

The ratepayer's poll

In January this year, under a 100-year-old gum tree at St Clair oval, Kirsten Alexander told *The Adelaide Review* the Charles Sturt Council's land swap must stop.

If she could not stop the swap then she would like a ratepayer's ballot over the controversial decision.

At the time Alexander was looking for candidates to run in the upcoming council election, never expecting that she herself would be Mayor before the year was out. Alexander beat standing Mayor Harold Anderson by 3,989 votes.

"In the end there didn't seem to be many people putting their hands up to run for Mayor," Alexander said.

"It was not an easy decision but I thought people had confidence in me and I had something to offer.

"In some ways it was a referendum on St Clair, we called for a ratepayer's poll and now we've had (it), with a very clear result."

Yet while she is known for her fight to save St Clair her main focus now is rebuilding the community's faith in the Council. However initially she must gain the trust of the councillors she fought.

"The first thing I want to do is build relationships with the other councillors and get us off on the right foot. The last thing we want is to end up a divided council fighting for four years like Burnside," she says.

An Ombudsman's report into the Council's handling of the land swap is due within months. How much of that decision can be reversed is unclear, however Alexander is concerned about the legacy of the contaminated land.

She admits: "The Council has taken on that liability now and we'll be responsible for it for years to come. I think what we've got to do is make the best of a bad choice."

- Louise Pascale