

Voting on our city's future

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DEMOCRACY will deliver its verdict this weekend to help shape the future of Melbourne and Victoria.

While many people place less scrutiny on local government than they do to state and federal levels, the community issues of the third tier impact lives significantly and effective representation is vital.

No more so than in the City of Melbourne where, under the pressures of population growth, council and its leadership must set an exciting and achievable vision for the state capital well into the 21st century.

With its \$500 million budget, council must develop a framework to help attract and secure new commercial opportunities, build on Melbourne as Australia's sporting, events and cultural capital, and continue to lead tourism and education sectors in a competitive market.

For eight years we've had a terrific advocate and salesman in Robert Doyle, whose passion for the city has been a boon. He is now seeking one further term.

The most immediate big-ticket challenge is development of the iconic Queen Victoria Market.



Queen Victoria Market is a big-ticket challenge for Melbourne City Council. Picture: Hamish Blair

While heritage aspects must be retained and celebrated, QVM needs to modernise to capitalise as a tourism drawcard and on its function as a unique produce and stall market.

The whopping \$76 million acquisition of the adjoining Munro site last year underlines how important this project is.

More than 29,000 postal votes of the 134,000 to be cast in the ballot to elect the City of Melbourne's mayor, deputy mayor and nine fellow councillors have already been cast before Saturday's poll. As has been the case throughout Victoria, which has seen a record number of candidates, the field is full.

Melbourne's crowded ballot has seven tickets running for mayor and deputy and 44 candidates vying for councillor positions.

Among the higher-profile mayoral contestants are pollster Gary Morgan and former federal MP Phil Cleary, both of whom bring a passion and well regarded experience to their candidacy. But Mr Cleary's platform is largely centred on the concerns of a clutch of QVM trader issues and Mr Morgan, while well credentialed in business, expounds some policies that can border on the eccentric.

And, while the Green faction in Melbourne's elections is expected to garner votes from inner-city "progressives", people should deny granting any leadership power to mayoral candidate Olivia Ball. A vote for the Greens is a vote to take Melbourne back to the Dark Ages — a stifling move against business, an anti-car agenda and an unwelcome divergence into social issues well outside the domain of council.



Councillor Ken Ong. Picture: Andrew Tauber

Councillor Ken Ong, another contender, is also expected to poll well and may be a key figure in preferences.

Sitting mayor Cr Doyle has served Melbourne well and is hoping for a record third term, which will see him lead the city for a cumulative 12 years, if successful. Although on one hand effective, Cr Doyle has failed in a number of areas: the homeless crisis, Elizabeth St skid row, a stagnant Swanston St, unrealised Northbank development and yet to be fully integrated Docklands.

But Cr Doyle is nothing if not energised, a proud and committed exponent of the city and able to articulate a clear vision (if at times in thought bubble mode).

The Herald Sun, while acknowledging a failure to deliver on some of his rhetoric, believes Cr Doyle has been an outstanding servant of the city and should be returned for a third term as lord mayor.

Link: <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/voting-on-our-citys-future/news-story/40c087f721f16b66cfb7257e9416b326>