

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: Steven Chang

Ward: North East Ward of Darebin

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

We need a council that will stand up for sustainable communities by resisting the interests of wealthy developers. We must preserve public green spaces for community use. The Northcote Public Golf Course is a prime example of opportunities to preserve biodiversity. People and the planet must come before profit.

Keep Preston Market [where it is, as it is](#). This includes mandatory height limits. No demolition. No relocation. Ultimately, it should be publicly owned, not by a private developer. This should be the formal position of the Council.

Tackle the housing affordability crisis. [Identify more Council land](#) for social housing use. Advocate for mandatory inclusionary zoning to be legislated at a state level. Establish a public housing advisory committee to local council made up of public housing residents elected by fellow residents.

Open up green spaces: make Northcote Golf Course [accessible to the broader public](#) on a permanent basis. Proactively consult residents and local indigenous groups to co-design this transition.



GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILTY AND TRANSPARANCY

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?

YES	
HOW?	
<p>The community should know what happens in council. Meeting minutes should be available and circulated to all to ensure transparency. Any conflicts of interest should also be made public, there should be no business behind closed doors. Victorian Socialists (VS) will never accept any corporate donations, nor would it accept any personal bribes and would publish any attempts to be bribed accordingly.</p>	

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

YES	
HOW?	
<p>Holding public meetings with councillors is a great way to hear residents' opinions so that councillors can act in their benefit.</p> <p>I would draw up a regular calendar of community meetings, held both online and in person to ensure maximum accessibility for all. Generous time for extensive community Q&A would be provided.</p>	

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

YES	
HOW?	
<p>Certainly, any policy/by-laws implementation should have the support of the people it will affect.</p> <p>I would write summaries of proposed by-laws in clear and accessible language, hold Town Hall meetings about these proposals, and allow the community to vote on these matters to express their perspectives prior to the enactment of the laws.</p>	

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



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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	
<p>HOW?</p> <p>Town Hall meetings, surveys, allowing generous time for consultation on proposals, communicating proposed motions and their implications in clear, concise language.</p>	

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	
<p>HOW?</p> <p>I, and all Darebin VS Councillors, will be staunchly opposed to any attempt to relocate or demolish Preston Market. This historic market should stay where it is, and as it is. Developers suck too much money out of local communities to line their own pockets.</p> <p>VS is a proponent of more community spaces, so we will vote against any beloved community sites being removed, especially one with as much history and importance to the community as Preston Market.</p> <p>Ultimately the market should be publicly owned to empower the community, rather than be in the hands of a private developer. This should be the Council’s formal position.</p>	



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

YES	
HOW?	
<p>We are not in the pockets of developers, cannot be swayed by them, and will refuse (and publish!) any attempts to be bribed. Therefore we will act in the interest of the community.</p>	

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?	
<p>VS is firmly opposed to unrestricted development in Darebin. Gentrification is an ongoing process in Darebin that we are against. We want affordable living spaces for all people, not just those who can afford it.</p> <p>All controls should be mandatory and strongly reinforced in a systematic manner, rather than optional recommendations easily flouted by developers. Here's an example of our commitment to ensuring housing for all people: https://www.victoriansocialists.org.au/darebin_friends_of_public_housing</p>	

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 neighborhood 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	
HOW?	
<p>The Council must set a mandatory, enforced land contribution for all new developments that must be accountably designed for open and green spaces for the community. This support must come out of the wealthy pockets of developers, who can afford it the most.</p>	



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Proactive community consultation should decide how these spaces should be designed. The land must be accessible to the broad public and maintained over time in an effective way.

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

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

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

YES

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

● home support services;	YES	
● personal care,	YES	
● 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

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

YES

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



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	
HOW?	
<p>VS are strong supporters of accessible community spaces, and will advocate for a wide-ranging review of where improvements are needed. Our proposed policy for the Northcote Golf Course is a good example.</p> <p>Prioritisation of public facilities must be decided collectively by the community, and proactive public consultation will be key to this.</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	
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4. Will you vote for more parking and vote against blanket parking restrictions?

YES	
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5. Will you support Council in making publically available more detailed financial reporting on departmental, program and project expenditure?

YES	
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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?	



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Absolutely. Climate justice - not just climate action - is crucial. The impending climate catastrophe will hit the most vulnerable communities of Darebin the hardest, despite them being the ones who contribute the least to climate change. VS are strong advocates for a rapid transition to zero emissions, primarily through creating green jobs, and targeting/regulating corporations and industry who get away with polluting and making ludicrous profits.

The council should become a vibrant and well-resourced hub of climate justice activism, empowering the whole community to pressure the state and national governments to shut down the big polluters and encourage sustainable local practices.

I, and all other Darebin VS candidates, have been active in promoting and marching at the historic [Global Climate Strikes](#), as well as other climate justice marches and initiatives.

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)	
Our Northcote Golf Course policy is a good example of our willingness to turn spaces into places for all of the community to enjoy.	

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?

	<p>The climate emergency declaration was historic for Darebin Council. Going forward, it is important to ensure this initiative means more than just rhetoric and is backed up by the Council’s actions. We need a Council that will accountably and actively take rapid steps towards a zero emissions community here in Darebin.</p> <p>Hence my answer below is “Yes”, but only as long as recognition of the climate emergency is a guiding principle, and not a publicity stunt.</p>
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4. Have they been effective?

YES	
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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.



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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>

