

**Item 3.2****City Response to the Outbreak of the Delta Variant of Covid-19****File No: S051491****Minute by the Lord Mayor**

To Council:

The outbreak of the dangerous Delta variant of Covid-19 in Sydney has now led to a two-week lockdown of Greater Sydney. This comes at a time when the community and local businesses were starting to feel like life was returning to normal.

Following the announcement last week of the lockdown of four Local Government Areas, including the City of Sydney, the Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich, and I wrote a joint letter to the Treasurer seeking urgent support for inner city businesses.

In response to the Northern Beaches lockdown that commenced in December last year, the NSW Government introduced the Northern Beaches Small Business Hardship Grant. Grants provided one-off payments of \$3,000 or \$5,000 to help small businesses experiencing significant financial loss.

With the broader lockdown now in place, it is even more urgent that the NSW Government introduce a grants program similar to the Northern Beaches Small Business Hardship Grant to support businesses. Impacted businesses will need to urgently know whether financial support will be forthcoming to help them with staffing, cash flow and planning.

The lockdown of Greater Sydney for two weeks will have significant financial implications for small businesses, especially those in the central business district that are already suffering severe downturn. Restricted movements will cut patronage, and new costs will arise to deal with continued operations including marketing and communications, and financial and legal advice.

Inner city businesses make a massive contribution to the state economy through a range of sectors including the arts and culture, retail, tourism, food and beverage, and transport. We cannot afford to let them suffer and potentially close during this difficult period in the pandemic.

I am asking Council to support my call for urgent hardship grants from the NSW Government to ensure local businesses are able to get through and continue to operate beyond the lockdown.

The Small Business Concierge service established by the City continues to operate to help local businesses through the current lockdown. The City will continue to work with the community and businesses to provide assistance, such as rent relief for our tenants and fee waivers, which the Chief Executive Officer can provide under delegation, if required. The Chief Executive Officer should investigate whether other assistance measures are needed as the situation evolves and bring a report to Council if required.

The City continues to move quickly to respond to the latest health orders and announcements from the NSW Government:

- Our pools, libraries, community centres, gyms, customer and neighbourhood service centres have closed for the lockdown, in line with Health orders.
- Sydney Town Hall, Customs House and Town Hall House have also closed to the public.
- Venues for hire are closed and anyone with a booking will be contacted, and no cancellation fee will be charged.
- Additional cleaning will be implemented for playgrounds and outdoor fitness equipment, which will remain open in line with health advice.

Our homelessness services will continue to operate, as well as our meals on wheels services, to ensure vulnerable people in our city get the support they need during this difficult time.

### **Recommendation**

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note that on Friday, 25 June 2021, the Lord Mayor and NSW Member for Sydney wrote to the NSW Treasurer seeking urgent hardship grants, similar to what was provided for the Northern Beaches lockdown;
- (B) Council endorse the Lord Mayor's call for urgent hardship grants from the NSW Government to ensure local businesses are able to get through and continue to operate beyond the lockdown; and
- (C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to monitor the situation and investigate whether other assistance measures are needed as the situation evolves and bring a report back to Council if required.

### **COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE**

Lord Mayor