

## Melbourne Lord Mayor Robert Doyle to take on 'unholy alliance' of opponents

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September 26, 2016



LORD Mayor Robert Doyle was in the fight of his political life after an “unholy alliance” of opponents ganged up against him for next month’s city council election, a Doyle team member has claimed.

Nick Reece, an academic and former ALP staffer, also warned that Melbourne could return to the days of “clown hall” if Cr Doyle was defeated.

But pollster Gary Morgan, who is making another bid for the lord mayoralty, said this was nonsense and Cr Doyle was not a suitable person for the job.

Preference deals confirmed yesterday reveal that four lord mayoral teams have preferred each other at the expense of Team Doyle.

They are the Greens, Together Melbourne led by Cr Ken Ong, Team Morgan and former independent federal MP Phil Cleary who is opposing the council’s plan to renovate Queen Victoria Market.

However, Team Doyle will benefit from preference flows given by two tickets with links to the Labor Party.

It is generally acknowledged that Cr Doyle needs to get a primary vote of about 40 per cent to maximise his chances of winning when preferences are distributed.

Mr Reece, who is number two on Team Doyle’s separate councillor ticket, described the combined forces against the Lord Mayor as an unholy alliance.

“They have sold out on their policy and values and jumped into bed with each other in the hope that one of them – but who knows who – might emerge the winner over Doyle,” he said.

“This unholy preference deal has left him in the fight for his life. If people don’t want a return to the days when Melbourne Town Hall was known as clown hall, then the safest thing to do is vote one for Team Doyle.”

But Mr Morgan, whose number one council candidate is Doyle enemy Cr Jackie Watts, said this was nonsense because council was already being run like “clown hall” under the Lord Mayor’s leadership.

Mr Morgan said issues such as Team Doyle’s conflicts of interest due to developer donations and Cr Doyle’s previous problems with the use of his council credit card meant he shouldn’t be re-elected for a record third term.

“We just don’t think that he’s a suitable person to be lord mayor of Melbourne,” he said.

It is possible that Cr Doyle could face off with Cr Ong, a fellow Liberal Party member, once preferences are distributed.



📷 Pollster Gary Morgan has once again thrown his hat into the mayoral race. Picture: Nicole Garmston

In February, Cr Ong reportedly offered Cr Doyle a campaign donation of up to \$200,000 if he could run as deputy lord mayor on the Doyle ticket.

But Cr Ong now has his own ticket, Together Melbourne, with his deputy former CEO of Pacific Brands Sue Morphet.

Cr Ong defended preferencing the Greens ahead of Cr Doyle on his ticket.

“For me it’s all about individuals and principles, it’s not about parties and what not,” he said.

Cr Ong also took aim at a comment Cr Doyle made on Channel Nine news last week in response to Cr Ong challenging him.

“I think he’s made a serious error in trying to take my job away from me because I’ll be hanging on to it with both hands,” Cr Doyle said then.

Cr Ong said: “It’s not really his job, it’s a decision of the people.”



📷 Melbourne City Councillor and Mayoral candidate Ken Ong. Picture: Supplied

Greens councillor candidate Cr Rohan Leppert said Cr Doyle’s main challenger was likely to be Greens lord mayoral hopeful Dr Olivia Ball.

“The best chance for a new lord mayor is to put Doyle last,” he said.

“That’s what many candidates are doing.”

ALP member Anthony Van Der Craats, lord mayoral candidate from the Light on the Hill team, said the election shouldn't be decided on personal hatred.

"It's not everybody against Doyle from our point of view," he said.

Mr Van Der Craats said Team Doyle had a well-balanced ticket, including respected environmentalist Cr Arron Wood and ALP member Nick Reece.

Independent councillor Stephen Mayne said he would need a strong primary vote to be re-elected since he didn't have a lord mayoral ticket to direct preferences towards him.

The election will be held by post next month.