

# GEELONG SALEYARDS

Stakeholder Workshop Report of Outputs

PRODUCED FOR



**KISMET  
FORWARD**

FACILITATING BETTER DECISIONS

# KISMET FORWARD

FACILITATING BETTER DECISIONS

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The authors do not necessarily agree with the opinions documented herein.

Kismet Forward provides specialist advice and support in the areas of community engagement, facilitation, program logic, strategy, evaluation, training and project management.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	1
1. Introduction and Background .....	2
Attendance .....	2
Meeting Introduction .....	2
This Report .....	3
2. What We Heard: The Importance of Geelong Saleyards .....	4
Why are the Geelong Saleyards Important?.....	4
3. What We Heard: Scenarios .....	5
Scenario 1: Open a Fully Upgraded or New Facility within the City of Greater Geelong.....	5
Scenario 2: Temporary Opening of Geelong Saleyards, then Transition to Permanent Closure within Twelve Months .....	8
Scenario 3: Keep the Geelong Saleyards closed with no new replacement facility within the City of Greater Geelong.....	10
Scenario 4: Independent Risk Assessment including Accurate and Itemised Costs to Bring Current Yards Up to Date, Repair and Reopen the Saleyards .....	12
4. Additional Comments .....	13
5. Questions on Notice.....	15
Appendix A Geelong Saleyards Users Group Presentation.....	16
Appendix B Workshop Evaluation Results.....	19
Appendix C - Scenarios Provided by CoGG for Discussion .....	20

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Geelong Saleyards operated in North Geelong for over 140 years until August 2016, when they were closed by owner City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) following advice from structural engineers, for occupational health and safety reasons. Until that time they had provided a meeting place for the region's farmers and agents to buy and sell sheep, cattle and other livestock, often in small batches.

The closure of the saleyards resulted in a variety of concerns on part of farmers and associated service providers. In response, the City of Greater Geelong convened a stakeholder workshop in West Geelong in November 2016 to discuss the benefits and disadvantages of some scenarios related to the future of the saleyards, and to identify ways in which CoGG could support farmers and the broader industry.

118 people registered their attendance at the workshop. Participants included a wide array of individuals and groups associated with the farming industry including farmers, transporters, agents, community and industry group representatives and local and state government authority representatives. Feedback was sought both during the meeting as well as through written submissions, which were accepted until 25 November 2016. Two written submissions were received.

Key feedback received during the consultation period included:

- The saleyards play a key role in supporting social connectedness and mental wellbeing within the farming community – it's a 'men's shed'
- The saleyards play a key role in the continuation of agribusiness in the region - many farmers are small producers on small holdings who need a local outlet to buy and sell their stock.
- There is widespread distrust regarding many of the financial aspects of the facility presented by Council in terms of income, expenditure and repair costs of the existing facility as well as new facility construction costs
- None of the three scenarios presented by Council solves the immediate problem of needing the facility opened urgently.
- Of the three scenarios presented, that of opening a fully upgraded or new facility with the City of Greater Geelong, was the preferred option. Within this option, there was a preference for an upgrade of the existing facility rather than construction of a new facility. Cost saving suggestions included reducing the scale of the current facility. Upgrading the existing facility was considered far less expensive than building a new facility.
- A fourth scenario, that of an independent risk assessment including accurate and itemised costs to bring the current yards up to date, was offered from the floor and positively received by attendees. There was a general willingness by the farming community present to use their many skills in a volunteer capacity to contribute to the upgrade.
- A new management structure is needed to guide the future management of the facility either in partnership with CoGG or as a privately run enterprise. The management committee should comprise representatives of saleyard users.

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Geelong Saleyards operated in North Geelong for over 140 years until August 2016, when they were closed by owner City of Greater Geelong (CoGG) following advice from structural engineers, for occupational health and safety reasons. Until that time they had provided a meeting place for the region's farmers and agents to buy and sell sheep, cattle and other livestock, often in small batches.

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## Attendance

118 people registered their attendance at the workshop; anecdotal evidence suggests that some people entered through the rear door and did not see the registration desk. In a rough show of hands, about half identified themselves as farmers, of whom approximately half were located within the City of Greater Geelong. Other attendees identified themselves as transporters/carriers (10), agents (3), community group representatives (3), industry group representatives (6-8), local government authorities (14) and state government/statutory authorities (3). One attendee was from Tasmania where a similar situation had occurred in his local area. In answer to a question, only 6-8 attendees at the session identified themselves as being under 50 years of age.

## Meeting Introduction

Will Tieppo (General Manager Strategy and Performance, CoGG) and Dr. Kathy Alexander (Administrator, CoGG) welcomed all to the workshop and outlined the process undertaken to date: over recent months, Council has consulted widely to gather data and information to inform its decision regarding the future of the saleyards facility. A stakeholder survey was distributed and 463 responses received. Data collected indicates that, whilst a significant percentage of users are from Geelong, Surf Coast or Golden Plains, 32% travel from outside the G21 region.

Kathy explained that, in recognising the breadth of issues relevant to the saleyards, Council has considered the cost impacts, social and heritage issues and logistical difficulties associated with using saleyard facilities in other locations. Council also recognises that small farmers in the region need equity, the lack of Council investment in the maintenance of the facility and the absence of a farming and agribusiness strategy for the region.

Kathy stressed that no decision had yet been made as to the future of the Geelong saleyards.

## This Report

This report is an independent account of the feedback generated at the meeting and through subsequent written submissions, which were accepted until 25 November 2016. Two written submissions were received. While most of the feedback received has been consolidated, some direct representative quotes have been included.

Whilst it contains the views presented during the consultation process, this report does not provide recommendations. This report will be used as an input to Council's decision regarding the future of the Geelong saleyards and impacts for the broader farming industry.

The Geelong Saleyards Users Group distributed a PowerPoint presentation to attendees and spoke to it during the session. This presentation is contained in Appendix A.

At the conclusion of the workshop attendees were asked to complete an evaluation form regarding the success of the session. The results of this exercise are contained in Appendix B.



## 2. WHAT WE HEARD: THE IMPORTANCE OF GEELONG SALEYARDS

### Why are the Geelong Saleyards Important?

Participants were asked to identify why the Geelong Saleyards were important to them. Below is a summary of the responses. The responses that were mentioned frequently have been marked with a \*.

- *Outlet for small producers* – many farmers are small producers on small holdings who need a local outlet to buy and sell their stock. Many landholders want to see their stock sold or view stock prior to purchase. Increased time and transport costs resulting from having to travel to saleyards further afield may result in small producers ceasing farming altogether. The flow on effects from loss of small scale farming could include increased vermin, weeds, fire risk etc. \*
- *Social connectedness* – the saleyards offer an important social meeting place for a range of people associated with farming and contributes to social connectedness and mental wellbeing in the farming community \*
- *Employment* - for agents, transporters etc. \*
- *Keeping an agricultural industry in the region* \*
- *Traceability* – saleyards are vital to maintain traceability on all stock and protect the integrity of the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) database. This cannot be managed as easily through private or online sales\*
- *Ancillary benefits for surrounding businesses* – local allied businesses such as machinery dealers, farm supplies, produce stores etc. benefit from the existence of the saleyards\*
- *Animal welfare* \*
- *Heritage values* \*
- *Venue for Geelong Show prime lamb competition* – the saleyards has traditionally hosted the “on hoof” section of this competition. It is an excellent venue for this purpose and no other suitable venue is currently available
- *Tourism and education*

*“Farmers spend where they sell.”*

*“This is a men’s shed for farmers”*

## 3. WHAT WE HEARD: SCENARIOS

Attendees were asked to consider three scenarios and to add to, edit and seek clarity on the benefits and disadvantages previously identified by CoGG (See Appendix C). Attendees were also asked to identify support mechanisms required under each scenario. During the meeting, a fourth scenario was offered from the floor and provided to all attendees for feedback. Provided below are summaries of the feedback received at the meeting. Responses received most commonly are indicated with an \*.

### SCENARIO 1: Open a Fully Upgraded or New Facility within the City of Greater Geelong

#### 3.1.1 Benefits

Only a small amount of feedback was offered on the presented benefits of this scenario. Suggestions included the installation of solar panels on the roof and the ability to capture rainwater from the roof as cost recovery elements for a new facility. However, the need for a roof was also questioned as an unnecessary expense.

#### 3.1.2 Disadvantages

Substantial feedback was offered on the presented disadvantages of this scenario. Many of the disadvantages listed by CoGG were questioned as to their accuracy. The statement that this scenario *'does not have the support of all sales agents'* was questioned with the suggestion that this may be due to the poor condition of the facility or that agents are dominating yards in other locations.

The statements that the *'throughput is not likely to increase'* and *'buyers have indicated that the numbers being sold in Geelong do not make it worth it for them to attend'* were also questioned and the recent drought years were identified as possible explanations for these conclusions.

It was also suggested that, if the sales were undertaken weekly or more actively promoted within the region, throughput increases could result. In response to the statement that it would cost *'between \$10-15 million to be spent for a new facility to be built'*, the accuracy of that costing was questioned and a common reaction was that it would cost far less to update the existing facility. In responding to the statement that *'if a new location was required, the time taken to be back up running sales would be well over 12 months'*, the common feedback was that the existing yards should be *'patched up'* and operated until a new facility is ready.

### 3.1.3 Support Needed

In identifying the support required under this scenario, the following points are a summary of the responses provided:

- Subsidise costs to transport to other areas in the meantime\*
- An interim sale yard until new yard available\*
- Minimum saleyard open for collection and tagging on Sunday and mass transfer to Ballarat or Colac\*
- Immediate utilisation of the safe and usable components of the current facility\*
- Support to agents through the provision of extra cartage to assist in transporting small numbers of stock\*
- An interim transport hub for collection of small lots by large transporters
- An online system for aggregating stock numbers in interim – perhaps a subsidy
- State and local government funding partnership

### 3.1.4 If a different location is considered for new saleyards, what criteria should be used when assessing potential sites?

In identifying criteria for the assessment of other potential sites, the following points were provided:

- Easy access from highway/ring road\*
- Large area able to house poultry market, sheep and cattle on same day, other associated activities e.g. farmers markets, meeting rooms for buyers/agents, fuel, allied industries (tractor sales, farm supplies)\*
- Central location \*
- Wash down bays \*
- Canteen/food vans \*
- In an industrial area \*
- Away from residents but not too far from Bellarine
- Able to be used by multiple local municipalities – within 20km of Geelong

### 3.1.5 General Comments

Other frequently mentioned comments around this scenario included:

- It doesn't solve the immediate problem of needing a facility in the short term\*
- A smaller facility at the current site would reduce refurbishment costs\*
- Bring local farmers together regularly to voice their opinions in the running of the facility – everyone has a say and is involved with its operation - CoGG hasn't demonstrated that it can run this facility well \*
- Need for multipurpose facility to be able to accommodate a range of livestock\*
- This scenario supports the paddock to plate phenomenon

This scenario was the most popular of the three presented by Council. Most attendees present identified a preference for an upgrade of the existing facility rather than construction of a new facility.

*"... upgrade and downsize the current yard"*

*"How much of the current saleyards is really in need of repair/replacement? And at what cost? Less than half - 42 pens can be used today!"*

## SCENARIO 2: Temporary Opening of Geelong Saleyards, then Transition to Permanent Closure within Twelve Months

Several templates were returned with the words 'temporary' and/or '12 months' crossed out. Clarity was sought on whether the opening included a safety upgrade. It was also suggested that, rather than a transition to closure period of 12 months, a timeframe of 3, 5 or 10 years might be more appropriate.

### 3.1.6 Benefits

Many of the presented benefits of this scenario were met with counter arguments. Indeed, much of the feedback suggested that there were no benefits of this scenario at all. One benefit that was identified was that it allowed time for Council to develop transition plans to assist affected farmers.

### 3.1.7 Disadvantages

In response to the presented disadvantages of this scenario, clarity was sought as to whether *'the \$900,000 to be spent to get the saleyards up to just a basic standard'* covered the entire facility and that upgrade of only part of the facility was necessary and would be far less expensive. Furthermore, it was suggested that the \$500,000 fire insurance funding could be utilised for this purpose. The *'expected losses per year..... at approximately \$250,000'* figure was questioned and it was suggested that these losses were due to low stock numbers which would increase as the facility improved. The statement that *'throughput is not likely to increase'* was disputed. It was also suggested that seasonal variations and drought conditions could explain the current levels of throughput.

### 3.1.8 Support Needed

In identifying the support required under this scenario, the following points are a summary of the responses provided:

- A new regional mixed-use saleyards facility (sheep, cattle, chooks, horses, produce etc.)\*
- Cooperation to re-open saleyards immediately
- Reduce our rates – increase farm rate – pay cartage to other areas
- Would need transport subsidy indefinitely!
- Agree to allow producers to sell current stock NOW!

### 3.1.9 General Comments

Other comments around this scenario included:

- That this scenario doesn't progress anything and farmers are no better off after 12 months\*
- The investment of a considerable amount of money (\$900,00) for a benefit of only 12 months was irresponsible\*
- The stated \$900,000 required to bring the saleyards up to a basic standard was excessive and that a substantially smaller investment could be made to enable the facility to operate. Furthermore, many comments suggested that maintenance works only were required\*
- The longer that stock are in transport, the lower the quality of stock and, ultimately, the quality of the meat\*
- Calls for management of the facility to be moved from COGG to private ownership or a farmers' co-operative arrangement\*
- Call for federal/state funding to assist
- Financial losses should not be the primary concern

This scenario was the second popular of the three presented by Council.

*"12 months seems too soon to seek alternative options to support farmers"*

*"Do this and I need no support. The next sale will be my last anywhere!"*

*"This is stupid and an insult. Why invest money for 12 months when should invest for long term?"*

*"History has proven that once one closes, a new one 'rarely if ever' opens"*

## **SCENARIO 3: Keep the Geelong Saleyards closed with no new replacement facility within the City of Greater Geelong**

### **3.1.10 Benefits**

Most of the presented benefits were of a financial nature, relating largely to the saving of expenditure on operating the current facility, upgrading it and/or building a new facility. There was little response to these benefits, although some of the figures were questioned.

### **3.1.11 Disadvantages**

Attendees generally agreed with the statements provided. Additional disadvantages offered included loss of livelihood for farming and farming related businesses, loss of traceability and stock monitoring, cruelty to livestock and animal welfare issues leading to inferior meat quality and mental health impacts to the farming community.

### **3.1.12 Support Needed for Individuals**

In identifying the support required for individuals under this scenario, the following points are a summary of the responses provided:

- Provide mental health services\*
- Reduce Council rates\*
- No cost penalty to farmers i.e. full additional cost to be met by Council
- Immediate transport subsidies – ongoing forever
- Relax subdivision rules ie allow subdivision down to 5 hectares because same/medium scale livestock farming will become economically unviable and unfair on livestock
- Need a stock collection yard for locals to deliver to then mass transport to Ballarat Monday sale. This only covers selling though, not buying.
- Cartage rebate for 10 years, not only to CoGG ratepayers but to all those affected i.e. Surf Coast ratepayers

### 3.1.13 Support Needed by the Industry

In identifying the support required by the industry under this scenario, the following points are a summary of the responses provided:

- Use the money gained from the sale of the saleyards into building a new facility\*
- Lower the rate burden to all rural residents
- New shared facilities – funded by multiple municipalities and state government within 20km Geelong
- Support for other rural suppliers
- Retain part of the site for heritage purposes, social engagement and development of agriculture educational purpose built facility (for all ages)
- Better consultation with farmers and creative thinking to fund cost recovery of facility
- Huge subsidies for transport costs
- Opportunities for producer groups to form and pursue paddock to plate ventures

### 3.1.14 General Comments

Other comments around this scenario included:

- This scenario was ‘not acceptable’ to many attendees\*
- The timing of the decision has been orchestrated so that administrators make a decision and leave. The new Council will then have to implement an unpopular decision
- There is no transition period although there is discussion about transition – transition to what? Nothing is clear and nothing is communicated well
- There are no benefits to small farmers if a yard closes
- If the saleyards close, do farmers get any benefits from the sale of the facility?

This scenario was the least popular of the three presented by Council.

*“The Council will need to explain to all ratepayers why the city strategy to support rural communities and preserve the rural landscapes is not supporting saleyards!!”*

*“CoGG rates increase and CoGG services decrease”*

## **SCENARIO 4: Independent Risk Assessment including Accurate and Itemised Costs to Bring Current Yards Up to Date, Repair and Reopen the Saleyards**

This scenario was put forward from the floor and offered for feedback/comment. A summary of responses is provided below:

- This is a good option \*
- Form a management committee of farmers, carriers, agents, buyers, vendors and CoGG\*
- There are many skills amongst the farming community who can contribute to the facility upgrade in a volunteer capacity\*
- Re-open current saleyards with repair works and then follow a maintenance program to keep them in good and safe repair. Make use of current facilities that are in good condition.

*“Some farmers have inspected the yards and offered to have a working bee; this was refused”*

*“Yes! An independent risk assessor who has an informed/experienced background – rural/farm experience”*

This scenario was positively received by many workshop attendees.

## 4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Additional comments received during the consultation period included:

- Widespread distrust regarding many of the financial aspects of the facility presented at the meeting, in terms of income, expenditure, current duties undertaken by the 2.2 staff and past and current maintenance works. There were repeated requests for clear published financials for the yards\*
- Strategic planning values a farmed edge to urban development. CoGG has encouraged small subdivisions in rural areas, thereby increasing small landholders who run livestock. This will further increase in the future as larger properties subdivide into smaller lots. It is incumbent on Council, therefore, to provide the facility to support small rural producers. If not, farmers will walk away\*
- The saleyards play a key role in supporting the mental health of the farming community and there were serious concerns regarding depression, social isolation, suicide etc. that may result should this facility close. It was repeatedly likened to a men's shed\*
- Suggestion that a new management structure be established to guide the future management of the facility either in partnership with CoGG or as a privately run enterprise. The management committee needs to comprise representatives of saleyard users\*
- Reduce the size of the yards, sell half and use the proceeds to rejuvenate the other half\*
- Heritage and cultural values of the facility need to also be considered\*
- Biosecurity concerns relating to loss of traceability should the saleyards close and small buyers turn to informal non-traceable forms of trading. This will become even more critical when National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) tags become compulsory for all sheep born after 1/1/17 and saleyard recording commences on 1/7/17. Traceability is extremely important in livestock disease eradication/control within Australia as well as being essential for export and domestic market access. State Government funding is available to local councils for NLIS infrastructure, installation, training and saleyard modifications. Applications opened on 14 November and will close March 2017. (see [http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/324137/Sheep-EID-funding-scenarios.pdf](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/324137/Sheep-EID-funding-scenarios.pdf)).\*
- The need for CoGG to develop an agriculture/agribusiness strategy for the region, which identifies ways to support a vibrant agricultural sector. Whilst being consistent with G21's Agribusiness Strategy, this strategy needs to be specific to CoGG
- A belief that the saleyards facility is the only benefit that rural ratepayers get from their substantial rates. The non-provision of a saleyard service is not an option
- In June 2015, CoGG Council resolved to '*work with neighbouring councils to identify and develop a suitable regional solution with a view to initiating a future stage withdrawal from saleyards operation*'. No progress has been made to date on determining a suitable regional solution

- The current closure of the facility is during the peak spring/summer period and buyers have made alternative arrangements. It is unlikely that they will now change their pattern
- At the next Council meeting, the Administrators need to rescind the previous Council decision to close yards to support progress of this matter
- This workshop is a productive first step in real consultation. It is refreshing for the facilitator and administrator to hear from the public in an open forum as there has been continued distrust in Council for years
- Frustration at numerous previous reports/plans/audits in 2002, 2007, 2013, 2014 which outlined actions to support the continued use of the facility. The 2014 report stated that walkways and ramps were compliant and sheep ramps were fixed – why are they now unsafe?
- Why is rural infrastructure a cost centre rather than a service? Local governments invest in men's sheds, senior citizens' centres, swimming pools and other infrastructure for groups, why not rural infrastructure?
- A belief that CoGG is responsible for allowing the facility to fall into disrepair and, should, therefore, take responsibility to fix it. The fire insurance money from the canteen fire should be made available
- At its Council meeting of 22 November 2016, Surf Coast Shire made a number of recommendations on the Geelong Saleyards issue including making a request to COGG to immediately *'undertake necessary tactical works to re-open the existing Geelong Saleyards facility as soon as possible to cater for cattle and sheep'*, to *'form a Geelong Saleyards Stakeholder Committee...'* to *'commence a Livestock Market Channel Analysis (LMCA)'* and to *'defer any decision as to the long term future of the Geelong Saleyards until consideration of the LMCA'*.

***“The yards are like an informal counselling session every Monday”***

***“Define the most appropriate management structure, infrastructure and operating model to operate a sustainable service for small producers”***

## 5. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Will Tieppo took a number of questions asked at the session on notice and committed to providing attendees with responses. These were:

- Can we get access to the reports including the OH&S Report upon which recent Council decisions have been based and which led to the recent closure?
- Where does the \$12.50/head of cattle go? Why does COGG say that the saleyards runs at a loss? What is the Council annual expenditure of \$400,000 spent on?
- Why were new walkways constructed on underlying structures that were not able to support them?



# APPENDIX A GEELONG SALEYARDS USERS GROUP PRESENTATION



## Who we are

- A coalition of small producers from the City of Greater Geelong, Golden Plains Shire, Moorabool Shire, Surf Coast Shire and Wyndham Shire, supported by agents, buyers and carriers

## Why we are here today

- We cannot trade our stock without local access to saleyards
- CoGG needs to understand what will happen to our businesses if the saleyards do not reopen urgently
- Our goal is a **SUSTAINABLE SALEYARDS SERVICE** for small producers in Geelong and district

## Our proposition

- There will always be a need for a local saleyard service for small producers
  - Most of the rural areas near Geelong are subdivided into small farms
  - In 2014, DEPI estimated approximately 30% of Geelong saleyards trade was from 'hobby farms'. Recent estimates suggest 50%
  - Purchasers of small lots of cattle/sheep need to physically assess produce to ensure safety and quality
  - The logistics of the small producer business model are incompatible with buying and selling through remote saleyards (e.g. Ballarat or Colac) or over the internet

## Our proposition

- The rural community is entitled to service equity
  - The saleyards have contributed a surplus for approximately 150 years
  - Small producers make a significant contribution to the regional economy
    - Estimated farm rates income to CoGG of \$2,517,982 in 2016/17
    - Saleyard vendors spend considerable money in Geelong
  - Care of the rural environment by small producers benefits the local community and tourism sector
  - Local governments invest in men's sheds, senior citizens' centres, swimming pools and other infrastructure for other groups - why is rural infrastructure a cost centre rather than a service?

## The context

- In 2014, Council officers said "*The Saleyards complies with OH&S requirements*".
  - What happened between 2014 and 2016 that resulted in sudden closure of the Geelong saleyards in August 2016 because of OH&S concerns?
  - Where is the expert advice on which that decision was based?
  - Why has CoGG not acted to remedy whatever deficits were identified, so trading could continue while a longer term solution is identified (consistent with 2015 Council resolution)?

## The context

- A decision to permanently close the saleyards has been presented recently as a *fait accompli*, however the CoGG Council (pre-Administrators) DID NOT resolve to close the saleyards:
  - In June 2015, CoGG Council resolved to “*work with neighbouring councils to identify and develop a suitable regional solution with a view to initiating a future staged withdrawal from saleyards operation*”
- There has been no meaningful work with other councils, nor has a suitable regional solution been identified – why are parts of that resolution being implemented selectively?

## The small producer business model

- Successful production from small farms requires effort and ingenuity
- Many small producers hold off-farm jobs, while working at weekends to maintain their farming businesses
- Small producers buy and sell small lots of sheep and cattle frequently. Delays in turnover can lead to crippling cash flow problems
- Costs are high, margins are very small and additional costs can make production unsustainable

## The small producer business model

Bellarine Peninsula 2014/15

Size	Location	Improvements	Total Rates (EXCL FSL)	Cost(\$/ha)
32ha	Portarlington	Pasture with sheds	\$2541.95	\$72.62
30.7ha	Portarlington	Pasture with sheds	\$1914.50	\$62.36
27.49ha	St Leonards	House and pasture	\$1990	\$72.38

South West Monitor Farm

Year	Average rates and rents (\$/ha)
2014/2015	\$21
2013/2014	\$17
2012/2013	\$13
2011/2012	N/A
2010/2011	\$11

## The small producer business model

- Many small producers transport their stock themselves. Closure of the saleyards brings cost, safety and animal welfare consequences
  - their properties are not equipped with the roads and loading ramps required to load/off-load larger trucks – and such investment is not economically viable
  - their business models rely on them performing most tasks personally, rather than paying contractors
  - they therefore transport stock using crates on tandem trailers, or small trucks
  - permanent closure will leave them no alternative but to travel an additional 150-200 km towing small lots of animals, potentially on unsuitable roads and through additional urban areas

## The small producer business model

- Even small producers who have the necessary infrastructure to use commercial carriers are now subject to unsustainable delays in access to carrier services - it is simply not viable for carriers to collect large numbers of small lots of livestock from across the entire region
- Timing of sales is an issue – many small producers cannot attend mid-week sales because they are employed off-farm
  - Monday sales in Geelong meant they could transport their stock on Sunday
  - Thursday sales in Colac are inaccessible for those employed off-farm

## Biosecurity considerations

- Saleyards ensure traceability of stock
  - All livestock are required to have a National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) compliant ear tag or rumen bolus
  - Livestock must also be accompanied by a movement statement such as a National Vendor Declaration
  - Vendors and buyers must have a Property Identification Code
- DEPI has previously expressed concern about small buyers turning to informal, non-traceable means of trading if the saleyards close
- The situation will be exacerbated when NLIS electronic tags become compulsory for all sheep born after 1/1/17

## Heritage considerations

- The saleyards are historically significant for their long standing associations with the City of Greater Geelong
- The saleyards are socially significant at a State level
- These issues are important, but are not our primary focus
  - Our primary focus is access to a service we need for business viability, not preservation of history (although many of us think that is also important)

## Social considerations

- Farmers have unique attitudes, sources of stress and a heightened risk of suicide
- Social disconnection is a known contributing factor to psychological distress, ill health and premature death
- Farming is, intrinsically, an isolating activity
- The saleyards have always played an important role in generating connection and cohesion within the rural community
- The loss of the Market Office building through fire has already had a significant negative impact
- There is an urgent need for some basic infrastructure to support social cohesion in the rural community

## Consequences for small producers of closure

- A decision to permanently close the Geelong saleyards without offering a viable alternative service will lead to critical sustainability problems for many small producers
  - ...leading to highly detrimental changes in the rural vista, rural economy and wellbeing of the rural community in Geelong and district

## What needs to be done

1. Resume saleyard services urgently
  - Share OH&S assessment
  - Work with us to confirm necessary works and immediately commence remediation works
  - Immediately respond to our proposal to use alternative rows of pens for sheep sales, to avoid using walkways.
    - If you don't think that will work, explain why and then work with us to find another solution
  - Work with us to develop a similar solution for cattle sales
  - Maintain maintenance over time, in accordance with an agreed plan, until an alternative is available

## What needs to be done

2. Engage meaningfully with the community
  - Give us access to the reports on which you have based your decisions
  - Meet with us regularly, and disclose the information we need to help you find a solution
3. Aggressively manage short term costs
  - Urgently reduce costs by aligning staffing numbers to service needs (1 sale per fortnight)
  - Use any excess staffing hours for maintenance
  - Seek support from neighbouring municipalities for necessary operating costs, in proportion to utilisation

## What needs to be done

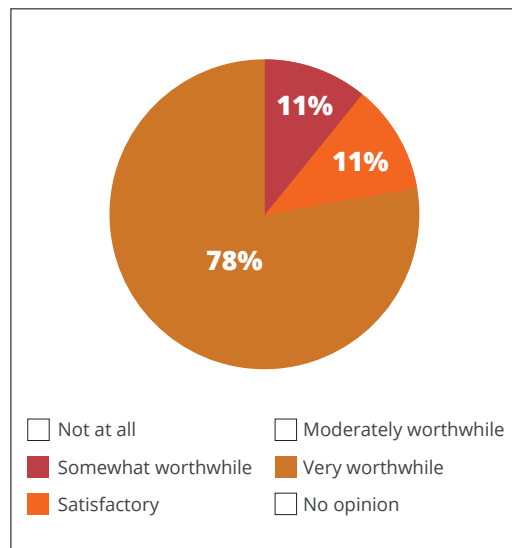
4. Implement a sustainable 'niche' solution
  - Join us on a visit to Kyneton and Shepparton, which are small saleyards that appear to be managed efficiently and successfully and are actively promoted by their Councils, to learn about the business model
  - Define the most appropriate management structure, infrastructure and operating model to operate a sustainable service for small producers
  - Assess feasibility of adapting the current site, or re-building in a different (close) location
  - Seek support from all relevant governments (local, state, federal) to invest in infrastructure and implement a sustainable service

# APPENDIX B WORKSHOP EVALUATION RESULTS

The results of the twenty evaluation forms completed at the conclusion of the workshop are contained below. (It should be noted that the facilitator did not point out the evaluation form before many attendees were on their feet).

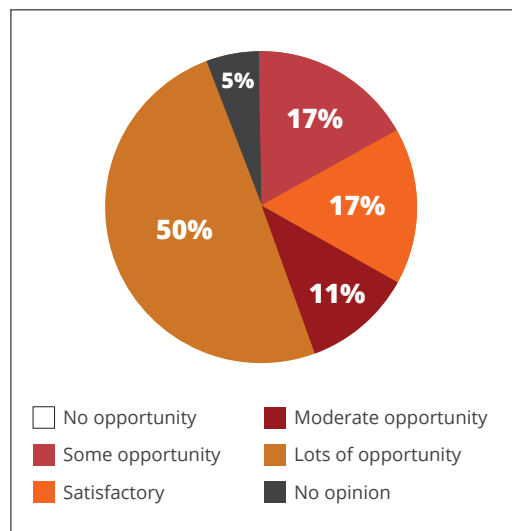
## Was your involvement in the workshop a worthwhile experience?

Eighteen respondents choose to answer this question. Fourteen (78%) considered the workshop to be very worthwhile whilst two (11%) considered it to be somewhat worthwhile and a further two (11%) satisfactory. In providing explanations as to their responses, comments included *'It was time the people voice was heard in a public forum - minuted and reported'*, *'Excellent turnout of concerned people, demonstrates degree of concern, Council must represent these people's opinions. What else can they do to tell you what they want.'* *'Yes, impressive to see such strong support for the retention of the saleyards'* and *'Nothing resolved or about to be'*.



## Were you given enough opportunity to participate in and influence discussions?

Eighteen respondents choose to answer this question. Nine (50%) considered that they were given lots of opportunity to participate whilst two (11%) considered that they were given moderate opportunity, three (17%) satisfactory opportunity and a further three (17%) some opportunity. One respondent (5%) considered that they were given no opportunity. In providing explanations as to their responses, four of the ten comments provided suggested that more time was needed to be spent on discussions. Additional comments included *'Difficult to facilitate as the scenarios were constrictive'*, *'Council must take notice of farmers opinions, ideas and comments'*, *'I don't feel we were really listened to'*, *'Long term guarantee of saleyards. Agriculture is Australia second highest export industry, after years of drought'*, *'It depends where you were sitting!!!'*, *'Very well facilitated, very patient and tolerant answers to questions from staff and Administrators'*



## How would you like to be further involved?

Ten respondents provided suggestions on how they would like to be further involved. Responses included *'to be kept up to date on progress'*, *'Possibly organise the chair to volunteer our time to help reopen and perform the relevant maintenance'*, *'In a working bee to get the yards up and running again'*, *'Geelong saleyards users group should be consulted'*, *'To have the OH&S report and all the costings now!'*, *'Like to be advised about what happens next, any reports, any other workshops'* and *'Would like council to work with community instead of isolation'*.

# APPENDIX C SCENARIOS PROVIDED BY COGG FOR DISCUSSION

## SCENARIO 1: Open a fully upgraded or new facility within the City of Greater Geelong

Benefits of this scenario	Disadvantages of this scenario
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New facility constructed that meets all current standards for safety and animal welfare, including a roof.</li> <li>• Facility for all producers to sell and buy stock locally</li> <li>• Provides a place for the rural community to meet.</li> <li>• Support for local businesses</li> <li>• Less travel time for stock</li> <li>• Less cost to producers for carting stock.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not have the support of all sales agents</li> <li>• Throughput is not likely to increase.</li> <li>• Between \$10-15Million to be spent for a new facility to be built</li> <li>• Significant time before the sales will be back up and running</li> <li>• Buyers have indicated that the numbers being sold at Geelong do not make it worth it for them to attend.</li> <li>• Potentially need to consider a location for a new facility to be built elsewhere in COGG</li> <li>• If a new location was required the time taken to be back up running sales would be well over 12 months</li> </ul>
<p>What support would you need under this scenario?</p>	<p>If a different location is considered for new Saleyards, what criteria should be used when assessing potential sites?</p>

# SCENARIO 2: Temporary opening of Geelong Saleyards then transition to permanent closure within 12 months

Benefits of this scenario	Disadvantages of this scenario
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows producers to sell current stock.</li> <li>• Allows producers time to make arrangements if required to be able to get stock picked up from their properties</li> <li>• Allows time for local producers to consider other alternatives for selling their stock such as local abattoirs.</li> <li>• Allows time for local transporters to establish local drop off centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over \$900,000 to be spent to get the saleyards up to just a basic standard.</li> <li>• Expected losses per year would remain the same at approximately \$250,000 at least.</li> <li>• Throughput is not likely to increase.</li> <li>• Works that need to be done will mean the saleyards will not be open until approx March 2017.</li> </ul>
<p>What support would you need under this scenario?</p>	

### SCENARIO 3: Keep the Geelong Saleyards closed, with no new replacement facility within City of Greater Geelong

Benefits of this scenario	Disadvantages of this scenario
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Save ratepayers \$250,000 per year in losses.</li> <li>• Save \$900,000 which is required to get the saleyards to a basic standard.</li> <li>• Save between \$10 Million and \$15 Million dollars which would be required to rebuild or construct a new facility elsewhere in COGG.</li> <li>• Would allow money to be spent on a rural strategy.</li> <li>• Eliminate a significant safety risk to COGG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional cost to farmers to sell stock at Colac and Ballarat</li> <li>• Difficult for transporters to pick up many small lots</li> <li>• More difficult for small farmers to sell their stock</li> <li>• Loss of a rural community meeting place.</li> <li>• Loss of a historic saleyard facility</li> <li>• Impacts more than just COGG farmers.</li> <li>• Impact on associated small businesses</li> <li>• Rural community feeling they aren't getting any return for the rates they pay</li> </ul>
<p>What support would you need under this scenario?</p>	<p>What support would <u>the industry</u> need under this scenario?</p>



# KISMET FORWARD

FACILITATING BETTER DECISIONS