

Resolution of Council

9 March 2020

Item 12.3

Alternatives for New Year's Eve Fireworks

Moved by Councillor Chung, seconded by Councillor Vithoukas –

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note:
- (i) the 2019 New Year's Eve Fireworks display were considered the most controversial as the event was permitted to go ahead at the height of the bushfire crisis despite calls for it to be cancelled by the community;
 - (ii) drone shows are gradually becoming more common as alternatives to fireworks displays due to their minimal noise and environmental disruption. Between 2015 and 2018, Intel's 'Shooting Star' drones have performed more than 300 shows in 16 countries;
 - (iii) notable drone show performances include the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang South Korea and the 2018 Fourth of July show in Aspen, Colorado which was done as a safer alternative in the midst of a fire ban due to the North American wildfires; and
 - (iv) to date, there have been no large-scale drone shows that have been performed in Australia;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate environmentally-sustainable and non-explosive alternatives, such as drone shows, for future New Year's Eve celebrations and provide a report back to Council.

Note – the motion above was not carried. The resolution as below was carried –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) many members of the community were calling for the New Year's Eve fireworks to be cancelled;
- (ii) the 2019 New Year's Eve fireworks display went ahead as planned after approval from the NSW Rural Fire Service;
- (iii) the decision to proceed was based on the following considerations:
 - (a) after 15 months of preparations, the vast majority of the budget had been spent, so the money could not have been redirected and cancelling the celebrations would have had no practical benefit for bushfire and drought-affected communities;
 - (b) the event contributes \$133 million to the NSW economy and cancelling the event would have had a devastating impact on hotels, restaurants, and other small businesses, particularly tourism operators in Sydney and across NSW;
 - (c) the Lord Mayor believed that more could be gained for fire and drought-affected communities by harnessing the power of the event to raise money for charities responding to the crisis; and
 - (d) the Lord Mayor did not want to disappoint over one million people who planned to attend the event on the harbour foreshore, including many who travelled from overseas;
- (iv) the City of Sydney, ABC Australia and Australian Red Cross Sydney New Year's Eve fundraising drive raised a total of \$13.3 million;
- (v) the decision to proceed with the 2019 New Year's Eve fireworks was supported by fire authorities, and political and business leaders, including:
 - (a) Shane Fitzsimmons, NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner;
 - (b) the Premier of NSW, Gladys Berejiklian, and the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison; and
 - (c) Chief Executive of the Tourism and Transport Forum, Margy Osmond; Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber, Katherine O'Regan; General Manager of the Captain Cook Cruises, Anthony Haworth; and former advertising executive Jane Caro, as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on 30 December 2019;
- (vi) the 2019 New Year's Eve celebrations brought more than one million people to the harbour foreshore and their safety was the prime consideration in the planning and delivery of the event – Sydney's fireworks have a proven safety record for such a large-scale and global event;
- (vii) with their scale, height and visibility, Sydney's fireworks have a proven appeal as:
 - (a) a live event staged over a large area to an audience of at least one million people;

- (b) a globally broadcast event on television and via the internet to one billion people worldwide; and
 - (c) the opportunity to showcase Sydney, its significant landmarks, such as the harbour, the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, and Australia, to the world;
- (viii) drone shows are gradually becoming more common as alternatives to fireworks displays due to their minimal noise and environmental disruption. Between 2015 and 2018, Intel's 'Shooting Star' drones have performed more than 300 shows in 16 countries;
 - (ix) notable drone show performances include the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, and the 2018 Fourth of July show in Aspen, Colorado, which was done as a safer alternative in the midst of a fire ban due to the North American wildfires;
 - (x) to date, there have been no large-scale drone shows that have been performed in Australia;
 - (xi) City staff have been working to introduce innovative elements that reduce the environmental impact of the New Year's Eve celebrations for many years, including pylon projections, the use of lighting on the bridge, colour changing lighting on vessels to coincide with bridge lighting and lighting on the Lunar Park ferris wheel; and
 - (xii) City staff are already investigating alternatives and complementary activities for future New Year's Eve celebrations, including drones; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to provide a report to Council comparing the cost and environmental impacts of drones and other technologies to the current fireworks display for future New Year's Eve celebrations.

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

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