

Resolution of Council

17 February 2020

Item 3.3

Solidarity with the People of Wuhan

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

The world continues to experience the impact of the novel coronavirus which first appeared in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Much of this impact has been seen in terms of its effects on international travel, trade and the world economy.

My concern is for the people of Wuhan, Hubei Province and other areas of China where people have become ill and have experienced severe disruption in their daily lives. I had the opportunity to visit Wuhan in 2014 and was impressed with its goal of becoming a major transport hub and the most liveable and sustainable city in China. During that visit I signed a memorandum of understanding with the Mayor of Wuhan, Mr Tang Liangzhi which has led to Sydney and Wuhan becoming friendship cities.

It is therefore hard for me to imagine this busy city of 11 million people being isolated and in lockdown with its residents confined to their homes and its bustling streets devoid of people. What makes this even worse is that it has occurred during the Lunar New Year Festival, a time usually devoted to celebrating joy and happiness with family and friends.

On 6 February 2020, I wrote to Mr Zhou Xianwang, Mayor of Wuhan, sending our support to the people of Wuhan on behalf of the people of Sydney. I expressed our sincere hope that the people of Wuhan and China overcome the challenge of this terrible virus as soon as possible, and that their lives can return to normal.

I am aware that people are asking about providing practical support to the people of Wuhan and other cities and areas in China, including Guangzhou, Chongqing, Nanjing, and Shanxi Province. I understand these cities and areas are experiencing a shortage of protective medical equipment, specifically N95 masks, medical surgical masks, protective overalls, and eyes protectors. I would encourage Australian manufacturers of this equipment to contact these governments with offers of assistance, which my office can facilitate. I also commend Councillor Robert Kok for personally donating required masks and protective gear to Wuhan.

The most concerning impact of this virus is the risk of fear and panic, with the media already reporting that this fear has led to racially motivated attacks on Chinese people. I strongly endorse the statement of Chief Medical Officer Brendan Murphy denouncing the spread of abhorrent racist prejudices towards Chinese-Australians.

Mr Murphy has said that there is no reason for people to wear masks or to avoid people of any particular background or appearance.

Unfortunately, sensationalist media can feed this fear. The pervasive influence of social media can also increase fear due to its rapid circulation of false information. We must guard against this, and instead rely on factual verifiable information.

The City remains vigilant and continues to act on the advice of State and Federal departments of health to inform our response. However, we must also be vigilant in preventing the contagious spread of inaccurate and exaggerated information and the resulting stigma and discrimination.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note the letter by the Lord Mayor to the Mayor of Wuhan expressing Sydney's support for the people of Wuhan; and
- (B) continue to celebrate and support Sydney's Chinese community in addressing the impacts of the novel coronavirus crisis, as we did during our recent Sydney Lunar Festival events.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor

Moved by the Chair (the Lord Mayor), seconded by Councillor Kok –

That the Minute by the Lord Mayor be endorsed and adopted.

Variation. At the request of Councillor Phelps, and by consent, the Lord Mayor varied the Minute, such that it read as follows:

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note the letter by the Lord Mayor to the Mayor of Wuhan expressing Sydney's support for the people of Wuhan;

- (B) continue to celebrate and support Sydney's Chinese community in addressing the impacts of the novel coronavirus crisis, as we did during our recent Sydney Lunar Festival events; and
- (C) note that Professor Murphy has said "there is no need for the Australian public to wear masks, the only people who should wear masks in relation to this virus are those who are unwell", and there is no need to avoid people of any particular background or appearance.

The Minute, as varied by consent, was carried unanimously.

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