



10.4 SOAP DISPENSER TRIAL IN PUBLIC TOILETS

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1. PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Council with a proposal to reintroduce handwashing soap in public toilet facilities.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Council has approximately 50 public toilets that it maintains and operates on behalf of the community. These amenities are in high visitation areas such as along the foreshore, at activity centres, in parks and gardens, and at many playgrounds.
- 2.2 Public toilet facilities are unsupervised amenities, other than in the peak of summer, where security was introduced along the foreshore last year to help monitor queues and ensure compliance with COVID-19 social distancing requirements.
- 2.3 In 2015, Council ceased providing soap and paper towel dispensers in all public toilets. This was due to the large number of public toilets in the City that required regular replacement of the soap and paper dispensers due to vandalism, graffiti and theft.
- 2.4 The pandemic has heightened hygiene practises and expectations within the community.
- 2.5 In response to these concerns, Council passed a notice of motion on 1 September 2021 instructing the CEO to provide a proposal to reintroduce handwashing soap to public toilet facilities across the City.
- 2.6 This report outlines the costs associated with a reintroduction and recommends a trial of soap dispensers at high-profile sites across the City over the summer period. Following this period, a summary of the trial is proposed to be brought to Council for consideration as part of Budget 2022/23 development.

3. RECOMMENDATION

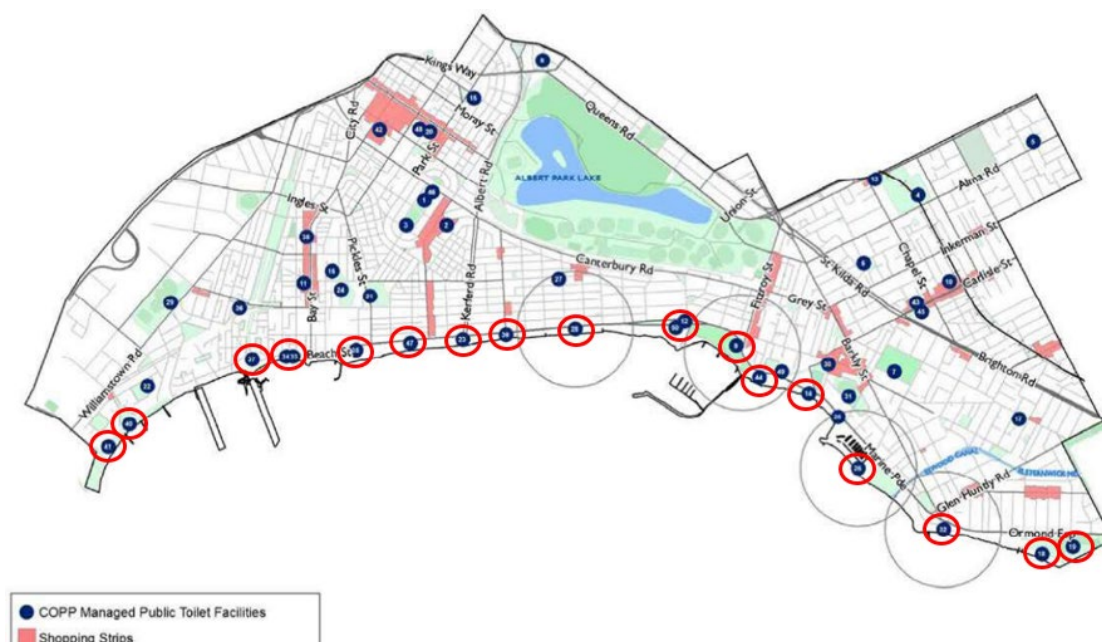
That Council:

- 3.1 That, subject to the 2021/22 quarterly budget review, Council allocate additional funding of \$21,850 (Ex.GST) in the 2021/22 budget to fund the trial reintroduction of soap dispensers along the foreshore for an approximately four-month period commencing 1 December by providing liquid soap dispensers to Council operated public toilet facilities along the foreshore.
- 3.2 Provide a report to Council in April 2022 alongside the Budget 2022/23 after the trial period and report back on the trial, costs involved, and recommendation to either continue the trial period to include other public toilet facilities, roll-out to the rest of the City or cease liquid soap dispensers along the foreshore and any further roll-out across Council.



4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 Council has approximately 50 public toilets that it maintains and operates on behalf of the community. Most public toilet facilities are freely open to the public and access is not supervised or controlled except at high use locations during the height of summer.
- 4.2 Council public toilets are cleaned two times a day, with the foreshore toilets and highly utilised public toilets in gardens such as Catani Gardens and the Botanical Gardens, cleaned three times a day, and increased to six cleans in summertime. There are currently no soap dispensers, hand towels or hand dryers in all the public toilet facilities. Council ceased providing soap and hand drying paper towel in all of our public toilets in 2015 in response to incidents of vandalism and theft.
- 4.3 The pandemic has heightened hygiene practises and expectations across the community. Since COVID-19 the Federal and State government COVID-19 health alert states that *everyone must continue to practice good hygiene at all times to prevent the virus spreading. This means, wash your hands often with soap and water and use alcohol-based hand sanitisers when you can't use soap or water.*
- 4.4 In response to the changed community expectations, Council has requested that officers prepare a proposal for the reintroduction of hand cleaning soap in the public toilet facilities.
- 4.5 The roll-out to all 50 sites across the City would cost approximately \$55,000 for the upfront installation costs and around \$3,000 per month for refill, maintenance and cleaning (\$36,000 per annum). The costs associated with responding to vandalism and theft are unknown at this stage and are difficult to estimate.
- 4.6 It is therefore recommended that a trial be instituted over the upcoming summer period to assess the viability of a wider reintroduction of soap dispensers. A trial would provide the opportunity for Council officers to assess the effectiveness of the reintroduction, the incidents of vandalism, the costs associated and the ongoing maintenance requirements.
- 4.7 It is proposed that Council trial the reintroduction of soap dispensers across the toilet facilities along the foreshore, during the summer period. This would provide a trial duration of approximately four-months. This would involve the installation of 50 soap dispensers across accessible, female and male facilities across the foreshore as shown in the following map



- 4.8 The toilets along the foreshore have been identified to provide a sweep of utilisation and varying visitation and would cover all areas across our City, from Elwood to Port Melbourne, and would cover the entire municipality. The trial period would also allow Council to understand the financial cost involved. It would also enable Council officers to test different types of soap dispensers and monitor use and vandalism or theft and report back to Council on their findings.
- 4.9 The report to Council will include the following:
- Usage as determined by refill requirements;
 - Instances of vandalism, theft and graffiti;
 - Costs associated with both routine operation (refilling, etc.) and reactive responses (replacement, repairs, etc.); and
 - Any feedback received from community members.
- 4.10 In the first instance, it is proposed to trial the use of a cost effective, 'vandal proof' cage over automatic soap dispensers. This approach is the simplest approach that would provide the most scalability.
- 4.11 It is estimated that the installation of the 50 soap dispensers with enclosed cages would cost approximately \$17,850.00. The ongoing cost of soap refills is estimated to be \$3,870.72 for the four-month trial period. The cost of refilling the soap dispensers by Council's Cleaning contractor would be undertaken by Council's cleaning contractor.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Officers have consulted with cleaning contractors and suppliers of soap dispenser units to develop a cost effective and simple solution for the initial trial.



6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No legal impacts. The risk of increased vandalism will be monitored during the trial. If increased vandalism becomes an issue and cost unreasonable to continue the trial, this will be reported back to Councillors.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 The capital cost of supply and installation of the soap dispensers is estimated at \$17,850.00 (Ex.GST), \$350 per soap dispenser.

7.2 The cost for refilling, cleaning and maintenance under Council's cleaning contract for the four-months is estimated at approximately \$4,000 (Ex.GST).

7.3 The total cost for the trial is estimated at \$21,850 (Ex.GST).

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 Nil

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 The pandemic impact on society and our community is significant. Soap dispensers and promoting good hygiene are considered one way of limiting the spread of the virus.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 The Council Plan 2021-31 sets out five key Strategic Directions to guide the organisation's priorities and actions. One of those five strategic directions is Liveable Port Phillip, which aims to create: *'a great place to live, where our community has access to high quality public spaces, development and growth are well managed, and it is safer and easy to connect and travel within'*. Improvements to our service and public amenities would align with this strategic direction.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 The trial period would commence on 1 December. To ensure that the trial commences on 1 December, it is anticipated that the roll-out would commence the second week of November.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 Signage at each Council public toilet facility encourages the community contact Council if they have concerns about the cleanliness or condition of the facilities. These existing notices provide a convenient way to provide the community with an avenue for raising concerns.

11.2.2 A report will be prepared at the end of the trial period and presented to Council in April 2022 with the findings.

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 Nil