

City undemocratic – candidate

WHITTLESEA Council chief executive David Turnbull has rejected claims the council is dysfunctional, undemocratic and disengaged with the community.

Northern Metropolitan state independent candidate Stephen Mayne said only two people attended the November 9 meeting in South Morang – himself and a *Whittlesea Leader* reporter.

Mr Mayne lists “keeping your councils honest” as one of his key election platforms and has attended council meetings in Whittlesea, Moreland and Hume as part of his campaign.

“The Whittlesea experience was the smallest turnout I’ve seen,” he said. “People are more likely to engage if there are oral questions; they’re not putting out the welcome mat.

“At Manningham we have about ten council regulars but Whittlesea doesn’t appear to have regulars.”

In a written submission, Mr Mayne asked why councillors did not publicise councillor expenses, as neighbouring Hume Council did quarterly on its website.

Mr Turnbull said past council meetings had drawn more than 100 people from the community.

“Questions can be submitted in writing prior to the start of the meeting, are addressed during the meeting and receive a written response following the meeting,” Mr Turnbull said.

North Ward councillor John Fry said a low turnout from residents was “a sign that people are happy” and that he did not oppose publicising his accommodation and travel expenses if residents wanted.

North Ward councillor Rex Griffin said he supported verbal questions from the gallery during meetings.

“I’ve always asked for verbal questions and voted for it, but not all councillors want that,” he said.

Whittlesea Ratepayers’ Association president Barry Hill called the council dysfunctional and one of Melbourne’s most undemocratic. “I don’t go along any more because we’re one of the only councils that don’t allow questions without notice,” Mr Hill said.

“They should be debating all issues on the agenda so members in the gallery are fully aware of how each decision is reached.

“Everything is block-passed and we’re left in the dark.”

Mr Turnbull said the block-passing method was in accordance with the Local Government Act.

State refuses to fund locals’ anti-noise measures

MILL Park residents whose homes will face the Epping-to-South Morang railway extension have been told the state will not pay for double-glazed windows, shutters or noise walls to cut train noise.

Sturrock Court’s Ann Lee has been campaigning for neighbours for one of the measures because of noise and security concerns.

The majority of the extension will be lowered in a cutting, but will rise to almost surface level at Sturrock Court because it must cross a flood plain.

Mrs Lee and neighbours met the South Morang Rail Extension Project team last Tuesday where they were told the noise abatement measures they sought would not be provided.

“We were told the Government has signed off on everything,” Mrs Lee said. “Anyone with a park view is now at risk of losing that.”

South Morang Rail Extension Project spokeswoman Briana Dewar said earth mounds and fencing would instead be provided along the Sturrock Court stretch of the rail line.

She said lowering the rail line and the earth mounds would cut most of the rail noise. Other measures to further cut noise would include single-welded tracks, concrete sleepers, special fasteners and rubber pads, with wire mesh fencing 1.8m high to go along the earth mounds for safety.

Mill Park state Labor MP Lily D’Ambrosio said the track’s design was a direct result of public input, resulting in the tracks being mostly at or below surface level.

Northern Metropolitan state Liberal MP Matthew Guy said the Coalition, if elected, would talk with Sturrock Court residents about providing noise dampening.



Ann Lee’s plea for the state to fund house noise abatement measures has been rejected. N02WP050

Road to get \$17m

LABOR will spend \$17 million to duplicate one of Epping’s busiest roads if re-elected on November 27.

Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas said the State Government will spend \$17 million towards the 1km duplication of Epping Rd from Memorial Ave to Findon Rd. He could not say whether traffic lights would replace the Epping and Findon roads roundabout.

Yan Yean state Labor MP Danielle Green said: “Epping Rd is an important north-south link to the Epping North growth area and this upgrade will help reduce congestion.”

Mill Park state Labor MP Lily D’Ambrosio said a re-elected government would deliver better and safer travel for families.

Whittlesea drivers nominated the Epping and Findon roads intersection as one of our most congested junctions in the 2010 Leader/RACV Redspot survey in September.

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