

COUNCIL ELECTIONS for the City of Charles Sturt - WACRA asks the candidates...

Council candidates answer some questions from WACRA.

We believe that rate payers and other citizens should know where the candidates for the Henley or Grange Wards and for Mayor stand on the key issues.

So we asked them the 7 questions in the left hand column below.

We emailed them the questions on 3 October we asked for responses by 12 October. The table below sets out what we asked and what we got back.

Henley Ward

Who did not answer?

By 15 October we had received no responses from candidates Andersen or Pittman.

Questions	Kenzie Van de Nieuwelaar	Paul Sykes	Alexandra Turnbull	Christopher Knott
<i>What do you see as the three most important issues facing the City of Charles Sturt today?</i>	<p>1) Lack of transparency, accountability and political independence within Council.</p> <p>2) Poor relations between residents and Council.</p> <p>3) Power of developers and big business in planning issues. There is a lack of public consultation on big projects/decisions. While residents may be invited to have their say, these views are often overlooked, with some council decisions being made in secrecy. Too often residents are kept in the dark over major decisions, with</p>	<p>Ensuring Council delivers basic services to a high standard while minimising increases to rates.</p> <p>Encouraging a healthy lifestyles by investing in walking and cycling paths, sporting facilities, surf lifesaving and parks and playgrounds.</p> <p>Protecting our fragile coastline and repairing the West Beach foreshore and Rock Wall.</p>	<p>1) The national waste crisis following China's ban on a range of importable recyclables and its impact on local councils.</p> <p>2) Balancing the increase in affordable housing with the protection of local heritage.</p> <p>3) Long-term coastal preservation planning.</p>	<p>Three important issues facing the City of Charles Sturt today are: - <u>Accountability</u>, <u>Cooperation</u> and <u>Sustainability</u>. Council needs to listen and consider the needs of ratepayers. It is important environmental issues that affect the ratepayers supported by council decisions.</p>

	little or no option to appeal them.			
<i>What changes would you like to see in the work of Charles Sturt Council over the next four years?</i>	<p>Independence within the Council chamber and a lack of political bias. Council and councillors' decisions should be independent from any other government body and be free from party policy or alliances. Decisions should be based on merit and free from personal bias or personal conflicts. I would like to see more respect and professionalism within the Council chamber.</p> <p>Greater emphasis on community engagement and consultation. I want to see community groups recognised for their ideas and genuine concerns. Too often these are dismissed and ignored. Let's end the 'us and them' mentality so all parties work together toward common goals.</p>	<p>Improving community consultation by holding regular community forums.</p> <p>Council adopting a more inclusive community approach to planning matters so that development will be more in line with community expectations in what the residents want their built environment to look like.</p>	<p>- Improved transparency of council work, decision making and increased communication to residents.</p> <p>-An emphasis on greener streetscapes and an encouragement of residents to retain and grow significant trees.</p> <p>- The improvement of building rules and regulations to ensure that they support sustainable development goals.</p>	<p>Council working as a team supporting its Elected Members, who support the ideas and needs of their ward ratepayers.</p>
<i>How do you intend to obtain the views and concerns of the residents you represent and the broader community?</i>	<p>If elected I plan to:</p> <p>a) hold monthly 'drop-in sessions' at the Henley Library for residents to discuss ideas and key issues</p> <p>b) advocate for more community reference groups to harness ideas, particularly when big projects and developments are being proposed</p> <p>c) hold quarterly meetings at the HSLSC and WBSLSC encouraging residents and organisations to attend to discuss important community issues</p> <p>d) use social media as an important</p>	<p>By convening regular residents forums, attending WACRA meetings, sporting club events and meetings of community groups.</p>	<p>By meeting with local community groups, stakeholders and residents and continuing to seek their opinions on all issues of relevance and importance.</p>	<p>I intended, with my fellow ward councillor, to communicate via a newsletter or Face book account. I feel it is important that ward ratepayers are kept up to date with Council Decisions. I also consider it important that elected Councillors should attend/have a presence at Community Events and make themselves available for meetings of key Environmental Community</p>

	<p>supplementary means of communication for the exchange of ideas and to raise any issues and concerns</p>			<p>groups like the WACRA and the Tennyson Dunes Group. This will be a major way for elected Councillors to view problems and concerns of our Ratepayers regarding their Ward they represent.</p>
<p><i>What is the first thing Council should do to make the city more environmentally sustainable?</i></p>	<p>Charles Sturt has lost more green space than any other Council. We need to protect and preserve greenery that already exists, rather than rely on new planting programs, as good canopy can take years to develop. More canopy and greenspace will not only assist in cooling our streets, it will greatly improve the amenity and quality of life for residents.</p> <p>Our major environmental threats are the continued loss of groundwater at Henley Beach, coastal erosion, particularly at West Beach and over-development along our coastline. These issues need to be addressed to ensure long-term viability and sustainability of our precious coastline.</p>	<p>Conduct a review into housing density, encourage cycle lanes and walking paths and finding a long-term solution to sand loss at West Beach</p>	<p>I would like to see the South Australian councils create an alliance similar to the Victorian Council Alliance for Sustainable Built Environments (CASBE). This alliance has involved local governments partnering with design and planning professionals to build environmentally sustainable built environments. Councils should be sharing resources and ensuring a statewide improvement in sustainable design and building practices.</p>	<p>The first thing Council should do is to listen to concerns of ratepayers regarding the Telecommunication Tower</p> <p>And improve the sand erosion problems from our foreshore.</p>
<p><i>How do you resolve the potential tension between development and preserving</i></p>	<p>While it is important to strike a balance between progress and evolution of an area, I believe that for too long the views and rights of residents have taken a back seat to developers' interests.</p> <p>I will fight to ensure that:</p> <p>a) greater emphasis is placed on genuine concerns and rights of the</p>	<p>Talking to residents and heritage experts to strike a sensible balance between development and preserving the character and heritage of our suburbs.</p>	<p>We need to create a long-term planning solution that ensures we have access to modern amenities while preserving historic buildings and zones through the use of existing urban conservation tools. I believe in working with urban planning professionals to</p>	<p>To resolve potential tensions, Council must <u>Listen</u>, <u>Communicate</u>, <u>Explain</u> and <u>Develop</u> trust between parties concerned.</p>

<p><i>heritage, culture and amenity?</i></p>	<p>residents to allow them a say in planning decisions which will have a direct impact on them</p> <p>b) Council adequately follows and defends their own planning guidelines</p> <p>c) decisions are made in public rather than behind closed doors</p> <p>d) there are no decisions about us, without us</p>		<p>balance cultural heritage with sustainable development. Cultural heritage plays a crucial role in sustainable development and continues to be an important non-renewable resource. We should be looking to local governments internationally who have successfully balanced these tensions. Some success has been driven through the identification of a local area's 'identity', with planning based around this concept.</p>	
<p><i>Residents are concerned about increased rates and how the the money is best spent. In order to get the best value from our rates council must take hard decisions on spending priorities. What do you think council should spend</i></p>	<p>My priorities are on community services, ensuring they are retained, financially supported and encouraged. I want to see funds to projects aimed at getting people out and involved; projects which instill a sense of pride and achievement for participants. Transparency and sound decision-making in consultation with the community are essential. We have seen an incredible waste of our money on legal challenges and poor decisions, such as paid parking at Henley Beach. Each budget must be carefully analysed according to its merits and value to the community, with a strong focus on indulgent and unnecessary spending being eliminated.</p>	<p>Council should deliver basic services to a high standard. These include: Garbage/hardwaste collection, libraries & community centres, parks & playgrounds, roads and footpaths, sporting facilities, surf lifesaving, verge maintenance and walking & cycling paths. Council should avoid 'mission creep' into non-core activities and ensure that Council staffing/administration costs are kept to a necessary minimum.</p>	<p>I don't think any statements about spending or cuts should be made flippantly. I would prefer to be able to undertake an in depth analysis of the council's financial documents and speak to any stakeholders affected. A cut that may seem obvious to some may provide hardship to others. If elected I would thoroughly analyse this information before making any decisions. I would be looking to the importance of long term planning to ensure that any financial decisions made, do not negatively impact the council in the future, and provide an excellent base for building a strong community.</p>	<p>Council should spend more on Roads, Footpaths and Tree Maintenance and less on unnecessary building maintenance or additions.</p>

<p><i>more on, and where do you think council should make savings (cuts).</i></p>				
<p><i>Councillors will have differing opinions and priorities on many issues that must be resolved. How will you contribute to finding a method of engagement to find compromise and agreement?</i></p>	<p>Ward councillor must: a) look after the interests of their Ward first and foremost; and b) fully educate themselves on the issues they are voting on beyond their Ward.</p> <p>Both require excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and empathy to see all sides of any arguments, which I possess. It is vital that councillors are fully informed on the needs and issues of the community and have passion and conviction to argue important issues in Chamber on their behalf. My decisions will be based on merit, well-researched information and most importantly free from any political ties, bias or conflicts.</p>	<p>I have 11 years' experience as a local Councillor and will work respectfully in cooperation with the community, other elected members and Council staff to ensure the best outcomes for our community.</p>	<p>In my work as a lawyer I have often been involved in mediations and negotiations. I find listening to other people and spending the time to understand their positions very useful. It then becomes easier to identify any differences or agreements. Building strong relationships as a base is always a first step. I feel confident I can contribute positively to discussions and move decision making forward to further the work of the Council without delay.</p>	<p>You can never please everyone. I intended, after a period of Council Training, to consider four words when a decision is to be made. a)WHY-should a project go ahead. b) WHERE-should the project constructed/delivered so that it benefits the majority of people. c) WHEN-can the project be followed through so that minimum ratepayers/properties are affected. d) HOW-will the project be funded having minimum affect on ratepayers. I consider all of the elected members on Council, should work as a team to support all Wards.</p>

Grange ward

Who did not answer?

By 15 October we had received no responses from candidates Scheffler or Hanley.

Questions	Sarah McGrath	Rachele Tullio
<p><i>What do you see as the three most important issues facing the City of Charles Sturt today?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive growth in rates. From 2008 - 2018 the CCS population grew by 11%. Rateable properties grew 12%. In the same period rates grew 71% (from \$60 to \$103.4 million) <u>Rates grew significantly faster than population and number of properties.</u> • Excessive growth in headcount. In the same period CCS added 70 staff and the wage bill grew 63%. In the same period Adelaide CPI increased 23.86%. • Council not listening. In 2017 the CCS spent \$1 million dollars contesting a law suit with their ratepayers. <u>In 2018 they changed the rules so they no longer have to listen.</u> 	<p>We must respond to ageing demographics in the City of Charles Sturt. We should work closely with agencies to determine how ageing in the city can be best addressed. I believe in providing and creating a vibrant city for residents, one that can attract interest, investments and employment. I want to see a sustainable city enduring into the future. This means ensuring that the City has a 'local' flavour with a resilient community where people feel welcomed and connected. Tree canopies are important for climate change issues: smaller blocks don't have trees and I am concerned about this.</p>
<p><i>What changes would you like to see in the work of Charles Sturt Council over the next four years?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get long term spend back in line with growth Current projections from the Council shows from 2018 – 2028 rates growing <u>43.25%</u>. CPI rises 23.10%; average wages rise by 32.94%. That is unacceptable! • Reduce bureaucracy and headcount The Council is a business you don't grow headcount faster than your business. • Slow spending on new assets. In 10 years the Council has grown managed assets by 79%. Depreciation grew by 48% - in the next 10 years depreciation will grow by 75%. 	<p>It is important to fulfil Council resolutions, such as the completion of the Coast Park, in the Grange Ward. This project has been 20 years in the making and a solution to enable all to enjoy it would be a great outcome. A greater emphasis on creating social networks such as community groups and outdoor markets where people are attracted to mingling as a community.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on services that the community wants and will pay for. I want to leave more money in your pocket. 	
<i>How do you intend to obtain the views and concerns of the residents you represent and the broader community?</i>	<p>Talk to me in whichever way is best for you. There is no point in attending Council meetings without taking the pulse of local ratepayers. I will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent the community - Councillors need to be visible and engaged. I will attend your community group meeting. Send me an invite and I will be there. • Use my webpage and Facebook to explore community views. I am very familiar with Facebook and other apps. Technology will allow me to broaden my coverage and seek your views. • Contact me via mobile. Pick up the phone and call. I will answer your calls. 	I pride myself on door knocking and communicating with residents. They can email me or ring me. I often meet them in person to hear what their concerns are and try to resolve the issue or pass on information they require.
<i>What is the first thing Council should do to make the city more environmentally sustainable?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the green canopy. Plant more trees with more native plants in parks, reserves and gardens. More trees mean better shade and more cooling. Native plants in parks, reserves and gardens will cut down our water usage. 	The first thing Council should do to make the city more environmentally sustainable is to review current policies and align them with new and emerging needs. Street parking, environmental issues, planning developments, bin collections and noise pollution for residents are important aspects of harmonious living.
<i>How do you resolve the potential tension between development and preserving heritage, culture and amenity?</i>	<p>It is clear today's planners are too allied to development and not to local heritage and culture. We need to listen to the community – and observe a couple of simple rules. Use the precautionary principle – if we cannot establish that a project is a net positive and protects our heritage and culture <u>then we should not do it.</u> Finally change should always be evolutionary and not revolutionary.</p>	Regarding the potential tension between development and cultural heritage, I would be an advocate for residents and an outcome of good results. It is important that we all have an input at local level and refer to our politicians to further the cause. This can be done especially through the media and social media forums. There is a tension between current technologies and residents but I expect phone towers and other media merchandise will become less intrusive in local areas. New technologies are to be encouraged. Where expectations are mismatched, I will advocate for a solution palatable to all.
<i>Residents are concerned about</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the basics 	During the past 4 years, Charles Sturt has had one of the

increased rates and how the the money is best spent. In order to get the best value from our rates council must take hard decisions on spending priorities. What do you think council should spend more on, and where do you think council should make savings (cuts).

- Roads
- Rubbish
- Libraries

• Efficiencies of scale?

I have reviewed Budget numbers over 10 years. I can find no efficiencies of scale. Typically as businesses grow the number of people and costs administrating them grow more slowly. However, in the CCS over 10 years the “business” has grown by 12% and yet the number of staff grew by 17%. We need to return the CCS bureaucracy to growing less than the properties and population.

• Less spending on international and national trips with questionable benefits.

Staff and elected members should spend less time on trips with questionable benefits.

lowest rate increases at 1.4%. Open spaces are my top priority as they are community-gathering places for people. They need to be looked after and made attractive. Street parking studies are another priority. As the City continues to attract investors and visitors, we need to make sure they have free, available parking. Residential parking is also important. Footpaths must be constantly monitored and repaired. I want to review home maintenance programs to support the elderly. Residents tell me this is an important service by Council.

Councillors will have differing opinions and priorities on many issues that must be resolved. How will you contribute to finding a method of engagement to find compromise and agreement?

• Work with facts

Compromise and agreement come from debating the facts. Time and again I see Councillors offering opinions and not dealing in facts.

I will bring facts to the table.

It is important to have robust debates at Council as part of the important dynamic of decision-making. It is important to source all information before a debate and to speak to the issues only rather than personalising them. Personalising issues is very unprofessional and lowers the professional tenor of impartial debates.

Candidates for Mayor

The three candidates for mayor are Maria Russo, Paul Kitsis and Angela Evans. Only Maria Russo has responded with answers to our questions by 15 October.

WACRA's Question	Maria Russo
<i>What do you see as the three most important issues facing the City of Charles Sturt today?</i>	<p>One of the most important issues facing the City of Charles Sturt is improving Council's attitudes towards community consultation. There is a great deal of evidence to support the view that the Council does not listen and communicate well with residents and that there is room for improvement in this area.</p> <p>Secondly, there is a need for greater transparency in Council decision making especially with regards to planning and development.</p> <p>Thirdly, issues around financial accountability also need to be investigated.</p>
<i>What changes would you like to see in the work of Charles Sturt Council over the next four years?</i>	<p>I would like to see the Council develop a better understanding of the need to protect and preserve the cultural and environmental heritage of our communities. This includes the cultural heritage of our Indigenous communities and being able to do that work with the expertise and knowledge of local Indigenous leaders.</p> <p>In addition, Council needs to be strong enough to stand up against property developers who do not value our cultural and environmental heritage and are only interested in the profits that come from developing more apartment blocks.</p>
<i>How do you intend to obtain the views and concerns of the residents you represent and the broader community?</i>	<p>I would organise and attend regular meetings in local communities where residents and other stakeholders could meet with me in person and let me know of their concerns.</p> <p>I would also attend Chamber of Commerce meetings and other business networking events where I could meet business owners and learn about their issues and concerns.</p>
<i>What is the first thing Council should do to make the city more environmentally sustainable?</i>	<p>One of the first environmental issues Council should resolve is the long running battle to stop groundwater being pumped from Baju apartments onto Henley Beach. This activity is in breach of the Natural Resources Management Act and</p>

	could have long term consequences that could potentially undermine the stability of structures near Henley Square.
<i>How do you resolve the potential tension between development and preserving heritage, culture and amenity?</i>	When we make it a priority to live and work in an environmentally sustainable way which respects our histories and cultures, then development is obligated to follow a path which respects and integrates all of these into its design. 'Form follows function' is a principle well-known to many architects, planners and designers and encapsulates the idea that design should primarily relate to intended function or purpose. Therefore, Council will be a leader in ensuring that development does relate well to our purpose, to have a well- functioning, safe and harmonious society that is grounded in environmental and cultural heritage values.
<i>Residents are concerned about increased rates and how the the money is best spent. In order to get the best value from our rates council must take hard decisions on spending priorities. What do you think council should spend more on, and where do you think council should make savings (cuts)?</i>	I think that this is a complex question and it's difficult to answer without making a comprehensive analysis of budgets and spending. I'm in favour of Council being more financially accountable via greater transparency and making this information easily accessible to the public.
<i>Councillors will have differing opinions and priorities on many issues that must be resolved. How will you contribute to finding a method of engagement to find compromise and agreement?</i>	The final question is all about leadership and how to be a good leader. My view is that being a leader is like being the captain of a boat and having a vision about where that boat needs to go for the best outcomes for all stakeholders. A good leader will develop a rapport with councillors based on mutual empathy, understanding and respect and will be able to motivate councillors to work together to achieve the vision. The aim is for everyone in the metaphorical boat of Council to be going in the same direction towards the same outcomes, so that the vision can be achieved.