

Item 9

Questions on Notice with Answers

1. Maintenance and Repair of Escalators and Lifts at Railway Square

By Councillor Weldon

Question

1. For how long have the escalators at Railway Square (on the Western side of George Street) been out of operation?
2. Why have these escalators not yet been repaired?
3. Which other escalators and lifts at Railway Square are currently out of operation, or have been out of operation for extended periods this year?
4. How many enquiries and complaints have been received about escalators and lifts at Railway Square?
5. In January 2024, it was reported that the City was appointing a new contractor to replace all lifts and escalators at Railway Square. Has a contractor been appointed?
6. How are members of the community, particularly those who have made enquiries and complaints, being kept updated?
7. Across our Local Government Area, how many City owned, managed or maintained escalators and lifts are currently out of operation, or have been out of operation for extended periods this year?
8. What processes and targets do we have to ensure the maintenance and repair of vital accessibility infrastructure?

X086670

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. The escalators have been out of operation since late 2023 due to being at end of life and constant vandalism.
2. Due to their age, it is not economical to repair them. This is why the City conducted an open market tender to replace the escalators and lifts.
3. All escalators and lifts at Railway Square were included in the open market tender and are scheduled to be replaced.
4. The City received ad hoc community enquiries (less than 5) in 2024.
5. A report was presented to Council in April 2024 regarding this matter and a recommendation to reject and negotiate was endorsed. Negotiations have been completed and the contract was signed at the end of July 2024.

6. Feedback has been provided to explain assets are scheduled for replacement through an open market tender process. Signage will be provided advising of the replacement project and timeframes.
7. The City owns and manages nearly 100 escalators and lifts across its Local Government Area. While some of these assets do experience breakdowns due to their condition, the City ensures essential repairs are carried out as needed.
8. We ensure the maintenance and repair of lifts and escalators through regular preventive maintenance, active monitoring, and prompt repair protocols. We also prioritise user feedback to continuously improve the reliability and safety of our accessibility infrastructure.

2. Dormant Public Bike Parking and End-of-Trip Facility

By Councillor Scott

Question

We understand the City of Sydney owns a public bike parking and end-of-trip facility at 180 George Street, Sydney.

Construction was completed in November 2022; however, it is currently dormant.

In light of this, could you please advise:

1. When did construction for the bike parking facility begin?
2. What is the exact date the construction was completed?
3. How long has the parking facility been empty/closed for?
4. In light of public reports, why has the parking facility been dormant/empty since the construction was completed in November 2022?
5. Why has there been significant delays in the opening of the bike parking facility?
6. Has the City received any feedback from community members requesting the opening of the bike parking facility?
7. How many bikes will this facility hold?
8. What is the current opening date for public use of the parking facility?
9. What are the current delays that restrict the bike parking facility from opening right now?
10. How much money has it cost the City to keep the bike parking facility vacant?

X086668

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. The 180 George Street construction project started in 2019.

2. Construction was completed and handover in early 2024.
3. The facility has not been activated since we took over ownership in early 2024
4. We have not been able to secure an operator despite going to an Expression of Interest (EOI) which closed in early 2023 where limited responses were received that struggled to show financial viability. We have since undertaken negotiations with a couple of potential vendors.
5. The facility was offered to the market via EOI. There was a lack of market interest.
6. There have been sporadic enquiries.
7. 210.
8. Our aim is to resolve and advise Council of the preferred operating model as soon as possible. We are exploring various operating models (including trials and interim solutions) so that the facility can be opened as soon as possible.
9. Refer response to Part 4 above.
10. The City has contributed to shared building outgoings, which includes essential fire maintenance activities (proportionate to our share of the building) since handover in early 2024. Cleaning and operating services have not been undertaken as the facility has not been occupied.

3. August Update - Asbestos in the City of Sydney

By Councillor Scott

Question

We understand the City's parks and open space maintenance contractor is currently meeting remediation costs in accordance with the contract. We also understand the City is continuing to work with its contractor to ensure parks are cleaned and reopened as quickly as possible. We thank the staff who have cleared up the asbestos.

In light of this, could you please advise:

1. According to the City of Sydney's website (13 August 2024), Cook + Phillip Park is the only area in the city with clean-up still underway. What is the proposed timeframe for the completion of the asbestos clean-up in this park?
2. Has clean-up been completed for all garden beds in the City?
3. If not, what is the proposed timeframe for completion?
4. What is the exact timeframe that the City has taken to clear all asbestos in garden beds and parks across the City?

X086668

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. Clean up is completed at Cook and Phillip Park and the fencing to the final stage was removed on 13 August 2024.
2. Yes.
3. Not applicable.
4. Clean up was undertaken in stages across the impacted parks and garden beds, with each park re-opened once the contaminated mulch was cleared. In total, on-site clean up across all sites took 25 weeks.

4. Use of Agency Staff

By Councillor Ellsmore

Question

In Item 3 of the Corporate, Finance, Properties and Tenders Committee 12 August 2024 – 2023/24 Quarter 4 Review – Delivery Program 2022-2026 - it was reported the Actual Expenditure for Agency Contract Staff in 2023-2024 was \$25.3 million, a 134% increase on the budget of \$10.8 million.

1. What were the main drivers or reasons for the increase in use of Agency Contract Staff in 2023/24?
2. In 2022/23 there was a reported 92% increase in the budget for Agency Contract Staff. What were the main drivers of the increase in use of Agency Contract Staff in 2022/23?
3. In 2021/22 there was a reported 82% increase in the budget for Agency Contract Staff. What were the main drivers of the increase in use of Agency Contract Staff in 2021/22?
4. In 2023/24:
 - (a) What was the breakdown in terms of numbers (FTE) and budget of Agency Contract staff by Council divisions, units or work areas?
 - (b) What was the breakdown in terms of numbers (FTE) and budget of directly employed, ongoing Council staff by Council divisions, units or work areas?
5. What were the number of staff (FTE) directly employed by the Council (not including agency staff, or externally contracted staff) in:
 - (a) 2021/22?
 - (b) 2022/23?
 - (c) 2023/24?

6. In 2024/25:
 - (a) What number of directly employed staff (not agency or externally contracted staff) (FTE) are budgeted to be employed by the Council?
 - (b) What number of Agency Contract Staff (FTE) are budgeted to be employed in 2024/25?
 - (c) What number of staff (FTE) are estimated to be employed through outsourcing or private contracting of services by the Council?
7. In 2024/25:
 - (a) What is the total approved budget for directly employed Council staff, not including agency or externally contracted staff?
 - (b) What is the total budget for Agency Contract Staff?
8. What data does Council collect or track about the wages and conditions of Council staff compared to agency or privately contracted staff? Where can Councillors access this information? Where can the public access this information?

X086664

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

The City of Sydney does not budget for agency workers to backfill vacant City positions. Instead, we budget for a full complement of approved positions. When there is a need to backfill a position with an agency worker, for example due to a resignation, long term leave or parental leave, the salaries and wages already budgeted for the position are used to fund the agency worker.

1. The main drivers for the variance of agency worker expenditure to budget in 2023/24 were temporary backfilling of vacant permanent positions (pending recruitment), and an increase in agency worker pay rates adjusting for labour market fluctuations, principally in childcare. It should be noted that while actual expenditure for Agency Contract Staff in 2023/24 was 3.7% higher than 2022/23, a lower budget in 2023/24 impacted the variance percentage reported.

In addition, in the latter part of the 2023/24 financial year, successful recruitment activity led to a reduction in vacant positions. A lower vacancy rate is anticipated to reduce utilisation of agency backfill.

2. The main drivers for the variance of agency worker expenditure to budget in 2022/23 were the temporary backfilling of permanent positions and increases in agency worker pay rates adjusting for labour market fluctuations amid candidate shortages in the job market, particularly in childcare and properties. A higher budget for Agency Contract Staff in 2022/23 reflected (planned) utilisation of additional agency staff in delivering significant projects including the WorldPride event, and a Field Surveyor project.
3. The main driver for the variance of agency worker expenditure to budget in 2021/22 was the temporary backfilling of permanent positions. There was an increase in agency spend generally in this financial year as various services returned to full operations as Covid restrictions were lifted.

4. To provide comparable data, the following table is based on headcount rather than FTE, due to the difficulties of reflecting agency worker FTE utilised for less than a full year.

Please note that the below agency worker count does not account for agency workers who are engaged for same day/next day services to backfill unplanned absences where there are mandatory minimums for workers on any shift.

Division	City of Sydney employee count*	Agency staff count**
Chief Executive Office	51	2
Chief Financial Office	65	5
Chief Operations Office	135	51
City Life	612	69
City Planning Development & Transport	240	7
City Services	747	68
Legal & Governance	36	1
People Performance & Technology	207	71
Strategic Development & Engagement	98	4
Total	2191	278

**for the year ended 30 June 2024

Division	2023/24 Agency Budget	2023/24 Employee Budget
	\$M	\$M Inclusive of casuals, oncosts and superannuation
Council	10.8	248.6
Chief Executive Office	0.1	7.4
Legal & Governance	0	6.7
Chief Financial Office	0.1	10
Chief Operations Office	0.7	18.6
City Life	2.5	47.8

Division	2023/24 Agency Budget	2023/24 Employee Budget
	\$M	\$M Inclusive of casuals, oncosts and superannuation
City Planning Development & Transport	0.1	36.9
City Services	1.9	85.1
People Performance & Technology	5.1	32.8
Strategic Development & Engagement	0.4	15.7
Corporate Costs	0	-12.4

5. The table provided below outlines the FTE excluding casuals, agency workers and externally contracted staff.

Financial Year	FTE
2021-22	1723
2022-23	1743
2023-24	1852

*as at 30 June for each year shown

- 6.
- (a) There are 2002 budgeted FTE positions for 2024/25, excluding casuals, agency and externally contracted staff.
 - (b) We do not forecast the number of Agency workers (FTE or headcount) to be employed, however we have allocated an expenditure budget of \$12.7 million for Agency Contract Staff in 2024/25.
 - (c) Outsourced and privately contracted organisations state their service levels only, rather than the total number of employees assigned to City of Sydney contracts. These include services providers for cleansing and waste, facilities management and aquatics and leisure services.
- 7.
- (a) The total approved budget for directly employed council staff, not including agency or externally contracted staff is \$264.7 million in FY 2024/25.
 - (b) The total approved budget for agency contract staff is \$12.7 million in FY 2024/25.

8. Pay rates and terms and conditions for agency workers are set in accordance with the relevant state industry awards and federal modern awards such as the Local Government Industry Award, Children Services Award, and the Education Services Award. Some specialist workers are paid above these award rates when there is high competition for talent or skill shortages.