

Relevant Information for Council

FILE: X080317 **DATE:** 18 February 2022

TO: Lord Mayor and Councillors

FROM: Emma Rigney, Director City Life

THROUGH: Monica Barone, Chief Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Information Relevant To Item 6.11 - Exemption from Tender and Contract Variations - Sydney New Year's Eve

For Noting

This memo is for the information of the Lord Mayor and Councillors.

Background

At the meeting of the Corporate, Finance, Properties and Tenders Committee on 14 February 2022, further information was sought on the following:

1. **Current fireworks provider's sustainability and environmental credentials**

The current contract with the Sydney New Year's Eve fireworks provider has a provision for environmental performance. Key obligations include:

- Must keep abreast of developments in the environmental sustainability of fireworks including advances in manufacturing and display technology.
- Must adhere at all times to industry best practice for sustainability and in minimising impact on the environment.
- Following the Sydney New Year's Eve Event, provide the City a comprehensive annual Environmental Performance Report.

2. **Possible future alternatives to fireworks that are more environmentally sustainable**

The City and its creative suppliers continue to evaluate alternatives to the fireworks which are more environmentally sustainable, with drone displays being a particular area of focus for investigation. Initial findings of these investigations have been:

- Drone shows would not be able to go ahead in rain, increasing the risk of a cancelled Sydney New Year's Eve show. A fireworks display can continue in light rain conditions.
- Drone shows are only tenable at much lower wind speeds than fireworks, further increasing the risk of a cancelled Sydney New Year's Eve show.
- To maintain the scope of the current show across Sydney Harbour, approximately 5,500 to 6,500 drones would be required. The recent Elevate event, produced by Destination NSW and localised within Circular Quay included 500 drones.
- The midnight display would have to be shortened, as the battery capacity of drones places limits on their flight time.
- The current fireworks display costs approximately \$1 million of the overall \$5.86 million Sydney New Year's Eve budget. Replacing the fireworks display with 6,500 drones would potentially increase the cost of the event by an additional \$5-6 million, for a total show cost of approximately \$11-12 million.
- The feasibility of a drone show of this size and scale presents as a significant risk as it would be much bigger than the current largest drone show ever presented and would be required to display (inclusive of take-off and landing areas) over water.

The City is continuing to investigate other potential alternatives to drones, including water effects, increased lighting, illuminated scenic items and projections. Any other technologies proposed to replace the fireworks would require a significant amount of additional scoping and development to ensure they could be successfully implemented and be confident in any estimates of their cost and environmental impact.

3. **Environmental improvements to the current contract**

The current contract with the fireworks provider requires them to remain abreast of developments in the environmental sustainability of fireworks. This has yielded the following improvements:

- Being at the forefront of development in manufacturing of fireworks to improve quality and consistency of chemicals used.
- Improvements to fireworks technologies, including:
 - (a) Smoke reduction technologies.
 - (b) Single-shot fireworks that are manufactured free of debris.
 - (c) The use of specialised electric igniters which are lead and perchlorate free.

- (d) A reduction in the use of single-use plastics by more than 80% over the past 3 years.
 - (e) Recycling or reuse of copper wire and plastic tube components used in the fireworks display.
 - (f) Biodegradable components replacing key single-use items previously made of plastic.
- Offsetting all of the fireworks contractor's business operations' carbon emissions, while continuing to monitor emissions annually.

The City, as part of its contract management processes, will continue to enforce this requirement and to continue exploring further technologies that may improve the environmental sustainability of fireworks further.

Memo from Emma Rigney, Director City Life

Prepared by: Stephen Gilby, Event Producer - Creative City

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P.M.B.' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

MONICA BARONE

Chief Executive Officer