

Resolution of Council

14 December 2020

Item 12.19

Safeguarding Pubs and Significant Community Assets

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

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) pubs are significant community and cultural assets and are highly valued by our community members as village social centres;
- (ii) hospitality venues including pubs have suffered under the lock out laws and the lockdown in response to Covid-19. The city's economic output fell approximately 15.8 per cent and jobs in our local area fell by about 12.4 per cent in Q2 2020;
- (iii) Action Area 3 of the City of Sydney's Covid Recovery Plan is to "strengthen community cohesion to build the resilience of local communities" in the wake of loss of social connection through isolation, distancing closure of community facilities, cancellation of events, and community forums;
- (iv) the historic 127 year old Green Park Hotel in Darlinghurst, a well-known and loved institution for the LGBTQI community in particular, has recently been sold by Solotel to neighbouring St Vincent's Hospital to make way for a mental health facility. St Vincent's Hospital are an important stakeholder in the Darlinghurst area, and they have been a long term supporter of the LGBTQI community;
- (v) the community was not given the opportunity to have input into the pub's future and there is now an active campaign to save the pub;

- (vi) recently, the City resolved that it would protect the site of the Empire Hotel (excluding buildings and other structures) based on the social and historic significance associated with its former use as Les Girls. Although this site has been altered and its use subsequently discontinued, the significance of the role of this site in the community has been recognised in the Darlington Road Development Control Plan. These planning controls were embedded so that the historical use be interpreted, through a new food and drink premises or entertainment premises on the ground floor, as well as in architectural forms that echo the historically significant site. Therefore, any redevelopment would need to reflect the historical and social significance of the Les Girls site to ensure that the social significance of the site and its place in the community is preserved. This could be interpreted as setting an important precedent for the protection of the social use of certain premises that might have a unique significance;
 - (vii) the United Kingdom's Localism Act 2011 states that councils are required to maintain a list of 'community assets' nominated by community groups or parish councils, with the community groups given the opportunity and time to bid for the community asset if it is to be sold. This has led to community groups forming entities that have successfully nominated pubs, meeting rooms, community halls, parks, sporting fields and the leading London LGTBIQ nightclub Heaven being listed as assets of community value. This is an approach which supports grassroots organising and community control of important assets, such as pubs, empowering communities to nominate, own and manage community assets directly. Buildings or land are considered to be of community value if:
 - (a) an actual current use of the building or other land that is not an ancillary use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community; and
 - (b) it is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further (whether or not in the same way) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community; and
 - (viii) the historic 127-year-old Green Park Hotel in Darlington, a known institution for the LGBTQI community, has recently been sold by Solotel to neighbouring St Vincent's Hospital to make way for a mental health facility. The community was not given the chance to have input into the pub's future and there is now an active campaign to save the pub; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) report on the heritage status of pubs in our Local Government Area via the CEO Update, so Councillors and the community can have more information for further discussions;
 - (ii) investigate the impact of adopting the UK model of community assets to identify and protect the use of significant community assets, and to report back via CEO Update on the feasibility of adopting this approach in Sydney; and
 - (iii) investigate tools which might be applied to the protection of significant community assets, including their use, taking the Green Park Hotel into consideration for the protection of use.

Carried unanimously.

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