

#11

COMPLETE

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Q1

Candidate Name

Mel Yuan

Q2

Bulleke-bek Ward

Contesting Which Merri-bek Ward?

Q3

Independent

Are you a candidate for a political party? Which Party?
Are you standing as an Independent candidate? If you
are standing as an Independent but you are also a
member of a political party, please write that party in the
Comment box.

Q4

Connections to Merri-bek Wards. Outline your connection to Merri-bek, do you live in the ward you are contesting, do
you work in that ward? What are your other connections to the Merri-bek community?

I have lived in Brunswick since 2002 and am standing in the ward I live in.

Q5

Climate Emergency. Merri-bek Council declared a Climate Emergency in September 2018. Do you accept the
research evidence from climate scientists and the UN Secretary General that:

	Answer
the earth is already too hot and we are outside the safe climate zone?	Yes
we face a climate emergency?	Yes
local cooling is required to prevent runaway warming?	Unsure

Q6

Governance and Triple bottom line accounting brings to account three domains that we need for a good life. They are economic, social and environmental sustainability. In the past projects have been delivered based on organisational silos often not considering other aspects outside the silo. Will you endeavour as a Councillor for Council to use triple bottom line accounting on all Council infrastructure decisions to ensure that climate emergency priorities are embedded in Council decisions? Note that triple bottom line is already encapsulated in the Local Government Act 2020 Section 9, 2b and 2c for good Council governance.

(no label)

Yes

Q7

Transport: Upfield Rail Upgrade - Problems with parking and traffic congestion, capacity issues of public transport need solutions for upgrading the Upfield Line. According to Infrastructure Australia, the northern region Transport Corridor will reach and exceed capacity in the next decade. Do you support the Northern Councils Alliance campaign to Connect Melbourne's North for duplication and extension of the Upfield rail line to Craigieburn and Wallan for provision of a more reliable and frequent rail service catering for the growing population in Merri-bek and residents in new growth suburbs further north?

(no label)

Strongly Agree

Q8

Transport: Mode shift - What actions will you be pushing for to facilitate a mode shift to more sustainable modes of transport in Merri-bek as part of, or beyond, Moving Around Merri-bek Strategy (PDF), including increasing safety for walking and cycling and increasing public transport advocacy?

I think the key here is governance - how does Merri-bek execute and deliver on these strategies? More should be done to make lofty ideals a reality that are on time and on budget.

Q9

Heat Vulnerability: Large sections of Merri-bek's north are at the extreme end of the Heat Vulnerability Index, meaning residents are very susceptible to global warming extreme heat events. What will you do to address this beyond existing policies, including Merri-bek Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan (PDF), Merri-bek Urban Forest Strategy 2017-2017 (PDF), Cooling the Upfield Corridor Action Plan 2018-2028 (PDF)?

We have plenty of strategies but how is reality meeting these goals? What measures are we using to assess progress? Is it working? Are we getting value for money in these initiatives?

Q10

Waste Management. Merri-bek aims to be a leading council in sustainable waste management. What will you do to help Merri-bek in educating citizens on waste streams, to achieve Merri-bek's 2030 zero waste to landfill target as part of Zero Carbon in the Planning Scheme – ESD Policy v2.0?

Council provide professional and available advice on better waste. We need evidence to assess if these are effective and where they are not.

Q11

Energy Efficiency and Renewables. Merri-bek has a goal of “Efficient and 100% renewably powered energy”. How can Merri-bek “walk the talk” on renewable energy and meet the community goals set in the Zero Carbon Merri-bek – Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 (PDF)?

The energy market is changing rapidly. Solutions from even 5 years ago may not be relevant now. We are in a situation where renewables are being “thrown away” from the grid in times of excess supply. New strategies are needed.

Q12

Supporting business and the environment What actions will you take to help the Council promote environmentally sustainable jobs in the municipality and for businesses to reduce emissions in their operations?

Merri-bek may, not may not, be well suited to environmentally sustainable jobs - depending on what these are. Businesses are driven by cost. Council is limited on how it can address businesses' behaviour to reduce emissions.

Q13

Food Security How would you build community resilience and address food security in Merri-bek beyond the existing Merri-bek Food System Strategy 2024 - 2027 (PDF)? How do you think Council could further support culturally relevant and nutritionally rich food to diverse and vulnerable communities?

I think Council's strategy on this topic, while worthy, is more hope than concrete and meaningful action. Merri-bek is a highly urbanised area with no primary production space. At best, food production is limited to household or public green open space. Care should be taken in promoting solutions that are inequitable (expensive), inefficient (too small scale), or unsafe (due to urban waste & pesticides). Multicultural communities with their own food cultures do not need local government to patronise their cultural practices. Securing Australia's food security requires, at least, national coordinated action between the primary industries sector, government, all planning frameworks, and trade organisations. People who experience food insecurity due to social disadvantage, low wages and high prices need significant social assistance, not a weekend farmers' market with expensive organic produce. Scarce public funds should not be spent which effectively cross-subsidise more expensive food choices by the wealthy.

Q14

Buildings, Biodiversity and Urban cooling: What would you do as a Councillor to ensure that with new building developments, Merri-bek residents have protection from overshadowing existing solar PV systems, and that Merri-bek has sufficient vegetation cover to contribute to biodiversity outcomes, urban cooling, and water sensitive urban design beyond existing policies in the Urban Forest Strategy (PDF), Merri-bek Nature Plan, and the Achieving Zero Carbon in the Planning Scheme – ESD Policy v2.0?

I would like to see genuine outcomes from these existing Council strategies. Have any of them been implemented? Were the desired outcomes reached? We are entering a phase where solar panels are less economical for individual households and planning schemes are more scorecard-driven. I am critical of the tree-planting targets and their genuine effectiveness.

Q15

What are your top four priorities for the Council Plan, to be formulated for 2025-2029.

Priority 1	Addressing the new State Government planning frameworks which re-craft the role of local government in planning
Priority 2	Better governance and accountability for the laundry list of existing Council strategies
Priority 3	Keeping pace with needed infrastructure for roads, bike paths, footpaths, water-sensitive urban design, open space and other civic amenities with ever-increasing density
Priority 4	Local economic development. We are not realising the economic, employment and social potential of much of our mixed use and commercial zones which could unlock more sustainable employment and greater social cohesion in the inner north

Q16

Democracy and representation: advocacy to State Government on multi-member wards versus single member wards. The state government has imposed single-member wards on Merri-bek against the recommendation of the council, the Local Government Association of Victoria, and even the Victorian Electoral Commission. This shift in electoral structure is an imposition by the parliament, not a choice of experts.

Answer

Do you support or oppose single-member wards?

Oppose

If (re)-elected will you initiate and/or support measures to pressure the state government to return to multi-member wards?

Support

Other (please specify):

Single-member wards are specifically designed to hand local government into the hands of political parties. Anything which reduces the diversity in democracy is a retrograde step. This local council election cycle is a sad one for Victorian democracy.

Q17

Do you have any other comments on Climate Leadership and Advocacy by Council? Do you have any supplementary comments relating to the questions above, comments on other issues related to climate resilience and climate adaptation, or comments on making decisions for the whole municipality?

We are at an inflexion point in the energy market in Australia. The community need new messages about what their governments should, and can, do to address Climate Change. It is particularly concerning that many young people see the "Climate Crisis" as such an existential challenge that change is not possible and that their futures are out of their hands. Rather than motivating young people, the debate has scared young people into inaction.