

8.15. Sculpture@Sawmillers Exhibition

AUTHOR: Sandra Moore, Manager Communications and Events
Joanna Gibson, Team Leader Events

ENDORSED BY: Margaret Palmer, Director Corporate Services

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to consider a request to fund a Sculpture@Sawmillers exhibition and advise Council that funding is available within the Communications and Events budget should Council resolve to financially support the exhibition in September/October 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At its meeting of 25 October 2020, Council considered Mayoral Minute (6.1 MM01) about Sculpture@Sawmillers and resolved:

- 1. THAT Council staff provided a report to the November Council meeting in respect to the proposed Sculpture Exhibition and capacity to incorporate it within Council's overall event program.*

Local resident and Cultural Consultant Elsa Atkin has approached Council seeking a \$70,000 grant to allow her to produce a Sculpture@Sawmillers exhibition in Spring 2021. The events budget currently includes \$70,000 for Council's Australia Day event, BBQ by the Bridge. This event was not able to proceed in 2021 because the event site is being used for maintenance works on the Harbour Bridge. In addition to the site works, the Australia Day harbour program was also cancelled due to COVID-19 Public Health Order restrictions so no funds were required to implement crowd control measures.

This means funds are available to support Sculpture@Sawmillers should Council resolve to do so. Should Council not resolve to support the event, some of the BBQ by the Bridge funding would be used to activate the village centres.

The request for funding has been publicly advertised as required under Section 356 of the Local Government Act. Only two submissions were received, both in support of the proposed grant.

Under the current Public Health (COVID-19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement) Order (no 7), which was current at the writing of this report, a maximum of 50 people are permitted to gather in a public outdoor place. If the event were to proceed, it would require a COVID-19 safety plan and to register as a COVID safe business or organisation with NSW Health, in order to manage access to the reserve if required.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funding is available within the events budget for 2020/2021 to cover the proposed cost of the exhibition.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** Council determine its position on providing a \$70,000 grant to Ms Elsa Atkin to produce Sculpture@Sawmillers in Spring 2021.
2. **THAT** should Council resolve to provide the grant, Communications & Events staff be authorised to draw up an agreement with Ms Atkin that includes a schedule for progress payments and Council approval of the event's COVID-safety plan.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

4. Our Social Vitality

4.2 North Sydney is creative and home to popular events

BACKGROUND

In 2010, local resident Elsa Atkin approached Council seeking support and funding for a sculpture exhibition in Sawmillers Reserve, McMahons Point. Council resolved to grant Ms Atkin \$50,000 to produce a sculpture exhibition, entitled *Sculpture@Sawmillers*, which ran over a weekend. The event was very successful and at the request of Ms Atkin Council provided financial support again in 2014 and 2016.

The 2016 exhibition was expanded to run for 10 days from Friday 16 to Sunday 25 September and included a poetry competition. The event was supported by a team of local volunteers and opened by former Governor General Dame Quentin Bryce. The exhibition drew people from across Sydney and received favourable media and social media coverage.

Last year, with the approval of Council, Ms Atkin commissioned Jane Gillings, one of the exhibitors from 2016, to recreate her artwork *Our Golden Years* in Sawmillers Reserve.

In early October, Ms Atkin approached Council seeking financial support to produce a fourth *Sculpture@Sawmillers* exhibition in September or October 2021. Ms Atkin is proposing a similar scale event to the 2016 exhibition, with 50 to 70 sculptures selected from established and emerging artists.

Following consideration of the Mayoral Minute on 30 November 2020, a report was drafted in accordance with the resolution. During the preparation for this report, it was determined that under section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, a minimum of 28 days public notice must be given before Council considers a proposal to provide a grant outside of an already approved program.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with section 356 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, Ms Atkin's request for funding was advertised on Council's website from 26 November 2020. Two submissions were received, one from Stanton Precinct and one from a McMahons Point resident. Both support the proposed grant.

DETAIL

Ms Atkin has requested a grant of \$70,000. The grant would cover \$12,000 for prizes, with other prize money sought from sponsors. The quote provided by Ms Atkin includes labour and other costs associated with curation, judging, promotion and a small event launch.

There are currently no major cultural events planned for Spring 2021 and the event would complement the Council third-party events which are held at this time of year. The community feedback from previous Sculpture@Sawmillers has been very positive and there is strong support among residents for all events, including arts and cultural events.

It should be noted that Council's North Sydney Art Prize is scheduled for March 2022. This event at the Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability runs for 16 days, attracts 18,000 visitors and includes sculpture, installations, drawings, paintings and new media as well as public workshops and talks.

The events budget for the financial year 2020-2021 currently includes \$70,000 for Council's Australia Day event, BBQ by the Bridge. The event site in Bradfield Park is currently being used as a works site for maintenance on the Harbour Bridge and BBQ by the Bridge was therefore not able to proceed in 2021. As the Australia Day harbour program was also cancelled due to Public Health Order restrictions, no funds were required to implement crowd control measure on the foreshore.

BBQ by the Bridge funding could be used as grant funding for Sculpture@Sawmillers should Council resolve to do so. Should Council not support allocating the funds in this way, some of this funding would be used to activate village centres including the Mitchell Street Plaza, St Leonards and Ernest Place, Crows Nest.

Should Council resolve to approve the grant funding for Ms Atkin, Council will need an agreement with Ms Atkin that includes public liability insurance, risk management, a COVID-safety plan and a schedule of progress payments against key milestones.

Finally, it should also be noted that the current Public Health Orders relating to mass gatherings and movement restricts outdoor public gatherings to 50 people. It would therefore only be able to proceed if Ms Atkin can ensure that a strategy is in place to ensure crowd gatherings at the exhibition do not exceed the maximum number permitted according to the Public Health Order at the time of the event. It should be noted that access to the reserve may need to be restricted at busy times to ensure that the event operates in a COVID-safe way that meets the relevant guidelines.

It is difficult to predict the progression of the pandemic. At the time of writing, while vaccines had become available, there was also more contagious versions of the virus

spreading throughout the world. Should Council resolve to support the exhibition, substantial planning and investment will need to go ahead well before it is known what PHO may apply at the time.