

**QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES TO QUESTION TIME
TUESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2016**

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.

Judy Fyfe asked question in relation to the Geelong Saleyards:

Much reliance is being placed on the recently commissioned Safety Audit Inspection of the Geelong Cattle Yards.

- 1) Why has this vital facility been allowed to deteriorate to this state?
- 2) What OH & S inspection schedule has been in place for the last ten years? I volunteer at a City asset (also managed by City Services) and we are subject to a regular quarterly OH & S inspection and have to comply with City standards at this workplace at all times?
- 3) Why are regional farmers being forced to bear the burden of past practices of the City which are far from "best practice"?

This is not fair on the regional farming community.

Kathy Alexander responded that she can't answer why it has been allowed to deteriorate, but believe there are a number of issues why this situation has occurred.

Vicki Shelton responded that Council conducts OH & S inspections on a monthly (staff amenities), and six monthly (yards and surrounds) basis.

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
General Manager City Services in the following terms:**

Thank you for submitting your questions regarding the Geelong Saleyards and the OH&S management on the site.

Officers responsible for the site undertake regular inspections pre and post sales to identify any issues that may pose a risk to the safety of the public and also to stock. Actions are in place manage these issues including the ongoing maintenance works undertaken by the operations staff onsite.

Workplace inspections of the staff amenities are completed monthly.

Audits have been completed twice annually and identified issues were programmed to be addressed or monitored. The structural components in the yards were being monitored and in August this year it was considered that an independent structural engineer was required to determine their status. The report identified risks to users of the overhead and pedestrian walkways which prompted the immediate temporary closure of the Geelong Saleyards to sheep and cattle sales on the 22 August 2016

An independent Occupational Health and Safety assessment on the cattle pens made it absolutely clear that this area of the facility is in much worse condition than the City's first anticipated. They will require significantly more work and expense to ensure they are safe for public access and use.

The City of Greater Geelong is responsible for all costs associated with the Saleyards. Major works identified were subject to budget submission and approval and it is noted that only limited budgets were available over a number of years.

It should also be noted that only one-third (or 34 per cent) of the stock sellers using the Saleyards actually come from the City of Greater Geelong.

If you require additional information or have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Fiona Conroy asked:

Are the Administrators aware, that despite the advice they have received by Council staff, that no member of the Geelong Saleyards Users Group has ever been shown any plans in any format whatsoever, detailing the works to be undertaken on the ramps, holding pens and selling yards?

The Geelong Saleyards Users Groups would like to see these plans and work with Council to make constructive suggestions to make sure the Council money being spent on the sheep yards is being spent in the most cost effective manner.

Kathy Alexander responded it was her understanding that the group was shown some proposals.

Vicki Shelton responded that documentation (aerial plan), was shown to the group on a walk around.

Kathy Alexander added she recognized this decision is causing hardship on the smaller sheep holders in particular and we are prepared to provide support.

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
General Manager City Services in the following terms:**

Thank you for submitting your question regarding the Geelong Saleyards and the current works on the sheep pens.

Members of the Saleyards Users group along with agents have been on site and were shown Aerial Plans of the site. Officers indicated the location of proposed works on the aerial plans and sheep pens on site were marked to identify repairs. The repairs supported those pens which would be suitable for the selling of sheep.

Given the nature of the works and the timing of repairs detailed design plans were not prepared.

Officers have recently met on site twice in the last week with representatives from the saleyards users group to review the current works on the sheep yards. Please note that changes have been made to the works based on feedback received.

Further scoping still needs to be done to determine the works and costs needed to repair the cattle pens (as identified in the recent independent OH&S report). Meetings on site will be held once the scope of works for the cattle yards is prepared.

If you require additional information or have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

John Fyfe asked:

The Council's 2015-16 Annual Report shows it has \$690,000 sitting in an Asset Redevelopment Reserve for the Saleyards Redevelopment:

Why is this money not being spent to repair the cattle yards?

Kathy Alexander responded it was her understanding it will be used to repair the cattle yards.

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
General Manager City Services in the following terms:**

Thank you for submitting your question regarding the Geelong Saleyards and the funds available to undertake repair works on the site.

The funds currently held in the City's Saleyards budget came from an insurance payout received after a fire at the Saleyards building in June 2013. The City is using these funds for its current works to repair the sheep pens and any other safety works identified in the Engineers report and OH&S assessment.

In relation to the cattle pens, further scoping of the required works (as identified in the independent OH&S report) to make it safe, are currently being developed to determine the extent and cost of the repairs. The City's Insurance funds will be used for any repair works arising from the Saleyards review.

If you require additional information or have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me on 5272 4317.

Susan Ryan asked who will be accountable for the mis-management of the Geelong Saleyards.

Kathy Alexander responded it is a complex issue and dates back many, many years. A lack of decision of what to do with the asset has been a compounding issue.

**A subsequent written response was provided by the
General Manager City Services in the following terms:**

Thank you for submitting your questions regarding the Geelong Saleyards.

Please find below responses to your questions.

Who will be accountable for the mismanagement of the Geelong Saleyards?

I acknowledge your concerns that the saleyards have been allowed to deteriorate beyond this regular maintenance. I understand that in 2014 the full recognition of this deterioration by staff and councillors was the main reason behind the then Council's decision to transition the site to closure. That report to Council, and a change in staff, led to a closer monitoring of the yards' structural components. As a result, last August officers called for an independent engineer's examination of these structural components. That report identified serious risks to users of the overhead and pedestrian walkways, which prompted the immediate temporary closure of the saleyards to sheep and cattle sales on 22 August 2016.

An independent occupational health and safety assessment on the cattle pens (commissioned by City officers) also made it absolutely clear that this area of the facility is in much worse condition than first thought. The pens will require significantly more work to ensure they are safe for public access and use.

The question still remains as to how the saleyards got to their current state of disrepair. Unfortunately, as you are no doubt aware, there are a number of areas in which the City's administration and its former councils' decision-making processes did not meet what we would now consider to be 'acceptable organisational standards'.

Recognising these failings, the Victorian Government appointed the Administrators to ensure the development of appropriate policies, procedures, monitoring and audit processes – ready to ensure effective governance into the future when an elected mayor and councillors return. The Commission of Inquiry also determined that the City's lack of governance coincided with 'a culture of bullying', where staff have been afraid to raise issues or errors – both within the City's administration, and its elected council. This culture has evolved over many years, and many terms of former councils.

I believe that most people come to work to do the very best they can in the circumstances they are in. The way forward is to get our systems right, clarify the expectations of our staff, and monitor continuous improvement. In contrast, identifying people to blame who have been unfortunate enough to have worked in a culture of bullying would only perpetuate the negative culture we are trying to fix. Changing organisational culture takes time and trust. As well, there have been so many changes in the City's leadership that no-one but the more operational staff members have been constant over the last decade or so. It would be unfair to blame them for not understanding complex structural engineering issues, or for undertaking work that is beyond or above their role.

Do the administrators expect the public of Geelong to find credible when they reverse decisions with no consultation and despite overwhelming public interest?

The administrators are required to act within the Local Government Act 1989 – which means they must make all decisions based on information available to them for every council meeting. I feel it's important to note that the administrators were still receiving submissions on the saleyards from stakeholders right up to the start of the council meeting on 13 December 2016.

Having considered those submissions, the administrators decided not to endorse the City officers' recommendations, but to instead make their own decision. They determined that any major expenditure must be decided in the context of more information about the strategic priorities for farming generally, and for emerging and future market trends for stock in particular. Such decisions should be made strategically in order to serve development in the future across our entire municipality. Investment in infrastructure is costly and important, and what we need to ensure we succeed in agribusiness in Geelong in the future might not be the same as in the past.

If you require additional information or have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me on 5272 4317.

Michael Garvey asked questions in relation to the CBD 40km/h Speed Limit:

The implementation of the 40km/h speed limit in the designation CBD area is likely to increase traffic flow in McKillop Street, which remains at 60km/h.

Given that McKillop Street is primarily residential could the 40km/h be extended to that street and why were residents in that street not consulted in such a significant change?

Brett Luxford responded that the areas designated are designed to reduce the speed limit across Central Geelong encouraging a safe environment for both pedestrians and traffic movements. Council will be addressing the issue of east/west traffic in a future report on the Network Operating Plan dealing with heavy vehicles movements outside Central Geelong.

Kathy Alexander added the comments will be taken into consideration and will consult when that piece of work comes up.

Pam McGarigle asked if there will be a survey of traffic increase after the introduction of the 40km/hr zone?

Vicki Shelton responded Council would be monitoring traffic movements both prior to and post the introduction of the 40km/hr zone.