



MINUTE OF THE MAYOR

Dated: 27 April 2020

RE: COVID-19 Financial Support

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) has asked for Council's support with their campaign for assistance in dealing with the health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council is working to support its community, businesses and Council staff during this world-wide pandemic. We have taken action in response to the various restrictions put in place by the Federal and State Governments. Council is already suffering the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. We expect an estimated shortfall in income for the June Quarter of \$6.3 million and a shortfall in the 2020/21 financial year of \$9.4 million.

Council is in the process of preparing a paper on the financial impacts of COVID-19.

In addition, the closure of a number of our key sites including the North Sydney Olympic Pool, Library and Coal Loader and the reduction or cancellation of many community-oriented services has impacted our community and staff.

I am recommending that we support the campaign which is being coordinated on behalf of the NSW sector by LGNSW and at a national level by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

Council is struggling with the financial impacts of COVID-19. We have faced increased costs and at the same time are experiencing declining revenue as more and more ratepayers are forced into financial hardship. The impacts are rapidly escalating.

Council is doing everything possible to provide support and deliver the services needed to protect community health and keep our communities running during these difficult times. The wellbeing, safety and livelihoods of our communities, customers and staff is our top priority. However, if additional assistance is not provided, Council may be forced to cut services, infrastructure maintenance and staff.

It is critical that the local government sector receives adequate funding and resources to coordinate and deliver the goods and services needed as we navigate through, and recover from, the new challenges presented by COVID-19 and its massive impacts on people and our local economies.

Council needs urgent financial assistance from the Federal Government and NSW State Government to maintain infrastructure, services and employment as well as funding to give councils the capacity to provide hardship assistance to the community.

The measures listed below would be effective and simple to implement:

- Increasing Financial Assistance Grants payments to 1% to help councils maintain essential functions and services, acknowledging the increased costs and mounting revenue losses arising from COVID-19 as well as giving councils the capacity to provide hardship assistance to businesses and residents.
- Immediate financial assistance to support council employees, especially in early education and care.
- Providing stimulus funding to councils for projects that will help sustain council operations and boost local economies. This could be achieved through increasing or bringing forward funding under existing funding programs or introducing new programs. Existing Federal funding programs include the Roads to Recovery, Bridges Renewal and Road Safety Blackspots programs. State programs include Fixing Local Roads, Fixing Country Bridges and the Stronger Country Communities programs.
- Increased access to TAFE, VET and other apprenticeship opportunities that council staff can undertake to address skill shortages, especially for staff in non-essential services who are unable to be redeployed.

I therefore recommend:

1. THAT Council calls on the Federal Government and NSW Government to urgently deliver comprehensive and multifaceted financial support and stimulus packages to local government to enable them to continue to operate effectively and provide essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. THAT Council calls for the packages to include the following measures:

- Increasing Financial Assistance Grants payments to 1% to help councils maintain essential functions and services, acknowledging the increased costs and mounting revenue losses arising from COVID-19 as well as giving councils capacity to provide hardship assistance to businesses and residents.
- Immediate financial assistance to support council employees, especially in early education and care.
- Providing stimulus funding to councils for projects that will help sustain council operations and boost local economies. This could be achieved through increasing or bringing forward funding under existing funding programs or introducing new programs.
- Increased access to TAFE, VET and other apprenticeship opportunities that council staff can undertake to address skill shortages, especially for staff in non-essential services who are unable to be redeployed.

3. THAT Council commends the NSW and Federal Governments on their stewardship during this crisis and commits to working in partnership to protect community health and sustain local economies through this crisis.

4. THAT Council write to the local Federal Member for North Sydney, Mr Trent Zimmerman MP; the local State Member for North Shore, Ms Felicity Wilson MP; Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP; NSW Premier, the Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP; Federal Treasurer, the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP; NSW Treasurer, the Hon Dominic Perrottet MP; NSW Local Government Minister, the Hon Shelley Hancock MP; Federal Minister for Local Government, the Hon Mark Coulton MP; Federal Opposition Leader, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP; NSW Opposition Leader, Ms Jodi McKay MP; Federal Shadow Minister for Local Government, Mr Jason Clare MP; and NSW Shadow Minister for Local Government, Mr Greg Warren MP, to confirm their support for increased financial assistance and stimulus funding for local government to help councils maintain essential services and employment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 5. THAT** Council endorses Local Government NSW's sector-wide campaign to obtain financial assistance, employment support and stimulus funding for the local government sector.
- 6. THAT** Council advise LGNSW President Linda Scott of the passage of this Mayoral Minute.

**COUNCILLOR JILLY GIBSON
MAYOR**