

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **JANET TO THE POWER OF TWO – AGAIN!**

City of Port Phillip councillors tonight elected two Janets as its mayoral team. Janet Cribbes is the new mayor while out-going mayor, Janet Bolitho, takes up the position of deputy. In 2005, the two Janets became the first all-woman team in the history of Port Phillip, though in reverse roles.

Cr Cribbes, who represents Ormond Ward covering Elwood and Ripponlea, told the council's annual general meeting that she would be bringing the same level of passion and commitment she feels for her local area to the whole municipality.

"It's hard work being on the council but what I really love is building community. It might sound daggy but I enjoy connecting people to each other and championing what people want," she said

"As mayor, I'm on a mission to boost the council's level of service and responsiveness. Council services should be tailored to what people actually need and be friendly and fast. I keen to build more of a 'can do' culture. My 'big' aim is to make sure every household and business knows that the council does, how it does it and what they can ask for. The culture of 'demand and supply' needs to be changed into something that's more about relationships.

"We should be moving away from the 'us and them' adversarial style of politics. I also want to change the way we consult – and to ensure that everyone's views are taken into account even if they may not be physically present at the time."

Cr Cribbes is placing great store on the Community Plan launched last night (5/12) at the Civic Awards.

"The Community Plan outlines the priorities for the next ten years established by local residents, traders and visitors in an extensive survey and April's Port Philip Speaks Community Summit," she said.

"Everyone at the Community Summit talked about wanting to have more opportunities to get involved locally and build local relationships and connections – and this plan does just that through the new Small Poppy grants program which will help people 'kick start' neighbourhood projects. You won't have to wait months for the money. We're cutting red tape and aiming at a very short turnaround."

Cr Cribbes cites the newly-opened Poet's Grove Family and Children's Centre in Elwood is one of the best council initiatives in her patch.

“The new centre on the corner of Elwood Primary School grounds is a one-stop drop off point for parents whether their kids are 6 months old, 6 years old or 16 years old,” she said.

“Babies can get their shots at the maternal and child health centre, toddlers can attend child care or kindergarten all at the one spot. Older children can go to the primary school next door or across the sports ground to Elwood College. There aren’t many places in Australia, let alone Melbourne, to have such continuity of care and schooling in the one place. It should create deep and lasting connections for all concerned.

“I’m also proud to have helped bring in height controls for Ormond Road and got the funding to implement the Elwood foreshore management plan. For me, building safe school crossings around the Elwood Village roundabout has also been very special. The Elwood cleaning trial where the council is trying to tailor its service to meet specific local needs also points in the right direction. This level of practicality is what Port Phillip needs.”

For Cr Cribbes, social equity is the cornerstone of her beliefs. “How we look after the less privileged tells us how well we’re tracking as a community. It’s a measure of whether we’re a strong, cohesive, tolerant and inclusive society. We shouldn’t just be concerned about how affluent we are but about homelessness, poverty, climate change, and reconciliation, to name such a few obvious issues.

“The submissions to the Victorian Electoral Commission review of council boundaries and representation have revealed how deeply we all identify with our local neighbourhoods and the different forms that feeling of belonging takes. The village feel is not unique to Elwood. Together, all these diverse communities make for an interesting and vibrant municipality – one that I feel proud and privileged to lead for the next year.

“I recognise the challenge ahead with the redevelopment of the St Kilda triangle site. We as a council are listening intently to what everyone is saying and doing everything we can to ensure very best community benefits will result. Life is never dull in Port Phillip.”

Cr Cribbes is pleased that homelessness is finally on the Federal Government agenda. “Here in Port Phillip we should be doing our bit to eradicate homelessness. You can’t be safe without a decent roof over your head,” she said.

“I’m looking forward to working with government, philanthropic and faith organisations to build on the council’s community housing program and other services.”

Cr Cribbes, who is 47, grew up in Italian immigrant family in the Mildura district. She has degrees in arts and social work and has worked extensively in the area of alcohol and drug counselling. She helped set up the Women’s Council on Homelessness and Addiction.

She was two-thirds of a way through her Master’s cum PhD when her husband John, who served on St Kilda Council from 1990-94, was diagnosed with secondary cancers. He died in 1999 when

the youngest of her two daughters was only six months old. Cr Cribbes has lived in Elwood for 17 years but the Cribbes family now stretches back five generations.

As Chairperson of the Elwood/St Kilda West Parish in the Catholic Church, Cr Cribbes is keen to bring the different faiths together.

“I’m hoping the different faiths can work together to create the circumstances for people to live more meaningful lives and to meet the spiritual needs identified in the council’s just-released Health and Wellbeing Plan,” she said.

After two years as mayor, Cr Bolitho is looking forward to spending more time in Port Melbourne.

“I’m relieved I’ll have more time for family, friends and fitness,” she says.

She nominates the council’s commitment to dealing with climate change as the most important achievement of her two terms. “Steering the council ship through choppy seas has been hard but worthwhile. I owe a big debt to my fellow councillors for their hard work, good ideas and warm support.

“Overall, the biggest highlight has been meeting so many fantastic local people. They may be from all walks of life but the work they do for the benefit of the whole community is outstanding. I feel both inspired and humbled.”

Cr Bolitho has also been impressed by the council’s access arts programs. “The programs involve people with physical and/or psychiatric disabilities and the creativity they unleash lifts the spirit and warm the heart.”

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