

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL 1 MARCH 2023



13.1 SOUTH MELBOURNE TOWN HALL - PROPOSED LEASE TO ANAM - SUBMISSIONS

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LACHLAN JOHNSON, GENERAL MANAGER, OPERATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report the submissions in response to a notice published in accordance with section 115(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020* ("Act") advising of Council's intention to lease of the South Melbourne Town Hall by the Australian National Academy of Music ("ANAM").



2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 On 7 December 2022 Council resolved to commence community consultation on the proposal to lease the South Melbourne Town Hall to the Australian National Academy of Music.
- 2.2 A Notice of Intention to Lease was published on Council's website on 13 December 2022 (**Attachment 1**), supplemented with a notice in *The Age*. The notice informed the public of Council's intention to lease, and the key terms of the proposed lease, inviting submissions of feedback.

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL

1 MARCH 2023



- 2.3 8,410 letters were distributed via mail to owners and residents in the surrounding area to support awareness of the proposal. Awareness was also boosted by social media posts and a “pop up” information kiosk on Clarendon Street, South Melbourne.
- 2.4 We received 554 survey/letter submissions.
- 2.5 Approximately 91% of submissions received were supportive of leasing the property to ANAM. Common themes that were raised: draws visitors; adds vibrancy; adds cultural value; a suitable use/tenant; supports preservation/restoration of a heritage building; reduces cost burden to Council.
- 2.6 Approximately 9% were against the proposal or unsure. For those respondents, common themes raised were: excessively long lease and potential limitations on access by others.
- 2.7 Officers will consider the submissions and at a subsequent Ordinary Meeting of Council and recommend whether to proceed with a lease.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Notes that it has formally sought and received feedback in relation to its intention to enter into an agreement for lease, and lease, of lease 208-220 Bank Street, South Melbourne (South Melbourne Town Hall) to the Australian National Academy of Music Ltd.
- 3.2 Notes the submissions of response received by the end of the notice period (30 January 2023).
- 3.3 Thanks the submitters for their submissions.
- 3.4 Will formally consider the response to the submissions received at a subsequent meeting of Council, once Officers have had the opportunity to consider the feedback.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

Call for community feedback

- 4.1 At its ordinary meeting of 7 December 2022 Council resolved to commence community consultation on the proposal to lease the South Melbourne Town Hall to the Australian National Academy of Music.
- 4.2 In response, Officers carried out consultation on the lease proposal.
- 4.3 The consultation was designed to:
 - present the community with the key terms of the proposed lease, and to receive submissions from any person or organisation concerning that proposed lease;
 - ensure the neighbouring owners and residents are aware of the proposed lease and provided with an opportunity to comment;
 - comply with section 115(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020*; and
 - assist members of the public to register comments concerning the proposed lease for Council’s consideration, prior to a decision on whether to lease the property.



Responses received

- 4.4 In line with Council's *Community Engagement Policy 2021*, persons who engaged in the Have Your Say process were offered the opportunity to provide feedback on Council's lease proposal.
- 4.5 There were 1,864 visits to the *Have Your Say* page.
- 4.6 The *Have Your Say* survey was completed 535 times, and 19 letters of submission were uploaded (**Attachment 3**).
- 4.7 Participants were asked whether they support the proposed lease of the property to the Australian National Academy of Music. To this question, approximately:
- 91% (487) selected "Yes";
 - 4% (21) selected "No"; and
 - 5% (27) selected "Unsure".
- 4.8 Participants were asked to provide their reason(s) for supporting or not supporting the proposed lease. The full responses are in **Attachment 2**. Those supportive of proceeding with a lease commonly mentioned:
- increased activity/visitation/vibrancy;
 - increased cultural value;
 - the suitability of the proposed use/tenant;
 - the preservation/restoration of a heritage building; and
 - a reduced cost burden to Council.
- 4.9 Those not supportive, or unsure about proceeding with a lease commonly expressed the view that the proposed lease duration was excessive, and the proposed use limited access by others.
- 4.10 Asked about their connection to the South Melbourne Town Hall, approximately:
- 7% (39) selected "I have never visited";
 - 87% (464) selected "I have visited the South Melbourne Town Hall";
 - 5% (29) selected "My organisation has rented/hired space at South Melbourne Town Hall"; and
 - 15% (80) selected "Other".
- 4.11 To the question of whether they were associated with any community organisation, approximately:
- 33% (179) selected "Yes, ANAM";
 - 56% (301) selected "No"; and
 - 15% (82) selected "Other".



4.12 Within the survey participants were asked their residential suburb. To this question, approximately:

- 7% (35) selected "Albert Park";
- 0.5% (3) selected "Balaclava";
- 3% (15) selected "Elwood";
- 4.5% (24) selected "Melbourne";
- 4.5% (23) selected "Middle Park";
- 6% (31) selected "Port Melbourne";
- 0.2% (1) selected "Ripponlea";
- 36% (192) selected "South Melbourne";
- 3% (16) selected "Southbank";
- 8% (42) selected "St Kilda";
- 1.5% (8) selected "St Kilda East";
- 2% (12) selected "St Kilda West";
- 1% (5) selected "Windsor";
- 2% (9) selected "Prefer not to say"; and
- 22% (119) selected "Other".

4.13 Survey participants were also asked to disclose their gender. Approximately:

- 56% (292) selected "Female (woman or girl)";
- 44% (234) selected "Male (man or boy)";
- 2% (9) selected "Prefer not to say"; and
- 0% selected "Other".

4.14 Finally, survey participants were asked their age. In response, approximately:-

- 0.2% (1) selected "Under 17"
- 2.5% (14) selected "18-24";
- 9.5% (51) selected "25-34";
- 17% (90) selected "35-49";
- 18% (98) selected "50-59";
- 22% (119) selected "60-69";
- 21% (111) selected "70-79";
- 6% (34) selected "80-84";
- 2% (10) selected "85 & over"; and
- 1% (7) selected "Prefer not to say".



Next steps

- 4.15 Officers will consider the submissions and at a subsequent Ordinary Meeting of Council recommend whether to proceed with a lease.
- 4.16 Council is required to consider any submissions received prior to determining whether to proceed with a lease.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 The engagement activities Officers undertook included:

- publishing a notice on Council's website;
- publishing a notice in *The Age* newspaper;
- writing to adjoining owners and residents, attaching a copy of the notice, to support awareness of the proposed lease and highlight the opportunity to make comment;
- social media posts/advertisements (seen by 15,004 users);
- carrying out an online *Have Your Say* survey for approximately seven weeks, to enable members of the community to register comments concerning the proposed lease for Council's consideration prior to a decision.

5.2 At the property signs were installed notifying of the *Have Your Say* website.

5.3 Additionally, a pop up booth was set up on near the site on 24 January to inform passers by of the *Have Your Say* and provide them the opportunity to participate in the survey.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Pursuant to section 115(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020 (Victoria)*, Council must undertake a community engagement in accordance with its community engagement policy in respect of the proposal before entering into the lease.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 The costs of the carrying out the consultation total approximately \$5,000, plus officer time.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 The recommendations of this reports are not considered to have a material environmental impact.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 The recommendation, if adopted, provides the opportunity to consider the community feedback prior to making a decision on whether to lease the property.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 Community consultation on the proposed lease supports Council Plan strategic direction "Well Governed Port Phillip".

10.2 The potential investment in and activation of the South Melbourne Hall supports Council Plan strategic direction "Liveable Port Phillip" and the Emerald Hill Master Plan.

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL

1 MARCH 2023



11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 Officers intend to consider the submissions and then report to Council (anticipated for 15 March 2023) to enable Council to determine whether to proceed with a sale

11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 Officers shall update the Have Your Say webpage accordingly, and write to all submitters who have provided their contact details, to advise of the meeting at which Council will decide whether to proceed with a sale.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any material or general interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Public Notice [↓](#)
2. Reasons for supporting or not supporting [↓](#)
3. Submission Letters [↓](#)