

Meet the Candidates Forum - GERA responses:

1. Why have you decided to stand for council?

I have a long-standing history of public service at State and Federal level and I see council service as an opportunity to become involved at a local level in the great Australian spirit of volunteerism. As an independent I am able to seek counsel and receive input from interested parties and make value judgements that are based on fairness and majority consensus.

2. What specific skills, abilities and experience do you believe you can offer?

I am skilled in holding community consultation and in distilling data collected into themes to identify importance. Having also worked within bureaucratic systems in Australia and with similar institutions internationally I am able to bring to council the essential skill of diplomacy and negotiation to become part of a cohesive team that is focussed on good outcomes for rate payers. I have broad experience in public policy, planning and project management, all of which are essential skills in a democratic chamber.

3. In what areas do you think Glen Eira Council needs to improve and why?

Overall I am very impressed with the facilities and amenities provided by council over time. Having returned to my home in late 2011 after living abroad and interstate I appreciate the quality of environment provided for rate payers in GE. Unfortunately, a major issue that I have identified is a lack of a team spirit among incumbent councillors and a break-down in co-operative spirit with council executive, both of which require fixing if the council as a unit is to function effectively and re-gain the trust of the community. Once personal (and external influence) impasses are resolved the business of council will become more professional.

4. What specific commitments are you prepared to make to the residents of the municipality?

The first commitment is the volunteering of my time to consult and take advice on the views of the community as evidenced by my attendance at the GERA Meet the Candidates Forum. To make myself available to interested groups and individuals, to be well briefed when attending council meetings, well read and across the issues, apprised of the view of our council officers and their executive and cognizant of the governance framework on issues.

Secondly, having provided sufficient time to form a community view (not necessarily correlating to my personal view which is irrelevant in council) on the issues before council I will be in an informed position to debate intelligently on behalf of the citizens of GE in council regarding the interests on the future of our community.

Finally I commit to treating the office of councillor as a privilege and so commit to approaching the task utilising all of my professional acumen and personal dedication.

5. How would you improve governance issues at Glen Eira?

Work collegiately with council officers, take advice on specific issues, observe the code of conduct, maintain awareness of governance and policy guidelines, ensure that practice is consistent with all requirements and urge my colleagues to likewise respect the process.

6. What is your position on the planning reform zones, structure planning and height limits?

With respect to the planning reform zones of Residential Growth Zone, General Residential Zone and a Neighbourhood Residential Zone, I have no philosophical issue but do hold grave reservations on the lack of appeal rights as it is so very highly unlikely that the mandatory rules will not take all issues into account, many of which are location specific.

In a nutshell my position is the maintenance of amenity for rate payers so, while we must accept that there will be development, my position is that all development should be complementary to the environment and should not trample individual's rights of enjoyment.

Citizens' rights to object to a development which directly impacts on them as owners or occupiers of property must be maintained. The introduction of Municipal Plans and Structure Plans will assist in enshrining community views on appropriate development.

7. What do you see as the **three** major concerns facing Council and the municipality? What will be your approach to addressing these issues?

My approach is to work with the community, fellow councillors and council staff to identify, explore and develop feasible and sustainable options to challenges facing council, many of which relate to current and short-term urban planning matters but consume most of the 'debate space'. Enhanced planning guidelines would ensure that council can dedicate the necessary time to formulate medium to long-term planning strategies and policies.

In response to three major issues, and not in any particular order of merit:

- 1- **Traffic, parking and transport** - all of which impact on the amenity of citizens whether it is associated with development in residential areas that results in increased density, re-zoning resulting in subsequent development or simply permitting a development that grants exemptions to prescribed parking ratios, that merely transfers the parking problem to the community. Increases in residential density adversely impact on alternative transport options such as cycling or walking due to increased traffic volumes and drivers looking to 'rat runs'.

It is my view that council should rarely compromise on planning guidelines for the sake of development and a holistic view should be taken. If a residential development fails to 'stack-up' due to parking issues then it clearly shouldn't proceed whereas a commercial development that requires concessions should be considered if it can be proved that it would deliver a proven overall benefit to the community.

- 2- **Open Space** – Given that Glen Eira offers the least amount of open space in Melbourne there is a need for a dedicated effort directed to the acquisition of additional land. The answer must lie in a developing an approach that is innovative and sustainable.

Public/private combinations have been successful in some major infrastructure programs and such combinations could be adapted to fit the governance guidelines for Glen Eira and could include the options of philanthropy and sponsorship.

- 3- **Provision of community services** – development of policy such as a Municipal Plan and Structural Plans can account for the changing demographics of an ageing population. Good planning outcomes will define appropriate transport policies, public safety management and incorporate childcare and general community service needs.

Due to the ever-increasing unfunded drift to Council of services previously provided by Federal and State Governments there is a need create a framework to deal with this issue. As with all community issues I am most open to community input to identify practical solutions as council is about communal will not individual desire.

8. How would you approach the issue of increasing the amount of public open space in Glen Eira?

Thinking ‘outside the box’ is needed and I am sure that there are many great ideas lying dormant within the community that would emerge were local residents canvassed for concepts by a council who wanted to hear the answers.

So we can have a conversation, perhaps there could be an investigation and feasibility assessment into the potential for sections of the railway culvert to be covered and converted to open space within an overall development scheme funded by a developer, there may be an offer of dispensation for religious organisations who offer public access to private space?

9. If you have indicated whom you would preference, could you please explain why you chose those particular candidates?

I need GERA to fully appreciate that standing as an Independent candidate is challenging and confronting, particularly when there are endorsed candidates and party-backed candidates running. I had not met any of the sitting councillors or candidates prior to attending the first VEC Candidate Information Session but was approached by Bernie Kuran who offered guidance and support. I appreciated enormously his gesture and have preferenced him accordingly.

Of course I welcome the warmth from those who extended the opportunity of sharing their energy and experience from that point onwards.

10. Are you affiliated with any political party or organisation and has that party or organisation contributed in any way to your election campaign?

No I am not affiliated and have personally funded my campaign

11. Councillors often promise the world, but deliver very little. How do you intend to adhere to you election promises?

As an Independent I am able to adhere to the will of the people and my conscience so I have only promised what I can deliver, which is time to listen, to learn, and to interpret community wishes in order to become an advocate for the majority interest. You will note that I make no grandiose sweeping statements. I am a pragmatist who needs the full facts at my disposal in order to determine what it is that the rate payers want and then determine the best way to get there. My platform, or views or particular issues are irrelevant as, what I may want, is not the issue here.

I do promise my best endeavours to serve the community by championing causes that reflect the wishes of the majority of rate payers and are feasible, practical, affordable and sustainable. I have not made wild un-costed promises that are not achievable nor compromised by having to promote personal issues or by being obliged to pursue single issue agenda's.

As a pragmatist with a real-world perspective, I haven't promised the world as I simply cannot deliver the world, preferring to under-promise and over-deliver whenever possible. Please contact me if you wish to discuss election issues.

Kind regards,

James Steedman

Authorised by James Steedman, 8 Villiers Street, Elsternwick