

Council Election 2022 - Candidates Survey

Macclesfield Community Association

19 October 2022

Introduction

The Macclesfield Community Association (MCA) is actively working to make our town a better place with and for our residents. One of our key relationships is with the Mount Barker District Council. Over the last four years we have achieved a great deal through this valued relationship but there is still much more to do.

The MCA wrote to all candidates for the 2022 Council Election to ask them about issues that are important to our community and providing an opportunity for them to describe what they aim to achieve over the next four years if they were elected. The issues included a mix of local, South Ward and District-wide concerns.

The questions included some background information and covered these topics:

- Community consultation and building trust with Council
- Progress on the Township Plans
- Balancing the needs of towns across the Mount Barker District fairly
- Improving Lord Robinson Park / Crystal Lake
- Care of the environment
- Support for arts and culture
- What else they want to achieve.

Process

We explained that we would compile the responses from all candidates and distribute through our networks to assist voters in our area to decide who should represent them.

All candidates were treated the same. They had 11 days to respond, with follow up emails/phone calls and reminders about the deadline. They all indicated they had received the questions. A further 24 hours was extended to candidates that missed the deadline.

Candidates were also offered an opportunity to clarify or ask questions. A 100-word limit was requested for each topic/issue. Answers have been reprinted without changes except formatting.

Responses

There are 2 candidates for Mayor and 5 candidates for South Ward Councillor. Five out of these seven candidates provided responses to the questions.

The candidates are listed in the order they appear on the voting papers.

We hope this assists local voters to make informed choices.

Authorised by
Penny Worland
Chairperson, Macclesfield Community Association
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1. Community Consultation

Public consultation is required for many Council plans, policies and decisions including its Annual Budget and Business Plan. Sometimes Council does good community consultation, and at other times the process fails to capture the expertise and views of the community.

What will you do to ensure consultation and community engagement is meaningful and that the community's input is sought early, and its feedback is respected in Council decision-making?

How will you improve the public's trust and confidence in Council's consultation processes?

Candidates for Mayor

David Leach	
<p>I will ensure staff prepare Council's budget and Annual Business Plan with sufficient time to ensure the community and Elected Members have capacity to discuss changes with each other. Community must have input to the initial stage of budget preparation so that aspirational projects get consideration. Adding items after the budget has been prepared is fraught. Too often community consultations have been sent out with a predetermined outcome. Community consultations should be vetted by a meeting of two staff and two ward representatives prior to being presented to Council as an agenda item. Consultation with community associations executives in framing consultations will assist in public trust being improved.</p>	
Ann Ferguson	No response

Candidates for South Ward Councillor

Rowan Voogt	
<p>To ensure meaningful community consultation in Council decision-making, I think it's essential that councillors maintain and develop networks into the communities they serve and with the constituency at large. In my mind, there's no substitute for being in the room and engaged with the people stimulating change in the community. If Council clearly communicates its positions on certain things, and the public feel as if there are clear avenues for discussion, criticism and involvement around these intentions, it sets up a more effective partnership and ultimately greater outcomes across the board, resulting in greater trust and confidence.</p>	
Richard Coombe	
<p>One reason I am standing for Council is because of issues surrounding the Mawson Battunga Nottage Roads upgrade and the way in which Council conducted the consultation process. The proposed final design did not meet the needs of the community and businesses. I believe council needs to better engage with local community groups such as Community Associations, Sporting groups, Hall committees etc that provide a diverse and representative view. When Council make a decision the logic and reasons behind the decision needs to be provided so people can understand the logic behind the decision.</p>	
Narelle Hardingham	
<p>Engaging the community is one of the biggest challenges Council has – people generally don't respond to Community Consultation unless they are already engaged in the project. I believe ways Council Administration could improve Community Consultation is by broadening the advertising medium to</p>	

<p>include increased traditional signage around a particular project eg: corflute's on park fences that are currently asking for consultation.</p> <p>Over the past 4 yrs in north ward I have encouraged people to put in a submission (both positive & negative). I would highlight current Council consultation at all the north ward Community Association Meetings I attended. I will commit to continuing to do this</p> <p>A big frustration of mine is when Council asks the community for feedback then doesn't appear to take on board the feedback. I have advocated to see less "outside scope of project" on consultation summaries. I will continue to do this. Increasing public's trust and confidence will occur when they believe their feedback has been heard and acknowledged.</p>	
<p>Rebecca Hewett</p> <p>I will always be accessible and ready to listen.</p> <p>I will share any relevant information I discover with your association so you can take advantage of any opportunities being offered by council.</p> <p>I will pass on any relevant consultation opportunities to your association.</p> <p>I will be your voice to council on what your wishes would be regarding the plans/policy and make sure that your views are heard by council.</p> <p>Not sure how I can improve the public's trust of council.</p> <p>The only thing I can control is myself and my actions and hopefully I get the opportunity to show that I am a hard worker and can be relied upon to do my best.</p>	
<p>Bill Hankin</p>	<p>No response</p>

2. Township Plans

Council endorsed a Township Plan for Macclesfield in March 2020. The community was consulted extensively in 2019. Very few Actions proposed for delivery in the 0-3 year period have been progressed as at September 2022.

Read the Plan here: <https://www.mountbarker.sa.gov.au/discover/exploremap/macclesfield>

Hahndorf, Echunga and Meadows also have these Township Plans and implementation of all of them has been very slow.

Do you commit to seeking resources from Council for implementation of Actions for years 0-3 in the Macclesfield Township Plan during the first two years of your term as an Elected Member?

Candidates for Mayor

<p>David Leach</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>After reading the 0-3 years Acton items that have not been completed, I believe those items to, mostly, be low cost items that require more a "willingness to implement" than actual dollars.</p> <p>Having cycled to every house in every town in the Council area excepting a few parts of Mount Barker I have the capacity to assert that all is needed is for executive staff to direct employees to <u>actually implement</u> the short term elements of the plan so far not completed.</p>	
<p>Ann Ferguson</p>	<p>No response</p>

Candidates for South Ward Councillor

Rowan Voogt	
<p>Yes. To be clear, I'm unaware of why a holdup would exist in the execution of town plans, especially if Council has already verified and endorsed said plans. Whatever the reasons for the delays, I'll be keen to push through them.</p> <p>I understand these wholistic town plans are critical development projects for the townships of the South Ward and for many, they are the cornerstone projects to enabling strong growth trajectories for our communities, so I understand fully the importance of advancing these plans and seeing them come to fruition.</p>	
Richard Coombe	
<p>Having read the 74 action items in the Macclesfield Township plan and the 27 actions in the short term. I would ask Council staff for the status of the action items. I am focussed on outcomes and have no issues with the plan as it reflects the wishes of the community. I would support the implementation along with the other township plans within Councils budget constraints.</p> <p>I think a report card is needed to be provided to the community to show the status of the action items and any hurdles that have been encountered.</p>	
Narelle Hardingham	
<p>I would like to introduce an annual information report for each township plan into Council meeting agenda items. The report should provide Elected Members and the community with a summary of what has been achieved over the previous 12 months and what are the priorities for the next 12 – 24 months.</p> <p>Should I be elected to represent the south ward. I will commit to sitting down with the Macclesfield Community Association to review the Macclesfield Township Plan in detail with the other south ward Elected Members. As a team, we will therefore have a very intimate understanding of the plan, the communities' priorities and if there are any themes or actions which are no longer a focus.</p>	
Rebecca Hewett	
<p>I commit to familiarising myself with the township plans and keeping council accountable to achieve the promised outcomes.</p> <p>I have a very good track record of getting excellent outcomes for my towns and look forward to doing the same here in South Ward.</p> <p>I apologise that I can't be more specific without knowing the details.</p>	
Bill Hankin	No response

3. Fairness for South Ward

The pressure on Council resources due to growth in the Mount Barker township is considerable, but a balanced approach is required so that Council continues to support improvements and projects in the other parts of the District.

Mount Barker township has 50% of the current population and 40% of voters in 2022. The other towns of the District have the remaining 50% of the population and 60% of the voters.

Do you have ideas about how to ensure an allocation of resources which fairly balances the needs of small towns with the challenges of growth in the Mount Barker township?

Candidates for Mayor

David Leach

Council resources allocations are generally determined by Council staff prior to being discussed, amended and accepted by Elected Members. Ward accounting is tedious and unreliable. What will work is to have Elected Members and staff have “ward meetings” with ward Councillors once a year, chaired by the Mayor for moderation, so that each town gets a fair say in the distribution of resources.

It is moot that residents in the small towns enjoy the facilities based in Mount Barker and there needs to be some weighting towards funding allocation there, but increasingly Mount Barker people are using facilities in Macclesfield and places like the Glebe in Littlehampton.

Building a district wide aspirational register of wants and needs will be a good start to resource allocations instead of ad hoc allocation.

Ann Ferguson	No response
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Candidates for South Ward Councillor

Rowan Voogt

The growth of Mount Barker I think is here to stay. I also believe that while it burdens the community of Mount Barker, other townships here benefit in that population growth is centralised and not instead spread across the smaller communities interested in maintaining their heritage and local vibes.

I suspect there is a balancing act between making sustainable the growth of Mount Barker and continuing development and maintenance of other South Ward towns. It would require more knowledge and information on my part to understand exactly how to execute this balance and where/if it needs adjusting.

Richard Coombe

There are a variety of ways of ways in which you can rationalise a split in council expenditure which could also include revenue raised per Ward. Striking a balance is not easy. My decision would be based on the rationale behind the expenditure taking into consideration the economic and social benefits. Certain projects may not fit within the a particular years budget but should be prioritised for future years and give communities an idea when the project would be completed.

Narelle Hardingham

I will commit to working with the other south ward Elected Members to prioritise the projects for the ward and put budget bids in based on those priorities. In the past, EM's have worked in isolation. I believe working as a team will give the south ward greater strength and a stronger voice in the Chamber, I believe this will benefit the outcomes that can be achieved for the ward.

I believe I have developed a strong and positive working relationship with Council Administration. It doesn't mean that I receive the action I WANT on every request, but it does mean that requests and actions are given fair consideration and if its not possible, I have a sound understanding of the rational which can then be communicated to the community.

Mt Barker township has multiple large projects over the next 4+ years. (City Centre, Aquatic and Leisure Facility, Wastewater upgrade etc) and this will take significant resources and funding to achieve. I believe the other townships need to have smaller projects that are priorities within the Township Plans implemented while these larger projects are happening. This will ensure that the smaller townships aren't neglected, and the community can see progress.

Rebecca Hewett

The way I have worked in the past is to provide council with 'shovel' ready projects for my towns. This makes it easy for council to say 'yes' to projects.

Knowing how council works and what approach gets the best results is key to getting things across the line in our smaller townships.

I am very good at spotting opportunities and working with other councillors to have them support my ideas.

I do not know the history of council and its dealings with South Ward in previous years, so won't be limited in my thinking by what has occurred in the past.

Bill Hankin	No response
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4. Crystal Lake / Lord Robinson Park

Lord Robinson Park is 20 Ha of Crown Land in Council's care and control on the southern edge of Macclesfield. It includes the Crystal Lake area. There are several groups in Macclesfield who are working together to develop the park for arts and culture, recreation and environmental initiatives. This is a significant opportunity to create a new visitor destination for the Mount Barker District and to enrich our community.

Do you commit to approving a detailed Plan for arts and culture, recreation and environmental initiatives in Lord Robinson Park, that reflects the community's aspirations for the reserve?

Do you commit to working with the community to secure funding and implement projects according to the detailed Plan?

Candidates for Mayor

David Leach	
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Yes.

Yes. Provided the funding required satisfies the 1:1 cost:benefit ratio and it is achievable with competing funding needs district wide.

Ann Ferguson	No response
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Candidates for South Ward Councillor

Rowan Voogt	
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Yes. I admire and support the efforts for stronger arts and environmental initiatives by default, particularly when they are paired together and combine these valuable aspects of society. Lord Robinson Park and the Crystal Lake area I believe are prime locations for such endeavours.

I would happily work with the community at all stages to enable this project.

Richard Coombe	
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This is highlighted in the Macclesfield Township Plan as one of focusses of the Community. I would support the plan if it reflects the communities wishes.

I would support the community in securing funding subject to the fiscal constraints of council. I believe that Council should be in a position to provide seed funding or in-kind assistance to aid in gaining grant funding for these types of projects.

Narelle Hardingham	
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The current draft Arts Plan has an action to work with the Crystal Lake Working Group to support the development of a feasibility study and business plan. I think this is a great start, and I absolutely support this action to move forward. I believe this will probably be driven by the Arts Officer, however, I have no hesitation in advocating for regular progress updates to ensure progress is achieved

Once there is a plan for the Lord Robinson Park, advocating for funding to implement the plan will carry more weight and have a higher degree of success.	
Rebecca Hewett	
I would certainly vote for a detailed plan for these initiatives. As one of your elected members, I am most certainly committed to working with the community, keeping my eye out for appropriate grants and funding and keeping council accountable for the projects that they commit to.	
Bill Hankin	No response

5. Arts Plan

A draft Arts Plan for the District was developed in 2022 with community consultation. The new Councillors will be asked to approve it.

The Macclesfield Community Association was an advocate for the Arts Plan. Mount Barker Council has been a low spending Council in this area of its activities, when compared to similar Councils and the state-wide average for local government.

Will you vote in favour of approving an Arts Plan for the District?

Will you commit to increasing the Council's annual budget for Arts Plan initiatives in line with the state average spend during your term as an Elected Member?

Candidates for Mayor

David Leach	
Council voted the Arts Plan in at the October 2022 meeting recognising that although in caretaker mode this plan needed to be implemented this year. Absolutely. Although that average figure is hard to define given that 68 Councils will have very different interpretations of what is and what isn't Arts expenditure.	
Ann Ferguson	No response

Candidates for South Ward Councillor

Rowan Voogt	
Yes. I admire the persevering efforts of certain councillors to push for a stronger Arts agenda in the Ward and would applaud greater, more effective spending in the Ward to cultivate a thriving, grassroots arts community for the Hills. It is unacceptable to me that creative and passionate communities like ours aren't receiving the opportunities in the Art's sector that other Council's offer.	
Richard Coombe	
I would support a plan based on its merits. I have not seen the proposed plan but I make rational decisions focussed on outcomes and benefits both economic and social. I believe councils should be in a position to provide seed funding to assist community groups to deliver community projects. The work the community has done on the Macclesfield ANZAC Memorial Garden has provide both an economic and social benefit to the town.	

I am not in a position to commit to this increase until I see the submission.	
Narelle Hardingham	
<p>I have demonstrated my commitment to advancing and financially supporting the Arts Plan in the past I have also proven by commitment to increase the funding for the Arts Plan by advocating and achieving funding for an Arts Officer.</p> <p>Once the Arts Officer has commenced, this dedicated resource will be able to apply and secure grants, funding and resources that will achieve the implementations of the Arts Plans strategies and actions.</p> <p>I have mixed feeling about an Arts Levy paid by our residents, whilst it is a transparent way of increasing funding to the Arts, I am resistant to imposing additional financial pressures on our rate payers. I am however, not opposed to considering other means of increasing the funding of the Arts Plan, perhaps investigate the possibility of an Arts and Culture developer contribution similar to the Developer Infrastructure fee that is currently paid by developers.</p>	
Rebecca Hewett	
<p>Absolutely I think it is a fabulous idea!</p> <p>I am most happy to vote in favour of increasing funding in the councils budget.</p>	
Bill Hankin	No response

6. Environment

A healthy environment is critical to quality of life and many Macclesfield residents are concerned about sustainability and caring for the natural environment.

Council has adopted a number of environmental plans and strategies and has declared a climate emergency. In our recent budget submissions we have asked for more progress on implementing these plans.

What environmental priorities and initiatives will you seek to deliver (including climate, biodiversity, natural resources and a sustainable future) during your term as an Elected Member?

Candidates for Mayor

David Leach	
<p>Council to purchase open space such as Stempel Ave in Hahndorf.</p> <p>Council to not sell open space such as English St Hahndorf.</p> <p>Encourage, fund and acknowledge the greatly under appreciated, under recognised eco volunteers who do so much for the environment.</p> <p>Discourage planting European trees, encourage planting native species.</p> <p>Cats to be 24/7 confined to private properties.</p> <p>Plant more trees instead of attending a conference in Malmo, Sweden.</p> <p>Lobby NRM board to provide funding to creek and river property owners to fence off and rehabilitate watercourses.</p> <p>Understand we need a plan B - there is no planet B.</p>	
Ann Ferguson	No response

Candidates for South Ward Councillor

Rowan Voogt

<p>The transition away from traditional energy resources is a complex and lengthy process but one we can't afford to stall any longer. I'm ambitious here, and ultimately largescale projects dedicated to pivoting toward new sources of energy and greater utilisation of local recycling and production capacities for example, sound great. However, I'm not yet sure of all viable options for us here. I'd be gravitating toward these types of opportunities though. Initially, I'd be interested in engaging grassroots environmental activism to get a sense of what is possible for Macclesfield and the broader Adelaide Hills.</p>	
<p>Richard Coombe</p> <p>I believe that Green Energy is a sustainable and cost effective mechanism to create a healthier environment. I would like to review the solar energy uptake on council facilities which would reduce expenditure and provide cleaner electricity. I would be keen to review the environmental plans and seek an update on their progress.</p>	
<p>Narelle Hardingham</p> <p>I would like to see the Council's Community Environmental Grants fund increase. I have served on the Community and Environmental Grants Committee for the previous 4 years and I have seen the incredible work community-based groups can achieve – I think this needs to be increased and encouraged. Through partnerships, more project can progress. Increase educational activities for residents around recycling, reducing landfill waste and increasing the sustainability of our own homes and lifestyles. I would like to introduce an annual Awards Program that recognises environmental initiatives that residents and new home builders have implemented that will reduce their environmental footprint and improve the sustainability of our environs. Amongst other things, over the past 4 years while I have been an Elected Member I am particularly proud of initiating the development and implementation of the Yantaringa Management Plan that acknowledges the incredible work the Bush for Life volunteers have contributed to protecting the native vegetation around the Yantaringa reserve. The plan ensures that recreational activities do not negatively impact this high value native vegetation areas.</p>	
<p>Rebecca Hewett</p> <p>My environmental passions are reducing plastics and the devastation created to our habitat by feral pests. With that said, I am not nominating for council to push what I want. I am here to represent what the community wants, and I plan on discovering what that is through consultation. I will pursue the priorities that are important to the ratepayers in South Ward.</p>	
<p>Bill Hankin</p>	<p>No response</p>

7. Other issues

You are running for election for a reason and will have also been speaking with community members and groups in the Ward. You will have heard about other challenges and issues facing our community.

What else would you like to achieve for Macclesfield and South Ward in the next four years if elected?

Candidates for Mayor

<p>David Leach</p> <p>Keep Maccy the same as it has been, it is a lovely town. Do not change the essential and unique goodness it has.</p>

<p>Pedestrian bridge across the creek near the CFS station Build a retirement village in the centre of town for people who rent and want to stay in community. Allow people over 55 to subdivide larger blocks so they can rebuild a smaller home on a smaller property so they can stay in Macclesfield. Provide safer pickup/parking at the primary school. Encourage BnB accommodation to improve economy and tourism. Build fit for purpose, low cost trails between towns and tourist destinations. Get Keoride in, if they can get to Nairne/Littlehampton they can get to southern towns. Keep rate increases below CPI. Bushfire education.</p>	
Ann Ferguson	No response

Candidates for South Ward Councillor

Rowan Voogt	
<p>I would love to be responsible for a greater sense of cohesion across the townships of the South Ward. To achieve this, a more equal, fair allocation of resources and progress I think is critical to ensure no single community is left behind and can grow resentful. Greater cohesion of our communities I suspect will be crucial in the decades coming, in shielding ourselves and each other in hard times and prospering to our fullest in the good times, so I will constantly seek to foster collaboration and cohesion for the South Ward community.</p>	
Richard Coombe	
<p>I have been active in my community for since I moved here 24 years ago and see the benefit in an active and engaged community. I believe that the costs of running community groups and events may benefit from reviewing insurance arrangements and council bureaucratic requirements. Community engagement and the needs of the Community need to be one of the key focusses of Council. Financial management need to be paramount and council living within its means. I would like to explore and question the need for rate in the dollar increase when land valuations naturally increase. I would like to provide ratepayers reasons on why council made a particular decision.</p>	
Narelle Hardingham	
<p>Decentralise wherever possible, this will not only relieve the pressure on the Mt Barker city area, but it will also activate the smaller townships. Macclesfield could and probably already is the Arts Hub of the District, so I would advocate to grow this rather than replicate in Mt Barker. Play to the smaller town's strengths – don't try and compete with Mt Barker township, rather focus on the benefits. Encourage more festivals and events, introduce RV/Free camping to encourage tourism Advocate for the extension of the Keoride service to smaller townships. This would provide a vital linkage for residents, not only linking the townships together, but it would also encourage residents to utilise public transport rather than having a reliance on motor vehicles Improve and increase multi-purpose trails within the townships and throughout the district to encourage residents to walk/ride/golfer around this incredible environment we call home.</p>	
Rebecca Hewett	
<p>I would like to see the round about installed in Meadows, though that is a state government issue. I would also like to see more events that are diverse, interesting, and unique to our town. Being new, I am still discovering what is important to each of our towns.</p>	
Bill Hankin	No response