

Item 11

Grants and Sponsorship – Ad Hoc Grant - Support for Sundays at Qtopia Sydney

File No: X101031

Summary

On 19 February 2024, Council via a Lord Mayoral Minute, requested that the Chief Executive Officer provide a report to Council on the recommended response to Qtopia Ltd's request for funding to enable free entry on Sundays for a period of 12 months.

Qtopia is an LGBTIQ+ museum in the former Darlinghurst Police Station. Qtopia will host permanent and temporary exhibitions that explore the LGBTIQ+ community through the lens of history, culture, art and contemporary issues.

City staff have reviewed the proposal and other supporting documents. The proposal identifies a need for support of the first 12 months of Sundays to assist with the cost of resourcing, education programs and staffing for an anticipated 200 visitors each Sunday.

Qtopia Ltd propose that support from Council will provide a foundation and a necessary endorsement for them to engage the general public to visit, learn about the history of the LGBTIQ+ community and the broader historical context. It will also contribute to the implementation of a pre-bunking strategy of Qtopia. This aligns with the actions resulting from the Lord Mayor's LGBTIQ+ Safety Summit held in February 2024.

Support for Qtopia Ltd is specifically noted as a priority in the City's LGBTIQ+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy for Oxford Street.

It is recommended that Council approve an ad hoc grant to Qtopia Ltd for \$100,000, to support programming, curation and artist fees, associated staffing and marketing costs. Qtopia will provide free access on Sundays for a period of 12 months.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve a \$100,000 (excluding GST) cash grant to Qtopia Ltd as shown in Attachment A to the subject report;
- (B) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate, execute and administer the grant agreement with Qtopia Ltd on appropriate terms and conditions in relation to acquittal of grant funds and pre-conditions to payment of grant tranches, including as outlined in Attachment A to the subject report;
- (C) Council note that this grant forms one of the actions arising from the Lord Mayor's LGBTIQA+ Safety Summit held in February 2024 and further actions arising from the Lord Mayoral Minute of 19 February 2024 are being developed for Council consideration; and
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to correct minor changes to the matters set out in this report, noting that 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

Attachment A. Recommended For Funding - Ad-Hoc Submission -

Attachment B. Qtopia Partnership Presentation

Background

1. On 17 March 2014, Council resolved: "... should the LGBTIQ+ community develop a viable proposal for a permanent museum, the City of Sydney will support the community in its efforts to achieve this objective, noting that such a museum could only be established and sustained with strong community, State and Federal government financial support."
2. On 11 April 2022, Council endorsed a proposal from Qtopia Ltd for a permanent LGBTIQ+ museum at the site of the former Darlinghurst Police Station, which was preceded by an interim museum in the Oxford Street precinct during Sydney WorldPride 2023
3. Further to the 11 April 2022 Council resolution, on 16 May 2022, Council approved a \$283,500 cash grant to Qtopia Ltd to cover a portion of the start-up costs identified in their business plan.
4. On 5 September 2023 the NSW Government handed over the former Darlinghurst Police Station to Qtopia Ltd for a permanent LGBTIQ+ museum.
5. On 23 February 2024, Qtopia officially opened.
6. Qtopia Ltd have provided a proposal for Sundays at Qtopia with strong evidence of community support. The proposal has been assessed by City staff and is considered a viable proposal.
7. Qtopia Ltd 's proposed plan for Sunday afternoons is intended to increase engagement and visitation, giving visitors an inclusive space to learn and experience the past and current challenges and celebrations of Sydney's LGBTIQ+ community.
8. An average of 200 people are estimated to visit Qtopia each Sunday in its first year, highlighting the need to support the significant stories of the LGBTIQ+ community.
9. Qtopia will also align with one of Justice Sackar's recommendations to the NSW Government commissioned Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ Hate Crimes by hosting exhibitions exploring Sydney and Australian Queer history and implementing a pre-bunking strategy of the community. Access to these exhibitions will be facilitated by the provision of free entries on Sundays, which will encourage a broader attendance. This also aligns with actions from the Lord Mayor's LGBTIQ+ Safety Summit held in February 2024.
10. Support of the Sundays at Qtopia program will help to embed the institution in the Oxford Street precinct and maximise the opportunity for immediate success and long-term viability.
11. Sundays at Qtopia will make a positive contribution to maintaining and celebrating the LGBTIQ+ character of the Oxford Street precinct.
12. Qtopia Ltd is guided by a Board of five members, assisted by an Advisory Panel comprised of people with expertise in publishing, marketing, public relations and crisis communication, LGBTQIA+ history and culture, HIV and AIDS education, museum curation, strategic engagement, trans and First Nations issues. Its Patrons are the former High Court Justice, The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG and publisher and broadcaster, Ita Buttrose AC OBE.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

13. 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 grant is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 7 – Resilient and diverse communities – Sundays at Qtopia will drive visitation to the Oxford Street creative precinct and contribute to the character of the local area.
 - (b) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life – Sundays at Qtopia will make a significant contribution to the cultural life of Sydney and provide an important program of events celebrating the history and contemporary experience of the city and its communities.
 - (c) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy – Sundays at Qtopia will contribute to Sydney's reputation as an inclusive city with a vibrant and diverse cultural life, contributing to innovation and talent attraction.

Organisational Impact

14. The City will enter into a grant agreement with Qtopia Ltd. The grant will be overseen by the Strategy and Communications team who will ensure that appropriate grant conditions are developed and met and provide additional support to help maximise success of the project. These responsibilities can be managed in current staff resources and work plans.

Social / Cultural / Community

15. Community engagement related to the Oxford Street Creative Precinct Planning Controls registered strong interest in the delivery of Qtopia within the Oxford Street precinct. Support for Sundays at Qtopia will help deliver this community aspiration and will provide a meaningful program of events for the LGBTIQ+ community and visitors to city.

Financial Implications

16. In the first instance, the required funding of \$100,000 will be drawn from forecast operational savings across the City Life 2023/24 budget. If the savings are not available any shortfall will be sought from the CEO's contingency fund

Relevant Legislation

17. 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.
18. 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.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

19. This funding will commence on receipt of the signed contract until March 2025. This funding will support programming and staff on Sundays and will require Qtopia to ensure free entry on Sundays to the public until March 2025.

Public Consultation

20. Extensive consultation was undertaken in the development of planning controls for the Oxford Street Creative Precinct. This consultation revealed a strong sentiment that the City of Sydney should actively work to maintain the LGBTIQ+ culture and character of the Oxford Street precinct. In response, the City has published the LGBTIQ+ Social and Cultural Place Strategy for Oxford Street with five priority areas:
 - recognising historic LGBTIQ+ places and spaces
 - reflecting the contemporary LGBTIQ+ community within local businesses and venues
 - increasing LGBTIQ+ cultural and social spaces
 - increasing LGBTIQ+ visibility and identity throughout the precinct, and
 - ensuring the local community is safe and supported.

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