

Ed Mahony joins the race for WCC election

Description



Law graduate Ed Mahony has decided to throw his hat into the ring for the 2016 Warrnambool City Council elections.

Words and photos by Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I [/dropcap]f next year's Warrnambool City Council election wasn't already shaping up as intriguing battle, it has got a whole lot more fascinating with law graduate **Ed Mahony** stepping into local politics.

He joins Warrnambool businesswoman **Raelene Ponting** as two fresh faces who have declared they will be among the 2016 candidates, giving Warrnambool ratepayers plenty of time to find out who they are, what they are about and what ideas they might bring to the table. (Former councillor **Jennifer Lowe** has also confirmed she will run again.)

Ed, 25, has already established himself as what media commentators call "someone to watch" with his political savviness and dynamic approach to getting things done, rather than just talking about it.

A case in point was his setting up a popular pop-up Laneway Bar in Liebig Street over the 2013-14 summer.

It was, unofficially, the first of the laneway events that rolled out in 2014 and created a buzz around what might be possible with Warrnambool's untapped alleyways.

"A lot of people said to me at the time, 'this is what you see in Europe', but I said, 'it's also what you see in Melbourne', so why can't we do it here?," Ed said.

Ed was also integral to setting up a [Young Professionals Network](#) in Warrnambool – he couldn't

believe there wasn't already one in place – to encourage young people to stay in the area as they built their careers.

“There is this whole untapped market of young professionals who move to Warrnambool but don't stay, or who commute back to Melbourne for their social life because they feel isolated here,” Ed explains.

“We started YPN (the other founders are **Jayson Ward** and **Angie Paspaliaris**) to address this, to offer a social network for newcomers so that they could get a sense of community here.”



Geelong Mayor Darryn Lyons is one of several mentors that Ed has had in recent years as he has shaped his political and business acumen. Image: [City of Greater Geelong](#).

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] E [/dropcap]d was involved in both Young Professionals Warrnambool and the pop-up Laneway Bar while still living and studying law in Melbourne.

He grew up on dairy farm in Allansford, but moved away as a teenager to boarding school and has only returned home permanently last December after being offered a job at Dwyer Robinson law firm.

“It was the job that brought me back, but I love Warrnambool. It is a great place to live, an easy place to live and I see so much potential in this city,” Ed said.

Talking to Ed, his energy levels – even at the end of a working day – spark out of him: fingers tapping, eyes bright and a nimbleness in conversation that comes from travelling widely and, along the way, being mentored by some of the best in the business.

He explains how his winning a young entrepreneurs scholarship included the chance to work with two mentors and he already had his two in mind: Melbourne Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle** and Geelong Mayor **Darryn Lyons**.

These two men, together with National's MLC (Western Victoria) **David O'Brien**, have been a guiding force as Ed works out how to best utilise business and politics to build a better community.



One of the many under-utilised laneways in the Warrnambool CBD. Ed's pop-up bar in 2013-14 was the start of a renewed focus by council to make more use of the alleyways.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] L [/dropcap]ike Doyle and Lyons, Ed is a member of the Liberal Party but more of the 'wet' **Malcolm Turnbull** variety – whom he often quotes – than the 'dry' **Tony Abbott** variety.

"I see myself as someone who likes to questions people's beliefs," he said.

"But within that you need to be open to talking, to having an informed discussion and finding the middle ground."

There are many things a potential councillor needs to care about, but one high on Ed's list is planning: a dry word, but one that ultimately determines the shape and feel of a city.

We talk about the urban creep of Warrnambool into the farming areas on its fringe, while the city heart beats ever more slowly and empty shops remain empty.

He has plenty of ideas on how to address this – "I am someone who always looks for opportunities rather than pessimism" – and these will no doubt form part of his election campaign.

Ironically, a few days after this conversation, Ed is in Geelong on one of the balmiest evenings in the south-west all summer. He is running a pop-up Laneway Bar (Darryn Lyons is licensee) and the place is jumping.

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Author

carol