

## Item 4.1

### City of Sydney Campaign to Support the Voice to Parliament

File No: X094852.004

#### Memorandum by the Chief Executive Officer

To Council:

Council resolved to support a “Yes” vote in the Voice to Parliament referendum through a program of information, awareness, communications, events and community support.

This memorandum provides Council with an overview of the City’s proposed campaign activities to support the Voice to Parliament and notes funding has been allocated for key elements of the campaign that will be undertaken to implement the Council resolutions as set out below. This includes value in kind sponsorship for three significant events in landmark venues (through value in-kind sponsorship for venue hire).

#### Background

The Federal Government intends to hold a constitutional referendum for the establishment of a Voice to Parliament. To commence a referendum, a Bill is required that sets out the question to be determined to pass both the House of Representatives and the Senate, or to pass twice through one of those houses three months apart. Therefore, the final timing and details of the referendum will not be known until this occurs.

Once a Bill has been passed, writs can be issued, and a referendum will be held. It is most likely that this referendum will take place later this year.

Activities in the six-month period prior to the writ being issued are required to comply with the Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984, particularly around the authorisation and publication of material intended or calculated to affect the result of a referendum.

The City will ensure the campaign to support the Voice will comply with legislative requirements, including any required authorisation of referendum material and reporting in relation to expenditure on the campaign.

The City was a major sponsor of the Sydney Peace Prize which recognised the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The City provided free tickets to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and representatives to attend.

This campaign implements Action 4.9 of the City’s Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan, which commits the City to consult the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community about the Uluru Statement from the Heart to identify appropriate ways to support their aspirations.

This campaign also responds to the following Resolutions of Council:

**22 June 2022 – Item 3.1 – 2022 Federal Election**

- (a) develop a resource kit for communities seeking to hold public forums to inform communities about the proposed referendum, and consider allowing City venues to be used for this purpose at reduced or no cost;

**22 August 2022 - Item 3.2 – Progressing the Uluru Statement from the Heart**

- (b) investigate options for the City to conduct a campaign in support of the “yes” vote in the proposed constitutional referendum;
- (c) investigate opportunities to use our library system, communications, talks programs and other means to advance the truth-telling aspirations of the Uluru Statement of the Heart and Reconciliation Australia;

**20 February 2023 – Item 13.11 - Progressing the City's Campaign to Support the Voice to Parliament Referendum**

- (d) investigate working with and providing support, including financial support and access to City venues, to recognised community organisations who actively support and campaign for a “Yes” vote;
- (e) where appropriate, share information, resources and materials about the Uluru Statement of the Heart and Voice to Parliament;
- (f) note that the Chief Executive Office is developing a plan setting out action the City may take in support of a “Yes” vote for consideration by Council;
- (g) bring the plan referred to Item 13.11 (A) (iv) above to Council as soon as possible for consideration;
- (h) investigate the following for possible inclusion in the plan: working with and providing support, including financial support and access to City venues, for recognised community organisations who actively support and campaign for a “Yes” vote;
- (i) investigate the following for possible inclusion in the plan: where appropriate, sharing information, resources and materials about the Uluru Statement of the Heart and Voice to Parliament;

Free access to community venues for small-scale events by eligible community groups is provided under the Council resolution that:

**12 December 2022 – Item 11.4 - Extension of Free Hire of Community Spaces for Local Community Groups**

- (a) Council included in the 2022/23 budget that venue hire be waived, and public liability insurance coverage be provided for free, for local community groups;

- (b) the Council decision provided free use of community halls, meeting rooms and other community spaces for not-for-profit groups, where a group resides in or provides services largely to communities in the City of Sydney. That is: incorporated associations and unincorporated associations whose membership base and purpose is within the City of Sydney Local Government Area. Government agencies, political parties, and groups who do not reflect the Inclusion and Equity principles in the City of Sydney's Community Strategic Plan and other City of Sydney plans such as our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan and Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan are not included.

The 2022/2023 Quarter 3 Review – Delivery Program 2022-2026 report currently before Council seeks Council approval for value-in-kind sponsorships to up to three not-for-profit community organisations, unincorporated community groups or individuals auspiced by a not-for-profit organisation to host free public events of over 500 attendees to support the “yes” campaign. These value-in-kind sponsorships of up to \$30,000 plus GST per event will contribute towards the venue hire, equipment hire and staffing fees only associated with using an appropriate City venue, which may include Sydney Town Hall, Lower Town Hall or Paddington Town Hall (pending availability).

The City will prioritise care and compassion for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, being mindful of potential negative ramifications for community members. The City will actively discourage any discrimination or racism and will uphold the principles of self-determination. Respectful dialogue will be encouraged in all activities related to the referendum.

### **Financial Implications**

The campaign will be funded by Strategic Development and Engagement and City Life budgets across savings in the 2022/23 operational budget and included in the draft 2023/24 budget currently before Council.

### **Relevant Legislation**

- (a) Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act.
- (b) Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.
- (c) (Cth) Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Act 1984 as amended by the (Cth) Referendum (Machinery Provisions) Amendment Act 2023.
- (d) Local Government Act 1993 s 356 relating to the provision of financial assistance.

### **Critical Dates / Time Frames**

The date of the referendum, details and official materials will be provided by the Federal Government once all relevant Bills have been passed.

## Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the City's communications and engagement activities to support the 'yes' campaign for the Voice to Parliament, including street banners, utilising library resources and community centres, providing information to the community through workshops and normal communications channels and a CityTalk event;
- (B) note the cost of the communications and engagement campaign will be approximately \$260,000, with additional costs of up to \$90,000 to support up to three not-for-profit community events in venues, \$160,000 in revenue foregone for street banners and \$20,000 for community centre venues. The total value of revenue foregone for referendum-related use will be reported to Council alongside other community use as a supplementary report to the Operational Plan;
- (C) note that information about the referendum will be provided to City staff, and that support will be provided to enable a safe, respectful and non-discriminatory work environment during this time;
- (D) note that the 2022/2023 Quarter 3 Review – Delivery Program 2022-2026 report before Council seeks endorsement for provision of value in kind sponsorship for up to three public events related to the referendum as set out in that report;
- (E) note the free venue hire of community spaces and free public liability insurance coverage, as endorsed by Council on 12 December 2022, to enable local community groups to host small-scale events and activities at City of Sydney facilities that provide opportunities for the community to discuss the referendum and Uluru Statement of the Heart - Truth, Treaty and Voice. The total value of revenue foregone for referendum-related use will be reported to Council alongside other community use as a supplementary report to the Operational Plan;
- (F) endorse the Lord Mayor to authorise any material that requires authorisation, subject to any applicable legal obligations;
- (G) note that in implementing this campaign, the City will prioritise care and compassion for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, being mindful of potential negative ramifications for community members. The City will actively discourage any discrimination or racism and will uphold the principles of self-determination. Respectful dialogue will be encouraged in all activities related to the referendum; and
- (H) note that the City may be required to report and declare any financial assistance provided in accordance with the applicable legislation from time to time.

**MONICA BARONE**

Chief Executive Officer