

Item 3.3

CBD Recovery from Covid-19

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

On 22 April 2021 I joined NSW Government Ministers and business representatives at the second CBD Summit convened by the NSW Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet. It was a highly successful event, with many participants presenting ideas to encourage economic recovery in the Sydney CBD and to re-energise our city. I was heartened by the excitement and shared commitment of attendees to achieving this through continued collaboration.

The first Summit led to a program of initiatives which has had a significant impact on the recovery. This included our AI Fresco City program, with activities to activate the CBD and our outdoor dining initiatives. An evaluation survey of participating restaurants and cafes revealed that:

- 90 per cent of respondents reported the outdoor dining to be beneficial or crucial to their business;
- 45 per cent reported employing an additional two or more staff per week;
- 41 per cent reported increasing staff hours by 10 hours or more per week; and
- more than half (58 per cent) reported an increase in turnover of up to 10 per cent.

The CBD Activation Grant Program late last year has also delivered a strong pipeline of events to attract people into the CBD – and our program has generated jobs for the creative and cultural sector. The Sunset Piazza and roving performers created over 1000 jobs for the cultural and creative sector including jobs for performers, artists, creatives and production crew over a three-month period.

Continuing the CBD's recovery

With the NSW Government investing an additional \$20 million into CBD recovery, I propose that the City continue its investment in CBD recovery by contributing a further \$5.7 million, which would include:

- extending the fee waiver for outdoor dining until 30 June 2022 to continue the success of the AI Fresco City program (estimated cost of \$3.5 million); and
- allocating \$2.2 million from our existing grants program to encourage events and activations in the CBD and surrounds.

Other activation proposals

The Property Council has shown commendable initiative in developing its “Fab Fridays” proposal for activating the CBD. This proposal aims to encourage workers to return to work in the CBD, particularly on Mondays and Fridays when many people are choosing to work from home.

“Fab Fridays” would make being in the CBD on Fridays an enticing alternative. To be successful, the initiative would need the support of the NSW Government, the City and CBD businesses. City staff have met with the Property Council to discuss how we could help implement the proposal.

The NSW Government could support the proposal by providing free public transport into the CBD on Friday mornings and by further developing the ‘Dine and Discover’ voucher program to support CBD businesses. To maximise its impact the vouchers could also be used with small retailers and small businesses providing personal services such as hairdressers, beauticians, etc.

The Government should also act on the Australian Hotels Association’s call to extend the NSW Government’s Accommodation Vouchers to the entire City of Sydney Local Government Area, rather than just the 2000 postcode, as people who stay at these hotels are highly likely to spend time in the CBD during their visit.

CBD Taskforce

Several peak bodies have proposed establishing an ongoing CBD Taskforce to build on the success of the CBD Summits, and continue the collaboration between the NSW Government, City of Sydney and key stakeholders. Such a Taskforce could have an ongoing role in monitoring the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, identifying emerging issues and be involved in initiatives such as “Fab Friday”.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the City of Sydney continuing its partnership with the NSW Government in delivering this recovery by approving a contribution of \$5.7 million, which would include:
 - (i) extending the fee waiver for outdoor dining until 30 June 2022 to continue the success of the Al Fresco City program at an estimated cost of \$3.5 million; and
 - (ii) allocating \$2.2 million from our existing grants program to encourage events and activations in the CBD and surrounds;
- (B) endorse the Property Council’s “Fab Fridays” proposal;
- (C) call on the NSW Government to provide free public transport on Friday mornings, further develop the ‘Dine and Discover’ vouchers to support CBD businesses and extend its accommodation vouchers to the entire Local Government Area; and
- (D) support the establishment of a CBD Taskforce, with the City of Sydney being willing to participate in this Taskforce.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor