



12.1 **ST KILDA FESTIVAL 2022/23**

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: **KYLIE BENNETTS, GENERAL MANAGER, CITY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

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1. PURPOSE

1.1 To present Councillors with a recommendation regarding the 2023 St Kilda Festival.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The St Kilda Festival is Council's flagship event, held annually in central St Kilda and showcasing more than 50 artists/bands in a celebration of live music, community spirit, and St Kilda itself.
- 2.2 The event ran in its traditional one-day format in February 2020, then was cancelled in 2021 due to the pandemic and associated restrictions on public gatherings.
- 2.3 In 2022 the event was held in a modified format in order to maximise COVID safety and to comply with public health settings, which were constantly changing throughout the planning period.
- 2.4 The 2022 Festival was staged over a nine-day period and featured an opening event in O'Donnell Gardens and Acland Street, a closing event in Catani Gardens and Fitzroy Street, and four concerts on South Beach Reserve in the interim, including the First Peoples cultural event.
- 2.5 The event deliberately reduced attendance figures through format change and the marketing campaign, in response to COVID safety and in order to achieve the nine-day format.
- 2.6 Benefits and impacts of the modified format are outlined in this report, considering feedback and debriefs from the local business and residential community, artists, stakeholders and participants, Festival attendees and data from research undertaken at the events themselves.
- 2.7 The recommended format for 2022/23 aims to take the best of previous event formats to produce a St Kilda Festival that strongly delivers on Council's objectives for the event:
 - 2.7.1 Iconic branding that showcases the City of Port Phillip in order to promote St Kilda and increase tourism and visitation – a brand known to the local community, wider Melbourne and internationally.
 - 2.7.2 A commitment to live music, including dedicated support for local, young, diverse and emerging musicians.
 - 2.7.3 Long term sustainable economic benefit and development for local traders.
 - 2.7.4 Community engagement for local and wider communities, contributing to City of Port Phillip as a cultural hub.



3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Subject to budget being allocated through the 2022/23 Council Plan and Budget for the St Kilda Festival, endorses a two-day weekend format for the 2023 St Kilda Festival, comprising:
 - a) A First Peoples music and cultural event on South Beach Reserve on Saturday 11 February 2023.
 - b) A return to “St Kilda Festival Sunday” on Sunday 12 February 2023, including music and cultural activation of Acland Street, Fitzroy Street, The Esplanade and key parts of the foreshore and open space within central St Kilda.
 - c) A weekend-long family friendly activation in O’Donnell Gardens.
- 3.2 Requests that officers explore complementary programs including live music programs through venue partnerships in the lead up to the Festival weekend, and third-party use of the main stage or other Festival venues in advance of the Festival.
- 3.3 Resolves to continue advocacy for increased State Government support for the St Kilda Festival, including direct funding, promotional support, and in-kind support through delivery partners including Public Transport Victoria and Victoria Police.
- 3.4 Requests officers to ensure public safety remains the highest priority for Festival delivery, including any relevant changes to public health settings as a result of the ongoing response to COVID-19.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 The 2022 St Kilda Festival returned in 2022 after being cancelled in 2021 amidst COVID-19 restrictions.
- 4.2 The Festival was one of the first major events and music festivals to return in Victoria, and planning was undertaken when events were still being heavily restricted.
- 4.3 To increase COVID safety at the event and for the host community, the Festival was planned as six events over a nine-day period, to spread audiences throughout multiple events and reduce overall attendance.
- 4.4 The Festival focused on live music, but also incorporated community groups and children’s entertainment.
- 4.5 Traders in Acland and Fitzroy Streets were offered extended trading opportunities with fees waived; however, many were unable to take up the opportunity through resourcing challenges.
- 4.6 Attendance was consciously reduced in order to meet ever-changing COVID restrictions, spread the event over the nine-day program, and ensure the safety of all attendees and the local community.
- 4.7 Revising the event’s format presented an opportunity to test new ways of staging the St Kilda Festival, and present the best model for future events.
- 4.8 The 2022 St Kilda Festival presented more than 50 bands across its six performance days, with an estimated total attendance of 35,000.



- 4.9 The Festival is estimated to have brought an economic benefit of \$3.4m, with a calculated return on investment of 1.02.
- 4.10 Key benefits of the extended format included:
 - 4.10.1 Locals felt welcomed and like it was “their” event again, with a notable uptick in attendance from CoPP residents reported through market research.
 - 4.10.2 A more accessible program with audiences able to see a broad selection of live music.
 - 4.10.3 The First Peoples cultural event benefited from the new venue, with significant infrastructure improvement for artists, larger capacity, and an increased and diverse audience.
 - 4.10.4 Less community impact from road closures.
 - 4.10.5 Event was less vulnerable to external circumstances; if one day clashed with an external event or extreme weather was encountered, the remainder of the program could still proceed.
 - 4.10.6 Event was COVID safe and compliant, with no known outbreaks or major spreading events and positive site inspections from the DJPR.
- 4.11 Key challenges of the extended format included:
 - 4.11.1 Reduced economic benefit from deliberately reduced attendance figures.
 - 4.11.2 Reduced economic benefit from decrease in proportion of visitors amongst attendees.
 - 4.11.3 Increased noise complaints due to prolonged activity and weeknight programming.
 - 4.11.4 Reduced benefits to musicians through smaller audiences.
 - 4.11.5 Increased inaccessibility of public space through longer occupation period.
 - 4.11.6 Increased pressure on staff through longer event period.
- 4.12 In considering options for the 2023 event, officers have considered all stakeholder and audience feedback and evaluated against the stated objectives of the Festival.
- 4.13 The recommended two-day program will combine the best of each format within existing budget parameters.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Festival debriefs were held with key Festival stakeholders, including traders and local business, sponsors, key emergency and transport partners and internal contributors.
- 5.2 Overall, the Festival did not meet trader expectations, failing to deliver the patronage of previous years – however, this was always the likely outcome based on the restrictions placed on the event by COVID.
- 5.3 Extensive feedback has been received from traders with some key themes captured as:
 - 5.3.1 New format lost the ‘wow’ factor.
 - 5.3.2 A minor increase in trade for some businesses, whereas the Festival for others is usually the biggest day of the year.



- 5.3.3 Concerns about promotions and communications and a lack of awareness of what was on. This was a complex issue as the new format required a deliberate drop in attendance for safety and resourcing requirements.
- 5.3.4 Marketing didn't include messages about supporting local business. Some messages were included but opportunities were not as readily available as with the traditional format.
- 5.3.5 Some traders reported losses throughout the period.
- 5.4 Both trader associations showed support for a return to the one-day format overall, with key focuses on:
 - 5.4.1 Activations in the streets themselves.
 - 5.4.2 Increased communication with traders in the early stages.
 - 5.4.3 Improved awareness through marketing.
 - 5.4.4 Incorporation of trader events and activations into the program.
 - 5.4.5 Increased road closures to include the full business precinct (Fitzroy Street).
- 5.5 Some traders have also requested consideration of itinerant traders within the event, including prioritisation of local business across the municipality. Further work will be done in this area to seek solutions.
- 5.6 Stakeholders from emergency services and public transport providers were happy with the event and noted no major incidents, though all reported lower crowds and patronage.
- 5.7 Participating artists were also surveyed, with satisfaction rates generally high. The lowest score received related to opportunity – when asked whether participating opened up new work opportunities – this is likely to relate to reduced audience and profile. The highest score related to artists feeling safe and welcomed.
- 5.8 Festival attendees and the local community were surveyed as to whether they preferred the traditional one-day event or the extended format. Of those attendees on site, 32% noted they would like a return to the one-day format. Of those surveyed via Council's social media and what's on channels, 62% noted they would like to see a return to the traditional format.
- 5.9 Market research showed 40% of attendees came from the CoPP and 41% from other areas in metro Melbourne. This compares to a pre-Covid average of 23% and 53% respectively.
- 5.10 When asked what they would like to see more of in future festivals, more than 80% said more live music (pre-Covid average of 53%) and 55% said more food and beverage options (compared to 25%).

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Festival has an extensive risk management system in place relating to public safety. Operations and delivery are further governed by a Safety, Emergency, Traffic and Transport Committee including representatives from State Government, emergency service agencies and public transport providers.



- 6.2 Officers will continue to work with best practice in safety and risk management, including in consultation with State Government and any relevant public health settings.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 The 2023 St Kilda Festival is included within the draft 22/23 City of Port Phillip budget which Council considered at the end of April and is currently out for public consultation. The budget for the 2023 St Kilda Festival is proposed as \$1.7M which represents the same net cost as the 2020 and 2022 events.
- 7.2 Additional revenue will be sought from sources including corporate sponsorship and state government support, in order to further support changes and additions to programming and or reduce the contribution required from Council.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 The St Kilda Festival aims to minimise the environmental impact of the event and its attendees.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 The Festival is delivered as part of a suite of programs as part of Council's arts, festivals and events offering, tailored to meet the needs of a diverse community and provide a variety of participation and engagement opportunities.
- 9.2 A range of community benefits can be attributed to the event, including:
- 9.2.1 Economic benefit.
 - 9.2.2 Performance and development opportunities for artists and live music.
 - 9.2.3 Participation and attendance opportunities for the community, with no admission fee.
 - 9.2.4 Opportunities for business to attract long term and repeat visitation.
 - 9.2.5 Tourism and branding opportunities for St Kilda.
- 9.3 It is recognised that the Festival can also have some negative impact on the community, including:
- 9.3.1 Amenity impact.
 - 9.3.2 Access issues due to road closures or infrastructure.
 - 9.3.3 Preference for a different style of event or programming.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 The St Kilda Festival delivers primarily on objectives within the Vibrant Port Phillip direction of the Council Plan, though is aligned with all directions in the Council Plan 2021-31.
- 10.2 The St Kilda Festival is also a key component of additional Council strategies, including the Creative & Prosperous City Strategy, Events Strategy and St Kilda Festival Operational Plan.



MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL

4 MAY 2022

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 Planning for the 2023 St Kilda Festival would begin immediately (noting that confirmation of budget allocation would not be finalised until Council adopts its 2022/23 Council Plan and Budget, with immediate priorities being stakeholder notification, artist engagement, sponsorship drive and contract and supplier management.

11.1.2 The Festival would be scheduled for February 11 and 12, 2023.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 The St Kilda Festival has a dedicated marketing and communications campaign, with early priorities including publicising of dates for long-lead media opportunities, promotion of participation opportunities and notification for key stakeholders and partners.

11.2.2 Engagement of key stakeholders including local businesses will begin early and continue with ongoing consultation, and dedicated resident notification will be undertaken via letterbox drop closer to the event for those who live in the Festival precinct.

11.2.3 Wider resident notification will be undertaken as the event approaches by Council's key communications channels including Divercity and social media channels.

11.2.4 A promotional campaign will also include posters, targeted advertising, a publicity campaign and the Festival's website, with the tailored approach to be finalised following planning and program finalisation.

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