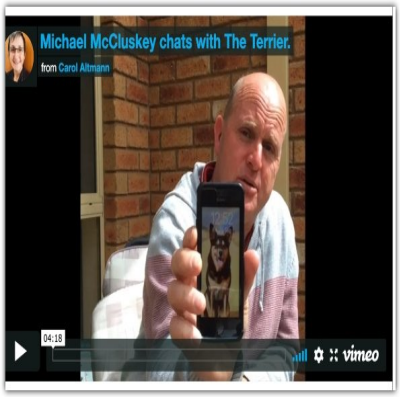

WCC candidate Michael McCluskey chats with The Terrier

Description

CANDIDATE MICHAEL McCLUSKEY

10 QUESTIONS FROM THE TERRIER:

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

Diversity of employment background having worked as a courier driver, dairy farm hand, Employment Officer in the Federal public service and then as a veterinarian including servicing the agricultural industry. Along with this I have studied extra units at university level in economics, law and psychology and have a passion for finance and efficient business practice.

Firm belief in the importance of a harmonious and cooperative council that is blended with respectful independence of thought. I subscribe to the notion of cherishing those who challenge the status quo as progress is often driven by those who are prepared to go out on a limb as long as they do so in a respectful and collaborative manner.

My strong desire to see decisions based on best available evidence as opposed to being blinded by adherence to a particular ideology. Group think and alliances are often an anchor that holds back progress and rarely benefit the community

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

The list of specific issues is long however all the best ideas in the world are of limited value unless we have a harmonious council that respects each and every other councillors views. Having a mature and adult approach then leads to a creative and solution focussed council.

I’m acutely aware that economic and social well being are intimately intertwined. Both need nurturing in order for current and future generations to thrive.

Given the Covid19 crisis council needs to support and advocate for local business including hospitality

and tourism. Social issues such as domestic violence, affordable housing, mental health, speedier access to surgical services and sustainability are all crucial issues.

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

Most definitely.

‘Sunshine is the best disinfectant’.

Openness and transparency are crucial for creating trust in council at the grassroots community level. When we have that, the community feels more inspired and energised to achieve outcomes. Fragmented council that is dogged by personal agendas ‘eats’ into the fabric of community goodwill.

Covid 19-inspired Zoom meetings, whether for work or personal get togethers, highlights just how easy technology can bring council closer to community

The next 12 months is 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?

Firstly deal with the waste and inefficiency within council itself. As axed CEO Peter Schneider had previously noted ‘the answers to most challenges we face, lie with’.

There is too much wasted expenditure and too many reports and not enough positive action

Speed up the planning process
Reduce rates
Be proactive – approach every business to see how council can help in removing any unhelpful impediments to operations

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

Having worked in the public service I have first hand experience how waste and inefficiency can creep into the system particularly if there is no accountability for work efforts. Focussing more effort into improving productivity outcomes within the council itself is far more beneficial than stripping ratepayers and service users of extra money via rate increases.

Draining ratepayer’s pockets in order to feed a bloated council is unfair and unsustainable.

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

I don’t do preferences as I prefer to see the voters choose who they want to represent them rather than be dictated to by me. A key question to ask is the ‘horse trading’ that goes on in preference deals about putting the community first, or the candidate?

Another important element that often gets lost is that ultimately preference deals mean little as unless the person voting follows the preference suggestions then they have no impact on the outcome.

Ultimately the power is with the community by how we structure our ticking of the boxes on the ballot paper.

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

Under the councillor Code of Conduct individual councillors have certain constraints on what can and can't be said.

More importantly we need council as a whole to be as open and transparent as possible, especially within the way it communicates to the community.

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

Putting the community interests above mine. One concern I have often had is the disproportionate number of business owners who get onto council.

This can risk skewing the bias of council and lead to other parts of the community missing out.

Diversity on council is also crucial whether that be diversity of age, gender, work background or ethnic origin.

If elected I would constantly 'beat the drum' about the importance of diversity.

As mentioned above, cutting planned excessive rate increases and improving waste within council operations is crucial and will give ratepayers more money in their pocket to help pay for essential items.

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

No I'm not.

In my experience parties are often more concerned with their own survival and looking after vested interests as opposed to putting the community's interests front and centre. Party ideology can also blind people to looking at the evidence in a rational and considered way.

We only have to look at the USA at the moment to see how towing the party line can threaten the wellbeing of the community.

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

Yes, I have been a long term passionate volunteer and committee member at the Riding for the Disabled Association. RDA provides hands on opportunity to ride and interact with horses for those children and adults in our who struggle with more difficulties than what most others have to in life.

I also served as Director of Finance on a local sporting club for 5 years.

Recently I have joined as a committee member for Water for East Timor which helps facilitate crucial drinking water projects in East Timor. By not having to walk many hours to cart water by hand children

are more likely to have more time to access education which is a cornerstone need to help improve our close neighbour's economic and social well being.

Closing thoughts or ask and answer your own question here:

Voting wisely can give us the change we need. We do have power with our vote to give us the council we desperately need, especially with such a large and diverse candidate base to draw upon at this election.

You can find Michael's candidate Facebook page here.

Category

1. Opinion

Tags

1. 2020
2. Michael McCluskey
3. Warrnambool City Council elections

Date Created
2020/09/28
Author
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