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Candidate survey – Sunshine Coast Regional Council (SCRC) Election 2024

Surname:	Etheridge	Given name:	Sue
Position contesting:	Division 10		

1 About you:

Do you live in the Division for which you are standing?	YES/NO	No
Are you a member of a registered political party?	YES/NO	Yes
If so, are you endorsed or formally supported by that political party?	YES/NO	Yes

2 How will you deal with situations where you or your immediate family have assets, interests or affiliations that might be likely to present you with potential conflicts of interest in carrying out your tasks as a Councillor?

Comment:

Generally speaking, a Conflict of Interest occurs when an individual's personal interests (family, friendships, financial, or social factors) could compromise their judgment/decision making in relation to specific issues being discussed/considered at the time.

Perceived and actual Conflicts of Interest (and/or Potential for Unreasonable Bias) are quite common in all organisations; however, it is the Management of these Conflicts of Interest that is important.

If I do have any Conflicts of interest to declare on any issues that are being discussed/decided upon, I will inform the necessary bodies, and recuse myself as required.

3 If elected, how do you intend to engage with your community and/or the region?

Comment:

An open, permanent office, and pop-up stalls in the major population areas on a routine basis. I'll host a web based forum to get community input and feedback, along with committing to attending regular community meetings across the division. I'll also provide regular updates via websites and social media platforms, as well as letterbox notices where necessary.

4 If elected as a Divisional Councillor, how will you advance the specific needs of your community?

Comment:

I would like to implement a system that shows where all resident/community projects are at. This would allow all projects to be monitored, but it would also allow urgent/worthwhile projects to be prioritised if necessary. I will consult regularly with the community and advance and ultimately deliver projects that benefit our area.

5 Why do you think that you are the best candidate for your Division or for Mayor?

Comment:

The Sunshine Coast Hinterland has been my home for over 40 years and where I raised my daughter and son. I reside on rural acreage, and understand first hand the needs of a hinterland division.

I started working for the Commonwealth Bank after completing my Junior Certificate, resigning after 23 years service to pursue self employment. I am a small business owner (I part own and help run both a building company and an aviation theory school), and have extensive experience in banking, finance, accounting and business management.

I have 25 years experience on Management Committees, and have extremely good listening, speaking, negotiation and consensus decision making skills. I will be able to work with other elected Councillors and the Mayor to deliver the best outcome for my Division 10 community. I am a strong woman, and I will make sure my voice is heard and my opinion as your Division 10 Councillor is listened to and respected.

Primarily, being a Councillor is being a leader. Good leaders listen, delegate and listen.

#1 - Being a leader is NOT a reward, it is a responsibility.

#2 - Leadership is not a position, it is about influence.

#3 - Leadership is setting an example, leading by example, and being the change I want to see in others.

#4 - Leadership is not an individual sport, it requires a team, and if I were your Councillor, you would be my team.

#5 - Leadership is not an idea, it is an ACTION.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Advanced Diploma of Accounting
- Certificate in Financial Planning
- Junior Certificate - High Distinction – Advanced Math, Science

6 Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning this section of the survey?

Comment:

Governance, Transparency and Ethical Behaviour

7 Are you aware of:

the Principles listed at the beginning of the Local Government Act 2009 and will you commit to abiding by these principles?	YES/NO	Yes
the relevant legislation and regulations that govern the conduct of Councillors and the activities of Council?	YES/NO	Yes

8 How do you see the above influencing your decision-making?

Comment:

The primary role of a councillor is to represent their division and the people who live in it. I will operate in an ethical and transparent manner, and will make my decisions and vote in accordance with the wishes/accepted consensus of the residents.

9 If elected will you:

support providing requested information (other than current commercial-in-confidence) to the community without the need for individuals and organisations having to resort to Right to Information applications?	YES/NO	Yes
support that community consultation will become routine and results respected and acted upon such that the public interest takes precedence over vested interests?	YES/NO	Yes
advocate to ensure consistent, high-quality, professional outcomes by requiring the planning and execution of all Council-initiated community engagement processes to be oversighted by the community engagement team of the Council?	YES/NO	Yes
commit to forensic scrutiny of projects and expenditure directions and the budget overall?	YES/NO	Yes
support the Environment Levy and its policies, including the continued acquisition of land for conservation, partnership funding for Land for Wildlife and other environment programs?	YES/NO	Yes

10 What do you mean by, and how would you measure sustainable development?

Comment:

Sustainable development is socially, environmentally, and economically responsible development that meets the present needs of the community without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Development activity needs to progress at a consistent and steady pace.

11 Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning Governance, Transparency and Ethical Behaviour?

Comment:

Everyone benefits from a culture of honesty, integrity, transparency, and accountability in politics. It's what we all deserve, and The Greens have a proven track record in advocating for this, along with a clear plan to deliver it.

Climate Emergency

12 What do you see as the key impacts of Climate Change on the Sunshine Coast and how should the SCRC deal with this now and into the future?

Comment:

The largest impacts from climate change will be felt from rising sea levels, but there will be other impacts as well. Our summers will be longer and hotter, and our winters will be shorter and hotter. We will suffer from more frequent and intense cyclonic weather events and more frequent bush fires as our climate extremes intensify. I endorse the Climate Change Emergency Declaration made by the current Council, and I will ensure emergency action is a part of Council's strategy across all areas, including an amended target of 2035 for net zero CO2 emissions. Flood mitigation on new developments must also consider existing developments, otherwise the direction of overland flow will be intensified in to low lying areas, exacerbating problems for current residents. Sunshine Coast Council must also properly fund and allocate resources to emergency services in support of existing State funding arrangements, and allow QRFS to manage our fire risks with input from our traditional custodians. We should also fast-track/update the Sunshine Coast Council Environment and Liveability Strategy.

13 Do you endorse the Climate Change Emergency Declaration made by the current Council and will you advocate for a review of the scope, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the current corporate performance mechanisms to give effect to the Declaration?

Comment:
Yes

14 What role do you see for the SCRC and the Planning Scheme to accelerate the Sunshine Coast becoming a low emissions region by 2041?

Comment:
SCRC should become a role model/educator for both businesses and households. Waste is the biggest contributor of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Council should incentivise recycling/resource recovery and also incentivise the diversion of food and garden waste from landfill. All Council vehicles should be ZEV's, and renewable energy should be used for Council's buildings/facilities/street lights etc. Incentivising better designed buildings with minimum 7 Star Energy Ratings, ensuring street trees are planted to provide shade, and even using lighter coloured asphalt can be effective.

15 The Coastal Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS):

Will you ensure that the current CHAS is regularly updated as new Climate Change information and IPCC reports become available, and ensure CHAS updates are incorporated in the Planning Scheme as soon as possible after updates occur?

YES/NO

Yes

16 Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning Climate Emergency?

Comment:
SCRC is well positioned to become a leader in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change prevention/reduction strategies.

Planning issues

17 What is your understanding of when it is appropriate to override the Planning Scheme (PS) when there are conflicts?

Comment:
Sometimes the Planning Scheme may fail to account for new technology, or new ways of building/living, and there needs to be allowance for approvals that would otherwise be considered in conflict; however, these applications would be in the minority. The major reason there are conflicts with large developments is that developers buy cheap, inappropriately zoned land and try to have the Council approve development that is not allowed. These applications are often 'disguised' as something else with a housing estate/component attached, and are not appropriate to be overridden.

18 Do you agree that:

Development Applications (DA) that conflict with the relevant PS Performance Outcomes and other planning instruments should be refused unless there is an overriding need in the public interest?

YES/NO

Yes

the community should be able to make formal public submissions and have the right of appeal to the Planning and Environment Court for development applications involving major impacts on the community and the environment?

YES/NO

Yes

Councillors rather than Council staff should decide such major development applications?

YES/NO

Yes

development that is vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change such as flooding, inundation, coastal erosion, landslip and bushfire hazard should be prohibited?	YES/NO	Yes
financial contributions in place of the provisions of onsite parking should not be allowed unless improvements are provided within 200 metres of the development?	YES/NO	Yes
longer public submission timeframes than the statutory minimum times concerning amendments of the PS and for the proposed new PS should be implemented and consultation time for the new PS should be longer than the statutory timeframes (currently a minimum of 40 business days) to allow time for the community to understand and make an informed response?	YES/NO	Yes
further development on the floodplains should be prohibited and not approved?	YES/NO	Yes
a thorough review of the proposed Draft of the new PS, including the assumptions underlying it and the provision of infrastructure on which the proposed Draft PS is relying should be undertaken by the new Council? These include for example, the proposed rate of population growth specified in the SEQ Regional Plan Update to be accommodated on the Sunshine Coast and the impact of that rate of population growth in the region including the increases in dwelling numbers and densities mandated in the Update.	YES/NO	Yes
where community expectations about the PS are inconsistent with the planning directions and expectations of the State Government (eg in the SEQ Regional Plan Update or State legislation or policies), you will advocate strongly to ensure that the State accommodates the expressed planning wishes of our regional community to the greatest practicable extent?	YES/NO	Yes
Halls Creek should not be recommended for residential development and should remain part of the Inter-Urban Break as per the long-held view of the SCRC and supported by OSCAR?	YES/NO	Yes
there should be a level playing field for all quarry operations in the Sunshine Coast region by ensuring that the new PS has the same zoning for all quarry operations and the same level of development assessment for their operations?	YES/NO	Yes

19 Concerning the South East Queensland Regional Plan (Shaping SEQ) Update of December 2023, what are your views on the strategic directions for the Northern Subregion, the expansions of the Urban Footprint at Yandina, and the population and dwelling requirements for the Sunshine Coast region?

<p>Comment:</p> <p>Whilst I support growth along rail corridors/existing transport infrastructure, it is important that the character of hinterland towns including Yandina is maintained. We need to get the balance right. With the Sunshine Coast Region's population expected to increase to 500K by 2041, we need to plan for an additional 85K dwellings to be built to house this increase. It is imperative that developers contribute to appropriate infrastructure to accommodate this growth. Gentle density development will be required to reduce the expansion of the urban footprint.</p>

20 Given the focus on increased densification via higher buildings and/or "gentle density" as per the SEQRP2023 Update will you commit to:

the development of careful guidelines for "gentle density" and that this type of development is not just seen as "accepted development"/"as of right"?	YES/NO	Yes
ensuring that SCRC undertakes a pilot project for higher density living that demonstrates the best in planning outcomes as per the ELS policy?	YES/NO	Yes

21 The coastal hazard “erosion prone area” is defined by the Queensland Government. The State Planning Policy Guidance states redevelopment is to “avoid urban footprint expansion into erosion-prone areas while the State Policy prohibits this land “to be used for urban purposes” unless already located in an urban area or urban footprint in a regional plan.

Will you oppose increases in the urban footprint and the density of medium and high-rise mixed-use residential buildings in these designated coastal hazard areas to reduce overall risk – and if so, how?

Comment:

The simple rule in coastal regions had always been “no development past the first dune” but since we have removed all the dunes in the ever increasing desire to live and work closer to the beach, that understanding has long since passed as we no longer have a “first dune” in many of the areas in question. The current demand for beachside residences has resulted in applications being made for much higher densities closer to the beaches, and this needs to be put to an end. Allowing small transgressions leads to greater transgressions and before we know it, there will be an application for a 12 floor high-rise with private beach access.

22 How can the Planning Scheme support the biosphere?

Comment:

The Council needs to take in the social and environmental impacts in all planning and development decisions. The ‘pursuit of sustainability’ creates opportunities for growth and adaptation in the design of buildings and other infrastructure and Council should ‘lead by example’. The Blue Heart Project and the proposed Dark Sky Reserve are a great start. Densification should occur in existing urban footprints, minimising the need for destruction of the natural environment.

23 Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning Planning Issues?

Comment:

I will advocate for a First Nations Liaison to be in Planning and Development to ensure consultation with Traditional Owners to conserve and celebrate places with cultural significance.

Transport Infrastructure and Service

24 Given the Australian Government has withdrawn financial support for all but one of the 5 major transport projects on the Sunshine Coast and has reduced Federal contributions from 80% to 50% for approved projects, and given the strong nexus between land use planning decisions and the provision of transport infrastructure, do you agree that:

all the current regional transport projects should be reassessed to identify and “lock in” the most effective and affordable project or projects that realistically can be delivered with Federal and State funding?	YES/NO	Yes
accurate budgeting with realistic cost increases and contingency funding must be included in this reassessment process?	YES/NO	Yes
projects that meet the need to efficiently move large numbers of Olympics 2032 spectators to, from and within the Sunshine Coast and that deliver a significant “legacy” transport benefit to the region must be a major decision-making consideration?	YES/NO	Yes
any reassessment should explore some options that do not involve the high capital cost, fixed transport infrastructure projects currently under consideration eg significant increases in the regional public bus network with small and large battery buses on more routes, servicing all major regional destinations, with greater frequency and express services, and with bus right of way clearways at peak periods and priority at traffic lights?	YES/NO	Yes

that ratepayers should not be subsidising major infrastructure projects that traditionally have been funded by the State and Australian Governments through an increase in Council debt or increases in the Transport Levy?	YES/NO	Yes
given the importance of synchronising and integrating land use planning and development approvals with the planning, funding and delivery of transport infrastructure and services, you will support including in the proposed new Planning Scheme medium, high and gentle density land use changes only where the relevant transport infrastructure and services are guaranteed to be funded and delivered in a synchronised way?	YES/NO	Yes
Active transport and Accessible transport should be made priorities in any transport infrastructure projects?	YES/NO	Yes

25 Do you have any additional comments you would like to make concerning Transport Infrastructure and Services?

<p>Comment: To encourage users, public transport needs to be frequent, reliable fast, and universally free. Feeder and community buses and taxis should be incorporated to service the diverse needs of both the Hinterland and Coastal areas as required; with direct routes to major services (e.g. hospitals).</p>

Thank you for your responses. We appreciate your time commitment to complete this survey.