

WCC candidate Ben Blain chats with The Terrier

CANDIDATE BEN BLAIN

10 QUESTIONS FROM THE TERRIER:

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

My problem-solving ability – My ability to see an issue, identify the problem and come up with a solution. I think if you break down an issue you can find a solution. Research, understanding and listening to the community are how we can solve things together.

My Financial Knowledge – Understanding how to put together and read a budget. I own and run my own small business which has given me a good understanding of how a budget works. I also wrote and prepared a submission to the council budget this year outlining how we could fund a freeze on our rates, offer free parking in the CBD and waive user fees for businesses and sporting clubs in Warrnambool.

Being able to not only listen to issues but act – Being able to listen, understand and create an action plan to make the community's dreams a reality. A good idea is a good idea no matter who comes up with it.

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

I believe the council has been lacking in offering financial relief for not only businesses but the entire community. I think we need to stop the continual increases in rates to offer everyone some relief. I don't want to see the council break the rate cap again in 2022 as is currently proposed.

I want to see our general rubbish collection remain as a weekly service not move to fortnightly. I also don't want to see us being charged for the replacement of damaged bins. We all pay enough now in our waste service charge, why add a bin replacement fee?

Finally, the maintenance and upkeep of our public assets, this was the main reason for breaking the rate cap. We need to have a long-term plan to fund this work through our current budget funding, not continue to hit ratepayers for more money.

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

Yes, the council could be more transparent and open. For the council to rebuild its trust with the community, they need to be more transparent. This can be done through the councillors being more open about decisions and not hiding behind confidentiality unless it is for commercial reasons.

Through policy and meeting procedures the council could be more open. Bringing back general business gives councillors a powerful tool to raise issues within the community.

I would also like to see the public have the ability to address the council before they vote on a particular agenda item. Moving public question time to the start of meetings before the items have been voted on. Have tea, coffee and sandwiches with the gallery after meetings instead of dinner and drinks out the back. All these measures could be used to "open" council to the community.

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?

We need to be campaigning to bring more visitors to our great city. Now as we are looking to come out of lockdown, we should be aggressively pushing our city's amazing attractions.

When metro Melbourne moves out of lockdown they will be looking to travel, and we want them to come here. More than likely they won't be able to leave Victoria, this is an opportunity to give our local economy a real boost.

I think the council should also be looking for what financial relief they can offer to businesses and community groups concerning user fees. Many sporting organisations have not had a season this year, every business has felt some impact from the pandemic. Offer relief on grounds fees and shop fees to help every business and organisation make it through this tough time.

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

I think we need to do an efficiency review of the council and all council business. We have seen the council continue to run without filling vacant roles, so can these roles continue to be done by others within the organisation.

Businesses need to be looked at closely but not impact the service they give to the community. Meals-on-Wheels is one that I wouldn't want to see cut back, but there could be opportunities to make this service more efficient and give it the ability to service more of the community.

After the credit card scandal, I also would like to see stricter financial controls on employee spending which I think could also offer savings to the community.

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 all new candidates.

Looking at the field there are so many new and exciting candidates putting their hands up this election, I think it

would be a shame to miss this opportunity to make a better Warrnambool.

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

I would continue to inform the community through being open to any member of the community through the phone, email, etc. I commit to the community that I will respond to issues and always try to help.

I have sent concerns to the current councillors and received no response; I don't like it happening to me so I wouldn't want it for anyone else. I will also promote the work of the council through social media.

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

I would like to see the trust be rebuilt between the council and the community. I would also like to see Warrnambool moving forward after the economic effects of the pandemic. I want to see the council be able to fund the care of its current assets through its current budget restraints.

I hope to see the harbour made into a safe boat launching facility for all users, currently, it is ranked one of the two worst ramps in the state. I will work towards being more proactive in securing funding for projects in our city to continue to see it move forward.

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

I am not and have never been a member of any political party.

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

I am the Vice President of the Warrnambool Ratepayers Association. Through this role, I have been active in raising

the issues of community members. It's been really special to be a part of this association helping groups and individuals with issues they have with the council.

I am also currently a member of the CFA and have been over the past 15 years. I was one of the first responders to the St Patricks Day fires. I find this has been a rewarding way to give back to the community.

Closing thoughts or ask and answer your own question here:

We have a chance to make a positive change this time within our city council. There are so many great candidates putting their hands up. We all have an exciting chance to move Warrnambool forward.

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

**Ben has also published his preference list which is below.
This is the line-up Ben would like to see on the new council
and if you agree, you can follow this card.**



HOW TO VOTE **1**

Ben BLAIN

CANDIDATE for the RATEPAYERS

1 BLAIN, Ben

- 17** ANDERSON, Jacinta Catherine
- 4** BURKE, Jim
- 19** TOGNI, Tracey
- 6** ARNOTT, Debbie
- 13** McCLUSKEY, Michael
- 2** PASPALIARIS, Angie
- 14** CAMPBELL, Bruce
- 3** MOORE, Steve
- 8** ZIEGELER, Richard
- 22** CASSIDY, Sue
- 24** NEOH, Michael
- 15** EARNSHAW, Anthony
- 23** GASTON, Kylie
- 10** CAMPBELL, Thomas Edwin
- 18** PRIGG, Cassandra
- 5** JELLIE, Vicki
- 7** TAYLOR, Max
- 21** OWEN, David
- 11** WALSH, Matthew
- 12** HUDSON, Lynn
- 16** SQUIRES, Andrew
- 20** SYCOPOULIS, Peter
- 9** AKOCH, Otha Thon



Ben Blain - Candidate for the Ratepayers Warrnambool



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