

# Time for council to stand tall

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A CLEAR message has been sent to candidates in the coming City of Greater Geelong council elections.

The ratepayers — including the business community — want a new council that shows direction and leadership, provides certainty and applies effective governance.

The Geelong Chamber of Commerce was pleased to present a special briefing late last month on the role of the chamber in the Geelong business community, our key advocacy priorities and what we expect to see from our new council.

The following week, it was our turn to listen: more than 40 candidates were invited to speak to the audience for 90 seconds, providing a brief, but nevertheless valuable, insight into each candidate's position on a range of topics.



DOWN TO BUSINESS: Bellarine ward candidates at the Geelong Chamber of Commerce's forum.

What became obvious was the importance placed by the candidates — regardless of their political persuasion — on supporting our local businesses, particularly small businesses, as our region continues to grow jobs and our economy.

The chamber has been a strong participant in the development, and supporter, of council's "Our Future" vision blueprint for the City of Greater Geelong's future over the next 30 years.

The Clever and Creative vision was developed after extensive community consultation of 16,000 residents led by the administrators, and it was pleasing to hear that the overwhelming majority of candidates support and commit to implementing the vision.

Some 53 candidates — the equivalent of two Melbourne Cup fields — are contesting the election. The field of candidates is diverse, representing a range of backgrounds, views and perspectives. You can learn more about them by accessing their statements on the Victorian Electoral Commission website.

Running for council is not for the faint-hearted, and the chamber congratulates all candidates — particularly the younger nominees — in putting themselves forward as leaders of our community.

The Geelong Chamber of Commerce, as the city's peak business group, seeks an environment of stability and certainty for the business sector.

It's vital that our new council pledges to work together with business for the city's benefit, and understand that council actions and decisions can have a direct impact on the economic growth and prosperity — not just of Geelong, but the surrounding regions.

A survey of business trends undertaken late last year by the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with Deakin University, listed local government leadership, policy or support as the No. 1 barrier to business growth in the Geelong region.

In order to build business confidence leading to investment in their businesses, growth in the economy and creation of more jobs in our community, businesses need to operate in an environment of certainty and stability.

Outgoing administrator Kathy Alexander recently told a Geelong Business Network breakfast that "Geelong is at a tipping point — it's got the greatest opportunity of any city I've seen for ages".

Dr Alexander spoke of the enormous untapped potential in the Geelong region, and that the new council would be given the perfect mandate to drive the city's future economy and build on our role as the capital of the region.

The chamber is apolitical and independent. We welcome the opportunity to continue to build a collaborative and collegiate working relationship with the new City of Greater Geelong Council.

However, upholding the interests of the Geelong region's business community will always remain our highest priority, thereby creating employment and economic growth.

**Kylie Warne is president of the  
Geelong Chamber of Commerce.**

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