

Selectors

I am very pleased and extraordinarily honored to be asked to provide a letter of endorsement for Katherine O'Regan for the seat of Wentworth. I cannot think of a person better prepared and more capable of taking on the seat of a former Prime Minister.

Katherine is ready for the role for the people of the electorate and to serve the nation.

I have known Katherine for more than a decade as a colleague and co-worker on matters of urban leadership.

I met her at the United States Studies Centre where she completed a master's Degree in US policy. Her degree examined American cities—what she could learn from them that might be transferable to a fast-moving and urban Australia. But she did not look just at the US, even as she pursued the American oriented degree. She used the US template to understand what was going on around the world.

Even though she was an elected councilor for Woollahra and later elevated to Deputy Mayor, she travelled when possible to urban issues conferences in European and Asia to master urban management. She didn't just learn, she applied what she learned at home with her city and surrounding councils. Her energy and clarity were infectious leading to a re-shaping of her city's approach to Place-making, urban design and smart cities. From dormant retail areas in double Bay she helped with her colleagues on council and the local chamber to bring Double Bay back to life.

After several years of solid work with her own Council and nearby councils like Waverley and Randwick, she led coalitions of local councilors and community leaders to join the Future Cities at the University of Sydney. I was the Director of Future Cities at this time. I was able build on her momentum and leadership to expand Future Cities from these Eastern Suburbs beach cities to other cities across metropolitan Sydney. It was Katherine's inspiration that helped Future Cities grow. Her work with her city illustrated the right information and community leadership can transform cities for their citizens.

Fast forward six years, Katherine helped move Future Cities into a new nationally relevant cities leadership organization by helping establish Cities Leadership Institute where she is Executive Director. The organization through her foresight and hard work is now national in scale with global visibility. Cities Leadership is at the national forefront to the SMART Cities movement with Katherine as the recognized “guru”. While transitioning to a role outside of Council she has not move away from continuing in-depth work in her home community of Woollahra where—unbelievably she heads an expanding chamber of commerce. She is respected globally and truly grounded locally.

Katherine’s urban knowledge is so well recognized that she through Cities Leadership Institute is being tapped for nationwide leadership in the national SMART Cities program. There are many able people the Commonwealth might have turned to but Katherine has positioned Cities Leadership Institute as the “go to” urban innovation organization across the nation.

Because of her leadership Cities Leadership was selected with the Sydney City Deal to help collective of eight cities act more like a smooth urban system as they grapple with the new Western Sydney Airport urban spread.

This long catalogue of strong wise and courageous leadership grounded locally with national reach and international respect is exactly in keeping with what the constituents enjoyed with Malcolm Turnbull. Katherine continues this profile for Wentworth without missing a beat.

Edward J Blakely

Professor