

**ITEM 3.1 SUPPORT FOR THE LGBTI COMMUNITY****FILE NO: S051491****MINUTE BY THE LORD MAYOR**To Council:

On Monday 13 June 2016, many of us awoke to the news reports of an horrific mass shooting in an Orlando, Florida Nightclub. Updates to this shocking news revealed that the nightclub, Pulse, had long been a safe haven for the LGBTI community.

Many of Pulse's patrons were seriously injured and 49 people lost their lives. Many were young gay men. While some attempted to ignore the fact that this was an attack on the LGBTI community, I have not. This was an act motivated by extreme anti-gay prejudice, as well as a shocking case of terrorism.

I asked for the Rainbow Flag flown over the Town Hall, initially at half mast, and for the Town Hall to be lit pink to show the City's solidarity with our LGBTI community and LGBTI people everywhere. The following day our staff arranged for condolence books to sign and over the past two weeks many people have left messages of sorrow and solidarity. These books were also available for people attending the recent Aurora Ball to sign.

I recently received a letter from Trevor Ashley, one of Sydney's leading performers, producers and directors, seeking the City's support to hold a benefit for "the victims of the shooting and their families, and as a gesture of love and solidarity from Sydney to Orlando." Mr Ashley's letter is attached to this Minute. This event is being held in conjunction with ACON.

All proceeds from the benefit will be donated to the Equality Florida Pulse Victims Fund, a fund established by Equality Florida, Florida's leading LGBTI civil rights organisation and will be managed by the Equality Florida Institute. Information about the management of these funds, including the Orlando Victims Fund Transparency Statement, is available on Equality Florida's website, at [www.eqfl.org/transparent](http://www.eqfl.org/transparent). The Equality Florida Institute is partnering with National Center for Victims of Crime to oversee the distribution of funds, which will be directed towards healthcare, counselling and support services.

Mr Ashley has a strong record in producing such events, including five annual World AIDS Day concerts for ACON. He will be assisted by a committee of experienced producers and has already secured the interest of several of Australia's leading stage and television performers. He has also obtained guarantees of free advertising, ticket and accommodation services. A similar event will be held in Melbourne on 9 July 2016 and has already sold out.

Mr Ashley proposes staging the Sydney event in the Town Hall on Monday 11 July 2016 and is expecting a similar response. I propose that the City support this event by providing the Town Hall as the concert's venue under the Venue Support Grants and Sponsorship Program, providing a grant of up to \$5,000 cash towards the production and associated in-house costs for this event, and providing marketing and publicity support.

The response of Australia's show business community mirrors the response overseas, with performers and entertainers taking part in numerous fundraising activities. This heartfelt response was evident within a few hours of the horrific events in Orlando at the annual Tony Awards Ceremony in New York.

Of all the words that have been spoken and written in the past fortnight about this horrific act, perhaps the simplest and most powerful words were those of Lin-Manuel Miranda: "Love cannot be killed or swept aside. Love is love, is love, is love, is love. Fill the world with music, love and pride."

I am proud that this Council has endorsed this simple sentiment several times by its unanimous support for marriage equality, most recently on 29 February 2016. Being prepared to stand for equality and human rights and stand with our LGBTI community is crucial in a world where anti-gay hatred and prejudice still exists and can provide the motivation for the most horrific acts against LGBTI people.

There is a serious risk that anti-gay hatred and prejudice will be given a public platform if the newly elected Australian Parliament decides to proceed with a costly and potentially divisive plebiscite.

We are already aware of hateful comments being made about LGBTI people and same-sex couples by people opposed to marriage equality. There have also been attempts to intimidate supporters of marriage equality in the corporate sector by threatening boycotts. It is encouraging that our corporate leaders have resisted this intimidation and we should support them in doing so.

Council has previously opposed holding a plebiscite, calling upon Parliament to legislate to amend the Marriage Act to enable same sex couples to marry and to ensure that same sex marriages solemnised overseas are recognised in Australia.

In the event that that the Commonwealth Government proceeds with a plebiscite, Council:

- unanimously requested that the legislation enabling the plebiscite sets out the amendments to the Marriage Act 1961 which would allow same-sex marriage, with these amendments automatically becoming law if supported by a majority formal vote; and
- agreed to work with organisations supporting marriage equality in promoting the case for same-sex marriage.

If a plebiscite on same-sex marriage is to proceed, it is highly possible it could be held before the end of the year. Even if Parliament instead decides to debate and vote on same-sex marriage, a strong community campaign in support of change will be essential.

Australian Marriage Equality (AME), the community based organisation which has campaigned for equal marriage rights for over 10 years, has requested office space and a temporary shopfront to support an effective campaign for a strong vote in support of marriage equality. These premises would be used to accommodate staff and volunteers and would be shared with other organisations also involved in the equality campaign. The shopfront will provide a visible presence for the campaign on Oxford Street and will be used to promote awareness, engage volunteers and other campaign tasks.

Physical office space will be critical to a successful campaign, given AME will be required to play a leading role in informing, engaging and educating the Australian community about marriage equality and coordinating the various organisations expected to be involved. A pop up shop on Oxford Street would enable AME to engage with the community, raise money and sign up volunteers.

The City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA) has provided the base for much of AME's campaign and many of its staff, volunteers, members and supporters live here. The Sydney LGA also has high number of same-sex couples and one of Australia's largest LGBTI communities.

The Chief Executive Officer has informed me that the City has suitable office space with existing fitout and furniture available on level 10, 307 Pitt Street, Sydney, with a monthly market rent of \$5,661.67, plus GST, and a shop front at 122 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, at a monthly rent of \$3,529.17, plus GST.

I propose that the Pitt Street office space be provided to Australian Marriage Equality for the period 15 July 2016 to 30 November 2016 with a 100 per cent Accommodation Grant of \$36,800, plus GST, and the Oxford Street shopfront be provided to Australian Marriage Equality for the period 1 August 2016 to 30 November 2016 with a 100 per cent Accommodation Grant of \$14,120, plus GST.

Australian Marriage Equality shall be responsible for any additional fit out of the office space and furnishing the premises at its own expense and for all outgoings.

I also recommend that the City's rainbow banners be flown in Oxford Street at every opportunity in support of the LGBTI community.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council stand for one minute's silence to honour the lives of the 49 people killed in the attack on the Pulse Nightclub, Orlando, Florida on Sunday 12 June, 2016;
- (B) Council request the Lord Mayor write to the Mayor of the City of Orlando to express Council's condolences in relation to the tragic events at the LGBTI nightclub, Pulse, on 12 June 2016 and express our support for the Orlando LGBTI community during this time of grief;
- (C) Council stand in solidarity with and support LGBTI people everywhere;
- (D) Council condemn anti-gay hatred and prejudice wherever and whenever it is expressed;
- (E) Council commend Trevor Ashley and ACON for organising "From Sydney With Love – A Concert for Orlando", with the proceeds of the concert being donated to Equality Florida Pulse Victims Fund, and in support of this event the City will:
  - (i) provide value-in-kind sponsorship of the event to ACON not exceeding \$20,000 (ex-GST), for venue hire fees for the Town Hall as the concert's venue;
  - (ii) provide a cash grant of up to \$5,000 (ex-GST) to ACON towards production costs for the event;

- (iii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer to enter into an agreement with ACON for this sponsorship; and
  - (iv) promote the event through the City's communications and marketing mechanisms;
- (F) noting that Orlando is a reminder of the need to be vigilant about the safety and welfare of LGBTI residents and businesses in the City of Sydney and to oppose homophobic prejudice and hatred wherever it exists, Council request the Chief Executive Officer to:
  - (i) work with NSW Police in providing assistance where needed to ensure the safety of LGBTI people and businesses and to protect the City's iconic LGBTI landmarks and areas; and
  - (ii) continue the City's excellent work with the LGBTI community and its organisations in opposing homophobia and the hatred and prejudice it causes;
- (G) Council reaffirm its support for marriage equality for all Australians;
- (H) Council call upon the 44th Commonwealth Parliament not to proceed with a divisive and costly plebiscite on same-sex marriage and instead amend the Marriage Act to enable same sex couples to marry and to ensure that same sex marriages solemnised overseas are recognised in Australia, with these amendments to be enacted within 30 days of its first sitting;
- (I) Council commend Australia's corporate supporters of marriage equality for remaining steadfast in the face of attempts to intimidate them in abandoning this support;
- (J) Council request the Lord Mayor to work with Australian Marriage Equality to thank corporate leaders for their support of marriage equality;
- (K) recognising the possibility of Parliament nonetheless proceeding with a plebiscite, Council:
  - (i) reaffirm its request that the legislation enabling the plebiscite sets out the amendments to the Marriage Act 1961 which would allow same-sex marriage, with these amendments automatically becoming law if supported by a majority formal vote; and
  - (ii) work with organisations supporting marriage equality in promoting the case for same-sex marriage;
- (L) Council provide an Accommodation Grant valued at \$36,800, plus GST, for a furnished and fitted out office space on Level 10, 307 Pitt Street, Sydney for the period 15 July 2016 to 30 November 2016;
- (M) Council provide an Accommodation Grant valued at \$14,120, plus GST, for a retail space at 122 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst for the period 1 August 2016 to 30 November 2016, to Australian Marriage Equality;

- (N) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to enter into an agreement with Australian Marriage Equality for the use of these premises; and
- (O) Council request the Chief Executive Officer to arrange the City's rainbow banners to be flown in Oxford Street at every available opportunity.

**COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE**

Lord Mayor

**ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A:** Letter from Trevor Ashley, Showqueen Productions