

14.1 Status of Council Decisions: 1 January - 31 March 2019

Question from Cr Simic

Councillor Simic asked if officers can provide a timeline for the reinstatement of the removed seating on Fitzroy Street?

Response

Discussions with Service Providers

On Wednesday 15 May we held a session with representatives of local service providers including the Salvation Army (First People Officer), Launch Housing, Sacred Heart, Star Health and Victoria Police, to discuss how we could work together differently to create a safe and inclusive place for all members of our community. Also in attendance were Council staff from our community strengthening, local laws and street cleaning teams. Those present have great experience in providing services in and around Fitzroy Street, many having an association with the area for over 10 plus years. Each present shared their experiences and the changes they have observed, and Council officers shared information from our customer requests system, which highlighted changes in volumes and the locations of customer enquiries about cleaning, rubbish and syringe removals, as well as rough sleeping over the past three years.

As a group we mapped the key areas in and around Fitzroy Street where there are currently high levels of activity from a service provider perspective. We discussed what is being observed in the different areas (which varies) and also the different pathways people are using to move from location to location within the area, and the reasons for this movement. We then discussed some of the root causes that may be contributing to what is being observed and started to discuss ways that we could work differently together in light of these root causes. We agreed to meet again as a group next week to explore what some of these opportunities could look like in more detail and following this meeting, we would like to brief you on the work of this group, including sharing with you our mapping, customer request data, the root cause analysis and some of the ideas that could be explored, to ensure that we are creating a place that is safe and inclusive for all.

Seat Adjacent to 7Eleven Background

As previously advised, through Council's placemaking activities we have been engaging on ideas around the seat, and the idea that had most resonance with the community was a collaborative art piece, where the stories of all members of our community could be captured through a piece of art with mosaics painted by members of the community and reattached to the existing seat which would then be reinstalled. The intent behind the project is to bring all members of our community together. What was originally envisaged was that a pop-up art studio would be established in-place to undertake the project and create the artwork either through mosaics or painting the current seat on site. Council officers reached out to eight artists and have held more detailed discussions with four to seek their interest in undertaking the work and on the fourth approach an artist has now expressed potential interest in undertaking the work. In parallel to sourcing an artist, Council officers have been discussing

appropriate engagement with Voices of the South Side to ensure that all voices are represented in this project and that involvement in the project occurs in a safe way.

Feedback on the Art Project

Recently, Voices of the South Side have indicated to Council officers that they do not feel it is safe for their members to be placed in that location to conduct the artwork consultation nor to install a pop-up art studio as was originally intended. Instead, it has been suggested that the Voices of the South Side researchers would collect stories from all members of the community who happen to be on Fitzroy Street more broadly and that the Voices of the Southside participants and the artist would then work together on the art work for the seat off-site.

Feedback on the Location of the Seat

Before and during the temporary removal of the seat, officers have received a great deal of diverse feedback and perspectives, on this trial. Officers have received strong feedback about community dissatisfaction around the removal of the seat and the impact this has had on some members of our community who are now sitting on the ground. Officers have received equally strong feedback about community dissatisfaction with the seat being reinstalled in its current position given concerns around safety in the area for all members of the community. Feedback has also been received through the place audit that was undertaken across the entirety of the street that the level of seating generally across most of Fitzroy Street could be improved. Given the interest of Council's Older Persons Committee in this important issue, recently, officers and four members of the Older Persons Group undertook a walk of the area. I am advised that the impressions of the four representatives during the walk was that it was important that a seat is reinstalled back into this segment of Fitzroy Street and on the same side, but there could be benefit in the seat being located further down from the current location.

Way Forward

Officers are very conscious of the Council decision and that the removal of the seat is temporary in nature. Considering this, together with what we have learnt through the above engagement, we believe there are essentially three options:

- 1) Continue with our current proposed community art project, in line with advice from Voices of the South Side, and once complete reinstall this seat with artwork in the current location (this could take two to three months);*
- 2) In light of feedback received, take the opportunity to do a quick refurbishment of the timber on the current seat to address general wear and tear, and then reinstall, minus the community art project, in the current location (this could take about a month);*
- 3) Install a seat at a location on the same side of Fitzroy Street but in a slightly different location and look for an alternative location within the municipality for the current seat (timing to be determined in consultation with City Design).*

In light of the above, officers have called a meeting of the Fitzroy Street Place Reference Group, on Tuesday 21 February to discuss this important matter and seek their feedback on the above options and explore whether they have any further ideas. Following this meeting I will provide you with a further update.