



WCC candidate Debbie Arnott chats with The Terrier

Description

CANDIDATE DEBBIE ARNOTT:

10 QUESTIONS FROM THE TERRIER:

What three main skills could you bring to the Warrnambool City Council as a councillor?

Having owned and ran businesses for 25 years I have a strong business acumen. I understand the importance of making sound decisions based on reporting and data.

Integrity is an important skill to have in life. My personal values I bring to council are honesty, open-mindedness, efficiency, dependability, compassion and strong ethics. My core values have stood me in good stead over many years and will continue to do so in the years to come. I believe that it is very important to have someone who has a strong moral consciousness and to fight for what is right for our community.

I take pride in my ability to relate and connect with people. My interpersonal skills and openness will be something that I can bring to this role.

Do you see any particular issues, projects or problems in Warrnambool that you would like to work on as a councillor?

The first issue for the next council will be to find a new CEO. A very important decision and one that I would like to be involved with.

The effect of Covid-19 on Warrnambool has been significant. While some businesses have flourished, others have been adversely affected.

Many people have lost their jobs, and could possibly find it difficult to find employment. There will be further stress in the community once mortgage repayments recommence.

I would like to work on attracting more industry and business to Warrnambool. By attracting business and industry, this in turn can help create employment and further prosper our city.

I would also like to be able to do more for the homeless and disadvantaged. Domestic violence is a huge problem in our society with approximately one in four women experiencing an act of physical or emotional abuse.

Council can work towards achieving more affordable housing, making sure services are in place to support those in need.

With any decision the council makes, the effect on the environment is important and I am passionate about protecting our natural resources for years to come.

Do you think the council could be more “open” with residents and if so, how?

Yes I do believe council needs to be more open.

Decisions have been made that have a big impact on our community, such as the dismissal of CEO Peter Schneider. I think the community deserves to understand why this happened, as it has a direct impact on the running of the council and people are heavily invested. I believe council should have accountability for their decisions.

There needs to be a formal decision made on how information is shared with the community to rebuild trust. This can be as simple as bringing general business back to the council meetings, sending out newsletters or doing regular social media updates.

The next 12 months are going to be challenging due to the impact of Covid-19 – do you have one or two key idea/s for how WCC could support residents and/or businesses?

The next 12 months will be challenging for council.

One effective way in which council can help both business and community is to limit any further rate rise if possible. Warrnambool was one of only two councils that applied to have the rate increase above the Fair Go Rates System cap. I believe that with effective budgeting, we can optimise spending and carefully manage our expenses. Having operated successful businesses, I understand how important it is to plan finances.

A longer term goal could be to investigate the “Make Yourself at Home” initiative that Tasmania has used. It’s a scheme where people purchase a subsidised travel voucher. It cannot be refunded for cash and can only be used for accommodation. It could be adapted on a smaller scale for Warrnambool to help our tourism and hospitality industry.

Do you have any ideas on where the council could cut costs, if necessary, to keep rates at the state cap?

Each project needs to be carefully weighed up with costs versus benefits taken into consideration. Smart investment, careful planning and prioritising against community need is important.

I believe council should not keep allocating funds to ventures that continually lose money and are simply not sustainable in their current format. Thinking outside the square and with fresh eyes and some brainstorming, I'm sure council could come up with some positive outcomes.

Preferences will decide who is elected to the council. Are you planning to preference most highly new candidates, existing candidates or you won't be putting forward preferences:

I will be preferencing new candidates. Warrnambool is ready for a change.

I am hearing a lot of discontent in the community with current circumstances. If we can have some fresh faces this will encourage new ideas and enthusiasm.

If you were elected, what ways – if any – would you keep residents and ratepayers informed as an individual councillor?

If I am fortunate to be voted to represent Warrnambool as a councillor, I believe that it is important to share and keep residents informed of important council decisions.

This requires keeping myself active in all projects. I need to understand and thoroughly read contracts and when voting on decisions, be thoroughly knowledgeable on all elements and profoundly engaged to benefit the Warrnambool community.

If I am well informed on all council activities, then that enables me to be a vessel to provide information to the public. As an active social media user, I will be updating the people of Warrnambool regularly. I care very much about this great city, and I welcome feedback and I am ready to listen!

If you were elected, what would you have liked to have achieved at the end of your four-year term?

In a four-year term, the minimum expectation is that we have a council that is well respected by the community and is financially sustainable.

With the current environment we are in, it is hard to predict what the future will be with the uncertainties with the Coronavirus pandemic. I would like to imagine that we are in a world where we are in a state of recovery and focusing on rebuilding our local business, developing our tourism industry, supporting hospitality and all other affected sectors, generating jobs and economic growth.

As I have mentioned previously, I think we need to look at what other communities have done to support these industries such as the Tasmania 'Make Yourself at Home' campaign. There is a lot we can learn about what other states are doing.

We also need to create initiatives to support our most vulnerable who have suffered homelessness, domestic violence and mental illness as a result of Covid.

Are you a member of any political party? If so, which one?

I am not a member of any political party and have no aspirations to be.

In the past two years, have you been a member of any local club, organisation or association?

I have been part of the Steering Committee that helped represent traders and business to the council for the time of the CBD Renewal. This role lasted two years and involved meetings with council and traders throughout this time.

I found this role very rewarding and it led onto the formation of a small group that, with the help of council initiated the event *A Very Liebig Christmas*.

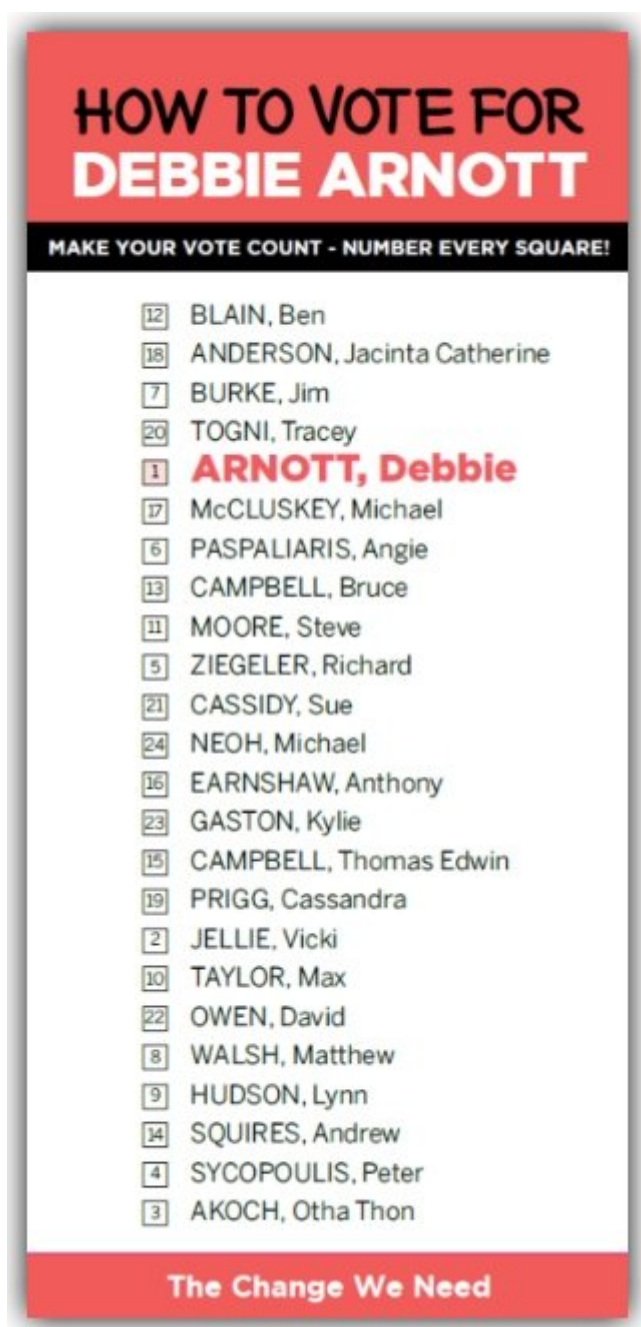
Our aim was to create a community event that celebrated Christmas as well as the completion of the roadworks. This event is now into its third year, it will be different due the pandemic restrictions but still a community event. I was very proud of the success of A Very Liebig Christmas which reactivated the city centre, generated business for the traders and boosted revenue.

Closing thoughts or ask and answer your own question here:

Warrnambool has been my home for most of my life and has been very good to myself and my family. I would be honoured to be able to give a little back to our wonderful city.

I encourage the voters to consider their vote and preferences carefully, so that whoever is in the new council will strive to be a passionate voice for the community.

You can find Debbie's candidate [Facebook page here.](#)



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