

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: Peter Willis **Ward:** South 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'm running because we need Council to be better at this unprecedented time.

My top 3 priorities are:

- Getting the basics right on parking, planning, streets and park maintenance;
- Championing a COVID-19 recovery that supports local jobs and our small businesses;
- Driving effective action on climate change and sustainability;

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? All means possible, but mainly by committing to transparency on what I'm working on. I'll regularly publish what's on my to-do list for council – the issues I'm working on and by extension, the issues I'm not working on. I'll also push for greater use of	



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technology that allows resident to track what Council is working on – like what they use in the City of Boston where I worked. They have a website that allows resident to log issues (potholes, uncollected rubbish etc) and then tracks the Council’s response to it in close to real-time: <https://311.boston.gov/>

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

YES	
HOW? I will do fortnightly meetings street-by-street across the Ward (in person or zoom). I’ll work up and down the entire ward + hold specific meetings on particular issues.	

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

YES	
HOW? By all means available.	

4. Would you restructure Public Question Time in 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?



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YES	
HOW? I'll support initiatives to provide more information to community groups, well in advance of big Council decisions. I'll ask for the community's opinions – again well in advance. I'll be proactive and give people plenty of time.	

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? Through height restrictions and working to retain the vibrant businesses that call Preston Market home.	

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

YES	
HOW? Expanding the current height restrictions in place.	

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? The objective has to always be greater than “getting developments built”. This especially means taking into account the feedback and concerns of residents.	

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



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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? By supporting the proposed levies. Developers need to pay their fair share so that we can meet the needs of Darebin's growing population.	

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



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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	
HOW? These functions may not be “sexy” but they are core Council business. Council needs to get the basics right. I’d be pushing for more say for locals over upgrades and fixes – we can use technology to direct this better.	

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	
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HOW? I support ambitious action in Darebin to a) reduce emissions, b) accelerate the transition towards renewable energy and c) protect our natural assets. I'll seek to work closely with the State Government on this.

On Council, I'll look to promote programs that drive tangible action on the climate:

- Facilitate access to cheaper renewable power for local businesses -- e.g. bulk buying arrangements)
- Provide subsidies for households to buy batteries that allow them to store the solar energy generated by their solar panel systems
- Support households to transition away from gas usage – e.g. by providing subsidies to replace end of life gas hot water and stoves with electric
- Increase our tree cover, especially focusing on native regeneration to promote biodiversity

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?

I'll work to:

- Increase native tree cover to promote biodiversity
- Improve the Council's litter collection service. There's too much litter in our parks and green spaces
- Lift the Merri Creek lower trail. It currently sits within the riparian zone and should be lifted, restoring indigenous vegetation, ensuring the path is above the flood zone and meeting width regulations

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?

Both groups have worked raised awareness of the need for action on the climate emergency and lack of open space in Darebin. They have provided input into the Council's plans on both issues.

4. Have they been effective?

NO – members of the groups have told me feedback that their recommendations have not been implemented and that the groups have been sidelined by Council.

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.



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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>

