

Grants and Sponsorship - Additional Support for Sydney WorldPride 2023

File No: X082566

Summary

WorldPride is a biennial international festival that promotes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) issues on an international level through parades, festivals, and other cultural activities. WorldPride 2023 will celebrate the diversity and unique culture of Sydney, whilst raising awareness of LGBTIQ+ human rights issues across the Asia Pacific region. The event will take place over two and a half weeks from 17 February to 5 March 2023 and is expected to have a lasting social and economic impact on Sydney.

The City has supported WorldPride 2023 since the bid in 2019 for the rights to host the festival with a cash sponsorship of \$800,000 (plus GST) and \$650,000 Value in Kind to support the bid, pre-event planning and delivery of WorldPride 2023 to Sydney WorldPride Limited (Sydney WorldPride), an entity that has been set up specifically for the purposes of delivering WorldPride 2023.

The Grant Agreement requires Sydney WorldPride to provide free tickets to community members that would otherwise be unable to participate. There are several affordable ticket streams, such as free and discount all-inclusive First Nations tickets and a scholarship program to create opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people with refugee experience in Australia to attend the Human Rights Conference. The festival includes many free events such as Pride Villages, Pride March, the First Nations Gathering Space and other events produced by Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras such as the Parade and Fair Day.

The City's support extends beyond this sponsorship, with staff working with Sydney WorldPride to beautify Oxford Street through pride themed living colour floral displays and banners down Oxford Street and across the local government area, as well as lighting of Taylor Square fountain, a refreshed rainbow crossing and increased street cleaning services. The City is encouraging retail businesses to activate on-street and dress their shops and is assisting Sydney WorldPride to obtain the required approvals. Two of the City produced Sydney Street events (including road closures) will be aligned with the festival. The first event in Kings Cross will mark the 1978 protest that signifies the start of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras movement. The Stanley Street closure on Saturday 4 March will provide much needed capacity to support the Oxford Street Precinct celebrations on the final weekend of the Sydney WorldPride festival.

The City is working closely with a local artist to develop a hoarding artwork to be placed on large scale construction sites along Oxford Street, including sites within the festival footprint. This artwork will reflect the LGBTIQ+ history and connection to Oxford Street and help bring colour and life to Oxford Street.

On 19 September 2022, Council unanimously endorsed a Lord Mayoral Minute that noted the breadth, scale and diversity of the program for WorldPride 2023 and requested the Chief Executive Officer to investigate and report back to Council on other ways the City can provide support.

Sydney WorldPride propose to enhance Oxford Street even further for the duration of the festival by activating and beautifying vacant shops, environmental lighting to enliven the street, branding elements for styling and public art to delight guests coming to the precinct.

This report recommends a further cash sponsorship of up to \$300,000 to Sydney WorldPride Limited to support the beautification and activation of the Oxford Street neighbourhood as central to the LGBTIQ+ community for the duration of the festival period in 2022/23 financial year.

The request for additional cash sponsorship has been evaluated by City staff and is recommended to Council for approval.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve an additional cash sponsorship of up to \$300,000 (plus GST) to Sydney WorldPride Limited for the further beautification and activation of the Oxford Street neighbourhood for the duration of the festival subject to the applicant providing an acceptable project plan including timeframes;
- (B) Council note that these funds will be drawn from the 2022/23 General Contingency Fund;
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to vary the existing grant agreement between the City and Sydney WorldPride Limited to incorporate the additional funding and project scope under terms consistent with this resolution and the Grants and Sponsorship Policy; and
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to correct minor errors to the matters set out in this report, noting that the upper limit of the funding and the identity of the recipient will not change, and a CEO Update will be provided to Council advising of any changes made in accordance with this resolution.

Attachments

Nil.

Background

1. The City of Sydney area is home to the largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) population in Australia. The City has a long and proud history of providing support to this community including the employment of a dedicated LGBTIQ+ program officer working for over 15 years to increase wellbeing and support for the community and sector.
2. WorldPride is a biennial event that promotes LGBTIQ+ issues on an international level through a human rights convention, parades, festivals and other cultural activities.
3. On 9 September 2019, Council approved \$50,000 (excluding GST) cash sponsorship to support the successful bid by Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Ltd (SGLMG) to host WorldPride in 2023.
4. On 20 October 2019, at the InterPride (licensee of WorldPride) Annual General Meeting in Athens, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras won the right for Sydney to host WorldPride 2023. Sydney will be the first city in the southern hemisphere to host WorldPride, attracting a wide and diverse new global audience to the event.
5. On 9 December 2019, Council approved a further \$250,000 (excluding GST) cash sponsorship to Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras for the pre-event planning for Sydney WorldPride 2023 (Sydney WorldPride) and to establish Sydney WorldPride Limited as the delivery organisation.
6. Sydney WorldPride Limited was registered as a charity in 2020 with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. The Board has been appointed and executive team and numerous staff recruited. Destination NSW and Tourism Australia are confirmed government funding partners, with many commercial partners supporting the festival.
7. In June 2021, Council approved a cash sponsorship of \$500,000 (plus GST) to support pre-event planning and production of WorldPride 2023, split across the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years. The City entered into a Grant Agreement with Sydney WorldPride Limited with respect to the grant on 11 March 2022.
8. The Grant Agreement requires Sydney WorldPride to provide free tickets to community members that would otherwise be unable to participate. The festival includes many free events such as Pride Villages, Pride March and the First Nations Gathering Space. Approximately 5,000 affordable tickets are being offered through three streams including an all-inclusive First Nations Mobtix, and about 80 per cent of tickets to the First Nations Gala event to be offered for free to First Nations peoples. Affordable tickets will be offered to the general population to attend official events. An international scholarship program is offered to create opportunities and accessibility for approximately 100 LGBTIQ+ people with refugee experience in Australia to attend the Human Rights Conference.
9. In May 2022, Council approved \$650,000 Value in Kind sponsorship split across the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years with a package for access to City assets and services including outdoor venue hire, street banners, road closures, indoor venues, Living Colour Displays, cleansing and waste, marketing support and visitor information services.

10. The City's support extends beyond this sponsorship, with staff working with Sydney WorldPride to assist the Oxford Street neighbourhood to become the heart of the festival. Oxford Street will be the centrepiece to WorldPride 2023 with the 45th Mardi Gras Parade, returning to its Oxford Street home after two years absence. With 12,500 participants and over 200 floats, it will be the largest single Festival event.
11. Pride Villages will come alive with stalls, performances, dining and a place to connect with friends and family on parts of Crown and Riley Street closed to traffic from 24 February to 5 March 2023. On the final weekend from 4 to 5 March 2023, Oxford Street from College Street to Flinders Street will be pedestrianised and will host a street party filled with activities catering for all ages and interests. City staff are working with Sydney WorldPride to encourage retail businesses to activate on-street during the road closures and dress their shops for the duration of the festival.
12. The City is working with Sydney World Pride to beautify Oxford Street through pride themed living colour floral displays and banners, pride themed lighting of Taylor Square fountain, a refreshed rainbow crossing and increased street cleaning services. The City is working closely with a local artist to develop a hoarding artwork to be placed on large scale construction sites on Oxford Street. This artwork will reflect the LGBTIQ+ history and connection to Oxford Street and help bring colour and life to Oxford Street.
13. Other work the City is doing that will provide support to the Oxford Street neighbourhood during Sydney WorldPride is aligning two of the Sydney Street road closure activations. On the first Saturday of the festival, 18 February 2023, the City will close a section of Darlinghurst Road and Macleay Street to mark the 1978 protest that signified the start of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Activations will be coordinated with the Potts Point Partnership and local business. On the final Saturday, 4 March 2023, the City will close Stanley Street at East Sydney to align with the Secrets of Stanley precinct activation which will be vital to providing additional capacity for the Oxford Street precinct. Activations will be coordinated with Sydney WorldPride and local business. Both events will feature local queer artists and pride themed alfresco dining experiences, street performers and entertainment.
14. The City has also developed its planning controls on Oxford Street in consultation with community and businesses, as well as developed the Oxford Street LGBTIQ+ Place Strategy that further commits to the revitalisation of the precinct. There is confidence and growth that is proven through the investment and development on Oxford Street, in particular the 'Darlinghurst Collection' buildings at 56-76, 82-106 and 110-122 Oxford Street.
15. Sydney WorldPride are currently undertaking engagement through their existing and extensive local networks to engage with local businesses, landowners and property managers to gain access to and/or use of as many shops as possible to activate, beautify and enliven vacant spaces along Oxford Street during the festival. Sydney WorldPride will look to activate entire spaces that are fit for occupation with activities such as art exhibitions or collaborations with community groups.
16. Sydney WorldPride will enhance Oxford Street through simple and effective sustainable lighting. Splashes of rainbow up lighting onto the buildings and soft warm lighting onto the trees for the duration of the festival. For the final weekend, when Oxford Street Party is brought to life, rainbow colours will be added, festooning and moving lights and immersive moments will be incorporated.

17. The styling of Oxford Street will incorporate lining the footpath, and relaying positive messages of love and celebration back to the community. Free standing branded totems in squares on either end of Oxford Street will feature the official Pride Villages map. Public art will showcase queer creativity at its finest to a global audience.
18. The City is recommending further cash sponsorship of up \$300,000 (excluding GST) in the 2022/23 financial year to support further beautification and activation of the Oxford Street neighbourhood during WorldPride 2023, subject to the provision of an acceptable project plan including timeframes and evidence of projected expenses.
19. The existing Grant Agreement between the City and Sydney WorldPride will be varied to incorporate this additional funding and the project scope. Funding for this part of the project will be released to Sydney WorldPride as critical project milestones are reached and evidence of projected expenses are reported to the City. The amount to be expended will in part depend on how many vacant properties Sydney WorldPride is able to negotiate access to and the City will work with the organisation to assist them in activating as many vacant properties as possible.
20. The City's sponsorship of Sydney WorldPride is subject to a range of performance indicators as outlined in the Grant Agreement between the City and Sydney WorldPride Limited. These indicators include outcomes related to sustainability, media and marketing, community safety and participation, social impact, business impact, economic impact, and access and inclusion.
21. The City will receive recognition as a sponsor of this event including logo acknowledgment across all media platforms and other promotional materials.

Grants assessment process

22. The assessment process included advice and recommendations from a suitably qualified assessment panel. The application was scored against the defined assessment criteria for the Festivals and Events Sponsorship Tier Two grant program.
23. The assessment criteria are:
 - (a) Evidence of the need for the festival or event and proposed outcomes.
 - (b) Capacity and experience of the applicant to deliver the festival or event.
 - (c) Demonstrated connection and benefit to the local area and community.
 - (d) Evidence of diversity, inclusion and equity in the planning and delivery of the project.
 - (e) How the project delivers against the funding priorities.
24. The assessment meeting was held on Wednesday 28 September.
25. All grants and sponsorships are recommended on the condition that any required approvals, permits and development consents are obtained by the applicant.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

26. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This sponsorship is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life – the Sydney WorldPride Festival will employ over 2,000 people and over 500 artists, engaging over 1,600 volunteers, 12,500 parade participants and over 500,000 people viewing the parade. The festival has a diversified program offering events and activities to diverse groups such as women over 55, rainbow families, First Nations People, people with a disability and gender diverse people. The diversity of offerings throughout the festival is indicative of the support the organisers provide to the community and the platform it gives to those individual communities for self-expression.
 - (b) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy - WorldPride is the flagship global event for LGBTIQ+ pride and for the past 20 years has promoted and advocated for LGBTIQ+ issues on an international level. It will be the first time WorldPride has ever been hosted in the Southern Hemisphere with over 1 million visitors expected to visit Sydney over a 17-day period. The event footprint extends across multiple locations across the city and offers an opportunity to showcase Sydney's unique local neighbourhoods and global city centre.

Organisational Impact

27. An internal project team has been established to ensure appropriate planning and coordination of the City's support to the event.

Risks

28. Given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, there is a risk events may not proceed or will proceed in a modified form in response to the public health situation at the relevant time. This may also impact on the capacity for international travel and visitation. It is noted that many events have already sold out following initial ticket releases so there is demonstrated demand for attendance at the event at this time.

Social / Cultural / Community

29. Supplementary sponsorship to further activate Oxford Street during Sydney WorldPride 2023 will ensure a positive visitor experience, providing long term benefits that contribute to revitalisation of the precinct to support business recovery.
30. WorldPride will showcase the City of Sydney to the world and is a demonstration of the support that the LGBTIQ+ community has from the City of Sydney.
31. Communities will feel a sense of belonging and connection to place as Sydney celebrates Sydney WorldPride as a part of the 2023 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival. This sense of belonging comes from feeling safe and supported, having access to events and activities across the local government area and having representatives from LGBTIQ+ communities around the world visit Sydney to celebrate.

32. Sydney WorldPride will be working collaboratively with Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to develop the artistic and cultural program to ensure visitors to the City will be a part of the vibrant creative life of the City. Currently, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras employ over 450 artists, and this will be a significantly higher figure by 2023.

Environmental

33. Sydney WorldPride have engaged a qualified sustainability professional to provide advice and build upon the work of Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to minimise the environmental impact of the event. Sydney WorldPride will work with suppliers to achieve carbon neutral events wherever possible and ensure at least one carbon neutral event, and that all events are single use plastic free.

Economic

34. The combined Mardi Gras and Sydney WorldPride 2023 festival has the potential to deliver strong economic benefits to the hospitality, tourism and retail sectors with a potential combined economic benefit to Sydney of up to \$845 million.

Financial Implications

35. The cash funds of up to \$300,000 in cash will be drawn from the 2022/23 General Contingency Fund.

Relevant Legislation

36. Section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993 provides that a council may, in accordance with a resolution of the council, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions.
37. Public exhibition of this sponsorship is not required because the funds are being paid to a not-for-profit organisation that is not operating for private gain.
38. Sydney WorldPride Limited is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

39. Sydney WorldPride 2023 will take place from 17 February to 5 March 2023.

EMMA RIGNEY

Director City Life

Libby Harris, Night Time City Manager