

Attachment 2 – Community Safety Commentary

There were a number of submissions in which people articulated how personal safety was compromised as a consequence of the distribution and consumption of illicit drugs in the precinct and that the Safer Elizabeth Street program was unwelcome.

It was suggested by several people that the removal of parking would result in friends, relatives and patrons of local services and businesses – some of whom were described as vulnerable – having to use alternate parking immediately proximate to drug use issues. It was posited by one submitter that the Medically Supervised Injecting Room itself was generating an increased demand for car parking locally. One submitter noted that drug affected drivers represented a significant threat to safety. Some contended that managing drug use impacts should be the prioritised over cycling safety.

Others submitters believed that drug use issues are an altogether separate matter and the safety of vulnerable road users was of paramount importance. One person believed that further measures to prioritise cycling along Lennox Street would promote increased passive surveillance, in turn promoting community safety.

An active street-based drug market, principally in the trade and consumption of illicit heroin, has existed in and around Victoria, Lennox and Elizabeth streets for well over two decades. Council has acknowledged that the issues facing the area are complex and is aware and cognisant of the significant impact that drug-related activity is having on the community.

When it comes to promoting public health and community safety, Council's key role in this space continues to be the promotion of public amenity. Council has intensified public road and footpath cleansing, graffiti and poster removal from assets, and maintenance and repair of street furniture and signage in the locality. Council also directly manages all requests for syringe management services in the City.

Council's authority does not extend to law enforcement. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that promoting community safety by working across the government and non-government sector is essential to ensure a coordinated and relevant service response. Council remains committed to working closely with Victoria Police, State Government representatives, and alcohol and other drug agencies on addressing drug use issues by employing evidence-based measures, including harm reduction strategies.

Victoria Police continue regular, proactive police patrols and ongoing enforcement activity, as well as intelligence-led operations in high risk community locations. The Yarra Bicycle Patrol, based out of the Richmond Police complex, commenced in July 2019 and the community is encouraged to stay updated via Eyewatch Yarra. Members of the community are encouraged to phone the Local Area Command to discuss non-emergency matters and to phone emergency 000 if they are concerned for their personal safety or the safety of others. People concerned for the welfare of persons using drugs in public are encouraged to contact local agencies providing outreach.