



VICTORIA POLICE

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4 July 2017

Ms Alexandra Jefferies  
Planning Officer  
C/- Loddon Shire Council  
41 High Street, Wedderburn 3518

**Subject : Planning Application 5289 Yemaya Festival.**

Dear Ms Jefferies,

I am writing on behalf of Victoria Police to formally object to the application for planning permit 5289 regarding Yemaya Festival being held in Fernihurst from 28 September 2017 to 1 October 2017.

This objection is not intended to cover all aspects of the planning application and is not to be taken as a comprehensive assessment of all the information provided. I have detailed some observations of the main areas that could impact on the event being conducted in a safe manner.

I have separated my objection into two areas. The first being in regards to overall planning for the event based on planning application 5289 and the second being the policing response and effect on local communities.

### **Planning application**

There are several concerns I have with the planning application documentation. Many of these concerns could be rectified by the event organiser however I believe it shows a level well below the standard that should be accepted for the conduct of an event of this size and nature. This indicates a risk on its own and overall professional standards that could flow onto the impact on the safety of the event.

#### Emergency Management Plan

The Emergency Management Plan under 1.5 legal guidelines shows a range of codes and legislation the plan has been developed in accordance with. There is a lack of reference to Emergency Management Act 1986 which has defined purpose of 'to provide for the organisation of emergency management in Victoria' and Emergency Management Act 2013 which states the objectives are;

- (a) Foster a sustainable and efficient emergency management system that minimise the likelihood, effect and consequences of emergencies; and
- (b) establish effective governance arrangements that-
  - (i) clarify the roles and responsibilities of agencies; and
  - (ii) facilitate cooperation between agencies; and
  - (iii) ensure the coordination of emergency management reform within the emergency management sector; and
- (c) implement an 'all hazards – all agencies' approached based on networked arrangement and greater interoperability.

There is no reference to the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV) which contains policy and planning documents for emergency management in Victoria and provides details of the roles different organisations play in the emergency management arrangements.

The Emergency Management Co-ordinator (EMC) is referenced as Matt Wood – Ararat City Council. On Tuesday 20 June 2017 Matthew Wood contacted me in regards to the Yemaya event. He acknowledged Mr Apter had made contact with him however had not engaged his services for this event. At that time, Mr Wood was due to leave Australia for an overseas holiday until late August 2017 and was concerned that his name would be used to aid promoting his involvement in emergency management with the event without him actually being formally requested or paid for.

I see the EMC role as exceptionally important in an event of this nature and the advice, professionalism, qualifications, liaison and expertise a person employed in this position can bring to the overall event aids in it's success. Failure to have an adequately experienced person performing this role could have a significant negative impact.

At 2.3 the Emergency Management Team is detailed. When this list is referenced to the key contact list it is deficient in there is no senior medical officer, no communications officer, no wardens or area wardens identified and the chief warden should be a separate role to the event organiser. It also concerns me that the title of Joel Rowland from St John Ambulance is *Sales Manager*.

In regards to communications during the event, it is acknowledged there will be limitations on site hence the requirement for repeaters to be established for mobile phone use. In an emergency, the mobile phone network will become congested with overuse which may render it inoperable. Although one satellite phone will be made available, I am concerned this will not be sufficient.

3.2 detailed preparedness and states *....all internal safety staff are appropriately experienced and possess relevant qualifications*. There is nothing further in the documentation that details their experience or what relevant qualifications are. Being prepared and organised in an emergency management event is a priority.

Section 8 – evacuation. I acknowledge the advice in regards to evacuation sites within or adjacent to the main festival area. If the evacuation is required to those locations due to a severe weather event (could be rain, wind, storm etc), what shelter will be provided at those locations?

There are two escape routes identified from the actual event – Main Access Road and Emergency Access Road. What advice is being provided about the capacity and capability of Majors Line Road to cope with the volume of traffic (should a full evacuation be required) in either direction?

#### Fire management plan

The fire management plan refers to the event occurring in April 2017. Fire risks in April are different to those in September/October which makes me question have they been fully taken into consideration – in particular due to the 2015 fire season commencing very early in October.

This plan like the emergency management plan doesn't include legal guidelines such as EMMV and Emergency Management Act reference.

It details a team of qualified personal with a broad level of qualification and experience will be deployed to the event and will work in teams on 8 hour rotating shifts under the direction of an FMT shift supervisor. Who are these teams, where are they from and what are their qualifications?

Two of Phillip Millars certificates of accreditation are expired. One in 2014 and one in 2015 (pages 29 and 30).

The EPA documentation relates to April 2017 event and Cultural Heritage Management Plan relates to 2016 event.

## Traffic Management Plan

2.3 Primary Access Road. At what time prior to the event will the primary access road be professionally coated to an all-weather standard? The Loddon Shire was subject to significant flooding in mid September 2016 which if occurred again, would impact on achieving this plan.

6.3 Video Surveillance. A series of eight (8) wireless high-definition night vision CCTV cameras will be established at key locations around the event site and perimeter to assist all operations ..... Eight cameras will not be sufficient to cover the four main boundaries (each over 500m long) and key locations around the event site.

7.5 Soil Checkbanks. This is a positive initiative by the event organiser in order to segregate cars from camping areas. I am however concerned how it can be ensured the check banks are a minimum of 30 cm high due to dirt compacting and if 30cm is high enough to prevent vehicles driving over it.

## Security crowd management plan

Details the following .... *Critical to AUSWIDE strategy is effective communication of access control and implementation of entry search procedures (executed in co-operation with Victoria Police Force and in accordance with legislative limitations) primarily to assist in overall harm minimisation. The best deterrent is to have a distinct presence at all patron entry gates, at all areas of perimeter weakness, and at targeted high risk locations so there is a visual impact of control systems in place as the public access and observe the event site. This will ensure the public's perception of the event is that of a safe site controlled by proper authorities, this will also reduce the incidents that may occur.*

Legislative requirements make it prohibitive for Victoria Police to implement any search procedures, in particular with patrons attending in vehicles and not on foot. It is also exceptionally resource intensive from a policing perspective.

This role will be that of the event organiser in consultation with security. The plan is deficient in regards to specific advice on what 'search' and/or scanning procedure patrons will be subject to upon entry to the festival – for the safe conduct of the festival. Although there will not be a liquor licence on site, the application also doesn't indicate expectations or strategies in regards to alcohol coming onto the site and how this will be managed.

Physical Security Infrastructure – the plan includes the requirement for installation of adequate perimeter fencing to ensure site integrity to avoid unauthorised access by patrons to maintain crowd capacity at the approved level. Currently the plan is reliant upon farm height fencing, CCTV cameras and security patrols.

The trespassing section states ... *based on experience at the 2016 event, the most prominent risk factor was that of trespassing. It goes on to say further ... statistics have shown that persons caught trespassing at events are more likely to be associated with crimes and anti-social behaviour. As such, a greater focus on preventing instances of trespassing is likely to significantly reduce associated risk factors throughout the entire event.*

*The best deterrent is to have a distinct presence at all patron entry gates, at all areas of perimeter weakness, and at targeted high risk locations so that there is a visual impact of control systems in place as the public access and observe the event site.*

It is my opinion the best practicable way to deter trespassing (and subsequent disruption to the event) is through sufficient fencing around the borders of the event to ensure appropriate access control via the main entry points as indicated in the plan. This would also reduce the opportunity for festival goers to trespass onto neighbouring properties and crown land.

Security guards are trained and have relevant qualifications to deal with a variety of incidents. For safety reasons, I believe they should be working as a minimum in pairs without any reliance on volunteer workers. The reliance on volunteer workers to be supporting security guards in their role is a risk that in my opinion cuts corners and is likely due to cost reduction measures.

### Security schedule and ratio

Upon review of this documentation, it is my opinion that the deployment of 26 security guards for the event over 2 x 12 hr shifts per day (1 x swing shift to cover peak periods) is insufficient. The documented ratio of 1:187 based on 4500 persons attending is misleading. The actual figure per shift is closer to 1:346 whereas the 1:187 is for the rolling 24 hour period. The plan also indicates final deployment will be determined in consultation with Yemaya Festival as planning continues. This deployment should be part of the current planning required to be assessed not any future planning.

For any venue/event that has a liquor licence included, the standard practice is two licensed crowd controllers per 100 people and one per additional 100. In the instance of Yemaya and based on these ratio's, the number of security personnel would be 46 per shift. That means a total of 92 licensed crowd controllers per 24 hour period. I acknowledge there is no liquor licence included with this event however 13 licensed crowd controllers per 12 hour shift is insufficient to control a crowd of this size – in particular as a number will be involved in front gate, security command, campground, entry, first aid and perimeter patrols leaving very few for the most populous area of the actual festival. As indicated earlier, it is also my opinion that any licensed crowd controller should be working with another licensed crowd controller, not a volunteer to create a safe workplace and event.

The security risk register summary indicates the responsibility of Victoria Police in a number of areas of risk controller. There has not been any communication with myself or local Police in regards to this nor (to date) has there been any agreement on number of Police that will be directly working within the confines of the event.

### Drugs and prohibited items

I again refer to the '*entry search procedures*' that Victoria Police will not be involved with. I find the overall plan is deficient in identifying how any drugs or prohibited items will be prevented from being taken into the festival. This is particularly important when the festival indicates it has a **100% Zero Tolerance Drug Policy**.

One risk mitigation strategy indicates \* Subject to ongoing legal consultation regarding conduct of security pat-down or frisk searches (recent Victoria Police advice that activity cannot be conducted by security - potential implementation by Victoria Police Force). Legislative requirements limit the role that Victoria Police can do in these circumstances and general 'pat-down' frisk searches will not occur.

There is no extensive detail of proactive approaches occurring to ensure the event is drug free and it would require further detail and risk mitigation strategies.

The event held in 2015 at Costerfield detected a large number of drug offences – see attached article in Bendigo Advertiser. These detections were by local police without any specific operation being conducted in response to the event.

<http://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/3060622/drug-offences-rife-at-festival/>

At the event in 2016, there was clear evidence of overt drug use on site with, to my knowledge, no actions taken by the event organiser or security. Current intelligence indicates these events are targeted by drug trafficking groups in order to profit from the sale of drugs in an environment that is difficult to police.

Of particular concern to me is the *No GHB or Ice/Meth* specific heading. This section specifically singles out these drugs however in line with Yemaya **100% Zero Tolerance Drug Policy**, the silence on drugs such as cannabis indicates to me the use of such drugs is allowed within the scope of the event.

I note the engagement of DanceWize working closely with the medical team and the information they provide about the harms associated with illicit and licit drug use. I also note the intentions of the event are strongly and regularly relayed to all patrons via online channels, conditions of entry on tickets and onsite signage.

There is nothing however that indicates any drug use will be proactively monitored by event organisers, security and volunteers and reported to Police in each instance so relevant action can be taken.

#### Medical and Health plans

This event is being held at a remote location, some distance from the nearest medical facilities. There is insufficient detail in the documentation to indicate what medical and health support is being provided on site in order to treat any patients. I believe this lack of planning creates an unacceptable risk to event attendee's.

#### Police Presence

At the time of writing, details of any police presence on site have yet to be confirmed with the event organiser.

### **Policing Response**

In 2016, the policing response to this event was limited due to short time lines being provided in regards to the planning permit being granted. That said, the number of drug related detections from the Police operation is concerning from a community perspective. Had a larger scale policing response occurred, I would anticipate the detections to be a lot higher than indicated.

A summary of offences relating to the 2016 event are as follows;

- In 2016, there was 47 drug possession offences recorded in the entire Loddon Shire. 33 of these offences related to the targeted police operation that occurred in the Serpentine area over the ANZAC day long weekend.
- There were two drug traffickers detected.
- One collision near the event from a drug affected driver.
- One assault at the venue.
- 16 drug impaired drivers with a further two refusing to accompany police for further testing.
- 2400 random breath tests conducted with no positive results.

Planning is underway in respect of an increased policing response should the permit be granted. While I would prefer not to divulge the police operation methodology, I anticipate that in excess of 71 police from general duties and specialist police units from across Victoria would be involved in the operation. Only six of these will be working each shift specifically from the event (two shifts per day = 12 police per day) with the remaining police being deployed for a variety of other roles. This is a large commitment of policing resources that would normally be tasked to other duties within the community and will impact on services we are able to provide elsewhere over the duration of this event.

I have planned for this level of commitment due to how high I rate the risks to the community. While it will be stated these events provide an economic benefit to the community, the risks to road users and likelihood of a serious injury or fatal collision are always in the front of my mind. There is also little public transport available other than the use of cars.

### **Conclusion**

I am not against music events in principle, but they need to be planned for in a professional manner that takes into account appropriate risk mitigation strategies to ensure the safety of persons attending and reduction of risk to the local communities. An event in an isolated farming location such as Fernihurst, 230 km north of Melbourne in my opinion creates too many risks that are unable to be effectively mitigated, in particular with deficiencies in planning as detailed in my objection letter.

Should a permit be granted and based on my experiences from 2016 where several conditions and planning details were not met despite regular assurances, I recommend the permit details specific conditions that must be adhered to one month prior to the event or proof of payment to ensure the condition will be met.

This should not be difficult to achieve with many tickets pre sold. It will also enable strong governance over the agreed approach to the conduct of the event with the opportunity to enforce the provisions of the permit.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Gardiner', written in a cursive style.

Paul Gardiner - Inspector  
Local Area Commander  
Goldfields Police Service Area  
(incorporating Central Goldfields, Loddon and Mt Alexander Shires)