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COMPLETE

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Q1

Candidate Name

Nat Abboud

Q2

Pentridge 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 live in the Pentridge ward. I run a business in Warrk Warrk Ward.

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?

Yes

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?

Better walking and riding infrastructure, particularly in the Pentridge and southern wards.

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)?

I strongly support the existing plans. I think we could do more with the Food systems strategy encourage growing edibles(not necessarily heat related but important for access to food with low food miles) and I think we could do better with shading of public areas (especially those used by dog owners) and provision of better public cool spaces for respite during heatwaves such as better shading in public areas like the Coburg Mall.

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?

People need to see, as I have done, how the Veolia recycling facility works and see what happens to the end product. They need to understand the perils of proposals such as the Wollert incinerator and understand what it will mean to us down wind and down stream if something goes horribly wrong if the incinerator is allowed to be built. People need to understand how important procurement of recycled products is and how to aim to quit plastic. People need better education of the impact of plastic waste on our local waterways.

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)?

Merri-Bek can always do more to help residents to access pathways to getting off gas or transitioning to clean energy. I think it would be valuable to encourage more sharing of local stories of how people are becoming more efficient in our local communities.

Maybe we need to hold some fora like we have done in the past to inspire and educate community members about opportunities to transition. I think there needs to be more carrot and less stick in the conversation. We need to understand what the barriers are rather than expecting people to just DO MORE and shaming people who haven't or haven't been able to take it on for whatever reason.

We need to make it more fun to try like what happened with the Green Mile project or war on waste.

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?

Similar to the Green Mile, there is opportunity for eco dev to facilitate a conversation about how business is already doing this in many ways.

As someone who has co owned a business for almost two decades we have just transitioned off gas at our restaurant. We have an important story to tell about that but there are other businesses who are making changes because it actually makes important financial sense as well as being better for the environment.

The eco dev team at council are thriving with over 1000 members and a strong women's network. They are leaders in the field for how businesses can share stories and I think that there is an opportunity for them to partner with other LGA eco dev or even the business networks of other groups (say a sporting code like Carlton In Business) to deliver opportunities for knowledge sharing to help people move forward and create cleaner industries.

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?

This is something I am really passionate about and I think we are missing some really important opportunities in our open space to be growing a LOT more food in the public realm.

Our food systems strategy has missed an opportunity to connect all the growers in our community in a meaningful way in my opinion.

We need to understand that the north of the city has greater need for fresh local produce and less time to grow it and that some food gardens exist to facilitate the need for connection and social interaction.

There are parklands in other states where there are citrus groves and big herb gardens that are available for the public. I believe that the food systems strategy should include funding for a role from open space so that we can actually have boots in the garden and not just theory in the halls. I think that until we do this and more, we will not see what we should in terms of food growing in our city and that as long as we don't we will not thrive in the long term as our peri urban farmland is decimated for cheap housing with inadequate community facilities and transport routes.

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?

This is a very complex issue and I think it's hard to answer unless it's on a case by case basis. In some instances we need greater development along the activity and transport corridors but this will mean change which can sometimes be very hard to cop.

A visit to the outskirts of Melbourne to see the sprawl and poor quality development is a terrifying indication of what we can expect if we can accommodate some more density in our neighbourhoods. I believe there are good examples or acceptable denser living arrangements that exist but I also see some that is really average.

Q15

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

Priority 1	A more collaborative conversation.
Priority 2	Better transparency and information sharing.
Priority 3	A new look at the budget with new ideas about allocation of funds even for a year or two
Priority 4	Identify and resolve some of the small local issues.

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

Other (please specify):

I was the Mayor when the consultation happened with the member for LG and told him how we thought it was a bad idea. I made a submission to the ward boundaries and spoke to my submission. I am prepared to work with what we have and see how it goes. As an independent candidate, if I am elected I feel that if I am elected it will show that the ward size is irrelevant if the representation is meaningful. My goal is to be an active Cr who is answerable and available to the whole ward even if I don't agree with what I'm being asked to consider. We all have a lot to learn about each other. I want to lean in to that idea.

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?

The new council needs to show each other a bit of respect and understand that it's a big diverse city and we have very different needs and expectations.

I'm feeling optimistic about the future.
