

**ITEM MAYORAL MINUTE - CITY OF CANADA BAY
MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE NOVEL
CORONAVIRUS**

Department Executive Services

Author Initials: AT

REPORT

Councillors would be aware that, as of 10 February 2020, Australia has 15 confirmed cases of Novel Coronavirus and that there are four cases in New South Wales.

The number of cases in Australia and around the world is very low compared to the spread of the virus in parts of China. The approach to managing the spread of the virus here in Australia has been very effective and I commend both the State and Federal Governments, and our community for following the advice of health authorities during this global health incident.

I recently received a representation from the Rhodes Multicultural Community Association to discuss the issues our community are facing.

In our area, we have a number of local residents who, after visiting parts of China recently, have voluntarily taken up quarantine. They are confined to their homes in response to requests from health authorities.

The care these individuals and families have shown for our community is greatly appreciated and I will write to and thank each family for their selfless and conscientious approach.

I will share the information about all of Council's online resources with affected families so that they can continue to access local government services from their homes. These services include thousands of online library resources including e-books, video, music and news. Additionally, in the past week, Five Dock Leisure Centre has created online content highlighting home exercise to assist these families.

We are working with partners such as Rhodes Waterside to promote online retail options and to share their initiatives of support for our local residents. Rhodes Waterside provided a \$100 aid voucher to these families to support local residents and I commend them on this initiative.

Council is working with health authorities to provide accurate and timely information on the virus, symptoms and treatment to the whole community. A community health talk is being organised with the NSW Health team about the virus in Rhodes. Council will also make this session available online for people to watch at their convenience.

Any fear within our community about shopping local and participating in local events needs to be managed by providing accurate and timely information.

I am hearing from our local business owners that the outbreak is starting to hurt our local shopping centres as people are avoiding crowded places. This is already having an impact on the local economy and on Council's bottom line – one business in Rhodes that has closed its doors paid \$22,500 to Council annually in footpath dining fees.

It is clear that Council must intervene to assist local business.

Our strategy to support business is twofold:

- Some businesses in Rhodes have reported significant drops in trade and already one business has closed permanently as a result of the sudden decline in their trade. I recommend that footpath dining fees for affected business be waived for two months to support traders through this difficult time. This waiver would assist 20 businesses who are currently paying for footpath dining, making over 450 seats available free of charge. It may also encourage businesses who have considered footpath dining to apply during this period. The estimated cost to Council would be \$17,000 which may require an adjustment in the 3rd quarter budget review.
- Council can promote online business opportunities and support online sales. Those in quarantine are dependent upon home delivery for all their needs. It highlights the need for local business to make sales available through multiple channels. Local businesses needing help with developing their online offering can use BusinessConnect services or get in touch with Council for help with services and training.

I encourage our whole community to recognise the need to continue to go out and enjoy our town centres and I note that local businesses are taking measures to ensure that places are clean and safe for shoppers.

Council's Place team will also work with business and community partners in the roll out of local activations and promotions as the quarantine period winds up and people start to feel safer coming together. There are 12 events planned in the coming two months to bring the community and business together.

The postponed Lunar New Year event will be hosted when the concerns of the community have receded. We are currently proposing this to be in April.

Lastly and importantly, I have been advised by members of our community that the fear surrounding this virus has resulted in an increase of xenophobic and racist incidents. This is truly disappointing to me and I believe that Council must show leadership on this matter.

In this City, our diversity is our strength. When we are met with adversity this community responds by getting behind those in need, not by attributing blame, and that's the message that Council and Councillors must amplify within our City. Programs to tackle these attitudes and opinions are being woven into upcoming community events and Council communications.

Harmony Day (21 March) will be hosted in Rhodes to celebrate diversity and raise awareness of the harm of racism. Neighbour Day (29 March) will celebrate the importance of being a supportive and inclusive neighbour.

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT the Mayor write to those families who have maintained self-imposed quarantine, thanking them on behalf of Council for protecting our community.
2. THAT Council deliver a communications campaign to support and reassure members of the affected communities. This campaign can share authorised health and welfare information and also share local resources and programs.
3. THAT a business promotion campaign be delivered for local businesses in affected areas.
4. THAT business use of the footpath fees be waived in affected areas Rhodes and Concord West for February and March 2020. The estimated cost to Council would be \$17,000 which may require an adjustment in the 3rd quarter budget review.
5. THAT venue fees or deposits for community groups be waived for any cancelled programs or activities in affected areas Rhodes and Concord West for February and March 2020. The estimated cost to Council for this measure is minimal.
6. THAT a recovery event program be hosted in affected areas to support and celebrate community connection.

