

## Darebin Council Elections 2020: Questions for Candidates

23<sup>rd</sup> 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:  Isabel Jackson  Ward:  West

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

My intention is to support a positive contribution for the services that are within the domain of local government itself, and to assist Council to work collaboratively with state and federal governments as well as other key providers and stake holders to maintain and enhance Darebin's amenity and infrastructure.

### 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?

<b>YES</b>	
<b>HOW?</b>	
A key way is for consultation processes to be held as 'consultations' ie seeking input from the reference groups and/or open calls for comments into decision making and being explicit about the parameters (financial, social, environmental, legislative, etc.) for	



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that proposed activity. Engagement in the process will show the workings, as will feedback to the respondents, accompanied with explanation of the outcomes. Any such process needs to be scaled to the size, location, and impact of the proposal. More generally, the Ward newsletters could be more 'newsy' about the workings of the Council.

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

<b>YES</b>	
<b>HOW?</b>	
<p>Personally, I would maintain access via social media as well as regular co-located and on-line open forums to meet with Ward members.</p> <p>For Council, I would support active engagement in formal events such as Council meetings, as well as informal opportunities at community and Council events.</p> <p>Revised Ward and Council newsletters distributed in hard copy and electronically could provide material to alert residents to items of interest to them.</p>	

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

<b>YES</b>	
<b>HOW?</b>	
<p>I would expect that community groups and individuals would be engaged in the preparation and development of any by-laws. This engagement would be through formal avenues as well as informal, as noted above.</p>	

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

<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<p>I am not sure what this would achieve, and I would need to see how this would be implemented. Access is / would already be available via the usual channels for clarification etc. My concern is that there could be a 'pile on' for individual Councillors. Further, Council decision are group decisions, with voting recorded, which would already answer many questions, I imagine. So, upshot: I can't say now.</p>	

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

<b>YES</b>	
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<p>As above. The review would, in the spirit of the idea, need to be conducted consultatively of what residents would like to know, cost for print and distribution, timing to seek input into major activities such as budget etc.</p>	
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**6. Will you ensure Advisory Committees recommendations are heard in General Council meetings?**

<p><b>YES</b> Also, that they are explicitly noted in proposed Council related and arising activity.</p>	
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**7. Will you work for the community and not to serve any political party?**

<p><b>YES</b> Not quite sure what this question is asking. I am a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) because of my value set generally, many values of which are shared among non-members. My membership is a demonstration of the value I place on collective action within a forum to debate ideas. This value, I believe, is shared by members of any group, particularly those engaged in community activism in its many forms.</p>	
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**8. Will you insist on an annual staff survey and make it available to the community?**

<p><b>YES</b> Not sure about this. Too many variables in the question eg to what end, who conducts, what areas would be included, confidentiality of respondent view, privacy for individuals, what is “the community” expected to do with the material, etc. I would imagine that there already exists vast array of data available through Union membership feedback, staff performance reviews, program outcomes, financial audits etc.</p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>
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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?**

<b>YES</b>	
<b>HOW?</b> Thorough consultation processes would cover this. My experience, as a respondent and as well as a convenor, is that claims of ‘not being heard’ can arise from a combination of not getting what was individually desired, and/or of not having opinions and view acknowledged or responded to.	

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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

<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>HOW?</b> There is much claim and counter claim in this discussion in the public domain, and I have not been privy to the process and decision making thus far for me to say anything definite. Nevertheless, I recognise that it is a privately owned site albeit with strong community ‘ownership’, as is not uncommon with many sites of cultural and social history significance. Consequently, based on my experience and familiarity with similar situations, I would expect that the negotiations for any development would be within accepted practice and in good faith. Personally, I believe that High St, Cramer St, Murray Rd site is ideal geographically for the service population, and that there are strong cultural, social, and health arguments for the retention. However, much work is needed on the general amenity.	

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

<b>YES</b>	
<b>HOW?</b> Through the negotiation process and enforcement of regulations.	

**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?**

<b>YES</b>	
<b>HOW?</b> Most certainly. There is no point having standards and regulations if they can be traded off regularly. My concern is that the damage in terms of loss of amenity is experienced by many, including residents in the development, subsequent owners, and neighbours but the benefits are for the few. It also increases precedent that can lead to further	



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diminution. Of course, there are occasional compelling reasons but they should be occasional, and very compelling.

- 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**

I would imagine that every Scheme, including Planning, is reviewed regularly. The issue might be more about the process, its parameters, who conducts it, inclusionary consultation etc.

- 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?**

It is pointless, to me, that loss of amenity is centralised so that areas of comparative disadvantage are created, however inadvertently. I would envisage that there is a long-term plan for open space; a plan that acknowledges current usage and that anticipates future. Funds would be allocated accordingly.

- 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**

I would expect that this Charter, as other processes, would be subject to periodic review. I am not familiar with its specifics or its location in the processes noted. It would seem obvious though that recommendations and comments arising would be incorporated in any relevant applications and submissions.

**NO**

## AGED CARE AND DISABILITY SERVICES



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**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?**

<p><b>YES</b> I acknowledge that there are occasions to draw on specialist and niche skills from private providers but, on principle, I am sceptical of running 'services' as primarily as 'businesses', especially care.</p>	
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**2. Will you support Council subsidising the cost of home care services to eligible residents?**

<p><b>YES</b> And would need to know what services and terms of eligibility so that it doesn't become an exercise in cost shifting.</p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>
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**3. Will you support Council continuing to directly deliver to eligible older residents and people with a disability the following :**

<b>• home support services;</b>	<b>YES</b>	
<b>• personal care,</b>	<b>YES</b>	
<b>• shopping,</b>	<b>YES</b>	
<b>• respite,</b>	<b>YES</b>	
<b>• food services,</b>	<b>YES</b>	
<b>• home care,</b>	<b>YES</b>	
<b>• community transport,</b>	<b>YES</b>	
<b>• home maintenance</b>	<b>YES</b>	

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

<p><b>YES</b> Probably. Need to know the details ie if it is 'restrictions' or changes in need and provision need and service availability.</p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>
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**5. Will you agree to support Council becoming a registered home care provider?**

<b>YES</b>	
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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?**



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<p><b>YES</b> Need details on current and projected budgets before commenting on amounts.</p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>
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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?**

<p><b>YES</b> <b>HOW?</b> I would support the regular review of maintenance schedules compared with use. In low use areas, it might be informative (through regular or targeted consultation) to know of why low use eg maybe because of poor facilities, physical and social safety, hours of operation or provision of services. These facilities not only support employment and physical health of residents but offer opportunities for social interaction, which in turns supports health and well-being.</p>	
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- 2. Will you vote for balanced services and equal spend across all of Darebin, particularly Reservoir, including rebuilding to the Reservoir Leisure Centre?**

<p><b>YES</b> This might not necessarily in dollar terms due to variations in local factors, but equitable in quality of amenity.</p>	
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- 3. Will you oppose unsubstantiated use of money spent on consultants?**

<p><b>YES</b> Consultants have a role but are another form of outsourcing and should be treated as such ie used only in exceptional situations and not to replace Council staff.</p>	
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- 4. Will you vote for more parking and vote against blanket parking restrictions?**

<p><b>YES</b></p>	
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- 5. Will you support Council in making publically available more detailed financial reporting on departmental, program and project expenditure?**

<p><b>YES</b></p>	
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## Darebin Council Elections 2020: Questions for Candidates

- **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?**

<b>YES</b>	
<b>HOW?</b> Consider the environmental aspects as integral to the 'health' and 'social' impacts of a project because of their scope.	

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

<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>HOW? (please provide examples)</b>	

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?**

	I have only recently heard about the Nature Trust. It does like a good initiative but I have the impression that the expertise of the members has been under- valued and, consequently, under-utilised.
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4. **Have they been effective?**

<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
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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 30<sup>th</sup> 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>





