**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – COUNCIL MEETING SUBMISSION**

**Council Meeting 25 March 2025**

Responses to the Administration’s Answers

Save the Kebab

**Q1 Ore Obelisk and Public Art Removal**  
*Were the three options for the Ore Obelisk — conservation, relocation, or decommissioning — presented to Council as promised in early 2022?*

**A1** A report for Council has not been prepared on this matter and the artwork has not been deaccessioned.

**R1** The answer is no. Despite a commitment in early 2022 to present options to Council, the Administration has not delivered a report. Best practice in public art management requires transparent governance, with key decisions—especially those involving high-value or culturally significant works—subject to Council oversight and advisory consultation. The decision to remove the artwork appears to have been made administratively in 2021, without the involvement of Council or relevant advisory groups.

**Q2 Ore Obelisk and Public Art Removal**  
*Were relevant stakeholders and the community consulted on the fate of the Ore Obelisk before its removal?*

**A2** The removal was based on public safety risks identified through engineering reports following a rock fall in 2020. Feedback from stakeholders will inform future decisions on the artwork.

**R2** The answer is partially yes. Consultation with the artist’s family did occur, but only prior to removal. The City’s correspondence indicates that the CEO authorised deinstallation, and that stakeholder feedback would be considered in future—not before removal. Best practice would have involved early consultation with key advisory groups (such as the Culture and Arts Advisory Group and Elders Advisory Group) before actioning removal, particularly given the cultural and historical significance of the piece.

**Q3 Ore Obelisk and Public Art Removal**  
*Was a significance assessment undertaken before its removal?*

**A3** The artwork’s significance was never in question and it remains accessioned in the City’s collection. Removal was for safety reasons.

**R3** The answer is no. While the City states the artwork’s significance “was never in question,” this does not equate to conducting a formal significance assessment as recommended under national best practice guidelines (e.g., *Significance 2.0* by Collections Council of Australia). A formal assessment could have helped weigh significance against the risk and inform options such as conservation or sympathetic relocation.

**Q4 Ore Obelisk and Public Art Removal**  
*Was a conservation plan developed?*

**A4** No plan was created at time of commissioning (1971), but maintenance and inspections have been conducted since.

**R4** The answer is no. Although engineering reports informed reactive maintenance, the absence of a conservation management plan is a gap in long-term collection care. Such a plan is standard best practice for artworks of significance and would have guided decisions more holistically, balancing safety, integrity, and future potential reuse or restoration.

**Q5 Ore Obelisk and Public Art Removal**  
*What is the City’s current plan and timeline for the artwork, which has been in storage for four years?*

**A5** Options are being developed, informed by engineering assessments.

**R5** The answer is vague. After four years in storage, and with prior assessments already completed, it is concerning that no timeline or defined plan has been shared publicly. Best practice involves clear timeframes, public updates, and transparent governance. The current ambiguity raises questions about the City’s commitment to resolution.

**Q6 Boonji Spaceman Installation**  
*Why was the Boonji Spaceman acquisition approved despite it being a mass-produced artwork, inconsistent with Public Art Policy CP4.8?*

**A6** The artwork aligns with Policy CP4.8 Principle 3(f), showcasing international art and relating to the "City of Light" identity.

**R6** The answer does not address the fundamental concern: the Boonji Spaceman is a mass-produced artwork and, as such, does not comply with multiple criteria and principles within the City of Perth's own Public Art Policy CP4.8. The Administration's decision to proceed with this acquisition reflects a deliberate breach of the following policy criteria and principles:

**Policy Criteria and Principles Breached:**

* **3(h):** *Respond to the unique characteristics, needs and opportunities within each of the six distinct neighbourhoods in the Perth local government area.*
  + The artwork has no site-specific relationship to Stirling Gardens or the broader Perth context. Its relevance is forced via a tenuous link to the "City of Light" narrative, which **does not adequately address this policy requirement.**
* **5:** *Management and delivery of public art is guided and assisted by the expert advice of professionals who are members of the following panels/groups: a. Culture and Arts Advisory Group, b. Elders Advisory Group.*
  + There is **no evidence** that these expert panels were engaged meaningfully prior to the acquisition. This excludes community and cultural expertise and disregards the governance framework set out by the City. **This criterion is explicitly failed.**
* **8:** *The City encourages the integration of meaningful public art within private development and recommends commissioning in alignment with industry best-practice.*
  + Acquiring a non-original, mass-produced artwork rather than commissioning a site-responsive piece fails to meet best-practice commissioning models outlined in both national (VAPAA, NAVA) and international public art frameworks. **This criterion is explicitly failed.**
* **12:** *The lifespan and the City’s commitment to the maintenance of any work of public art will be established at the point of acquisition or commission by written agreement.*
  + There is no publicly available documentation confirming a defined lifespan or long-term site strategy, and the 12-month temporary installation suggests a lack of pre-planning. No report was undertaken to assess the lifespan, durability, or ongoing maintenance requirements of the work. **This criterion is explicitly failed.**
* **13(d):** *Compliance with all relevant codes and regulations applicable to works in the public realm and the site and intended use of the work.*
  + The work was placed in Stirling Gardens, a heritage-listed site. While a Heritage Impact Assessment was prepared, public documentation confirming full compliance is lacking, particularly in regard to consultation with Elders and Whadjuk representatives.
* **13(e):** *Artistic excellence, as befits work displayed in a capital city.*
  + The work was placed in Stirling Gardens, a heritage-listed and culturally significant site. While a Heritage Impact Assessment was prepared and statutory referral to the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and the Heritage Council occurred, public documentation confirming full compliance with broader ethical and cultural standards—particularly those outlined in the NAVA Code of Practice—is lacking.
  + The NAVA Code of Practice for Public Art explicitly requires consultation with Traditional Owners and Elders when placing artworks in culturally significant spaces. Stirling Gardens lies on Whadjuk Noongar Country, and there is no evidence that meaningful engagement with the Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation or City of Perth’s Elders Advisory Group was undertaken prior to site selection or installation.
  + Furthermore, NAVA calls for artworks to be site-responsive and contextually appropriate, a standard that a mass-produced commercial sculpture like Boonji Spaceman fails to meet.
  + Therefore, while heritage compliance may have been met under statutory planning requirements, the acquisition does not comply with the broader professional and ethical standards expected under best practice public art governance, as outlined by NAVA.
  + **This criterion is explicitly failed.**
* **13(f):** *Quality fabrication, physical integrity and durability appropriate to the work’s intended lifespan to minimize maintenance or conservation requirements.*
  + The work’s suitability for long-term public display—particularly in Perth’s outdoor climate—has not been substantiated.
  + There is no publicly available documentation confirming a defined lifespan, durability assessment, or a maintenance strategy aligned with the City’s public art maintenance program.
  + The decision to install the work on a temporary 12-month basis, with no confirmed permanent site, further indicates a lack of planning or due diligence regarding material integrity and conservation needs.
  + No engineering, fabrication, or conservation report has been provided that evaluates the work’s structural performance, material resilience, or adaptation to local environmental conditions.
  + Given these omissions, this criterion is explicitly failed, undermining the City’s obligations to ensure cost-effective stewardship and responsible public art acquisition.
  + **This criterion is explicitly failed.**
* **13(h):** *Relevance and appropriateness to site, the City of Perth and its community of residents, businesses and visitors.*
  + The artwork does not reflect the stories, identity, cultural character, or social history of Stirling Gardens, nor does it align with the distinctiveness of the surrounding Cathedral Square precinct.
  + The City has claimed relevance via a connection to the 1962 John Glenn orbital flight and Perth's “City of Light” identity. However, this justification is historically inaccurate and misleading: Council House, which the City cites as the symbolic anchor for this connection, was not completed until 1963, and therefore played no role in the original lighting event of 1962.
  + The placement of Boonji Spaceman appears to be driven by logistical convenience or promotional opportunity rather than authentic cultural or site relevance.
  + As such, this criterion is clearly not met, and the installation conflicts with both the intent and the letter of CP4.8's requirement for contextual alignment with place, history, and community.
  + **This criterion is explicitly failed.**
* **13(i):** *Sustainable outcomes, considering immediate and future costs, including costs associated with any impacts on the site or its management.*
  + Installing a large-scale, international sculpture on a temporary 12-month basis, with no confirmed permanent site, results in significant sustainability concerns, both financial and environmental.
  + The City has not publicly disclosed:
    - A second confirmed location for the artwork after its temporary placement in Stirling Gardens.
    - The additional costs associated with deinstallation, transport, storage, or potential reinstallation elsewhere.
  + These omissions demonstrate a lack of forward planning, contrary to policy expectations that artworks be acquired with consideration for long-term stewardship and lifecycle impact.
  + The import and relocation of a work of this scale also raises environmental concerns, including emissions associated with international freight, crating, and multiple handling events, none of which have been addressed in public documentation.
  + Without a site plan, sustainability analysis, or transparent costings, this acquisition fails to meet the requirements of Policy 13(i) and exposes the City to reputational and operational risk.
  + **This criterion is explicitly failed.**
* **13(j):** *Authentic and original works of ethical provenance.*
  + This work is neither authentic (in the sense of being unique to Perth) nor original (as it exists in multiple global locations).
  + The Boonji Spaceman series by artist Brendan Murphy encompasses both physical sculptures and digital assets (NFTs), raising questions about the authenticity and originality of the work proposed for installation in Perth.​
  + Physical Sculptures: Murphy has installed several large-scale Boonji Spaceman sculptures globally:​
    - Hodges Bay Resort & Spa, Antigua
    - Minute Maid Park, Houston, USA
    - Oslo, Norway
    - London, United Kingdom
  + Digital Assets (NFTs): In October 2021, Murphy launched the Boonji Project, a collection of 11,111 unique digital Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) on the Ethereum blockchain. The project achieved over $15.5 million in primary sales. ​
  + The NFTs feature avatars inspired by Murphy's Boonji Spaceman series, incorporating elements from his physical artworks.
  + Given the multiple existing installations and the extensive NFT series, the Boonji Spaceman intended for Perth is neither unique nor original to the city.
  + **This criterion is explicitly failed.**

**Q7 Boonji Spaceman Installation**  
*Why did the cost increase from $50,000 to $171,000?*

**A7** Council endorsed a $250,000 budget in June 2024 to cover acquisition, installation, and transport.

**R7** While the City acknowledges the budget increased to $250,000, it provides no explanation for the original $50,000 quote or how costs tripled. This raises serious concerns about the transparency and rigour of the procurement process.

To maintain public trust, the City must provide:

* A clear breakdown of costs, including artist fees, international shipping, insurance, customs, storage, installation, and site preparation.
* An explanation for the discrepancy between the initial and final figures.
* Disclosure of contractual arrangements — was this a direct acquisition, was an open tender conducted, or was a procurement exemption granted?
* Clarification on whether the artist or commercial galleries financially benefited from this transaction.

Without this detail, the City's handling of the Boonji Spaceman acquisition appears financially reckless and non-compliant with best practice, especially when compared to the treatment of existing local artworks.

**Q8 Boonji Spaceman Installation**  
*Why is the City funding the artist’s travel, accommodation, and event linked to a private exhibition?*

**A8** The City is not funding any travel, accommodation or exhibition-related events.

**R8** This answer is misleading and factually inaccurate.

According to the City’s own documentation (OCM 25 June 2024), the $171,580 quote received from Gullotti Galleries includes:

* Artist’s engineer costs, specifically covering *“sculpture preparation and travel and accommodation”*;
* An unveiling event, described as an *“official handover to the City of Perth, requested by the artist”*;
* Timing that aligns explicitly with a commercial exhibition at Gullotti Galleries.

This undermines the City’s assertion that no public money is funding travel, accommodation, or an event linked to the artist’s private exhibition. In reality, ratepayer funds are directly subsidising a commercial gallery's launch strategy, while the City characterises the sculpture as a donation.

This lack of transparency and the misleading nature of the public response indicate a deliberate effort to obscure the true financial relationship — a clear breach of public accountability and good governance. The City must release the full cost breakdown and contractual terms immediately.

**Q9 Boonji Spaceman Installation**  
*Was the installation timed to coincide with Brendan Murphy’s private exhibition?*

**A9** Installation was based on freight and scheduling logistics.

**R9** This response is disingenuous and omits critical context.

Council documents from the 25 June 2024 meeting clearly state that Gullotti Galleries requested the sculpture be installed by August 2024 to coincide with an exhibition of Brendan Murphy’s work in Cottesloe. This timeline was not incidental, but a condition explicitly tied to the “gift” of the sculpture.

The installation was timed to enhance the visibility and prestige of a commercial exhibition, effectively using public infrastructure and ratepayer funds to bolster the private promotion of the artist and his gallery.

To suggest that logistics alone dictated the timing is misleading. It masks the commercial interests embedded in the transaction, and obscures the true nature of the City’s partnership with Gullotti Galleries.

At minimum, this should have triggered a conflict-of-interest review and external probity oversight — neither of which appears to have occurred.

**Q10 Boonji Spaceman Installation**  
*What is the rationale for placing it at Stirling Gardens, and how does it align with policy and the Gardens’ Heritage Management Plan?*

**A10** A Heritage Impact Assessment deemed the temporary installation low-impact.

**R10** The City’s response avoids the core question: Why Stirling Gardens? What makes this site appropriate for a seven-metre, mass-produced sculpture with no cultural, historical, or environmental relationship to it?

Stirling Gardens is a heritage-listed, botanically significant, and culturally sensitive site on Whadjuk Noongar land. The Boonji Spaceman — a futuristic astronaut sculpture — bears no thematic or historical connection to the gardens, its surroundings, or the community it serves. This directly contradicts CP4.8’s requirement that public art be responsive to site context and contribute meaningfully to place.

While the City references a Heritage Impact Assessment, this pertains only to structural and spatial impact, not cultural appropriateness or policy alignment. The absence of consultation with the Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation or Elders Advisory Group is a serious omission.

The rationale appears driven not by public interest or cultural relevance, but by convenience and proximity to Council House to reinforce former Lord Mayor Basil Zempilas’s “City of Light” branding agenda. This decision reflects personal political optics rather than sound public art governance or community-led placemaking.

**Q11 Boonji Spaceman Installation**  
*Was the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) consulted, and what was their feedback?*

**A11** Yes. The Heritage Council supported the temporary installation, and DPLH confirmed it meets the definition of public work.

**R11** The answer is adequate. Consultation with DPLH and the Heritage Council aligns with statutory obligations. However, while the City asserts that the Heritage Council supported the temporary installation, the transparency of this approval process is questionable. Public records do not clearly indicate whether the Heritage Council's decision was unanimous or divided, leaving the extent of their endorsement uncertain.

Additionally, the lack of broader community consultation, particularly with local Indigenous groups and cultural stakeholders, further undermines the legitimacy and cultural sensitivity of the installation.

The City's failure to disclose detailed deliberations and community engagement efforts reflects a pattern of opacity in the Boonji Spaceman project.​

**Q12 Boonji Spaceman Installation**  
*Why pursue a temporary site knowing relocation will incur costs?*

**A12** The 12-month Stirling Gardens display connects to the “City of Light” theme; a long-term location (e.g. Elizabeth Quay) is being investigated.

**R12** The City has committed up to $250,000 in ratepayer funds to install an oversized, mass-produced sculpture in a temporary location — without identifying a permanent site or publishing relocation cost estimates.

This reflects irresponsible planning and poor asset management.

Relocation will incur additional freight, possible storage, site preparation, and installation costs — all publicly funded but currently unbudgeted and undisclosed. This undermines CP4.8 Policy 13(i), which requires sustainable outcomes and lifecycle cost consideration at the time of acquisition.

The rationale for Stirling Gardens — its proximity to Council House and alignment with the “City of Light” branding — further highlights that this was a political decision, not a strategic cultural one. The City is using a prominent heritage site for political optics, while offering no clear plan for the sculpture’s long-term stewardship.

The rationale for using Stirling Gardens seems to point to a politically motivated decision aligning with the with the former Lord Mayor’s branding agenda.

This approach is fiscally reckless, lacks transparency, and ignores public art policy commitments to sustainability, authenticity, and site relevance.

**Q13 Boonji Spaceman Installation**  
*What is the rationale for placing it at Elizabeth Quay, and how does it respond to site context?*

**A13** Investigations are at early stages. Site context and engagement will be considered.

**R13** The City’s response is vague and speculative — revealing that no site at Elizabeth Quay has been confirmed.

Placing Boonji Spaceman at Elizabeth Quay would repeat the same core issue as Stirling Gardens: a mass-produced artwork parachuted into a civic location with no meaningful relationship to place, culture, or community identity. This continues a pattern of ignoring CP4.8’s requirement for public art to respond to local site context and be site-specific.

There is also no evidence that the City has:

* Assessed technical suitability of any proposed site at EQ;
* Considered heritage, spatial, or environmental constraints;
* Conducted any public consultation or cultural advisory engagement;
* Published a budget or schedule for the relocation, installation, or ongoing maintenance at EQ.

At this point, the reference to Elizabeth Quay appears to be a  rhetorical placeholder to mask the absence of forward planning. It reflects a reactive, rather than strategic, approach to public asset management, which is fiscally reckless, lacks transparency, and ignores public art policy commitments to sustainability, authenticity, and site relevance.

**Q14 Decommissioning of Other Public Artworks**  
*Was a structural report completed before removing Lorenna Grant’s Arch? Can findings be made public?*

**A14** Yes, a 2023 report found severe corrosion and impracticality of in situ repair.

**R14** While the City confirms that a structural report was completed, it has not been made public, nor have any of its findings been released in full.

This lack of transparency contradicts the City’s obligations under best practice public collection governance, especially when decommissioning a major artwork by a well-respected Western Australian artist.

The City has repeatedly failed to:

* Publish the full structural report or an accessible public summary;
* Document attempts to consult with the artist or seek expert conservation advice before removal;
* Engage the Culture and Arts Advisory Group or independent curatorial professionals in any formal oversight of the process.

Without access to the report, the public has no way of evaluating the legitimacy or urgency of the decommissioning decision. Given the City’s demonstrated inconsistency in how it applies conservation standards — aggressively funding overseas works while removing locally significant pieces — this omission raises serious questions about governance, equity, and procedural fairness in public art management.

The City should release the report immediately.

**Q15 Decommissioning of Other Public Artworks**  
*Why was Arch removed instead of being repaired, given a <$50,000 quote?*

**A15** The initial quote only covered panel replacement; further assessment found severe corrosion, increasing costs to $193,000.

**R15** This response is riddled with unsubstantiated claims and missing documentation.

The City’s justification hinges on a revised quote of $193,000 and a structural report stating the work couldn’t be completed in situ — but neither the report nor the itemised quote has been made public, preventing any scrutiny of these figures. Given that an initial repair estimate was under $50,000, the sudden escalation raises red flags, especially in light of the City’s proven lack of transparency in other public art matters.

This selective and opaque process strongly suggests that the City made a pre-determined decision to remove the work, then built a paper trail to support it — a pattern disturbingly consistent with its handling of other removals.

In the absence of open reports and public consultation, the claim that in situ repair was impractical is, at best, unverified— and at worst, a strategic justification for cultural erasure.

**Q16 Decommissioning of Other Public Artworks**  
*What are the plans for 30 sculptures by Greg James and Drago Dadich removed from Russell Square?*

**A16** The works have been cleaned, conserved, stored, and may be reinstalled as part of Russell Square’s revitalisation.

**R16** This response provides the bare minimum and reflects a reactive, not strategic approach to public art stewardship.

The 30 sculptures by renowned WA artists Greg James and Drago Dadich — created as part of a major civic commission — were quietly removed under the guise of safety concerns related to a water feature. While the works have been cleaned and packed, no timeline, community consultation, or formal reintegration plan has been released.

This suggests the sculptures are in limbo, and risks them being forgotten or sidelined permanently. Storing public artworks indefinitely, especially those with deep local significance, contradicts the City’s public art policy commitment to visibility, access, and cultural storytelling.

**Q17 Decommissioning of Other Public Artworks**  
*What is the plan for the State Images Community Art mosaics at Barrack Square?*

**A17** These artworks are managed by DevelopmentWA.

**R17** The answer is administratively correct. This is a bureaucratic deflection, not a responsible answer.

**Q18 Decommissioning of Other Public Artworks**  
*What is the status and repair timeline for Water Labyrinth by Jeppe Hein?*

**A18** Extensive works are required to bring the system to current health standards. Work is on hold pending the Carillon City redevelopment.

**R18**  This response confirms what many suspected: one of Perth’s most beloved and internationally recognised public artworks remains indefinitely out of service, with no budget, no timeline, and no public engagement.

The Water Labyrinth by Jeppe Hein is not just infrastructure — it is a major experiential artwork, a civic landmark, and one of the few interactive public artworks in the City that engages children, families, and tourists alike.

Yet the City offers:

* No forecast for recommissioning;
* No interim conservation plan for the dormant installation;
* No communication with the artist or public about its future.

This is a dereliction of duty to both the artist and the community.

The City must provide a clear schedule, funding pathway, and engagement strategy to recommission the Water Labyrinth.

**Q19 Decommissioning of Other Public Artworks**  
*What is the current plan for Grow Your Own by James Angus?*

**A19** It was repainted in 2022 and is in excellent condition. Bird mitigation strategies are under review.

**R19** The City’s response focuses solely on maintenance — but fails to address or clarify the future of the work in light of former Lord Mayor Basil Zempilas’s public comments about relocating it.

In an interview on 6PR in October 2021, Zempilas said:

*“I think it looks like an echocardiogram. Maybe it would be better suited outside Royal Perth Hospital.”*

This comment, made while he was still in office, raised legitimate concerns that the City may have been considering the removal or relocation of this major civic artwork — a high-profile, million-dollar commission by an acclaimed Australian sculptor.

To date, the City has provided:

* No public statement confirming or denying any plans to relocate the work;
* No engagement with the artist or community about the long-term future of the sculpture;
* No reference to the artwork’s cultural, artistic, or civic value in its response.

Given the former Lord Mayor Basil Zempilas’s track record of politicising public art — as seen with Boonji Spaceman — this silence is deeply concerning. If there is any intention to move Grow Your Own, it must be disclosed, justified through policy, and subject to community and curatorial review.

**Q20 Policy and Strategy Alignment**  
*Why is the City not operating in line with its own Public Art Strategy, particularly in terms of conservation, transparency, and commissioning of new works?*

**A20** The City manages its Cultural Collections in line with Council Policies 4.7 Cultural Collections, 4.8 Public Art and 4.9 Commemorative Works. The acquisition of The Boonji Spaceman was unanimously endorsed by Council through a Notice of Motion at the 25 June 2025 Ordinary Council Meeting. It is not a new commission.

**R20** This response is both evasive and inadequate. It refers to policies on paper, but fails to demonstrate any substantive alignment with the actual intent or principles of the Public Art Strategy or Policy CP4.8.

Let’s be clear:

* The Public Art Strategy prioritises site-responsive, original, and community-engaged works. None of these principles have been upheld in the case of Boonji Spaceman.
* The Strategy commits to transparency and best-practice collection management. Yet the City has withheld structural reports, procurement details, and planning timelines across multiple projects.
* The claim that Boonji Spaceman is not a ‘new commission’ is a technical deflection. Its acquisition still demands scrutiny under the Strategy’s criteria for relevance, sustainability, and cultural value — which it fails.

Furthermore, under the leadership of the former Lord Mayor Basil Zempilas, the City’s public art direction shifted toward works that served branding agendas, rather than community-driven cultural development. This marks a departure from the Public Art Strategy’s foundation: to support local artistic excellence, cultural storytelling, and meaningful civic engagement.

The Strategy is being selectively referenced and systemically ignored.

**Q21 Policy and Strategy Alignment**  
*Was funding from the former Public Art Reserve used for Boonji Spaceman?*

**A21** No.

**R21** While technically accurate, this answer is highly misleading. It ignores the critical fact that the City abolished its Public Art Reserve just weeks before allocating up to $250,000 from the Municipal Surplus to fund the Boonji Spaceman installation.

Documents show that:

* In July 2024, the City’s budget formally reabsorbed the Public Art Reserve ($260,000), the Art Acquisition Reserve ($365,000), and the Bonus Plot Ratio Reserve (~$700,000) into general surplus;
* This decision effectively zeroed out all ring-fenced arts funds, erasing longstanding accountability structures built to protect cultural investment;
* A motion passed in June 2024 paved the way for these reallocated funds to be used to cover the Boonji Spaceman's costs.

In short, while no money was *technically* transferred from the Reserve, the only reason the surplus had capacity to fund Boonji is because the City deliberately collapsed the Public Art Reserve — abandoning best-practice public finance management in the process.

This was not just a policy decision — it was a strategic dismantling of cultural funding safeguards, undertaken just in time to bankroll a politically driven and highly contested artwork acquisition. To claim “no Reserve funds were used” is to evade responsibility while exploiting public trust.

**Q22 Policy and Strategy Alignment**  
*How many new artworks has the City commissioned since 2015?*

**A22** 11 sculptural works and ~30 murals.

**R22** While the figures may be factually correct, they lack critical context — particularly regarding the City’s shifting investment priorities, stagnation in major commissioning, and under-support for local artists.

* Most of the City’s commissioning activity in recent years has been limited to small-scale murals or temporary projects. The City has not delivered a major permanent civic commission of cultural significance for years.
* The permanent sculptural commissions mentioned are not itemised or contextualised. How many of the 11 were publicly visible, artist-led, or site-specific? How many resulted from open calls or transparent commissioning processes?
* During the same period, the City has:
  + Removed or decommissioned numerous major works;
  + Failed to deliver on strategic planning commitments, including a Public Art Master Plan;
  + And diverted substantial resources toward the acquisition of a mass-produced, non-local sculpture with no commissioning process (Boonji Spaceman).

So while the number may sound reasonable at face value, it masks a broader truth: the City has scaled back its commitment to meaningful, place-based public art commissioning, and has failed to uphold the intentions of its own Public Art Strategy.

A simple tally of artworks is not a performance indicator. What matters is quality, transparency, artist development, and community relevance — all areas where the City’s track record is increasingly in question.

**Q23 Policy and Strategy Alignment**  
*Why hasn’t a Public Art Master Plan been developed as promised?*

**A23** The Strategy is under review, and a Master Plan is being considered.

**R23** The answer confirms delay without explanation. Best practice would involve clear timelines for deliverables in strategic plans, and regular public updates. A 10-year delay in key strategy deliverables reflects poor follow-through.

The absence of a Master Plan has had direct consequences:

* No clear framework for integrating public art into city-shaping projects;
* No transparent mechanism for prioritising conservation, deaccessioning, or new commissions;
* No long-term guidance for curatorial strategy, funding allocation, or site-specific planning.

Instead, what we’ve seen is:

* Ad hoc decision-making;
* Politically driven acquisitions like Boonji Spaceman;
* The quiet removal or neglect of existing works, with no guiding cultural rationale.

The City has had years — and multiple budget cycles — to deliver this plan. The fact that it is only “being considered” now, in response to public scrutiny, signals a lack of genuine commitment to policy-led cultural planning.

If the Strategy is under review, the community deserves:

* A clear timeline for delivery of the revised Strategy and Master Plan;
* Open engagement with artists, curators, and First Nations stakeholders;
* And a public explanation of why this commitment was not honoured for over a decade.

Anything less represents a failure of governance, transparency, and cultural leadership.

**Q24 Policy and Strategy Alignment**  
*Why was the Public Art Advisory Panel disbanded, and why aren’t advisory groups consulted on major decisions?*

**A24** The Cultural Advisory Subcommittee discussed the Obelisk in 2020. Engagement continues via the Culture and Arts Advisory Group.

**R24** This answer is both inadequate and misleading.

The City’s own records show that major public art decisions — including the removal of the Ore Obelisk, the acquisition of Boonji Spaceman, and the decommissioning of significant works like Arch — were made without documented input from the Culture and Arts Advisory Group or the Elders Advisory Group.

* The Public Art Advisory Panel, a specialised body designed to ensure curatorial integrity, policy compliance, and transparency, was disbanded without public explanation.
* The Culture and Arts Advisory Group, while valuable, is not a substitute for a dedicated public art panel with expertise in public art commissioning, collection care, and cultural strategy.
* There is no published evidence that either advisory group was consulted on the Boonji acquisition — despite the City spending up to $250,000 on installation, freight, and a gallery-aligned unveiling.
* Similarly, the Elders Advisory Group — which should be consulted on all major works on Whadjuk Noongar land — appears to have been entirely bypassed in decisions affecting culturally sensitive sites like Stirling Gardens.

The City’s claim of “ongoing engagement” is therefore unsubstantiated and fails to meet the standards of informed, documented, and transparent cultural governance.

This is not a procedural oversight — it is a systemic sidelining of expert and cultural advice, and it has resulted in irreversible decisions that affect the City’s cultural landscape, heritage, and public trust.

If the City is serious about restoring integrity to its public art program, it must:

* Reinstate a dedicated Public Art Advisory Panel;
* Ensure all major decisions are subject to documented consultation;

And publicly disclose minutes, advice, and outcomes from its advisory groups moving forward.