

Response from Candidate Merrill Witt

1. Do you think it important to protect and preserve the local open natural green environment for future generations? **Yes**

2. Do you understand Council is a manager of the Crown Land Reserves in the municipality and that these reserves are owned by all residents of NSW? **Yes.**

Note: Council doesn't manage all Crown lands in the municipality

3. Would you support increasing the built environment in the municipality's Crown Land Reserves? **No**

4. Do you keep abreast of current research on environmental issues? **Yes**

If so how do you do that?

I'm a member of Save Sydney's Koalas and I'm also on the Leadership Team of the Better Planning Network. I have written multiple submissions in response to proposed changes to government legislation or Parliamentary Inquiries on environmental and planning issues. I have lobbied on behalf of protecting habitat and green space in our cities.

5. The Bi-Centennial Coastal Cliff Walk is a local Heritage item, would you support an application for it to be placed on the State Heritage Register. **Yes**

6. If elected a Woollahra Councillor would you advocate for a Greening policy with greater tree canopy and green cover across the municipality? **Yes**

If so how would you suggest this be implemented? **Changing planning controls and making sure they are complied with by developers. The Vaucluse West Residents Association, of which I am a founding member, also argued for the minimum lot size for dual occupancy attached developments to be increased to allow for more green space and trees. We also support a current Council proposal to institute an Floor Space Ratio of 0.5:1. The current control plate formula is leading to overdevelopment of sites.**

7. Do you consider preserving public views, and/or skylines and/or the night sky important. If so how will you uphold their importance if elected a Woollahra Councillor? **Yes. Improving planning controls and making sure they're enforced. Also adopting much stronger Local Character Statements for Vaucluse. I also want to explore whether the Council can offer owners of heritage properties incentives to encourage their cooperation in securing listings, eg. protection of views, curtilage etc. Council receives too much pushback from residents affected by heritage listings.**

8. Would you support Council using Council land and/or purchasing land specifically for formal organised sports use? **I think Council should be acquiring land for passive recreation, especially since they're pushing everyone into apartments. Not sure, what you're getting at with this question? Are you worried that organised sports groups are taking over Christison Park, especially on the weekends? If so, I agree, but where else can they go? I will definitely advocate that our parks are not overcommercialised.**

9. Which Ward in the Council area do you live in? **I have lived in Vaucluse for almost 30 years.**

10. What do you see as the role of a councillor? To represent the best interests of the residents of the Vaucluse Ward.

11. Why do you think you are a good choice to fulfill this role? I am well versed in local issues. As a member of the Vaucluse West Residents Associations, I have helped to prepare multiple submissions and

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Late Correspondence to Woollahra Council. I've attached our recent submissions on the draft Local Housing Strategy and the draft Edgecliff Commercial Centre Urban Planning and Design Strategy. I'm also a member of the Double Bay Residents Association, and have worked on multiple submissions for the Association this year, including a submission to the Upper House review of the Heritage Act 1977. I was invited to speak at the public hearings on this review on behalf of the Better Planning Network, of which I am a member of the Leadership Group.

12. Would you please list your qualifications and experience relevant to being a Councillor. Please see above. I also help run a family business, so I have a good understanding of small business issues. I have lived in Vaucluse for almost 30 years.

13. What are the major challenges facing councillors in Woollahra Municipality. Fighting back against overdevelopment. The current Liberal dominated Council has not been prepared to fight back against state government planning policies and net additional dwellings targets that are undermining Woollahra Council's planning controls and ruining residential amenity, local character and heritage. Please see the attached voting record for Residents First Councillors during the last term of Council. It reflects that almost all of Council's initiatives to fight overdevelopment and protect local character, heritage and public benefits were spearheaded by Residents First Councillors. eg increasing the lot size for dual occupancy attached developments, strengthening the local character statements, establishing a heritage advisory committee to provide Council with strategic advice, improving traffic calming measures in Rose Bay, heritage listing of Churches and public schools in Rose Bay, rezoning the Double Bay Bowling Club from R3 Medium Density to RE2 private recreation, not commercialising St Brigid's (now home to a beautiful new public art gallery), investigating opportunities to acquire land for community use, not privatising the Wilberforce car park in Rose Bay, removing the Seniors SEPP from the R2 low rise density zones. The Residents First Councillors will also fight to revise the Local Housing Strategy, which was recently approved by the Liberal dominated Council. We want it to reflect that we have already achieved our 2016 - 2026 additional dwellings target of 800. 889 additional dwellings have already been approved or constructed in Woollahra, 5 years ahead of schedule. We don't need a Housing Strategy that proposes a massive uplift in density in Edgecliff including towers up to 26 storeys at the Edgecliff Centre. Such a plan will create traffic gridlock throughout the rest of the municipality and ruin the amenity of the surrounding Heritage Conservation Areas in Darling Point and Paddington. The local parks simply won't be able to cope with an additional 3,000 + people. We need to be looking at more ways to curtail overdevelopment.

14. If elected, how do you propose tackling these challenges? Please see above. But it will be tough-going if we don't get a majority of Residents First Councillors on Council. This is why this election is so important. Residents First Councillors are best positioned to protect the interests of residents because we don't need to worry about upsetting Liberal colleagues at the state government level by pushing back against policies that are ruining not just Woollahra but all of Sydney. Woollahra is already the 7th most populated Local Government Area in NSW. We shouldn't be accommodating more development. We need to look at ways to slow it down, not just in Woollahra but in neighbouring Waverley Council as well. The Liberals say they are fighting overdevelopment but their voting record tells a different story. They all voted to approve the Local Housing Strategy, which endorses a huge uplift in density in Edgecliff.

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