

ITEM 2. SYDNEY CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL AND ADVISORY PANEL**FILE NO: S120655.008****SUMMARY**

From its modest beginnings in 1995 as a community street market, the Sydney Chinese New Year Festival has grown to become one of the largest celebrations of the Lunar New Year outside of Asia.

The Sydney Chinese New Year Festival incorporates a range of anchor events produced by the City that meet a number of our strategic objectives including cultural exchange, cultural development, retail, business and tourism opportunities and community participation. In addition, a range of umbrella events make up the entire Festival. In 2015, over 70 different events made up the Festival.

With major infrastructure works commencing on the City's streets and new corporate players such as Fairfax, Star, Ipoh and World Square growing their Chinese New Year offerings, 2015 presents a unique opportunity to review and refresh the City's approach to its Chinese New Year Festival.

The event is entering a period of change with significant external impacts on the Festival's core events such as the Twilight Parade, Dragon Boat Races and Belmore Park Launch and Markets. Due to the George Street Light Rail project, which is expected to commence in September 2015, the City will not be able to present a Twilight Parade on George Street for a number of years, so a new route, location, or new iconic event activation must be found.

The Belmore Park Markets, traditionally held over the first weekend of the Festival, were transformed into two events for the 2015 event: Lunar Streets in Chinatown, Thaitown and Koreatown and the Lanterns of the Terracotta Warriors installation and launch at Dawes Point, Circular Quay. This year, hotels in the city reported a 95 per cent occupancy over the period of the Festival.

The Festival attracts a large number of associated events with a recent notable inclusion in 2015 of the Lunar Markets in Pymont Park, produced by Fairfax Events in partnership with The Star. The inclusion of new participants is an opportunity to enhance the event.

In light of the planned works scheduled for the city, and to better gauge the communities' expectations and aspirations for the Festival, a community consultation program was undertaken in 2014. The community consultation included a survey that:

- collected stakeholders' feedback on the attendance and participation drivers;
- discussed challenges facing the event and alternatives for the Twilight Parade and Dragon Boat Races due to infrastructure developments;
- collected feedback on the current Festival name; and
- sought to understand current perceptions of the Festival and its cultural perspectives.

In summary, the outcomes of the survey showed that:

- (a) there is good recognition of the Festival, especially the Twilight Parade;
- (b) there are opportunities to increase awareness and participation in other elements of the Festival;
- (c) there is support to retain the current Festival name; and
- (d) there is support to keep the Twilight Parade with a new route, or to produce a major event to replace the Parade.

Advisory Group

Since the event's inception a number of community advisory bodies have assisted and worked with the City to produce the festival, the most recent being the Chinese New Year Festival Advisory Group chaired by Councillor Kok, endorsed by Council on 15 September 2014.

A new panel will be formed, with new Terms of Reference to be adopted, to provide higher level strategic advice to the City as it refreshes its approach to Chinese New Year celebrations.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note the impacts on the Chinese New Year Festival by the George Street Light Rail project;
- (B) note that the 2016 Chinese New Year Festival will be a transition year;
- (C) adopt the revised Sydney Chinese New Year Advisory Panel Terms of Reference, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report;
- (D) note that the Chief Executive Officer has called an Expression of Interest for members for the new Sydney Chinese New Year Advisory Panel; and
- (E) appoint Councillor as Chairperson of the Sydney Chinese New Year Advisory Panel.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Sydney Chinese New Year Advisory Panel Terms of Reference

BACKGROUND

The Festival

1. The Sydney Chinese New Year Festival incorporates a number of elements produced by the City that meet several of our strategic objectives, including economic and cultural policies and other key benefits to the community.
2. The city, and the celebrations, are going through a period of change. Corporate players such as Ipoh (Queen Victoria Building), World Square, Fairfax and The Star are increasing their public celebrations of the lunar new year through decorations and new events.
3. In addition, major city capital works, such as light rail in George Street and developments in Darling Harbour and Haymarket, will have a significant impact on the Festival's core events: the Twilight Parade; Belmore Park Markets and Launch; and Dragon Boat Races.
4. A number of alternative Parade routes have been investigated and researched by the Events Unit with input from the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Protocol and Special Events Unit, the Transport Management Centre, Roads and Maritime Services and Sydney Buses. At this stage, there is no viable alternative route that can be found that would meet the objectives of the event and accommodate the city's public and private traffic requirements once the planned works on George Street commence.
5. The Dragon Boats course in 2015 was altered to accommodate changes in the Darling Harbour precinct, and the Belmore Park Markets and Launch were replaced with two new events: Lunar Streets; and the Dawes Point Lantern installation and launch.

Community Consultation

6. At its 12 March 2014 meeting, the Chinese New Year Festival Advisory Group endorsed the Chinese New Year Community Consultation - Engagement Strategy program, which included a survey intended to:
 - (a) collect stakeholders' feedback on the attendance and participation drivers;
 - (b) discuss challenges facing the event and alternatives for the Twilight Parade and Dragon Boat Races due to infrastructure developments;
 - (c) collect feedback on the current Festival name; and
 - (d) understand current perceptions of the Festival and its cultural perspectives.
7. In total, 690 intercept surveys were conducted at Chinatown, Darling Harbour, Hyde Park, Cabramatta, Strathfield, Campsie, Circular Quay and Broadway, with 222 (32 per cent) interviews in English, 196 (28 per cent) interviews in Chinese and 272 (40 per cent) interviews in Korean, Thai and Vietnamese together.
8. When asked about ancestry in intercept surveys, 30 per cent were Chinese; 16 per cent Korean; 14 per cent Thai; 11 per cent Australian; and 10 per cent Vietnamese. The remainder of respondents was spread amongst a wide range of backgrounds.

9. 8,262 online surveys were completed. 5,345 (65 per cent) were completed in English; 2,786 (34 per cent) in Chinese; 69 in Korean, 52 in Vietnamese and 10 in Thai (1 per cent collectively).
10. When asked their ancestry in the online survey, 80 per cent indicated Chinese; 11 per cent Australian; 4 per cent Vietnamese; and 3 per cent Korean. Thai ancestry was below 1 per cent.
11. 28 per cent of intercept survey respondents had attended the Festival compared to 87 per cent of online respondents.
12. Amongst intercept surveys, 34 per cent of Korean/Vietnamese/Thai speaking respondents had attended, compared to 27 per cent of Chinese respondents and 22 per cent of English respondents. More significantly, when looking at the 28 per cent of intercept respondents who had attended a Festival event, 48 per cent were Korean/Thai/Vietnamese speakers, 27 per cent Chinese and 25 per cent English speakers.
13. There was good recognition about the Festival, especially the Twilight Parade; there are opportunities to increase awareness and participation in other elements of the Festival; and there is support to retain the current festival name and keep the Parade with a new route or produce a major event to replace the Parade.
14. Korean/Thai/Vietnamese respondents were most likely to want the name of the Festival to change, however the majority of online Chinese respondents felt strongly that the reference to Chinese should be retained in the Festival name.
15. In both online and intercept surveys, better promotion was identified as the key factor which would encourage people to attend the Festival.
16. The main attributes going forward should focus on the significance of celebrating with family and friends and that the Festival is welcoming to people of all ages and backgrounds.
17. The survey findings show that people attending the Festival are not aware of the full breadth of it.
18. After the Twilight Parade, food events are the most successful Festival events and also the most popular with the non-Chinese audience.
19. 91 per cent of respondents across intercept and online surveys did not want the Twilight Parade or Dragon Boats to be cancelled outright. This result was largely consistent across all languages.
20. Knowledge about the event was lowest amongst Korean/Vietnamese/Thai respondents.

The Advisory Group

21. In 2000, the City introduced the Chinatown Cultural Advisory Committee to assist with advice on matters pertaining to Chinatown, and the Chinese New Year Festival Subcommittee to assist with the 2001 Festival.

22. In 2007, the Chinatown Cultural Advisory Committee and Chinese New Year Festival Subcommittee were dissolved and the Chinese New Year Festival Advisory Group established. The Advisory group was appointed to provide advice on cultural aspects of the Festival and provide practical assistance with the development of the Festival. Membership of the group was drawn from Chinese community groups, cultural organisations, business groups and sporting associations.
23. The Advisory Group was extended in 2013, and again in 2014 until 31 March 2015. On 15 September 2014, Council resolved to establish the Chinese New Year Advisory Panel and endorse the Chinese New Year Advisory Group membership Guidelines as the interim Terms of Reference of the Panel.
24. A new Advisory Panel will be formed, with a revised Terms of Reference to be adopted, to provide higher level strategic advice to the City as it refreshes its approach to Chinese New Year celebrations. The new Panel will provide advice on the role of the Chinese New Year celebrations and the City's engagement with Asia, the tourism and retail potential, and the cultural importance to the local community.
25. The City will call for Expression of Interest for the new Panel members for the next twelve months.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

26. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. The Festival is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City – the support of the Lunar New Year in Sydney is integral to this direction, as the Festival assists Sydney in positioning itself as a global city home to diverse and cultural activity at an international standard.
 - (b) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre – the Festival brings to life the city through cultural events, business and retail activations and community participation. It brings creative activations to the public realm engaging both visitors and residents alike.
 - (c) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies – the Festival encourages community participation, promotes diversity and celebrates our local communities and their cultures.
 - (d) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City – the Festival aligns with the City's aims under this direction, specifically the desire to strengthen cultural partnerships internationally and with the cultural and creative sectors.

Social / Cultural / Community

27. The Chinese New Year is one of the highlights of our city's cultural celebrations. It makes a substantial cultural and social contribution to the life of our city.

28. The Festival attracts more than 700,000 visitors and it is growing in popularity. Interest is demonstrated by its increasing media coverage. In 2014, the Festival reached an estimated audience of over 27.6 million both here and overseas.
29. The Festival has played a key role in the development of the City's relationship with China, hosting official delegations from China to participate in the event every year since 2006. These delegations have numbered from 100 to almost 1,000 people, who have taken part in the Twilight Parade and produced associated events as part of the Festival.
30. For the past several years, the Festival has involved the involvement of the Vietnamese, Thai and Korean communities. One Vietnamese group has participated in the Parade for the past several years, with Korean participation now making up 19 of the 73 groups in the Parade and contributing one major associated event to the Festival. This relationship is now expanding, with the Royal Thai Consulate coordinating the Thai community's participation in Lunar Streets in 2015, and organising the first Thai entry in the 2015 Twilight Parade. The City has also met with the Vietnamese consulate, Korean Cultural Office and Japan Foundation to look at avenues for their involvement in the Festival in the future.
31. The Chinese community is heavily involved in the Festival every year, with key community organisations, state government bodies, arts organisations, institutions and commercial groups contributing a program of up to 80 associated events to the Festival.

Economic

32. The City's Economic Development Strategy identifies long-term, sustainable connections with Asia as a priority. Cultural and civic connections with Asia are integral to our future economic competitiveness, and to future trade and investment opportunities.
33. The Festival supports international engagement with China and other Asian trading partners and helps to open the door for bilateral cultural and economic exchange.
34. The Festival affirms Sydney's position as a global, multicultural city and further enhances the City's destination appeal to the tourism, business and international student sectors.
35. The 2014 Chinese New Year Market Research Study by Woolcott Research reports an estimated audience of 63,000 spectators watched the 2014 Twilight Parade and had an average spend on the one evening of \$44.00 per person totalling \$2.7M.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

36. The 2016 Festival is currently budgeted within the draft 2015/2016 operating budget.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

37. Planning is underway for the 2016 and 2017 Festivals. A report will be submitted to Council in May outlining the new Festival format for 2016.
38. The dates for the 2016 Festival are 5 to 21 February 2016.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

39. The Chinese New Year Festival Advisory Group endorsed the Chinese New Year Community Consultation - Engagement Strategy program, which included a survey. Details of the survey and results are outlined earlier in this report.

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