

RESPONSES FROM KATH LARKIN

Questions received for Meet the Lord Mayor Candidates - 1 October 2020:

Presented to Candidates

Questions 1-6 were answered at meeting.

Other Questions

Question 7

If elected, what will you do to improve the transparency and accountability of the Queen Victoria Market Board and market management?

The State Government has plans to locate a safe injecting room 150 metres from Queen Victoria Market at CoHealth in Victoria St, under social housing apartments housing vulnerable residents. What do you think?

Victorian Socialists support the establishment of a safe injecting room in the heart of the CBD. It is well documented that the injecting room already set up in Richmond has been effective and saved at least 21 lives as of June 2020. We believe that the location and model of this service should be determined based on the best public health advice, with consultation with likely service users.

Question 8 - a representative of Melbourne City U3A.

Background - U3A Melbourne City is the oldest [University of the Third Age](#) in Australia, established in 1984. Our 1,300 members, all of whom are 50 years or older and retired or semi-retired, attend classes and activities conducted in 13 venues around the City of Melbourne. Since March 2020 most courses have been conducted online or are suspended in view of COVID 19 restrictions.

There are 105 U3As across Victoria. Approximately 70% of these have free or discounted accommodation provided by the respective local government authority.

According to the MCC website 16% of the residents of Melbourne City are 50 years or older.

Questions to Candidates

1. What do you know about Melbourne City U3A?
2. How do you think U3A Melbourne City and the Melbourne City Council could work together?
3. If elected would you be prepared to meet with representatives of Melbourne City U3A to discuss how we could work collaboratively with the next MCC to further develop the U3A's profile and activities within the City of Melbourne?

Victorian Socialists supports community and educational institutions, and would be happy to meet with representatives of Melbourne City U3A to discuss how the council can assist in providing educational resources to older residents.

Question 9

My questions/concerns are probably like other residents:

1. How will residents be considered and consulted with their policies?
2. How much do they think residents of the CBD matter in their policies and plans? How will they show and reflect this in their work?
3. Do they see any shortcomings or issues with their policies and the interests of CBD residents? What are those shortcomings or issues?
4. What considerations have been made for residents and ratepayers as far as what the city will look like with COVID recovery in mind?
5. General security throughout the city with crime, homelessness and the issues that come with it. What do they have in their plans as these issues look to be on the rise and not likely to improve anytime soon given the COVID situation?
6. COVID dining plans with restaurants/business reopening – how will their policies keep it all checked and balanced, realistically, while also keeping in mind the welfare and wellbeing of the residents in the CBD AND the environment of the CBD?
7. Notification and working with residents around ANY construction (not just the COVID plans e.g. laneway work) works in the CBD – bike lane extension, road closures etc.
8. What they see for the city's immediate and long-term future and how will they get there?

Perhaps a curly one and question that might be best left out on the night, but it does get the thoughts flowing – If that candidate had to vote for another candidate that isn't themselves for the top job, who would they pick and give one reason why they would, and another for why they wouldn't.

1. Victorian Socialists supports decision making via community consultation, rather than by running processes through the undemocratic 'captains of industry' advisory board established by current Lord Mayor Sally Capp. Development, service and infrastructure decisions should be made by the residents and workers who are affected by them, not absentee landlords or representatives of big business.

2. We want to see a capital city for all, not a city for capital. Our policies, whether addressing the privatisation of aged care, rampant wage theft, unsafe work practices during the pandemic, are about standing up for ordinary people

3. Current Lord Mayor Sally Capp has shown herself to represent the interests of big business over workers and residents time and time again, whether campaigning to reopen the economy while covid cases were still high, or demonising the future safe injection facility which will save the lives of some of the most vulnerable in the community. We aim to challenge this.

4. We support a Covid recovery based on protecting human life and upholding workers' rights. We have a comprehensive safety plan including:

- Increased enforcement of health and safety standards in businesses
- Creating a hotline for Melbourne based workers to report anonymous complaints regarding unsafe, illegal or unethical practices at work
- A Moratorium on all parking fines, to deter front line workers and those requiring access to essential services in Melbourne from risking their health further by using public transport

We also support rate relief for all resident home owners experiencing housing stress.

5. We want to see root causes tackled, with a massive investment into new public housing, and improved mental health services.

6. The main challenge with reopening hospitality in the CBD will be shonky businesses who want to circumvent social distancing and health restrictions to increase their intake. The best way to control this is to empower unions representing these workers to enforce safety standards.

We will:

-Only tender to catering and hospitality businesses which are “Fair Plate” certified, that is been scrutinised and approved by hospitality workers and their unions

-Only businesses which have been approved by the union representing workers in their industry will be advertised in any guide or advertising material produced by the Melbourne City Council

-Encourage all businesses located in the City of Melbourne to open their books to union scrutiny

7. We support massively increased community consultation and notifications around any disruptive projects

8. We want to see a transformed CBD. Currently, Melbourne City Council is a haven for big business which runs roughshod over workers and residents.

Question 10

I would like to register the following questions for Sally Capp.

1. Can Sally please explain how her office and the Andrews Government arrived at the outdoor dining package without consulting business owners?
2. What formal discussions were held with the relevant businesses to develop the support that would be given to business?
3. Why are areas like Lygon Street left out of grants?
4. What is your reasoning in supporting proposed injecting rooms in the CBD?
5. It is rumoured that Daniel Andrews bullies you and your team around, so how do you plan to stand up to him this time around and do what's best for the city of Melbourne if you are voted in?

Not Applicable

Question 11

My question to the candidates is: Southbank Promenade / bicycles saturation to the area is destroying our social life!!!!!!!. What will you do about it?

We have no plans to change the fact that Southbank Promenade has been opened to cyclists, and support increased cycling infrastructure in the city.

Question 12

How will the Burra Charter be applied to determine the heritage, cultural and social value of places, and will the loss of heritage fabric, insensitive interventions and 'facadism' in our city be allowed to continue?

How will stakeholders such as residents' interests and amenity be balanced with the desire to accelerate development post-pandemic?

We stand against the destruction of heritage buildings, the destruction of green spaces, and other socially irresponsible decisions made in the interests of satiating property developers who are looking to make a buck. As Socialists, we look proudly at our history of community campaigns and trade union activism, like the Builders Labourers Green Bans, which have preserved much of Melbourne's heritage.

Question 13

Here are two questions for the mayoral candidates:

1. Given that the Melbourne CBD is a mecca for mentally disturbed people who do not wear masks for whatever reason, and probably will never pay fines for not doing so, what is your strategy for addressing this issue and keeping the rest of us safe?
2. The food courier bikes are powered vehicles whose riders insist on using the footpaths as bike lanes putting pedestrians at risk. I know bike lanes are being added to some parts of the CBD and what else can be done to reduce this behaviour and keep the side-walk safe for pedestrians?

There is generally a high degree of compliance with mandatory mask laws, but we support an increased level of PPE across the city, including masks and dispensers for hand sanitiser.

Delivery drivers on courier bikes are frontline workers during the coronavirus pandemic. We support more serious safety restrictions being placed on food delivery services, and support delivery drivers like Jeremy Rhind, who has taken Deliveroo to court over paying poverty wages

Question 14

Can I ask the following:

- what will be your approach to bringing the CBD back to life post-COVID?
- as a candidate what is your approach to reducing road traffic in the CBD, particularly polluting road traffic, and freeing up the streets to foot traffic?
- as a candidate what is your approach to our council carbon footprint and policies to achieve carbon neutrality (or carbon negative)

We support an end to lockdown based on prioritising human life over profit, and attempting to eliminate Covid-19.

The best way to tackle road traffic in the CBD is to increase alternative transport infrastructure. We will fight for increased bike lanes to make the CBD safer for cyclists, and campaign for free public transport.

Question 15

I would like to ask the candidates about the Climate Emergency, the Urban Forest strategy for the city of Melbourne, and how they see the 43 hectare historic Melbourne General Cemetery being involved.

May I ask whether the ca has members interested in the greening and preservation of Melbourne General cemetery?

Victorian Socialists are committed to declaring a climate emergency if elected to Melbourne City council, but we know that this alone won't be enough to tackle the climate crisis. We need rapid and decisive action based on public investment and the transition away from destructive industries. We will actively consider any proposals for the greening the Melbourne City Council Area.

Question 16

Wondering if anyone has brought up:

1. the noise disturbance from the very early rubbish collection truck, 5am I think.
2. the tram stop that used to be at Latrobe/Russell St going towards Swanston St which was removed maybe some years ago
3. When outdoor dining opens up, the birds preying on the food/bins etc, another big health concern
4. When cafes etc open up, the kitchens pots & pans, cutlery etc would have to be deep cleansed as rodents etc may have made their homes during the lockdown. Is there a hygiene grading system to inspect the cleanliness of these food prep areas? Am concerned about this when things open up

To address noise disturbances created by rubbish collection and the environmental impact of diesel vehicles, we want to see the current fleet of garbage trucks upgraded with all-electric fleet, as has been recently trialed in South Australia.

We support a massive increase of funding in public transport infrastructure, which includes the construction of new tram stops where the demand from the community exists.

Question 17

And my question for the candidates would be regarding short-term tenancies in Melbourne's residential apartment buildings.

I live in a small building where one company has the plan to eventually turn the building into a hotel of sorts. This has made my, and my fellow owner-occupiers, living conditions very different to the lifestyle we envisaged when moving to the CBD.

The current laws in Victoria do very little to protect owner-occupiers from short term tenancies / AirBnb - is there any plan to put in place some strong laws that protect residential apartment buildings being taken over in this manner?

Victorian Socialists support companies like AirBnB being treated like any other service provider in their industry- they should be subject to the same controls and restrictions.

Question 18

We are interested in what strategic steps they will take to get the city open and back to vibrancy following the pandemic.

See the answer to Question 9.4

Question 19

I would like to know where the candidates stand on the following issues, if possible, please?

On the environment:

Protecting the environment, undoing the damage already done, reducing our CO2 levels and quickly transitioning to renewable forms of energy are critical and urgent. Councils have a part to play.

Currently the City of Melbourne has no green waste or compost collection.

Do you intend offering green waste or compost collection? If so, how will that work?

What happens to our paper, glass and plastic recycling? How can we do better?

Victorian Socialists want to see green waste collection introduced for CBD residents. To make recycling an environmentally effective process, we support the construction of a publicly-owned recycling plant in Whittlesea, and have campaigned for this since 2018.

On heritage preservation:

Preserving our city heritage buildings and our green spaces is vital for future generations. To have a cohesive and proud society we need to anchor our sense of identity and understand and protect our past as well as provide for our future.

How do you intend protecting our heritage?

Where do you stand on protection verses development?

See answer to Question 12. Victorian Socialists take a strong stand in favour of protection, and will support and organise community campaigns to protect heritage and green spaces

City Liveability:

Melbourne has been the world's most liveable city for many years. Covid aside, we need to keep that living standard high. That means keeping the city safe and clean. It means providing safe and reliable public transport for people to get into and around the city. It means supporting our world class restaurants, theatres, entertainment and sporting events.

Where do you stand on public housing and the homeless?

We call for a revolution in public housing. We want to clear the 80,000 person waiting list, by building thirty thousand new housing units in three years, fifty thousand in five years, and a hundred thousand places within eight years.

What will you do to support public transport in the city?

We are calling for operation of the public transport network to be taken back into public ownership at the next opportunity, and public transport to be provided for free as an essential social service.

What will you do to support the arts and entertainment in our city?

We will:

- Rezone areas to create permanent creative spaces and arts venues.**
- Offer rate relief to arts venues in financial distress (subject to hospitality and arts unions 'scrutiny and approval).**
- Ensure all venues promoted in City of Melbourne advertising is approved by the hospitality and artists unions.**
- Advocate for real, ongoing income support for artists, especially emerging artists. Keep JobSeeker at \$1500/fortnight and expand availability of JobKeeper to freelance and contract workers, including artists.**
- Expand the number, dollar amount, and accessibility of arts grants, especially for public art and performance.**
- Make all artistic events and performances put on by the council free to attend, and properly pay all artists who work for council events.**
- Lobby against the neoliberalisation of universities, and the destruction of higher-education arts institutions. Make education in the arts free and accessible to all.**
- Promote indigenous artists.**
- Abolish fees for busking licences in the city.**
- Install public stages, bandshells, and graffiti walls in parks to foster public art and performances.**
- Improve access and participation opportunities in arts and culture activities for people with disabilities.**
- Establish grants for children from low-income families to access cultural institutions like the National Gallery of Victoria and Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.**

Question 20 'We Live Here'

Short-term letting in residential buildings when restrictions are lifted.

During the Stage 3 and 4 lockdown residential high-rise buildings have been able to maintain a COVIDSafe environment due to the absence of short-term letting of apartments. We have also rediscovered the security and amenity lost during the rampant years of the unregulated, out-of-control short-stay industry.

Our concern now is what happens when restrictions are lifted and visitors start returning to Melbourne. Social distancing and maintaining a COVIDSafe environment is going to remain for a long time. This is OK in hotels. It is also possible with owners renting out a room in their apartment for short-stays, when they are also present. However, it is incompatible with the modus operandi used by commercial short-stay operators, and can't possibly be achieved unless something akin to a registration process is introduced. There needs to be a clear Road Map going forward, and we need some guidance with it; we can't do it on our own.

We welcome the thoughts of the candidates on these issues, which affect 83% of the population of Melbourne living in the CBD.

We support increased PPE in all apartment buildings, and will work with community and residents organisations to make sure PPE is provided and social distancing restrictions are observed.

Question 21 – South Bank Residents Association

My question is:

How many, and who, on your team lives in the municipality, and for those who don't why should residents vote for candidates who don't live in the municipality?

Hundreds of thousands of people work in CBD but don't have residence there- but they rely on amenities, transport, conditions that are established.

Question 22

If possible, I would like to hear the Candidates discuss their attitude to homelessness in the City and what they intend to stand for if elected.

I would also like to hear from them on the issues of mental health and drug addiction.

For our attitude to confronting homelessness in the city, see answer to next question.

One of our top priorities for addressing the mental health crisis is to campaign to immediately shut down the Parkville youth detention centre, which inflicts untold damage on the young people incarcerated there. Further, we call for a vast increase in funding for mental health services, and want to tackle some of the root causes of mental distress- housing and job insecurity, low wages and unsafe working conditions.

Question 23

My question is solely about moving the homeless people off the CBD streets and into accom - there are way more homeless people since the lockdown but these are now also more troubled, drug-addicted, scary, screaming, fighting, etc. Whichever candidate is tackling this gets my vote!

Homelessness in the centre of the CBD is a stark reminder of the housing crisis Melburnians face. Victorian Socialists unequivocally oppose the demonisation of people who are homeless in the city- homelessness is not a choice, but a product of economic and social pressures that can be challenged. We call for a revolution in housing policy to tackle the issue. To reduce homelessness we plan to:

- Campaign for mandatory inclusionary zoning, so that all new housing developments contain affordable housing**
- Demand the government close loopholes and impose a real moratorium on evictions now**
- Provide rate relief for all resident home owners experiencing housing stress**
- Campaign for new public housing projects to clear the 80,000-person waiting list**
- Campaign for the government to requisition unoccupied properties to house the homeless**

Question 24

The city's recent moves to create more public and pedestrian-safe areas from on street parking have been positive steps towards benefiting residents, visitors and businesses. However, with the likely reduction in individual car use in city centres in years to come, there are further gains being made in leading cities from the reuse and eventual rezoning of car parks in the city centre - to purposes as diverse as recreation, business, art and urban agriculture. I would like to hear how candidates envision the creative reuse and repurposing of our city car parks. What are your visions and plans to incentivise and facilitate this process?

Our vision for Melbourne is one where the CBD is transformed into a vibrant community space for the workers and residents who spend their days here. We want to see under-utilised land rezoned to create more public and community spaces, including:

- New, high-quality public housing units**
- New permanent public performance and arts venues**
- New parks, gardens and waterways**