

Flower Industry Advisory Committee

Zoom Meeting

8th September 2020

8:00am – 9:00am

In attendance: Greg Duffy (Chair), Cheryl Roehrich, Lesley Imbesi, Kathleen Farrell, David Power, David Whitcelo, Mark Maskiell, Bryan Coyne, Malcolm Lum, Lauren Kitchener, Sue Friend & Georgie Christerson (Minute Taker) – All via Zoom

Apologies: Vince Cidoni & Di Templeton

Confirmation of Minutes from Previous Meeting: MMA COO welcomed all committee members to the fourth Flower Advisory Committee Meeting for 2020. Minutes were approved from the meeting held on 14 July 2020.

MATTERS ARISING

- **Market Community – Feedback:**

The Committee discussed the recent community feedback of keeping the flower market operating. The Committee expressed their gratitude of the recent effort and assistance provided by the MMA liaising with the State Government to keep market operations from ceasing during the current Stage 4 lockdown. Market tenants felt a sense of relief once confirmation was received enabling the flower market to continue to operate. Management again confirmed the safety measures adhered to in ensuring the continued operations of the flower market.

Committee discussed the businesses who have an online aspect to their business are performing well during the pandemic. Overall, the Committee are happy with how the situation has been handled.

- **COVID-19 – Market updates and communications:**

The MMA have continuously provided the Market Community with updates throughout the Covid pandemic. All communications have been distributed via market television screens and This Week in the Market (TWITM) weekly email/ text publication. The MMA have requested all market businesses to provide their Covid safe plans via a specific MMA email address, and to contact the MMA directly for any specific questions regarding the COVID safe plans. Noted that is generally the same people

- **Early Buyers:**

Early buyers entering the market prior to trading hours continues to be a key topic of discussion at Advisory Committee meetings. Noting: There have been several instances where buyers are entering the market pre-trade to source produce. The MMA will further investigate the issue and stipulate and again continue to enforce market operating rules.

- **Access to Online Platform:**

Management discussed the implementation of an online customer trading platform, at this stage to commence in early 2021. Online trading platforms are effectively a “way of the future”, and several businesses have been in discussions with the company assisting in the process.

- **Hand trolleys:**

Complimentary hand trolleys are now available for use by the Flower market community. The MMA have taken over the lease of the hand trolleys, of an existing 140 trolleys in total.

- **Florist Staging Area:**

An MMA initiative is to provide an area of the Flower market (eastern end of the market) to provide florists with a safe working space, to assemble their flower arrangement, gift wrapping and deliveries or click and collect drive through undercover area.

MMA 5 Year Birthday celebration:

Committee praised the five-year birthday video presented on the 31 August 2020, compiled by Lauren Kitchener, Strategic Communications Manager. The video highlighted the proposed additional undercover carparking and future development of the Market. The MMA confirmed progressing the Solar Canopy Undercover Carparking expansion with the Minister of Agriculture (following a letter sent to the Minister requesting sanction of the project).

MARKETING

- **Flower (four) Promotional Campaigns:**

The MMA are progressing with the introduction of a new Flower market website. The website will be predominantly consumer driven, similar to the A Better Choice website. At present, we have a Flower Market campaign being held during September and will run for a four-week period.

- **Customer Satisfaction Survey:**

Following the previous Flower Committee meeting, the MMA have engaged an external party to assist in creating a survey to understand the reasoning of market traders who ceased buying from the market. The survey (to be conducted in October) will stipulate why this has occurred and to understand the circumstances why florist and event companies are no longer purchasing from the Melbourne market. A suggestion from the Committee was to invite the external party researcher undertaking the survey to present at the next Committee meeting. The MMA will use the results and guidance from the survey to find a path to move forward on this topic.

- **Flower Market Open Day:**

Once restrictions have lifted following the Covid pandemic, a Flower Market Open Day will be held to encourage Flower market buyers, growers, importers and event companies to attend the Market.

- **Flower Market Industry Strategy: Florist Operating area:**

The MMA are liaising with Flowers VIC in progressing a Flower Market Industry strategy, to represent the Flower industry.

GENERAL BUSINESS

- **Digital Transformation: Update on online portal**

The MMA discussed the recent implementation of the CRM system, Salesforce. The system has a portal feature, which will be user friendly and training will be provided by the MMA for those requiring assistance. The portal will enable market tenants to access invoices, pay their account and liaise with the MMA directly.

- **Post Covid-19 outlook:**

Management and Committee agreed that the Stage 4 lockdown update from Premier Dan Andrews on 6 September were to be expected, given the present case numbers.

MATTERS ARISING

- **Invoices July/ August/ September:**

Committee discussed the 2.5% increase of rent issued to market tenants. MMA confirmed of offering a 3 month "rent free" period in April/ May/ June. Additional rental assistance is accessible to companies that qualify and to contact the MMA's General Counsel and Head of Property directly for those requiring additional relief.

- **Sustainability:** Opportunities exist to remove single use plastic sleeves, an item to be investigated.

- **Flowers VIC:** No value for money in the membership.

- **Flower Sales:** in Victoria had slumped during August, Interstate sales have been strong.