Committee for Ballarat is a visionary membership body that has a proud history of championing social and economic growth in our region.

Our membership comprises companies and organisations from across the region including local government, manufacturing, health, education, construction, professional services and tourism / hospitality sectors.

The thing that best defines the work of the Committee is that we work with our members (over 100 local and regional businesses and organisations) as well as local, state and federal governments to look beyond the horizon to achieve economic prosperity and sustainability for this region that improves the quality of life for all in our community.

Our role is to stimulate debate, envision innovative solutions and advocate essential long-term planning and commitment by all levels of government. We have an equally critical role to play in making sure those responsible for outcomes are supported and held accountable for their actions.

Committee for Ballarat has allowed the Ballarat Saleyard Relocation Project to go through its normal deliberations. Where the community has had the chance to make submissions to an independent panel established by council and where many of the concerns and sensitivities raised by many residents have been tabled and heard.

Whilst respectful of these concerns, it is important that an alternate position or view is presented and one that considers the significant long term benefits to Ballarat and the greater region.

Firstly, Committee applauds council on the decision to seek an independent assessment and conduct this community consultation process. Given the sensitivities for council over a number of years, the decision to send this project to an independent panel for advice to support determination was a wise one and correct one.

The relocation of the Ballarat Saleyards to Miners Rest is a decision not to be taken lightly by council but it is one that must be considered in the best interests of Ballarat and the broader regional community. It is a decision that will require strong visionary leadership and a decision that could set in motion a “domino effect” for a number of significant projects across the city.

The social and economic benefits to be derived from the establishment of a major regional saleyard facility for Western Victoria, the potential relocation of the Ballarat Showgrounds to the current saleyard site and South West corner of Victoria Park, as well as opening up commercial development opportunities in Latrobe Street, are well stated and documented. This includes $180m of direct economic output and benefit each year from the agriculture sector generated from the proposed Ballarat saleyard activity.

As Ballarat continues to grow, Latrobe Street and its linkages to the planned 2nd stage of the Western Link Road will become an important feeder for the planned 14,000 residences being established in the Ballarat West Growth Zone over the next 20-30 years. Concerns have been raised by local residents as to the proximity of housing for the proposed saleyards. However, it should be noted that the relocation of the current facility will address environmental concerns and inadequate residential buffers that exist at the Delacombe site, which will only be exacerbated by future residential growth and continued use.
The Ballarat Saleyard relocation is a project that cannot be looked at in isolation. It must be considered in the context of the 30 year Ballarat Planning Strategy and the recently published 2015-19 Ballarat Economic strategy developed by this council in consultation with key stakeholders, including the Committee for Ballarat.

Council has sought independent assessment and advice on the issues and concerns raised by local residents in regards to the relocation of the saleyards to Miners Rest. The community has had opportunity to provide input and council has been at arms-length to that process.

The findings and recommendations of the independent report should give the broader community confidence that people with appropriate skills and expertise in this area has appropriately considered the proposal. I remind council that this independent panel found:

- no credible reasons why this project should not proceed
- a strong case exists to modernize the saleyards that serves this region
- a strong case to keep the modernised yards in, or near, Ballarat
- the relevant environmental standards can be addressed, subject to EPA approvals
- traffic created won’t be unreasonable
- that whilst there is anxiety felt by some community members, there are no discernible social impacts that would flow from the proposal apart from some sections of the community simply not wanting the proposal to go ahead.

Today’s editorial in the Courier makes reference to the saleyard project and whilst quoting Committee for Ballarat’s former Chair, Judy Verlin AM, and incoming Chair, Janet Dore, the editorial calls for long-term strategic thinking that is capable of listening to differing positions on an issue, but also making clear and decisive conclusions from the assembled information.

The article goes on to state that as part of this consultation process several things should be made clear and I quote the editorial …

- “for the sake of Ballarat, things cannot simply stay as they are.
- the Delacombe site has a use-by-date where commercial and animal welfare issues will only continue to deteriorate over time.
- expansion and improvement of the existing site goes counter to the movement made by nearly every saleyard in Victoria away from inner city and suburban locations
- the development of a genuinely regional facility for the long-term would almost by default be hamstrung by its location as Ballarat grows around it”

Many stock agents have taken a position through this consultation process to support the relocation to Miner Rest and fears that the regional saleyards will be built in another municipality and lost to Ballarat are real. This will adversely impact on business and jobs within our growing Ballarat community.

Therefore, Committee’s position is that unless something significantly different comes up, or totally new information is presented to council through this hearing, then our expectation is that council will take the findings and recommendations of the independent panel, endorse them and see the project through to implementation.

John Kilgour

CEO - Committee for Ballarat