



THE LORD MAYOR OF SYDNEY CLOVER MOORE

City of Sydney Council to consider \$47.5 million support for community, business and creative sectors

30 March, 2019

The City of Sydney Council will tonight consider a plan to significantly expand the City's relief to businesses and community impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Lord Mayor said the \$47.5 million package significantly expands on measures announced last week, bringing the City's relief for businesses, cultural and creative industries and the community support sector to \$72.5 million.

"Our community faces a very serious public health crisis, and the City of Sydney continues to work with NSW Health to ensure we respond urgently and effectively, including through implementing physical distancing measures," the Lord Mayor said.

"It's important that we practise physical distancing, but sadly, the measures that save lives also hurt the livelihoods of many in our community. Those who work in our creative, arts and entertainment industries are facing months of cancelled events, lost income and uncertainty.

"We know the City of Sydney is the heart of the state's cultural sector, and we know that sector is really hurting. Facilities are closing, and opportunities to work are rapidly diminishing. This has been a terrific shock to everyone who works in this space – from artists, actors and musicians to producers, technicians and back stage staff.

"What we're trying to do is support them through this period of survival, to continue creative development and make sure they're ready for the renaissance when we're able to move past the coronavirus.

"We stand together with those who bring us so much inspiration, and who help us reflect on and understand the world we live in – especially during this crisis."

The package includes three new funding initiatives to support cultural and creative organisations:

- **The Cultural Sector Resilience Grant Program**, valued at \$2.25 million, will provide immediate financial support to the not-for-profit and sole traders who are often reliant on individual grant rounds and project based funds to maintain their minimal staff and to pay their artists. Institutions can apply for funds, including to curate creative development programs with groups of artists.
- **The Sector-Led Crisis Support Fund**, valued at \$250,000, will provide direct donations to existing, locally operated, online platforms Support Act NSW, the Artists Benevolent Fund and the Actors Benevolent Fund, who are raising funds to provide emergency relief and mental health support to local cultural workers in crisis.
- **The Creative Fellowships Fund**, valued at \$1 million, will support artists to engage in creative development of works and initiatives driven by the cultural sector, and to purchase materials and equipment. The works can be presented during or after the crisis has passed.

The Lord Mayor said the package also includes measures to facilitate business continuity through the crisis.

"In this rapidly changing context, many businesses are struggling to trade according to the business model that, until two weeks ago, had proven successful. This relates particularly to businesses impacted by physical distancing measures, such as gyms, retail, cafes, restaurants and bars," the Lord Mayor said.

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"We are providing financial assistance to help businesses adapt and reinvent themselves by going online or shifting their model to abide by new health and safety restrictions. We will also provide financial support to encourage those who can undertake improvements to their premises or operating systems while customer interaction isn't possible."

The new programs include:

- **The Small Business Grants Program**, valued at \$2 million, will support businesses with innovation and adaptation grants to modify their operating model to produce income and supply products or services to address a current or emerging demand in the market, develop online and e-commerce capabilities, undertake training and professional development and invest in capital works.
- **The Small Business Concierge Service** will see staff offer advice to small businesses on support available from the City and direct them to appropriate State and Federal support packages, assisting them to navigate this difficult time.

[Full contents of the package are available on the City's website.](#)

Other measures in the package include:

- Bringing forward the delivery of **\$23 million in future years' capital works** projects to stimulate employment and City upgrades.
- **Lowering the developer contributions** for small works under the draft central city contributions plan so small businesses aren't impacted.
- Increasing the City's **Quick Response Grants** and **Community Support Grants** by \$2 million.
- **Providing additional rental support** worth \$1 million for the City's Accommodation Grant Program tenants, live-work artists and childcare tenants, by waiving all rent for the next six months.
- **Donating \$1 million to Oz Harvest** to maintain staffing levels and adapt their service model to meet food security needs of vulnerable communities through the crisis.
- **Free access to City parking stations** for essential service workers like police, doctors and nurses.

The Lord Mayor said the crisis would have a significant financial impact on the City of Sydney, but that years of sound financial management put the organisation in a strong position to be able to help the community through this period.

"The City of Sydney will experience a significant financial impact from this crisis. There will be additional operational costs as the City increases cleansing and maintenance regimes, and major losses in revenue as our facilities and operations are impacted," the Lord Mayor said.

"Our strong financial management over the past 16 years provides a strong foundation to withstand a once in a generation shock of this nature, and provide support to our residents, businesses, creative and community sectors during this time of need.

"This is an unprecedented health emergency. We stand ready to support our residents, businesses, cultural and vulnerable communities through this challenging time."

The package will be considered and voted on at an extraordinary meeting of Council this evening. The meeting will be held entirely online for the first time in the City's history.

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