

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.10

Proposed Victorian Government Medically Supervised Injecting Service in the City of Melbourne

Council

25 May 2021

Presenter: Justin Hanney, Chief Executive Officer

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is for Council to reaffirm its position in relation the Victorian Government's proposed CBD located Supervised Injecting Service (SIS).
2. On 5 June 2020, the Victorian Government announced it had accepted the recommendations of the independent review of Victoria's first Medically Supervised Injecting Room at North Richmond including expanding the trial to include another supervised injecting service in an appropriate location within the City of Melbourne. The Victorian Government's nominated location was 53 Victoria Street, Melbourne. Council was not consulted in relation to this location.
3. On 23 June 2020 the Future Melbourne Committee:
 1. Acknowledged the findings of the independent review and accept the recommendation that a second MSIR be located in City of Melbourne.
 2. Noted the legitimate concerns of nearby residents, businesses and Queen Victoria Market traders.
 3. Noted that an appropriate site must be identified through an evidence-based process that includes comprehensive impact assessments and stakeholder consultation.
 4. Committed the City of Melbourne to continue working with the Victorian Government to assist them in finding the most appropriate site for a supervised injecting facility within the municipality.
 5. Requested the Victorian Government work with the City of Melbourne, businesses, residents and relevant experts to review and determine the appropriate location of the second safe injecting room other than the Drill Hall site. Noting that Council accepted the expert panel recommendation for a second safe injecting facility to be located in the City of Melbourne.

Key issues

4. Mr Ken Lay AO APM was appointed by the Victorian Government to lead the consultation process to compile evidence and data to inform the advice to government on the final site selection and actions to maintain and enhance safety and amenity. This included convening meetings with cohealth, City of Melbourne and the Department of Health and Human Services to collectively consider drug activity and harms; existing health and social services; safety and amenity; the built environment; transport and policing infrastructure limitations of potential sites.
5. The initial site selection criteria proposed by Ken Lay were those recommended in the independent review which included:
 - 5.1. Proximity to drug activity - the site being close to drug markets and purchases, and where harm is occurring.
 - 5.2. Needs of people who use drugs - the site meeting the needs and expectations of people who use drugs to improve their health outcomes.
 - 5.3. Needs of residents and community - the site meeting the needs and expectations of residents and community.

Attachments:

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- 5.4. Network of services - the site allowing the service to be embedded in a wider network of services.
6. City of Melbourne management requested an additional assessment criteria. This being that the impact of COVID-19 (economic and social) on the CBD's economy and recovery be added as an assessment criteria in relation to any site being considered.
7. Mr Lay has advised that his report to the Victorian Government is likely to be completed in the next 8-12 weeks. Council will be able to consider this report and formally respond to it when it is completed and made available. Therefore, any decision regarding the specific location of a proposed supervised injecting service is premature.

Recommendation from management

8. That Council:
 - 8.1. Endorses its continued support for the Medical Supervised Injecting Service (SIS) in the City of Melbourne conditional on it being a service offering located within a comprehensive health service (e.g. GP, podiatrists, drug and alcohol service specialists)
 - 8.2. Reiterates to the Victorian Government that Melbourne's economic recovery from COVID-19 is critical and that the location and timing of an SIS will impact this recovery.
 - 8.3. Requests the Lord Mayor write to the Minister for Health to seek an ongoing and formal commitment from the Victorian Government that regardless of the medically supervised injecting location:
 - 8.3.1. There is no impact on amenity to surrounding residents, businesses and other visitors.
 - 8.3.2. Impacted residents and traders are invited to participate in an ongoing consultation process undertaken by the Victorian Government to identify and resolve issues arising from the Melbourne SIS.
 - 8.4. Requests a copy of the Ken Lay report once it is completed so that it can formally consider and respond to the report.
 - 8.5. Requests a further report from Management upon receipt of the completed Ken Lay report.

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no direct legal implications for Council in relation to management's recommendation.

Finance

2. There are no direct financial implications relating to management's recommendation.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. Council has been advised that supporting the health and safety of people who use drugs is the primary objective of the supervised injecting service.

Stakeholder consultation

5. The Victorian Government intends to engage with stakeholders once its preferred site has been determined.

Relation to Council policy

6. It is Council's position that a supervised injecting service be located within the City of Melbourne at an appropriate location.

Environmental sustainability

7. This is a matter for the Victorian Government.
8. Council will advocate that environmental sustainability be incorporating into the operating model of the service.