

At Council meetings, questions from the public and from Councillors are sometimes taken 'on notice', meaning that an answer cannot be provided at the meeting itself. When an answer is available, it is provided direct to the questioner, and is also published here.

As well as the full response, the text below includes a summary of the question and the answer provided at the meeting. A recording of the Council Meeting (including Public Question Time and Councillor Questions Without Notice) is available on Council's website for twelve months following the meeting.

Response to a question from Robyn Sheen

Question

I am here on behalf of the Leisure Centre members about our concern about a decision that has been made about a much loved valued leisure staff member. A petition has been formed not on behalf of the staff member but by some of the leisure members as we do not want to lose a much loved instructor. What is the next step regarding this matter?

Response at the meeting

The Mayor advised that she would refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer as it relates to an operational matter.

Subsequent response

Thank you for your petition outlining community concerns about the management of services at our pools.

We acknowledge and understand our customers are passionate about their health and wellbeing, just as the Council is equally committed to providing exemplary community services. This is an important part of their lives, and we are pleased that the community have found the instructor to be a good instructor. The instructor has been contracted by Yarra Leisure for a number of years and we would like to also state our gratitude for the contribution the person has made to the program over this time. Yarra Leisure needs to make decisions about contractors and staff to deliver a wide range of programs. Whilst we appreciate the interest in the arrangement with the instructor, as there are industrial relations implications, it would be inappropriate for us to discuss these details with any third party, and as such we are not able to engage with community members on such decisions. I trust you can continue to enjoy the service offered by Yarra City Council.

Response to question from Cr Jolly

Question

In relation to vacated properties, it has been raised by the Fitzroy Residents Association, but is a general issue, where property owners are either unfortunately land banking or seeking to rent but can't find a tenant and those buildings are being graffitied, not street art, it is tagging i.e. the donut place on Brunswick Street.

Is it possible for Yarra Council to put some pressure on those landowners and landlords to do the right thing? I refer the CEO to Frankston Council, in Frankston Council the ordinary rate is 0.2 to CIV and when it comes to vacated residential land it is 0.27, when it comes to derelict land it is 0.64, so they have a policy that punishes or at least puts some financial pressure on people who allow their property to deteriorate.

Is it possible prior to the budget process for Councillors to have a response as to what we could do to follow suit with that policy and what is the process that we would have to go through?

Response at the meeting

The Chief Executive Office took the questions on notice.

Subsequent response

Frankston City Council (like many Councils), use Capital Improved Value (CIV) as basis for rate setting. Yarra City Council use Net Annual Value (NAV) as basis for rates. Under the Local Government Act, differential rates of the kind used at Frankston cannot be applied (except for farm land) if using NAV. Differentials can only be used alongside the CIV method.

Yarra City Council uses NAV as the basis for its rates because the use of CIV can cause inequity between residential and commercial property owners (penalising residential landowners and benefitting commercial landowners). The use of CIV would require the establishment of differential rates between these land uses in an endeavour to iron out these inequities.

On this basis, the use of differential rates for derelict properties is not something that is currently being explored. Instead, the focus has been on what Council can do to manage graffiti from a local law perspective.

Response to question from Cr Searle

Question

A property at 336 Burnley Street, Richmond which is an individually significant property in the Yarra's Planning Scheme has been allowed by the owner to become derelict. There is a long planning history and they challenged our refusal to allow them demolish it. There has now been a planning permit issued for a couple of town houses to the rear of the site, but nothing in terms of the property itself with restoring it, repairing it or stopping it from falling further into disrepair. Now that there is a planning permit issued are there any other levers that we can pull to ensure that the owner doesn't let the property fall into further disrepair?

Response at the meeting

The Director Planning and Place Making took the question on notice.

Subsequent response

I have some information from the statutory planning office that now enables a response to Councillors.

- The planning permit for the townhouses at this site has already issued.
- The application did not include any restoration works to the existing house; further, from a planning perspective there is nothing Council can do to force the owner to repair the existing property.
- Victorian (Yarra) Heritage Restoration Funds are available for restoration of those elements of a heritage building (can be a house or any other category of building) which can be viewed from the public domain. It is not for routine repair works. The

applicant would have to obtain a planning permit for those works and at least two quotations are needed. The link to VHRF website is <http://www.vhrf.org.au/>.

The office will provide some correspondence to the owner with this link encouraging them to restore the current property – that is all that Council can do.

Response to question from Cr Coleman

Question

I was reading the Yarra News today and on page 5 it outlines the great outcome and successes relating to the Abbotsford trial however less positive is on the back page where there is a graph that shows the amount of waste that goes to landfill over June, July and August and even though we have had the Abbotsford trial in July August, the amount of waste that goes to landfill has increased during that time. Since receiving these figures, (June, July, and August) what new action has been taken to reverse the amount of waste that is going to landfill?

Response at the meeting

The Director City Works and Assets took the question on notice.

Subsequent response

The data provided in the 'Watching our waste' article on page 12 of the Oct/Nov edition of Yarra News illustrates the amount and proportion of waste sent to landfill, and the amount and proportion of waste diverted from landfill. The data is waste that is collected from:

- Kerbside Recycling collection
- Kerbside Garbage collection
- Booked Green Waste collection
- Booked Hard Waste collection
- Dumped Waste collected
- Litter collected

Although useful to track this data to understand trends over time, there are a range of variables that mean these figures can fluctuate month to month, and they can be impacted by seasonal shifts. Community behaviour and waste generation patterns will always marginally impact on the percentages. The growing population rates will also impact on waste generation from the community. Thus the minor variations shown in the 'Watching our waste' graph should be seen primarily as an indicator of long term trends. Officers will monitor this trend for any future variation, and hope to see a decline in waste to landfill overtime as the Yarra Waste Minimisation Strategy is implemented, actions are rolled out and community behavior changes.

In terms of actions taken to reduce waste, Officers have undertaken significant advocacy in order to influence State and Federal Government, the industry and other influencers and decision makers to prioritise waste minimisation, resource recovery, and recycling.

As part of Yarra's Waste Minimisation Strategy, officers have delivered a number of initiatives, including;

- Development of the Recycling Centre at Roseneath Street to accept additional streams of materials
- Working with large MUD's to divert recycling out of the landfill stream into the recycling stream and to minimise recycling contamination; and divert organics from landfill and into onsite food waste processors

- Proudly Plastic Free with North Fitzroy Village and initial development of Yarra Leisure going plastic free.
- Yarra's Zero Waste Map (Interactive online map and education)
- Waste Minimisation Behaviour Change Program (Ed Garden activation, plus additional collateral focussing on textiles, plastic and food)
- E-Waste Education Program

These actions have been designed to educate and influence long term behaviour change.

This has been also complemented by the Holistic Waste trial currently underway in Abbotsford, with 1300 households and several businesses taking part. This involves separate collection for glass, comingled recycling, FOGO and general waste, with the goal of reducing waste production, increasing recycling and reducing landfill. The results of this trial have been particularly positive in terms of maximizing recycling and diverting material from landfill, and officers believe the municipal wide roll out of this approach is likely to be the single greatest action Council can take to divert waste from landfill. Based on data from the trial, the diversion rate of organics out of the landfill stream will probably shift the percentages in the graph to approximately 80% diverted and 20% landfill.