	
HOW?	As stated above, I will reinstate better objection and feedback processes. I propose to hold one community meeting a fortnight, with the first meeting of a month being for feedback & questions and the second being for response and discussion to reach resolutions.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Will you oppose the demolition and relocation of the Preston Market elsewhere on the site and actively support its retention?

YES	
HOW?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinstating height restrictions - push for development at High street end and immediate perimeter to be low height. - actively consult with traders to identify ways to appropriately support existing businesses - Integrate food market and vendors with local community organisations and businesses to create a more circular local economy. - Elevate and promote the markets cultural and heritage status - increase community stakehold in the market

2. Will you support mandatory heights limits be applied to the Preston Market site?

YES	
HOW?	expand the height restriction perimeter around the market.

3. Will you oppose the practice of trading off of objectives and standards, such as height limits in the planning scheme that can result in poorer outcomes but gets developments built in Darebin?

YES	
HOW?	Council needs to recognise and clearly establish its planning responsibilities to ensure appropriate developments and positive outcomes. We must start working towards improving our planning scheme but prioritise the Preston Market precinct as an urgent issue.

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4. Do you agree to a complete review of the Darebin Planning Scheme including consultation with community groups and members to ensure it is clearer in its intent, eg: applies mandatory heights to development plans, better protects neighbourhood character and increases neighbourhood residential zoning?

YES	
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5. Will you support the Open Space Levy and Developer Contribution Levy that adequately increases the amount of land dedicated to open space in order to meet the future needs of Darebin's growing population and ensure that the money is spent in the general locale of where the development occurs?

YES	
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HOW?

Increase Open Space Levy - asking for money from developers is never going to be an easy task, but we can certainly ask. In order for developers to be willing to pay the higher levy, they will want profit and for that to happen we need to have a clear understanding of our leverage. This means securing the market and finding whatever means we can to protect it from future development whilst ensuring that it flourishes economically. The Market is just one example; there are other areas to be looked at, such as the area around Northland.

6. Will you support a review of the Planning Committee Charter to give objectors more time to present their case, to allow at least one councillor to call up planning applications and release the agenda papers and reports at least seven days ahead of meetings and to allow residents to ask questions and make submissions?

YES	
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AGED CARE AND DISABILITY SERVICES

1. Will you support Council having an ongoing role in the direct delivery of home support care services to eligible older people and people with a disability in Darebin?

YES	
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2. Will you support Council subsidising the cost of home care services to eligible residents?

YES	
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3. Will you support Council continuing to directly deliver to eligible older residents and people with a disability the following :

● home support services;	YES	
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● personal care,	YES	
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● shopping,	YES	
● respite,	YES	
● food services,	YES	
● home care,	YES	
● community transport,	YES	
● home maintenance	YES	

4. Will you oppose further restrictions of eligibility criteria for home care services in Darebin?

YES	
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5. Will you agree to support Council becoming a registered home care provider?

YES	
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6. Will you agree to maintain at least \$6m in council co-funding for age care services and provide open financial reporting of aged care services?

YES	
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FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND SERVICES

1. Will you campaign and vote to provide more public facilities eg; toilet facilities, bins, footpaths upgrade, bike paths, Outdoor Gyms, upgrading parks, and regular removal of graffiti and litter in Darebin?

YES	
<p>HOW? My platform already includes closing the gap in terms of available open space in Preston East, the area I am running in. Part of that is maintaining a standard for all public facilities across Darebin. We need better plants that encourage local fauna and avifauna and encourage sustainability. We should work with local community groups to develop local work groups, which can be subsidised through extra funding to the community organisation involved. This will help instill community pride in facilities and encourage better public upkeep of them. Less money for contracting; more money for the community.</p>	

2. Will you vote for balanced services and equal spend across all of Darebin, particularly Reservoir, including rebuilding to the Reservoir Leisure Centre?

YES	
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3. Will you oppose unsubstantiated use of money spent on consultants?

YES	I would spend the money to ask the community, not those from outside paid to give an answer. Consultants should ONLY be used where there is a need for specialist expert opinion.
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4. Will you vote for more parking and vote against blanket parking restrictions?

YES	I want parking that reflects the needs of each given area.
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5. Will you support Council in making publically available more detailed financial reporting on departmental, program and project expenditure?

YES	Some people enjoy reading these reports more than novels.
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● ENVIRONMENT

1. Given that we are in a climate emergency and everyone; individuals, corporations and all three levels of government must be part of mitigation and adaptation, are you prepared to commit to strong action on global warming?

YES	
HOW?	Part of this is increasing the solar saver program and mandating energy ratings for new dwellings and buildings as well as exploring planning controls to ensure minimisation of carbon output.

2. Will you bring policies to Council that will make a real improvement at a local level to Darebin's environment and biodiversity?

YES	
HOW? (please provide examples)	Upgrading and maintaining existing open spaces to maximise local native flora Engage with Indigenous community to maintain best practices in maintenance of environment

3. Darebin Council set up both Climate Emergency Darebin and the Darebin Nature Trust as key initiatives very early in their term. What do you know about these two entities and their specific achievements?



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	Both groups have done well in raising awareness and increasing political focus on conservation.
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4. Have they been effective?

	NO - based on feedback from local conservationists and wildlife experts.
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In order to share this information to voters please return your responses to the sender in a Word, PDF or JPEG document by the 30th September 2020.

Thank you.

On behalf of:

Darebin Progress Association: <https://www.facebook.com/Darebin-Progress-Association-163813440325401/>

Save THE Preston Market Facebook Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/4553059228098235/>

Darebin Appropriate Development Association: <https://www.darebinada.org/> and

Darebin Residents Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/695607447257408>

