

Item 8

Questions on Notice with Answers

1. Covid-19 Vaccination in the City of Sydney

By Councillor Forster

Question

As at 27 August 2021, Covid-19 vaccination rates in the City of Sydney were 52.9 per cent and 31.9 per cent for first and second dose respectively. This is well below the state average of 65.4 per cent and 35.4 per cent.

On 16 August 2021, Council unanimously endorsed a motion to endorse a public health promotion campaign aimed at reducing vaccine hesitancy and increasing vaccination rates across the Local Government Area including the implementation of measures such as prioritising frontline workers, seeking support for more walk-up vaccination clinics and extending the City's activities to support increased testing and vaccinations.

What has the City done to date to reduce vaccine hesitancy and increase vaccination rates across the Local Government Area?

S129269

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

The City has been enabling the urgent opening of walk-up vaccination clinics to support increased vaccination rates through use of the City's facilities and resources. Most recently, the Redfern and Ultimo Community Centres and Green Square Library have been provided to NSW Health to ensure Covid testing and vaccinations are available to residents, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Testing and vaccination clinics have also operated in City facilities and locations including Peter Forsyth Auditorium, Glebe, Martin Place, Ward Park, Harold Park Community Hall, the Booter Community Centre, Camperdown, and East Sydney Community and Arts Centre. City staff are currently investigating and offering a range of other potential sites.

The Homelessness team has supported a weekly vaccination clinic in Woolloomooloo run by St Vincent's Health Network and the Kirketon Road Centre for people experiencing homelessness and those living in social housing. The City is also supporting the Kirketon Road Centre Covid testing and vaccinations across our local government area, providing support for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the public domain. In addition, St Vincent Health Network are providing mobile vaccinations to people sleeping rough, supported by City Public Space Liaison Officers and Way2home, funded by the City.

The City is working with Local Health Districts to share vaccination messaging as it is provided, including in community languages. To date, communications activities have driven 12,300 referrals to NSW Health vaccination booking pages in two weeks. A standing page on the City of Sydney News website “Get Vaccinated” is regularly updated, vaccination information is promoted in e-newsletter databases and pop-up vaccination clinics are promoted through City social media channels and through outreach to local social media community pages and groups. The City continues to promote the dedicated community hotline that helps to connect vulnerable people to support services. City staff are also sharing existing communications through our networks, including those created by local community groups such as the emerging First Nations Covid-19 Relief Network and Glebe Youth Service and will look to develop further communications to seed through community influencers.

The City continues to provide practical support for vulnerable communities including food relief through its donations to OzHarvest, FoodBank and Secondbite, quick response grants to address live issues in the community arising from the pandemic, as well as the provision of reusable cloth masks. This support is targeted specifically at social housing residents, rough sleepers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, boarding house residents, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, and international students and temporary visa holders.

The Chief Executive Officer also sends a weekly all staff message encouraging City staff and family members to get vaccinated.

2. Small Business Compliance Breaches

By Councillor Vithoukias

Question

How many small businesses have been issued breaches in regard to compliance from April 2020 to August 2021?

Please provide breakdowns:

- (a) month by month from April 2020 to August 2021;
- (b) type of business;
- (c) type of breaches; and
- (d) how much total revenue was raised from these breaches?

S129276

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

City staff issued 23 penalty infringements to businesses between April 2020 and August 2021.

Of these, 10 penalties infringements (\$7,260 in fines) were issued for food safety breaches. The remaining 13 infringements (\$54,000 in fines) were issued under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 for breaches such as failure to stop unauthorised works, sex premises, unauthorised accommodation and tree removal.

In the 2019/20 financial year, the City's Health and Building unit issued a total of 219 penalty infringements.

3. Non-Residential Roll Deadline

By Councillor Vithoukias

Question

The NSW Electoral Commission website states "the residential roll, roll of non-resident owners of rateable land and roll of occupiers and ratepaying lessees closes at 6pm, Monday, 25 October 2021.

The City of Sydney website states "applications and all changes of details must be received by the City by 27 September 2021 to ensure they can be processed in time for the 2021 election. After close of rolls on 25 October 2021, The City will pass electoral details of each eligible non-resident to the NSW Electoral Commission for verification. The details of those verified will be added to the authorised electoral roll for the 2021 election."

1. Why does the City close applications and changes to the non-residential roll one month prior to the NSW Electoral Commission?
2. What processes does the City undertake during the month from 27 September 2021 to 25 October 2021?
3. How many applications for the non-residential roll have been received from 1 January 2021 to 31 August 2021?
4. Once an application is received, what steps take place for each application until 27 September 2021?

S129276

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. The City accepts applications and changes for the non-residential register at any time. The date shown on the website, 27 September 2021, is the latest date of receipt to ensure applications can be processed in time for the 2021 election. This cut-off date coincides with the legislated nomination cut-off date and was advised to Councillors in the CEO Update of 13 August 2021. Applications received after this date will be processed in the order in which they are received until close of rolls at 6:00pm 25 October 2021 and the City will attempt to process all applications received in that period if possible.

2. In relation to the non-residential register, in this period the City will:
 - Process all applications and change details received by 27 September 2021
 - Upload and check ASIC details for entitled corporations and their secretaries and directors
 - Deem nominees for all entitled sole corporations and natural person groups where no manual nomination has been received
 - Upload and check all changes to rateable property owners
 - Process all applications and change of details received after 27 September 2021 in date order of receipt, excluding manual nominations
 - Review all regular exception reports and make any necessary corrections
3. The City received 876 applications for the non-residential register in this period.
4. All applications are reviewed on receipt by an enrolment officer. Manual checks are made to ensure entitlement criteria are met in relation to:
 - the rateable property occupied
 - enrolment details of natural persons
 - corporate status of corporations
 - enrolment details of corporation nominees.

If all entitlement criteria are met, application details are added to the register and applicants and their nominees are contacted by email or letter.

If any entitlement criteria are not met, enrolment officers will phone applicants to either explain why they are not eligible or to request additional details. If applicants cannot be reached by phone, enrolment officers will make contact by email.

As noted at the answer to 1 this will continue to occur for applications received after 27 September 2021 until the close of rolls.

4. 2021 Local Government Elections Preparations

By Councillor Phelps

Question

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the NSW Government postponed the September 2020 Local Government elections to 4 September 2021. The NSW Government further postponed the Local Government elections until 4 December 2021.

Could the Chief Executive Officer please advise:

1. What extra preparations are required to hold the Local Government Elections on 4 December 2021?
2. If the Covid-19 situation has not adequately improved to hold the elections, what is the expected response from the Office of Local Government?
3. What additional preparations and costs are involved in the election being postponed?

S129272

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. The NSW Electoral Commission has been engaged to administer the City's election. They have not yet advised on final arrangements. Their current Covid-19 action plan for the 2021 Local Government elections can be found at <https://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/LGE21-COVID19>.
2. At a briefing on the postponement of the election to 4 December 2021 for councils by the Office of Local Government and the NSW Electoral Commission, the Office of Local Government spokesperson confirmed that any subsequent postponement would require amendment to the Local Government Act 1993.
3. The City has not yet been advised by the NSW Electoral Commission as to the updated costs of conducting the 2021 election. Additional preparations and costs in relation to the non-residential register due to the postponement were advised to Councillors in the CEO Update on 13 August 2021.

5. Indoor Air Quality Monitoring and Ventilation

By Councillor Phelps

Question

Monitoring indoor air quality is vitally important as we continue to deal with from the Covid-19 pandemic and prepare for the risk of future airborne pandemics.

Particularly since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the impacts of poor ventilation in indoor settings, such as offices, has been increasingly recognised because of the airborne transmission of Covid-19, particularly in inadequately ventilated spaces.

It is a core responsibility of the City of Sydney as an employer to ensure that employees and members of the public are protected as much as possible against Covid-19 and other airborne viruses.

Could the Chief Executive Officer please advise:

1. What the City is doing in city-owned buildings to monitor indoor air quality and improve ventilation?
2. How has the City considered indoor air quality and ventilation when making decisions since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 on employees returning to work in the office?
3. What moves have been made to include ventilation standards in future development applications?

S129272

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

1. All ventilation systems installed within City buildings are maintained in full compliance with all relevant Regulations, Acts and codes of practice.

In response to the Covid pandemic, the City has implemented modifications to its air conditioning and ventilation to substantially increase the fresh air blend. This practice is in line with the latest ventilation guidelines advice as published by industry body, Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) on 16/07/2021 which promotes natural ventilation as the most effective method of controlling the SARS-CoV-2 virus, its variants and other pathogenic coronaviruses.

2. In addition to the increased in fresh air blending, the City has:
 - Developed a pre-check schedule of base building systems prior to reoccupation, including a fresh air purge on all ventilation systems.
 - Commenced a feasibility assessment on the application of the Air Cleaning Technologies including the installation of High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) Filters within ducted ventilation systems and/or the installation of Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI) as an alternate solution.

- The City is also consulting with the City Futures Research Centre at the University of NSW on the feasibility of installing CO2 monitoring sensors, as an indicator of fresh air levels within indoor conditioned space.
3. Planning controls and State Planning Policy (Apartment Design Guide) contain extensive provisions for securing and maintaining adequate natural ventilation and natural cross ventilation. Minimum requirements and technical design standards relating to mechanical and ventilation of buildings are also contained in the National Construction Code. Compliance with NCC requirements is certified through the construction certificate (CC) process.

6. Pandemic Leave and Stand Downs for City Staff

By Councillor Scott

Question

1. Broken down by year, how many City staff have been stood down under the Splinter Award, and for how long?
2. Broken down by month, how many City staff have had their hours reduced since lockdown began in June 2021?

S129275

Answer by the Chief Executive Officer

No City of Sydney employee was stood down under the Splinter Award in 2020. In July 2021, as a result of public health restrictions, 292 employees were stood down with pay under the 2021 Splinter Award. Most of these employees have now returned to their usual work or are undertaking suitable alternative work. As at 15 September 2021, two employees remain stood down with pay under the 2021 Splinter Award.

No employees had their hours reduced in June 2021. In July 2021, one part time employee had their hours reduced, with the hours not worked being paid as Covid-19 Special Paid Leave as per the 2021 Splinter Award. This employee has remained on this arrangement during August and September 2021. In August 2021, 70 employees in Infrastructure Maintenance worked on a roster basis which included a portion of their ordinary pay being paid as Covid-19 Special Paid Leave as per the 2021 Splinter Award. This arrangement remains in place.