

Thank you so much for your support! We have been honoured and humbled to hear from so many of our former clients and extended MAMA family members.

Please see below the email addresses for the mayor and councillors, as well as three different templates for you to pick from (or use as inspiration to draft your own!) These were adapted from a letter written by one of our amazing clients who has experience both as a MAMA client and working with another local council in developing their goals and annual reports. They all include a spot where you can add your experience with MAMA, which we hope will have some impact on the councillors and their decision.

Lots of love! Kelly, Jan and Team MAMA

**Melbourne City Mayor and Councillors’ Email Addresses**

lordmayor@melbourne.vic.gov.au

nicholas.reece@melbourne.vic.gov.au
olivia.ball@melbourne.vic.gov.au
roshena.campbell@melbourne.vic.gov.au
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philip.leliu@melbourne.vic.gov.au
rohan.leppert@melbourne.vic.gov.au
kevin.louey@melbourne.vic.gov.au

**Template #1 – Short and Sweet**

Dear Lord Mayor and Councillors,

I am writing with regards to the proposed sale of 30-38 Gatehouse Drive, Kensington, as publicised through <https://participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/proposal-sell-four-council-properties>.

I seek for the associated Council report due to Council in September 2022 to please recommend against the sale of this particular property. Should the Council report recommend the sale, I ask Councillors to please consider voting against such a recommendation.

Re: Proposed sale of 30-38 Gatehouse Drive, Kensington

The City of Melbourne makes strong, aspirational statements when it comes to health, equity and wellbeing. Demonstrating linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals and integrating its Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan into the Council Plan, Council often states it champions gender equality and positive mental and physical health outcomes as key strategic platforms.

However the proposed sale of the property at 30-38 Gatehouse Drive, Kensington could be considered a key example of undermining progress in these key areas and acting contrary to Council’s commitment to its strategic goals, objectives and outcomes.

While it may be tempting to view this property purely through an asset/property management lens, the sale of the property puts the operation of its long-term tenants Midwives and Mothers Australia (MAMA) at great risk. Not only does it risk their future in this location, but also the future of the organisation outright, as the costs of setting up a new clinic space may not be financially viable for the organisation.

I make this submission today in my capacity as one of the many people who have been supported by MAMA. PUT YOUR STORY HERE.

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards, SIGN NAME HERE

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**Template #2 – a bit more info about MAMA and our purpose**

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Why MAMA matters

When MAMA opened in 2011 they were the first of their kind in Victoria, revolutionising mother- and child-centred care during a profound time in a person’s life.

Midwife-led continuity of care models are models of maternity care that allow women to receive care from the same midwife or small team of midwives during pregnancy, labour and birth and the postnatal period. Evidence has shown that these models of care improve health outcomes for mothers and babies, and increase satisfaction with the birth experience - which is important given that approximately 1 in 3 women currently experiences birth trauma (Sandall et al., 2016, Mortensen et al., 2019.)

Their home at 30-38 Gatehouse Drive, Kensington is now a hub of holistic care of the rarest variety – providing pregnancy, labour and birth and post-natal care and education, counselling and psychologists, lactation consultants and breastfeeding drop-in groups, women’s health physiotherapy, paediatric care, osteopathy, chiropractic care, massage, education and physical activity classes, and other allied health services.

MAMA aims to focus on services that are under-resourced in the community, such as early postnatal care. The centre’s mission of trying to reduce postnatal depression by providing woman- and family-centred care from early pregnancy to 6 weeks postnatal is what they strive to achieve to this day. MAMA has supported thousands of women and families at this venue, and this vital community asset wants to stay in the City of Melbourne.

I make this submission today in my capacity as one of those women. PUT YOUR STORY HERE.

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**Template #3 – analysis of Melbourne City Goals**

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City of Melbourne strategic goals and objectives

Your Participate Melbourne site states "These properties do not support City of Melbourne’s future needs... or align with the strategic objectives outlined in our Council Plan 2021-25.)

I disagree that the aforementioned property does not align with Council’s strategic objectives, and assert that should the property be sold it will have a significantly negative impact in the Council’s ability to demonstrate it is truly working towards the achievement of the following goals and objectives.

Sustainable Development Goals:

· *SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*

To sell the aforementioned property would jeopardise the ultimate viability of a successful and much-needed service to the community responding to, and improving, maternal and child health needs and outcomes. The service has a positive impact on the mental and physical health outcomes of thousands of women, babies and their families, and the sale of the property would significantly jeopardise this.

· *SDG 5: Gender equality*

MAMA is an organisation that is woman-centred in its focus, and woman-led in its operation. It is an organisation who has created and led positive change in the fight for gender equity and equality.

This is a time when Council should be actively seeking to deliberately support, empower and promote organisations like MAMA through its strategic work, rather than hinder their progress or, at worst, destroy them.

Taking a gendered lens, it is notable all of the properties proposed for sale relate to former childcare and aged care facilities, and current community health and maternal and child health organisation – all highly feminised sectors that do the caring work in our society. There are no sports facilities, clubs, offices or other traditionally-male dominated spaces that have been deemed ‘unstrategic’ in their place in Council’s property portfolio.

Council Plan 2021-25 (incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan)

· *Community aspirations*

o Health and wellbeing is prioritised: “The City of Melbourne’s policies, spaces and services support the community’s physical health and mental wellbeing for the benefit of all.”

Again, this is a time when such services that seek to protect and improve the physical and mental health of women, babies and their families should be protected, not jeopardised.

· *Strategic Objective: Access and Affordability*

*(See also: Health and Wellbeing Focus Areas: Healthy and Sustainable Lifestyle, Mental Wellbeing and Inclusion, and the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2021-25)*

o The Mental Wellbeing and Inclusion focus area states Council will ensure: “Bonds and social connections are strengthened, and people have equal access to … physical activity in the city and core services such as mental healthcare…”

MAMA provides opportunities to access community bonds and social connections, physical activity and mental health care, particular in under-resourced areas in the city, including providing pregnancy, labour and birth and post-natal care and education, counselling and psychologists, lactation consultants and breastfeeding drop-in groups, education and physical activity classes, and other allied health services. The sale of the aforementioned property runs an extremely high risk of significantly reducing, and perhaps in some cases removing, people’s access to such services.

o *Major Initiative 36: Increase and upgrade accessible, inclusive spaces for women in City of Melbourne sports facilities.*

It is noteworthy, and somewhat disappointing, that Council’s commitment to increasing and upgrading spaces for women seems to begin and end with sports facilities.

Perhaps it would not be considered too much of a stretch to increase and upgrade an accessible, inclusive space for women at a single additional City of Melbourne facility - one that is already an inclusive space for women, and is well-established, well-used and loved by the community for more than a decade?

o *Major Initiative 37:* “Implement a neighbourhood model by working with communities to develop neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood service centres that respond to the local communities existing and projected needs.”

Has consultation been done on a neighbourhood planning level to determine if MAMA’s services are superfluous to community needs, or how the services it provides will be replaced? Can Council demonstrate how the community’s existing and projected needs in this critical maternal and child health space will be met should the site be sold?

· *Strategic Objective: Safety and Wellbeing*

*(See also Health and Wellbeing Focus Area: Public health and safety, and the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2021-25)*

o The Public Health and Safety focus area description states Council will ensure: “All people feel safe and included when participating in community life with a zero tolerance of… gender inequality and violence against women…”

o *Major Initiative 49: “We will be a leading organisation on equality and inclusion and deliver programs in communities that will reduce physical and psychological harm to all people… and meet our obligations under the Gender Equality Act 2020.”*

§ MAMA is a service that provides a range of services that seek to prevent or remedy physical and psychological harm that sadly all-too-often occurs to women during pregnancy, birth and labour and in the post-partum period. Again, it strikes me that undertaking an action that threatens the viability of a long-term community organisation would not be something that a ‘leading organisation’ would seek to do, either intentionally or unintentionally.

§ Under section 7 of the *Gender Equality Act 2020,* (Duty to promote gender equality), a defined entity (in this case, the City of Melbourne) must, in developing policies and programs and in delivering services that are to be provided to the public, or have a direct and significant impact on the public:

§ consider and promote gender equality; and

§ take necessary and proportionate action towards achieving gender equality.

Under section 9 of the Act (Defined entity must undertake gender impact assessments), a defined entity must undertake a gender impact assessment when developing or reviewing any policy of, or program or service provided by, the entity that has a direct and significant impact on the public. Council’s obligation started with the Act commencing on 31 March 2021.

Has a robust gender impact assessment been conducted with regards to this proposal? If so, it would be important for this work to be taken into consideration and made public for community consideration. If not, we would request their work be done as soon as possible, not least to ensure compliance with the Act.

§ Further, in demonstrating your commitment to this focus area, and the regional health partnerships operating as a key part of the Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, it would strike me as important to seek consultation with your health partners in this space to understand their perspectives – particularly those in the Preventing Violence Together partnership, GenWest, the Western Public Health Unit, Western Health and others. Are these organisations/networks in favour of the sale of the aforementioned property? Do they harbour concerns? Has Council made efforts to seek their perspectives?

In conclusion, after considering Council’s strategic goals and objectives, in addition to my own experiences with MAMA at the property, I believe the proposed sale of 30-38 Gatehouse Drive, Kensington is, with respect, a bad proposal.

I seek for the associated Council report due to Council in September 2022 to please recommend against the sale of this particular property. Should the Council report recommend the sale, I ask Councillors to please consider voting against such a recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards, SIGN NAME HERE