

**Combined Residents of Whitehorse
Action Group (CROWAG) Incorporated.**

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Candidate Questionnaire, Whitehorse Council Elections – October 2020

Name of Councillor candidate: Denise Massoud

Whitehorse Council Ward: Lake Ward

The *Combined Residents of Whitehorse Action Group Inc. (CROWAG)* represents a number of community groups and individual members across the municipality. In the current COVID-19 environment we are seeking to assist candidates to reach our members, helping them to make informed decisions when they vote.

CROWAG advocates for appropriate and sustainable development concerning built-form, public amenity, and the natural landscape within Whitehorse to all tiers of government. It seeks to promote the quality of life for residents and the natural landscape of Whitehorse. It lobbies Whitehorse Council to improve its relationship with its constituents in the areas of public accountability, public transparency, good governance, community engagement, fairness and equity.

Your responses to this questionnaire will be made available:

- a. to all CROWAG individual and group members and their networks within Whitehorse
- b. on the CROWAG website at www.crowag.com

QUESTIONNAIRE:

Please answer all questions and keep written responses to each question to less than 150 words.

1. How long have you been a resident of Whitehorse?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 20+ years

2. Do you live in the council ward for which you are a candidate?

Yes or No

3. List the community, political and/or professional organisations with which you have been involved during the last 10 years.

Whitehorse Council – councillor 2012-current

Blackburn Lake Sanctuary Advisory Committee (resigned when I entered Council so as to not be in a position of conflict when considering funding)

Blackburn Lake Sanctuary Education Program (continue as a volunteer)

Whitehorse Community Chest – Board Director (appointed)

Whitehorse Business Group – Board (appointed)

Australian Institute of Company Directors – Graduate and current member

Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) – Director (elected)

Australian Local Government Womens Association – Executive Committee Victoria Division

Liberal Party – member at large, not affiliated with any branch

Victorian Institute of Teaching – Teacher Registration

4. What positive achievements resulted from your membership of these groups?

Network of contacts through the community involvement has allowed advocacy to achieve successful outcomes for: Blackburn Lake Sanctuary – Visitors Centre refurbishment, technology and Education Program growth, BRAG establishing a successful engagement with Planning Department to better understand community expectations in SLO1 areas, resolving issues for Shared Use Path by encouraging and enabling community, VicRoads and Council officers to meet on site and share conversation and influence final design for an outcome best suited to the community, advocacy for lifts at Blackburn Station to support those with a mobility issue, facilitated the progress of McCubbin Park to allow indigenous plants to grow, seeds collection and finally establishment of a wonderful outdoor space, advocacy for a Tree Education Officer role – not supported by all councillors but certainly valued by community (put motion up initially and again to get it continued and it is now a permanent role), successful advocacy for many inappropriate developments (25 Holland Rd, 199 Canterbury Rd, 201 Canterbury Rd, cnr Surrey and Junction Roads, and many many more), organising donation of plants to volunteer groups, water fountain at Cootamundra Walk playspace (Eastern end) and also Mahoneys Reserve for both dogs and residents, repair of cricket nets flooding issue at Mahoneys Reserve, Morton Park pavilion redevelopment, supported Nunawading Hub location (purchase of Nunawading Primary School site) and then development, support Whitehorse Centre Redevelopment, upgrade of change rooms to be female friendly at Eley Park, upgrade of change rooms at City Oval to be female friendly, supported many playspace upgrades, Kalang Park pavilion redevelopment, advocacy for funding to re-establish billabong at Creeklands, stove and kitchen improvements at Elderly Citizens Centre on Central Road, years of advocacy to protect our Significant Landscape Overlays and finally get approval for SLO9 – municipal wide residential area protection of trees where not previously protected, toilet facilities opened at Mahoneys Reserve each weekday due to high community use of offlead dog area, review and increase of off lead dog areas

5. Please state what you want to achieve as an elected Councillor

There are many things to achieve still. I hope to be able to see an increase in APPROPRIATE development applications due to successful advocacy at VCAT for inappropriate

developments to be refused so we can protect our neighbourhood character and amenity. Pavilion at Slater Reserve is tired and will need improvement. Also concerned that Junction Rd Parklands has not had any focus whilst being part of Springfield Ward and thus now in Lake Ward, I will be strongly advocating to protect the environment there. Our open space is limited in that area and we need to seize opportunities. Need to develop more awareness of the value and appropriate treatment of our parklands by visitors. Since COVID-19, there has been some reckless use which is not helpful so education needs to be increased, need to increase awareness of recycling opportunities to minimise landfill quantity, must keep rates as low as possible whilst maintaining services for all – youth, families, elderly, increase the network of shared use paths to create an extensive offroad network for all to use, support upgrade of Blackburn Library, assist business recovery and encourage community to shop local and buy local whenever possible, establish an Advisory Committee with community stakeholders, council officers and councillor representation to look at ideas which support increasing our tree canopy – needs to be part of our response to Global Warming also as much as wanting the neighbourhood character and amenity to be enhanced, ensure good communication and transparency by being accessible to the community, basketball is struggling to have enough courts so will need to explore opportunities to provide further facilities, must keep our rates low – second lowest average rates in Melbourne Metro, passionate to see increased inclusion within our community – this could be special enterprise cafes, recycling using some staff , post COVID I believe there will be continued and increased demand on our facilities, particularly open spaces – people are discovering how wonderful Whitehorse is, I am advocating for programs to support local businesses as they re-open e.g. outdoor dining on pavement where possible and also within some car parking to allow more customers, also encourage businesses to offer a picnic pack which people can purchase and take to open space to enjoy, the Education Program at Blackburn Lake Sanctuary is a great resource for schools and it will encourage attendees to think more about the environment so I would like to see if it can expand once we are out of lockdown

6. What are the top five issues you believe could improve the functioning of the *Whitehorse City Council* in representing its ratepayers and community?
- 1) Maintain financial sustainability whilst delivering a high standard of services and the community facilities required
 - 2) Increase tree canopy, enhance vegetation, biolinks and open spaces and achieve our planned net zero Carbon emission target
 - 3) Expand waste services, introducing FOGO and organised recycling, supported with additional education for our community
 - 4) Extend our network of Shared Use Paths for casual recreation and support ongoing review, upgrade or development of formal sporting facilities

5) Actively engage with the community and listen to their ideas to ensure we deliver the best outcomes for the community

7. There are many important roles of Local Government. As a Councillor you will need to make difficult decisions with many issues of importance competing for your vote, council action and finances. Whitehorse Council’s responsibilities are listed below.

In the boxes below, please **rank the roles that are most important to you** from 7 (Most important) to 1 (Least important). Please do not use the same ranking number more than once.

4	Children and Families including childcare, kindergartens, maternal and child health, playgroups, immunisation
7	Health and Wellbeing including disability services, home and community care, meals on wheels, food safety
1	Residential and Commerce including strategic development, planning, and building, business development, animal registrations, rubbish collection and recycling
6	Sport and Leisure including sportsgrounds and pavilions, aquatic and leisure centres, Morack golf club
5	Non-structured Recreational activities including cycleways and shared use paths, parks and gardens, bushland, and open space
3	Roads and Safety including management of roads and footpaths, streetscapes (including street trees), street lighting, car and bike parks, pedestrian and cycling safety and security, disabled accessibility
2	Community including library services, theatre and the arts, community centres, volunteering, community grants

8. The following Issues of specific interest to CROWAG.

In the boxes below, please **rank the priority of the issues** in order of importance to you from 10 (Most important) to 1 (Least important). Please do not use the same ranking number more than once.

10	Engagement with residents and ratepayers
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9	Transparency and governance in council matters
8	Council response to Climate Change and Sustainability issues in terms of mitigation, adaptation, and urgency
2	Administrative and budgetary efficiency.
1	Council rates and capital expenditure policies
5	Administration of Council's planning and building provisions in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme (WPS) e.g. overall level of development in the city, building site compliance requirements, general administration including inspections, Planning Permit Conditions compliance, administration of tree and vegetation controls, tree retention and protection on building sites, ensuring compliance with landscape and planting plans, community consultation, fines and prosecution for transgressors
4	The city's natural landscape, tree canopy, streetscape, and overarching neighbourhood amenity considerations
7	Provision of infrastructure for walkers, cyclists, and people with disabilities
6	Management and utilization of the city's parks, open spaces, and linkages (e.g. shared use paths, waterways, and residential streets)
3	Traffic issues in Whitehorse

9. If you have any further comments please note them below:

You asked the question about living in the ward – I live 100m outside but I do live in SLO2 area and having represented that strongly for 8 years, I wanted to continue to do so thus I have nominated for Lake Ward. When the VEC were considering the boundaries, I argued that the SLO2 area should not be divided however VEC did not consider that in their final boundaries. It should also be remembered that every councillor represents the WHOLE of Whitehorse – not just local issues in their ward, so a tight “boundary focus” is not necessarily in the communities interest. It is the advocacy skills you need to effect change where needed. I would also like to comment on Q 7and Q8. I firstly numbered them with 1 as most important but then realised you have the numbering in the reverse. I have numbered however I was most frustrated as I believe there needs to be an opportunity to explain reasons. I actually believe all is important and all needs to be considered at the time. If the environment changes, as we have seen with the pandemic, it can result in business being elevated higher but this may not be the case over the entire 4 years. I actually do not

think I could commit to the order I have indicated as every decision will be considered at the time based on information available. I consider accessibility is high across all areas but your question does not allow this to be evident. I hope you can design a better survey next time.

Thank you for completing the CROWAG questionnaire.

For further queries contact CROWAG secretary David Berry on 0413 457 184

Please save your completed questionnaire and send it as an attachment by email to 'Whitehorse Councillor Candidate Responses' at: crowag.inc@gmail.com