

21 July 2020

Notice of Motion, Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood: Medically Supervised Injecting Room

Motion

1. That the Future Melbourne Committee, in light of new information, requests that the Chief Executive Officer write to the Minister for Mental Health, Martin Foley MP and Ken Lay AO to express the following
 - 1.1. That the Victorian Government's 'preferred site' (i.e. 53 Victoria St, Melbourne) be removed from the site options currently being considered for the second Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR) in Melbourne on the grounds that the 'preferred site' is both inappropriate and inadequate. The request is to outline that the site is:
 - 1.1.1. Inappropriate due to its immediate proximity to vulnerable resident groups, its proximity to Queen Victoria Market, a site which attracts significant numbers of customers, traders and tourists.
 - 1.1.2. Inadequate in relation to the provision of associated medical services not limited to but including rapid detox and rehab beds and the ability of the site to physically accommodate a MSIR similar to that in North Richmond.
 - 1.2. Welcoming the decision by the Victorian Government to establish a formal public engagement process headed by Ken Lay AO, reiterating that the Council will engage collaboratively with the State Government in evaluating alternate site options once the City of Melbourne has been provided with State data outlining the sites considered and assessment criteria used to assess those sites. The correspondence should note that the City of Melbourne is yet to receive responses to its two requests for site selection and assessment criteria following the Victorian Government announcement of its preferred site on 5 June.
 - 1.3. Noting the independent Review of the Medically Supervised Injecting Room in Richmond, presented to the Victorian Government in June 2020, found that "amenity has not improved during the review assessment period ... and significantly fewer residents and business people reported feeling safe walking alone during the day and after dark." Therefore, any MSIR in City of Melbourne must give priority to amenity, with an increased emphasis by all service providers and local and state governments to address community safety and amenity.

Background

2. Council resolved on 30 June 30 2020 to continue consultation with the Victorian Government on a second (MSIR) to be located in the City of Melbourne. Before and since that Council meeting, the outcry from constituents objecting to this 'preferred' site has been both strong and well argued.
3. Community distress arising from this site continuing to be regarded by the State Government as an option grows and is causing avoidable anxiety.

4. Since the Council resolution the City of Melbourne attended a meeting of Drill Hall residents on 1 July July2020 where residents sought clarity on Councils stance on the State Government 'preferred' option. Given the particular vulnerability of many residents of Drill Hall, many of whom were all too familiar with addiction issues, their distress and alarm at the prospect of the preferred site being on their doorstep was made very clear.
5. Since the Council resolution, QVM Management has conducted trader and customer research on the matter. The result was clear with over 90% of those canvassed rejecting the 'preferred' site.
6. At the time, Council resolved to allow the 'preferred site' to remain an 'option' for consideration and consultation by State Government, the ownership structure of the site was not raised as a determining factor.
7. Most Councillors were not fully aware that City of Melbourne has a 299 year lease over the 'preferred site' and that the Co-health lease only runs for a further 18month period. This, in effect, means the MSIR cannot proceed at this location without Council approval.

Moved: Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood

Seconded: Lord Mayor Sally Capp