

## Councillor Question Time – answers to questions taken on notice\*

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Councillor Simic raised complaints received regarding the use of security guards at St Kilda Botanical Gardens on the Australia day long weekend. What other public assets has security guards allocated over the Australia day long weekend? What was the total cost and when will Councillors be able to review whether this practice continues in future years?

Cr Simic

### **Response**

*In previous years the St Kilda Botanic Gardens has been a popular site for unplanned gatherings of people to celebrate the Triple J radio Hottest 100 music on Australia Day. This saw loud amplified music at several locations throughout the gardens, excessive alcohol consumption, anti-social behaviours, assaults (including on Police members) and destruction of the gardens and damage to public assets. This resulted in the subsequent closure to parts of the gardens for repairs (ie removal of damaged botanical plants and vegetation, asset vandalism and broken glasshouses from ball sports). The uncontrolled use of the public gardens also impacted surrounding residents and access for other visitors recreational use.*

*Consistent with the coordinated response in recent years, Council responded to residents formal requests to mitigate risks and reduce damage to Council assets and the heritage Botanical Garden. The costs of the security service was approximately \$15,000 per day with 16 security contractors working in pairs across 8 entrances and 2 roving patrols for asset/garden protection (totalling approximately \$30,000 across the long weekend). The previous vandalism and damage repairs for one day cost over \$30,000 excluding officer time and permanent damage of our precious vegetation at this site. With the Triple J radio hottest 100 no longer held on Australia Day 26 January, (ie Sunday 27 January in 2019) the Botanical Gardens have seen youth, families, children birthday parties and adults now gathering across the entire long weekend, rather than just Australia Day.*

*The Australia Day operation is under review as part of our Summer Management program and reduced controls (provision of security guards at St Kilda Botanical gardens) are likely in future years based on improved community behaviour this year.*

*\*Note: answers to any questions in Councillor Question Time which were answered at the meeting are included in the minutes of that meeting.*