

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES TO QUESTION TIME TUESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2014

The following questions were addressed to the above meeting. Some questions were adequately responded to at the meeting, however others required a more detailed response in writing.

This document includes both verbal and written responses. In this instance, no written responses were provided as issues were adequately addressed at the meeting.

Victoria Strachan thanked Council for the \$15,000 allocated to the Barwon Heads Arts Council through the 2014/2015 budget to undertake a feasibility study for a much needed Community Arts Hub. They have identified the perfect location. When the kindergarten moves to the new Early Learning Centre at Village Park in January 2015, the older kindergarten building will be left vacant.

What is the Council process going forward to undertake this feasibility study and when can it commence?

Jenny McMahon responded Council looks forward to the outcomes of the feasibility study and it is important that the feasibility study be undertaken before the "perfect location" is identified.

Regarding the feasibility study, Council's Manager Arts and Culture will be making contact with you to discuss the way forward.

Cr Richards added Council has made no formal decision. The kindergarten is operating as a kindergarten and will continue until the end of December – at that time Council can make a decision about the property going forward.

We have established a petition to gauge community support to keep the Barwon Heads Kindergarten as a community asset. Is a petition counted as all signatures on the list or is it counted as just one. In other words, do we need to get the community to sign separate pieces of paper?

The Mayor responded that all signatures will be counted.

Cr Heagney urged that when gathering signatories to ensure they are local, as this adds weight to the petition.

Anthony Aitken asked what due diligence was undertaken by City Hall in relation to the Portuscale Cruise Fiasco. What due diligence was undertaken by the City Hall funded Geelong Bellarine Tourism Inc. If due diligence was undertaken will City Hall and Geelong Bellarine Tourism publicly release those documents as there would be no commercial in confidence as the project has been abandoned. What subsidies were offered by State Government, City Hall and Geelong Bellarine Tourism and can any of those subsidies be recovered if paid to Portuscale. Will City Hall commit to protect the reputation of Geelong and public funds to undertake a due diligence of all future project of this nature?

Dean Frost responded that Portuscale Cruises is a Portuguese based shipping company that was established in 2013, with a fleet of four boutique ships.

Council was approached by Portuscale regarding their desire to establish a base within Geelong. This request was subsequently put in writing.

As Council does not own nor manage berthing facilities the Company was referred to the Port of Geelong, who began working with Portuscale and their berthing agent Wilhelmsen to confirm berthing arrangements. These were ultimately agreed and Portuscale's agents began promoting the Cruises.

This is the process we typically follow with other shipping lines that have booked to visit Geelong in recent years.

Obviously, we have recently been advised that Portuscale's 2015 Southern Hemisphere has been cancelled.

CEO of Portuscale Cruises, Rui Alegre, has written advising that the "decision to cancel was for commercial reasons and not based on any issue or concerns with Geelong City or the port authorities"

This has coincided with media reports regarding internal employee/contractor matters within Portuscale. This is a matter is for Portuscale.

I can confirm that Council has not, nor has the State Government or Greater Geelong Bellarine Tourism provided any funding or subsidy towards these proposed visits.

It should be noted that last year there were 6 Cruise ship visits to Geelong and that we have another 6 booked for this coming year.

This highlights the interest that Cruise ships have in exploring new ports, and emphasizes the need for the Yarra Street Pier - we expect to host up to 25 cruise ships per year and create in excess of 400 jobs and boost our local economy by \$61Ml.

Colin Wallace asked:

Members of the public used to be able to browse on the Council website the Minutes of Council Meetings going back at least a decade. That changed in December 2012 and, since then, only the Minutes from the start of 2012 have been made available on the website for browsing. If members of the public wish to have access to any Minutes from before 2012 they must contact a Customer Service Centre.

- 1) Why was this change made?
- 2) Will Council restore the opportunity for members of the public to browse on the Council website the Minutes of Council Meetings that were available prior to the change in December 2012 described above?

The Mayor took the questions on notice for a written response.

A subsequent written response was provided by the Acting General Manager Corporate Services in the following terms:

I refer to your questions raised during Question Time at the Council Meeting held on 9 September 2014.

In response to your first question, please note that the decision to remove old Minutes from Council's website was made following a review of the level of access by members of the public, and also in order to comply with Council's responsibility to provide information on its website in an accessible format.

The cost of converting all previous Council Minutes into an accessible format could not be justified, based on the level of use.

Accordingly, and in response to your second question, please note that there is no intention to convert all pre-2012 Council Minutes into an accessible format so that they can be made available via Council's website.