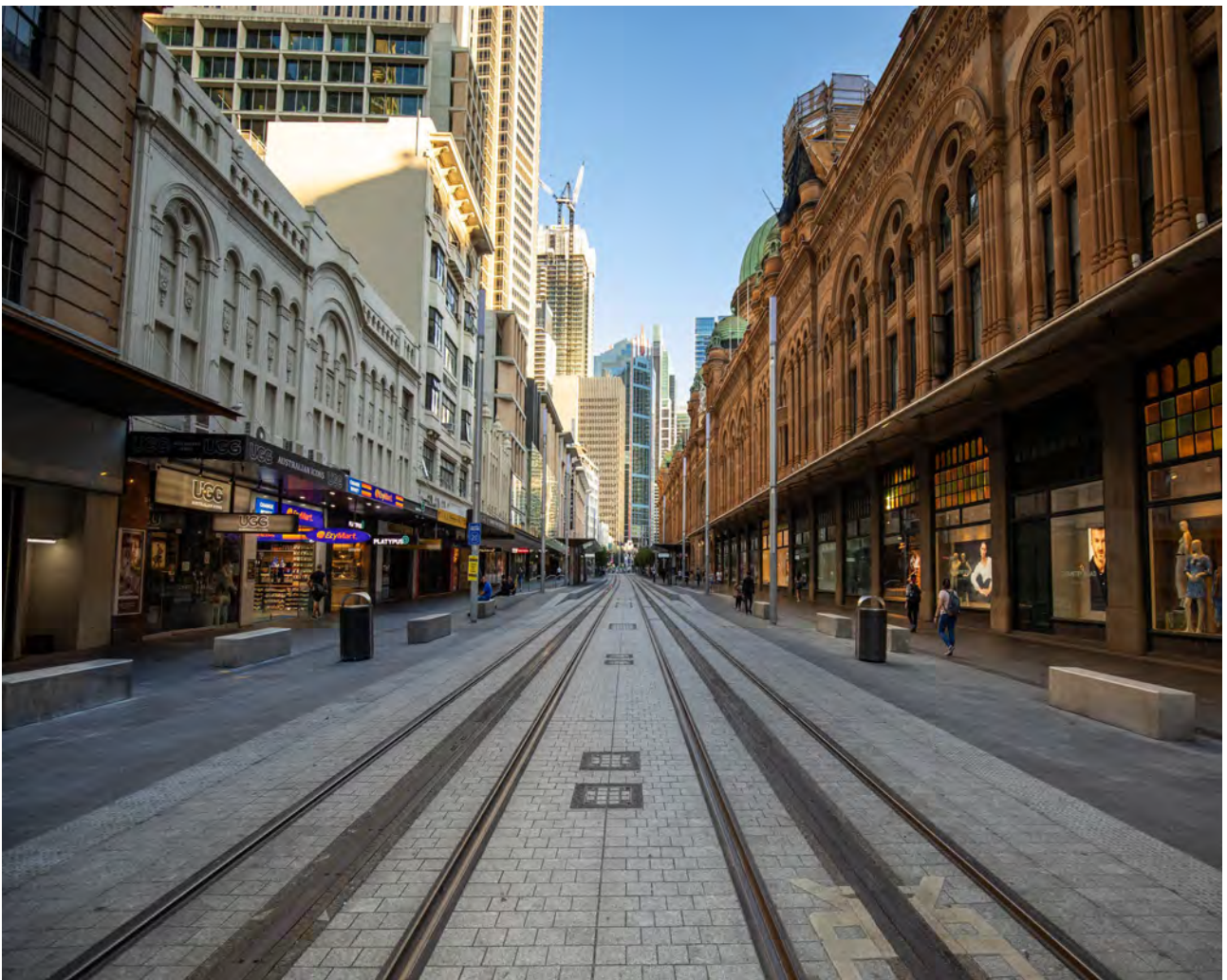


# Community Recovery Plan



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# Message from the Lord Mayor

When the pandemic first hit Sydney, the City responded quickly: closing our community facilities, our libraries, pools and playgrounds; increasing cleansing and waste regimes; and establishing new grants programs to help support our creatives, community sector and small businesses.

It is a credit to the people of Australia that we have made a strong response to contain and suppress Covid-19, centred on the advice provided by our health experts and action by governments.

While there is still a lot of uncertainty about the future, we are now cautiously looking beyond the crisis. We must remain vigilant and ensure we are working together to prevent another wave of the virus, but we must also be thinking about the kind of city that will emerge and what action we must take to support our communities.

This plan is an important step towards life after the pandemic.

In preparing the plan I have been speaking with many people about how the pandemic has impacted them personally or impacted their businesses and the organisations and industry sectors they represent. I have heard distressing stories from people who have lost their jobs or whose industries have been devastated because of the restrictions. I have also heard stories of communities coming together to support one another, doing what they can to provide comfort to those who are feeling isolated or are particularly vulnerable to the health crisis.

We have heard that we should prioritise support for our most vulnerable and our local businesses, more parks and open space for general wellbeing, and more footpaths and bike lanes for safe, physically-distant active transport. And we have heard that any recovery

should have sustainability and action on climate change at its core.

This recovery plan gives direction to how we will work in partnership with our communities, businesses, the state government and other local governments to lay the groundwork for and support economic and social recovery in our city.



**Clover Moore**  
**Lord Mayor**

A handwritten signature of Clover Moore in black ink, written in a cursive style.



# Introduction

## Recovery in the City of Sydney area

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on our communities and economy.

As a health crisis, the response has been well managed by the federal and state governments. The outcomes achieved to date are outstanding when compared globally.

But it has also triggered an economic crisis and we will all feel the consequences of this for some time.

Due to the depth and breadth of the policy, fiscal and social support responses required, initial support mechanisms have been put in

place by all levels of government and non-government organisations.

While management of the crisis continues, the staged removal of restrictions on social and business activity has begun.

This Community Recovery Plan is the next step we will take together over the next 18 months to the end of 2021 to shape the future of the City of Sydney area and the communities that live, work, invest, study and visit here.

It builds on the two support packages for our communities and businesses released by Council in March 2020. Combined, those packages were valued at \$72.5 million.

This recovery plan continues to provide support where it is needed most.



*An empty Sydney Town Hall during the pandemic.*

455 cash grants totalling \$6.75 million have been provided to help businesses survive the economic impacts, support organisations that are there for the most vulnerable and allow artists to continue to create.

Existing inequities in our society and economy have been exposed and exacerbated. New groups of vulnerable people have also emerged. Conditions for many are severe.

We will continue to address their most urgent needs and advocate on their behalf for support by other levels of government.

Some of Sydney's other chronic stresses that affect our communities have been amplified because of this pandemic. They include housing affordability, social cohesion, employment diversity and transport issues in particular. Our actions have been prioritised to respond to these.

This recovery plan also provides a pathway to moving beyond the crisis.

As an organisation, the City of Sydney has also been impacted by these economic conditions, which have led to significant decreases in our revenue. This recovery plan has been developed in the context of a constrained financial budget.

The plan outlines the way the City's resources, services and programs will pivot to provide for these new needs. This means that we will prioritise the actions in this plan ahead of other uses for our resources.

During the pandemic, most sectors of the economy (other than essential services) that relied on interaction with people were closed.

As government restrictions ease, we will work to re-open our city. By mitigating safety concerns, we aim to encourage people to re-engage with city life and businesses.

We will support local organisations and businesses to adapt and innovate so they are well placed to succeed in this changed environment.

Although this is not a long-term transformation plan for the city economy, we acknowledge there are potential opportunities even at this time. We have included actions that pursue opportunities in emerging sectors and new markets.

In taking action, we will also look for opportunities to embed climate action in all that we do, to ensure culture and creativity is central to the recovery effort and to create a more equitable and resilient city and community in future.

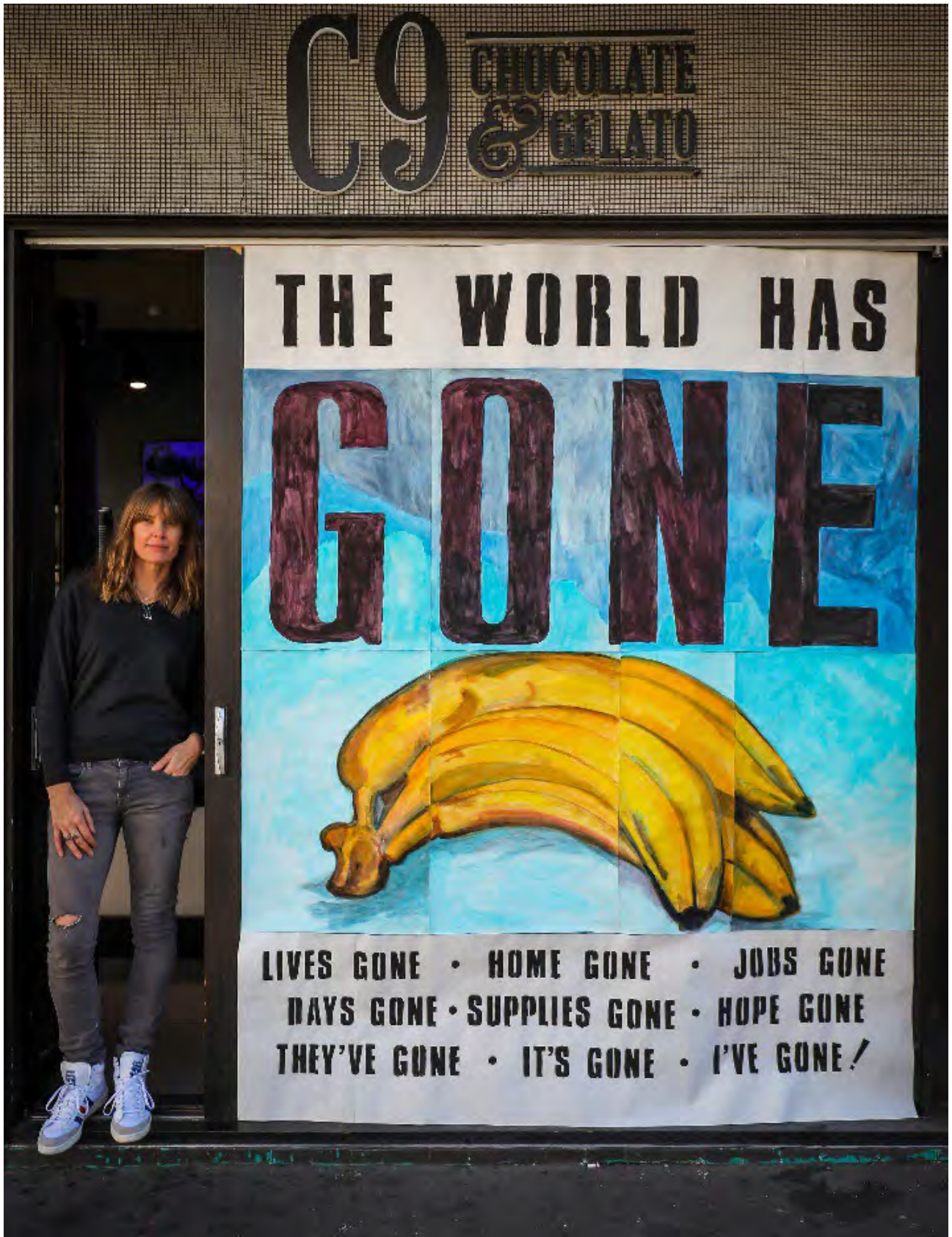
In developing this recovery plan, we have been informed by our communities. We asked how people and organisations have been impacted and how the City of Sydney could respond.

During the peak of the crisis, the response was necessarily led by government. However, as we transition to recovery, community involvement is more important than ever. It is crucial our communities once again influence decisions that affect their future and their city.

Our ongoing engagement with these communities will be essential in determining the priorities, timing and focus for our actions. This will help us to respond quickly to the needs of the community which may be greater or less than anticipated.

We will also be flexible to adapt to a situation and environment that is continually changing.





Artist Wendy Murray received a City of Sydney Covid-19 relief grant to support the New Views Poster Project. New artworks by Sydney artists are displayed in the windows of empty shopfronts along pandemic-impacted King Street, Newtown. The artworks add life and colour to the streetscape and reconnect the community in a collaboration between local creatives, businesses and property owners.



*Celebrating at NAIDOC in the City, 2019.*

## Recovery goals

We will measure progress and outcomes of this plan against four recovery goals.

### **1. Recovery is inclusive and equitable**

Our recovery actions will address existing and emerging inequality in our city. We will support the most vulnerable in society to access appropriate shelter and adequate food and services. We will direct the City's resources to those people and sectors who need it most. Our aim is for no one to be left behind and for everyone to have an opportunity to take part in and benefit from the city's recovery.

### **2. Recovery supports a resilient economy and community wealth building**

We will act as a facilitator, collaborator and convenor to help our communities and economy recover from this crisis. In doing so, we will work to manage space in our city to build confidence that the city is safe and active. By encouraging recovery actions to be developed in partnership between government, business and communities, we will strengthen

our city. As part of our work to build capacity in groups and organisations, we will support local procurement, promote local businesses and work together with our communities to catalyse the changes needed to build a stronger future.

### **3. Recovery is a catalyst for a green and sustainable future**

We will boost our recovery and climate-proof our city by accelerating the uptake of renewables, the transition to a circular economy and the use of new technologies. Our actions will support the growth of jobs and new industries.

### **4. Recovery is strengthened by a robust and diverse cultural sector**

Cities need strong and active cultural communities. It is through our arts and cultural practices that we know who we are and express what we value, and we recognise that culture is essential to all aspects of our lives and to our city's recovery. A thriving cultural sector is a foundation for innovation and vital for our city's future. Our actions will focus on supporting the sector to recover from the crisis as well as ensuring the sector is integral to broader recovery efforts.



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## Goals to action

In identifying where and how we should act, we have analysed the impact on, and needs of, our communities and economy as well as the policy responses of the federal and NSW governments.

We seek to act primarily when issues fall within the direct control of the City and where no other level of government is already providing a response.

In some instances, due to gaps in policy and service areas between levels of government, we have elected to act in areas where we do not normally, or at a scale not previously required. At the same time, we will continue to advocate for other levels of government to respond.

Our actions focus on the individuals, groups, businesses and industry sectors with the greatest unmet need and we will prioritise the allocation of resources accordingly.

We cannot act alone.

We will work with the NSW Government, including Resilience NSW, where our actions must be coordinated or require joint responses. Working together with business and other organisations in our city will be essential to the delivery of this plan.

We will consult the City's advisory panels when implementing this plan. This will ensure we receive independent, cross-sectoral advice to inform our actions.

We will also consult with industry, representative organisations and our communities to ensure our actions achieve the intended outcomes.

We will monitor and evaluate the progress and outcomes of this plan and modify our response to the situation as it develops and regularly report to Council.

### A time of uncertainty

This recovery plan has been developed in a time of great uncertainty.

The health crisis is not yet over. We don't yet understand the full extent of the social and economic impact and cannot predict the duration of the social and economic

consequences. That means the pathway to recovery cannot be mapped with any certainty.

We don't fully know how business or consumers will respond as regulations are gradually lifted and businesses trade at varying levels of their pre-pandemic capacity.

Much of the city economy's recovery will depend on the recovery of the global economy, over which we have no influence.

Our previous reliance on international education, tourism, business visitors and on attracting an internationally mobile workforce requires open global borders with people willing and able to move freely again. When this might occur is unknown at the time of developing this plan, but this is likely to be one of the last sectors of the economy to be rebuilt. The extent to which international markets can be replaced by domestic markets will be critical – at least in the short to medium term.

Our actions must account for this uncertainty. They must be timed according to the level of restrictions, scaled depending on the response, and prioritised to meet the greatest need.

### Policy framework

This recovery plan has been developed taking into account government health directions including the Australian Government's Roadmap to a COVIDSafe Australia and the NSW Government's subsequent implementation of the three-step roadmap.

Our actions are informed by the City of Sydney's community strategic plan, Sustainable Sydney 2030, and key policies, strategies and action plans that support its implementation.

Our actions have also been informed by Resilient Sydney, metropolitan Sydney's first resilience strategy designed to strengthen our ability to survive, adapt and thrive in the face of increasing global uncertainty and local shocks and stresses. In developing this recovery plan, we have accounted for the amplification of acute shocks and chronic stresses facing Sydney. This has helped us determine priorities for action as well as how these actions relate to each other and support multiple goals.



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## Guiding principles

These principles are based on community values and will guide the City in its decision making as we implement this recovery plan.

### **1. People are actively involved in recovery, shaping change in their city and their future**

People will have an opportunity to influence decisions that affect the recovery of the city and their communities. We will support people and organisations to be empowered, connected and effective community builders, involved in the change in the city and shaping their future.

The impacts of the pandemic mean that our recovery will involve reconnecting with places and social networks. Engaging people in their neighbourhoods in ways they feel safe and that contribute to stronger community connections will be particularly important.

This includes checking in with our community to ensure we respond to their changing needs.

### **2. Recovery is responsive to the government health directions, led by stewardship and collaboration**

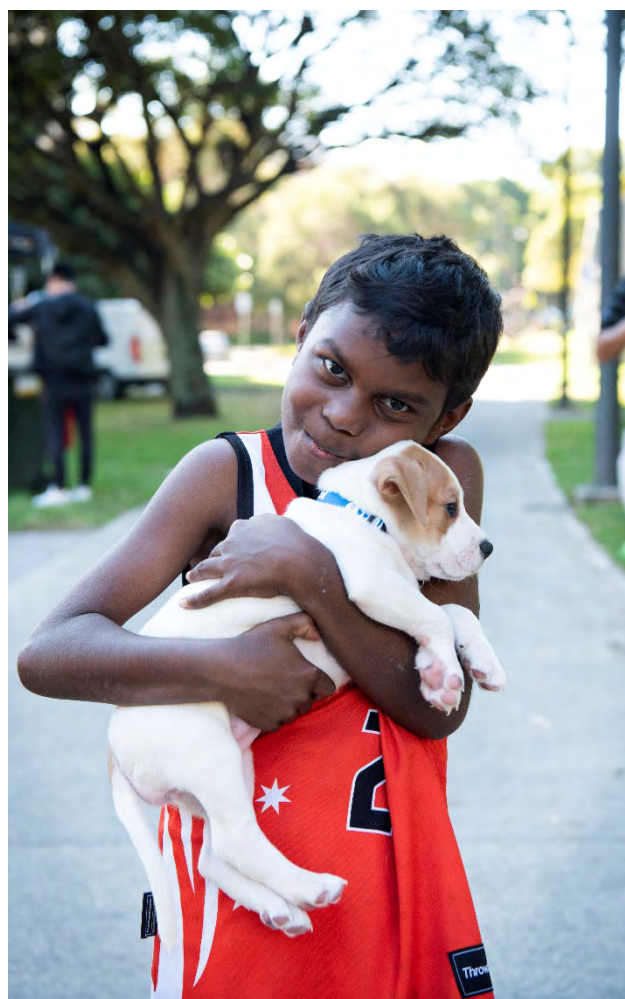
We will lead the recovery of our city by engendering social harmony and inclusion while also acting as a steward of the environment and the economy. This requires understanding what our communities value and the values we have in common, and holding ourselves to account to act in line with those shared values.

As stewards of this city, we embrace innovation and change and will integrate with other systems of recovery to share knowledge and expertise. Our communities are also impacted by decisions outside our boundaries and we seek to work collaboratively with partners, our neighbours and all levels of government for the benefit of current and future generations.

Community and government have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to work together to respond and adapt quickly to these unprecedented circumstances.

### **3. Decisions are evidence-based and allow a flexible response**

The health, safety, wellbeing and prosperity of our communities drives our decision making. Insights from our communities augment broader sets of data to inform our decisions. Our decision-making framework is guided by evidence and being prepared to respond and adapt as circumstances change. Our decisions are shared quickly and clearly with our communities, empowering their active engagement with recovery efforts.



*Redfern Waterloo Pet Day, 2019. The event hosted by the City of Sydney in partnership with Counterpoint Community Services provides pet health services for social housing residents and enhances community connection and safety.*

# Why we need to act

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## Impact on our economy

The severity of impact has seen the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecast that the global economy will contract by 3 per cent in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

In Australia, Federal Treasury has forecast GDP to fall by over 10 per cent in the June 2020 quarter. This represents the nation's biggest fall on record. The national unemployment rate is expected to reach around 10 per cent and high levels of underemployed are anticipated<sup>2</sup>.

Confidence in the economy is at historic lows<sup>3</sup>.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic output in the City of Sydney's local area was \$140 billion per year with an estimated 1.3 million people in the city centre every day.

There are 246,000 residents, approximately 23,000 businesses and more than 500,000 workers<sup>4</sup> in the City of Sydney local area. This makes it the most densely populated local government area in NSW and a magnet for international visitors, students, talent and investment.

The pandemic has had severe impact on the city, our community and our economy.

The economic output of the City of Sydney local area is forecast to fall up to 15.8 per cent<sup>5</sup> in the June 2020 quarter compared to 2018/19

average. This fall equates to a reduction of output in the order of \$40–50 million every day.

The impact is particularly severe in our local area because there is such a high concentration of businesses and a substantial number of jobs in the sectors that have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

These include the arts, accommodation and food services, retail and other professional services<sup>6</sup>.

Tourism and the visitor economy has been severely impacted from the closure of both national and state borders.

The university sector has been hit particularly hard from the international travel bans. This will impact the broader economy with ABS data indicating that for every \$1 lost in international student tuition fees, \$1.15 is lost in the broader economy due to loss of international student spending<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020](https://imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020)

<sup>2</sup> [ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/josh-frydenberg-2018/speeches/ministerial-statement-economy-parliament-house-canberra](https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/josh-frydenberg-2018/speeches/ministerial-statement-economy-parliament-house-canberra)

<sup>3</sup> [roymorgan.com/morganpoll/consumer-confidence/roy-morgan-business-confidence](https://roymorgan.com/morganpoll/consumer-confidence/roy-morgan-business-confidence) and [roymorgan.com/morganpoll/consumer-confidence/consumer-monthly-results](https://roymorgan.com/morganpoll/consumer-confidence/consumer-monthly-results)

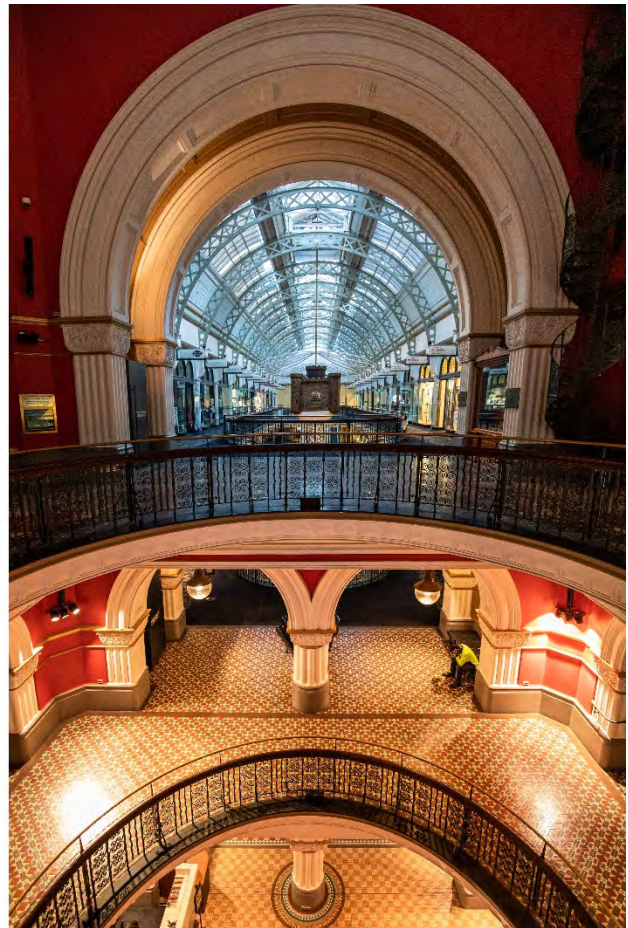
<sup>4</sup> [cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/learn/research-and-statistics/the-city-at-a-glance](https://cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/learn/research-and-statistics/the-city-at-a-glance)

<sup>5</sup> [economy.id.com.au/sydney/covid19](https://economy.id.com.au/sydney/covid19)

<sup>6</sup> [economy.id.com.au/sydney/covid19](https://economy.id.com.au/sydney/covid19)

<sup>7</sup> [theconversation.com/australian-universities-could-lose-19-billion-in-the-next-3-years-our-economy-will-suffer-with-them-136251](https://theconversation.com/australian-universities-could-lose-19-billion-in-the-next-3-years-our-economy-will-suffer-with-them-136251)





*A deserted Queen Victoria Building during the pandemic. Retail businesses and workers were hit particularly hard.*

## Impact on our workers

Jobs in our local area are forecast to fall by 12.4 per cent in the June 2020 quarter<sup>8</sup>, even after taking into account the mitigating effects of the federal government's JobKeeper employee retention program. This forecast does not factor in the rate of underemployment.

25,000 jobs in our local area have been lost in professional services and the scientific and tech industries, which is more jobs lost than from any other industry.<sup>9</sup>

Based on ABS data and our mix of businesses, around 100,000 of our city workforce are casual workers, including almost 30,000 of our resident workers.

Many casuals and insecure workers, such as those in the 'gig economy', as well as temporary visa holders and international students, were ineligible for the wage subsidy packages and other social and health support because of their visa status or job type.

Women have lost jobs at a higher rate than men and face more dire long-term consequences due to the economic shutdown<sup>10</sup>.

Impacts are expected to be particularly severe for young people. New research suggests they have borne the brunt of job losses and cuts to working hours with expected social impacts to flow on for years to come<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> [economy.id.com.au/sydney/covid19](https://economy.id.com.au/sydney/covid19)

<sup>9</sup> [economy.id.com.au/sydney/covid19](https://economy.id.com.au/sydney/covid19)

<sup>10</sup> [ABS Labour Force figures April 2020](https://www.abs.gov.au/australian-bulletin/labour-force-figures)

<sup>11</sup> [csi.edu.au/media/uploads/csi\\_fact\\_sheet\\_social\\_covid-19\\_youth\\_unemployment.pdf](https://csi.edu.au/media/uploads/csi_fact_sheet_social_covid-19_youth_unemployment.pdf)



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## Impact on our people

JobSeeker and JobKeeper have so far done well to insulate the impact of the economic downturn. But there is significant uncertainty surrounding the end of these stimulus interventions and what impact this will have on those groups most in need.

Many are advocating for a gradual and staged transition to ensure those impacted most by the pandemic have ongoing access to essential support.

The period of recovery and transition will be more difficult for those disproportionately impacted by job losses and financial hardship.

The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities for some groups within our communities. These include people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, individuals on low incomes, women and non-citizens.

We know the impacts of the pandemic are more significant for these groups and have longer-term flow-on impacts in all areas of their lives<sup>12</sup>.

The long-term impacts on mental health as people lose their jobs, experience housing stress and immense uncertainty is not yet fully understood. Many have also found social isolation has impacted their mental health.

With pressures on ensuring the safety of volunteers and financial constraints, many not-for-profit organisations have had to reduce their services or needed time to adapt. This has left a vacuum for many in most need in the city.

Many of our most disadvantaged communities already rely on the free or accessible services we provide. The scale of social and economic challenges as a consequence of pandemic will see an increased demand for these services.

**The City of Sydney donated \$1 million to OzHarvest for food relief.**



*An OzHarvest volunteer distributes food hampers. The City of Sydney donated \$1 million to OzHarvest to support their work in providing food relief to those severely impacted by the pandemic.*

<sup>12</sup> Sydney Equality Indicators Framework, Measures for a Just City



*The City of Sydney provides tables and chairs in the city centre which will support people to keep physically distant while enjoying their city.*

## Impact on our city

We expect physical distancing measures to be with us for some time. Even though people are returning to school and their workplaces, the impact of physical distancing on public transport limits the degree to which large volumes of people can safely return to the city within reasonable travel times.

There is also pressure on public spaces to provide for physical distancing in what might have been previously crowded areas. This has led to a broader recognition of the benefits of public space for people.

Sharing space is going to be more important than ever. Different users from our communities and businesses will need access to public spaces at different times. Careful management of our public places and facilities is crucial in rebuilding confidence as we return to public life across the city.

The transformation of George Street is a much needed catalyst for the revitalisation of the city centre. The City of Sydney is working with the state government to extend George Street's car-free zone to provide more space for people, dining, seating and activations.

# What our communities said

Engaging our communities is essential as we transition from government-led actions to regaining a sense of control over our lives during the recovery phase. From 18 May to 3 June 2020 we asked our communities about the impacts of the pandemic on them and how the City can best support our communities during recovery.

2,700 residents, visitors, workers, students and business or property owners completed an online community survey. There were over 1,100 responses to the business survey. The Lord Mayor hosted five online round tables and City staff took part in numerous stakeholder forums and online workshops to better understand the specific issues affecting particular sectors and groups.

The insights provided a platform for us to work with our communities on recovery, ensuring we understand and can respond to their needs.

The impacts of the pandemic have been widespread. A third have felt lonely or have mental health and wellbeing concerns. About 40 per cent have lost jobs or experienced reduced income and as many are worried about job security. 77 per cent of businesses surveyed had reduced staffing levels during the Covid-19 restrictions.

The community sector raised concerns for non-citizens including asylum seekers and international students and that basic needs such as food security for these most vulnerable community members will continue to be a concern.

“Businesses [need to be] supported so they can grow and take on all those unemployed people. There are lots of people struggling now.”

People are overwhelmingly concerned about others. Half of those surveyed were worried about people who are important to them. 74 per cent said it was very important for us to support vulnerable people during the recovery. Local residents' groups identified how communities had come together to support each other. There was growing optimism that actions taken during the pandemic could contribute to ongoing action on long-term concerns such as ending homelessness.

“[We need] continuation of the increased tolerance and kindness shown to others especially housing the homeless, and better service and financial support for people who are unemployed or living on low incomes.”

Those surveyed told us they need accurate information to help build confidence about when it is safe to return to their normal activities. 68 per cent said that clear communications from the City are very important. Accessible communication was identified as very important including using different formats and channels and being aware that not everyone has access to digital technology.

“Media hype has scared people.”

Promoting Sydney as a safe place is an important action to help businesses rebuild. This was identified as a more significant challenge for the city centre than focusing on local main streets where people were starting to feel comfortable again. While about half those surveyed said they were ready visit their local cafes and restaurants now, most people indicated that it would take longer for them to feel confident going to indoor cultural and community events.



“We need clear guidelines for CBD workers and visitors on how to interact to ensure safety but also get back to work. And transport solutions that don't clog up the streets.”

They also said they deeply valued public space during the pandemic. Our current predicament is seen by many as a trigger to rethink how we use public space and make more space available for walking, cycling, meeting up and cultural and community events. Using public outdoor space was identified by arts organisations and businesses as an alternative to indoor venues and a way to build confidence and bring people back.

“[I want to see] people eating out and drinking later, spreading out on footpaths and roads.”

“I have greater appreciation for the outdoors, for the simple pleasures of walking in a park and getting some fresh air. And the amazing ability for us to all cooperate and help each other. We've all gained new knowledge from this new experience.”

The most useful ways to assist business identified through the survey were financial support, marketing, clear communications, and local activations and events.

There is a strong desire to promote the unique cultural experiences of Sydney to local and regional visitors; support innovation and collaborate and negotiate with landowners and big employers to open up new opportunities.

The City's role as an advocate particularly for affordable housing and the arts and cultural sector was highly valued.

“Marketing and promotion needs to include profiling local businesses, neighbourhood character, what to do in the city, and what is happening locally.”

Those surveyed identified positive impacts such as flexible working arrangements (close to 50 per cent), more time with family (close to 50 per cent) and acts of kindness (40 per cent). Many see this an opportunity to build a more caring society.

People referred to a renewed sense of working together and a greater awareness of the needs and experiences of different people within our communities.



Local artist Jules Orcullo works in her apartment in the City of Sydney's William Street Creative Hub. With so many people working and staying at home during the pandemic, community consultation for the recovery plan was done entirely online.



*Grand Days Books, Records and Vintage owner Tom Hespe – Woolloomooloo 2019. Over 1,100 businesses contributed to the City's recovery planning survey and many small businesses participated in stakeholder forums and the Lord Mayor's roundtable conversations.*

Business, the cultural community and local residents liked the idea of a community celebration as an important step in recovery.

"Hopefully there will be more kindness and tolerance now."

"A positive impact for me, I can work from home less travelling to work. I've enjoyed not stressing and spending time with my family."

There is increasing concern about the impacts on the economy when the Federal Government's support package ends in September. Continuing physical distancing restrictions were a concern to the arts, cultural and entertainment sectors. Reduced international travel is a long term problem for the tourism and hospitality sector. There is growing concern for the sustainability of the NGO sector who have work tirelessly to support the most vulnerable members of the community especially in the face of more financial stress on people as a result of cuts backs to Jobkeeper and Jobseeker payments.

We asked people about their greatest concerns for Sydney's future in March 2019 and again in May 2020. Top concerns remain traffic congestion and inadequate public transport, lack of affordable housing and loss of places for entertainment and cultural expression. Importantly, more people are now worried about the impacts of climate change ranking second after traffic congestion.

"I hope this is taken as an opportunity to make a leap forward in environmental protection to address climate change."

The act of asking our communities for their input was greatly appreciated and contributed to a high level of trust between us. A continuing dialogue with our communities, businesses and stakeholders, sharing our insights and data with them, and in turn valuing their knowledge and insights will provide a strong platform for recovery.

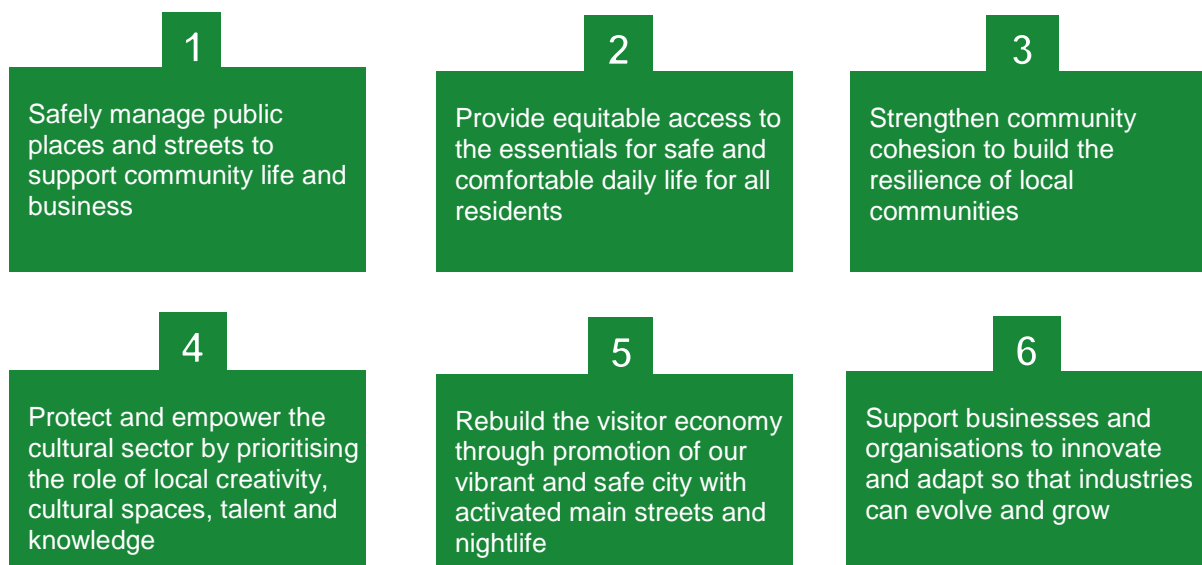
"Thank you for taking the time to find out about what your community believes is a priority."

# Summary of the plan

## Recovery goals

- Recovery is inclusive and equitable
  - Recovery supports a resilient economy and community wealth building
  - Recovery is a catalyst for a green and sustainable future
  - Recovery is strengthened by a robust and diverse cultural sector
- 

## Action Areas



## Guiding principles

People are actively involved in recovery, shaping change in their city and their future

Recovery is responsive to the government health directions, led by stewardship and collaboration

Decisions are evidence-based and allow a flexible response



# What we will do

## Action area 1

### **Safely manage public places and streets to support community life and business**

**People can move in and around the city safely because space is reallocated and businesses can successfully reopen.**

We need to prepare for a city that will operate differently from before the Covid-19 pandemic, in terms of how people move around the city and in how they conduct their daily working, shopping and recreational activities.

The way we manage all spaces in our city such as footpaths, open spaces, streets, cycleways, parks, playgrounds and laneways needs to support safe physical distancing. This allows businesses to open and trade and gives people the confidence that they can safely visit those businesses. It also means that people can use their city for recreation and daily life and feel safe doing so.

By reimagining public space and streets that prioritise people and building on work that has already been done in the city, such as the pedestrianisation of George Street, we can create more people-friendly streets, promote cycling as a transport alternative and provide opportunities for people to gather safely.

To achieve this, we need to balance the use of public spaces for different kinds of activities so that our spaces are also places that people want to be in and everyone can enjoy.



*Bourke Street cycleway. Cycleways are an important element of the City's plan to reimagine how public space can be managed to support safe physical distancing during recovery.*

**The City of Sydney is working with Transport for NSW to build 6 new pop-up cycleways to make bike riding a transport priority in response to the pandemic.**

## Why we need to do this

Workers and visitors make up over 80 per cent of the number of people who are in the city every day<sup>13</sup> and account for over 80 per cent of expenditure<sup>14</sup> in the local government area.

Since the start of the pandemic, there has been an estimated 90 per cent drop in the number of people on central Sydney streets<sup>15</sup>. Business viability is threatened due to the reduced visitation and consumer expenditure has dropped to below pre-pandemic levels<sup>16</sup>.

Even with the gradual lifting of restrictions, the reduced capacity of the transport system and city streets to safely manage daily visitors and workers means the return to pre-Covid-19 pandemic levels will be slow.

Many city workers successfully transitioned to working from home during the pandemic and we expect that at least a proportion of this remote working will be sustained for some time.

This means they are not visiting the city centre as frequently. For example, areas around Haymarket, the Rocks and the CBD have been significantly impacted due to the loss of workers, tourists and international students. Conversely, people are spending more time in their local areas. In planning our recovery actions, we have to consider that the type of support needed will differ from place to place, depending on how individual areas have been impacted by the pandemic.

To promote the return of activity in the city, public space and streets need to be reallocated and managed in a staged way to support people to go about their daily life. There will be different types of actions required at different stages of the recovery process. Much of this work to reallocate space requires approval by other government agencies. This means we need to work with the NSW Government to implement these measures and ensure our communities have clear and consistent information.

## What communities and businesses told us

Business representatives told us that public confidence that the city is safe is essential to encourage people back onto high streets, into the city and into our local businesses. For this confidence to be rebuilt, we need to demonstrate that the city is clean, there is sufficient open space and that businesses in the city are trading safely without the need to revert to single-use consumer items.

While confidence is increasing there is still a way to go. 52 per cent of respondents to the City's recovery planning survey<sup>17</sup> said that they were comfortable visiting their local main street businesses and 65 per cent said they were ready to use parks and open space including playgrounds and fitness equipment more, but less comfortable using public transport (33 per cent) and going to work in an office (30 per cent).

62 per cent of survey respondents agreed it was very important for the City to play a role in supporting local businesses. When asked what concerned them about the future of Sydney, 45 per cent stated they were concerned there would be a loss of local businesses and services.

Participants at the business workshops all agreed that businesses need flexibility in trading conditions and reduced fees to reactivate their businesses in new ways. And they need access to reliable information to help them through the recovery period and support long-term sustainability.

"We need to rebuild customer confidence in terms of safety and we need assistance to do it."

<sup>13</sup> Workers and visitors comprise an estimated 1.1 million people daily: City of Sydney

<sup>14</sup> Spendmap 2019

<sup>15</sup> Pedestrians in the city dataset, City of Sydney data hub

<sup>16</sup> National Australia Bank consumption data in the 4 weeks to 6 June 2020

<sup>17</sup> City of Sydney recovery planning survey, May 2020



## What we are doing to support recovery

- 1.1 Prioritise our business concierge service to support businesses to open and operate safely
- 1.2 Continue the acceleration of the capital works program to upgrade city streets, parks and playgrounds
- 1.3 Clean public places and streets to a high standard
- 1.4 Promote safe alternatives to single-use items to address emerging waste issues
- 1.5 Communicate that Sydney is safe, clean and open for business
- 1.6 Work with NSW Government on city management initiatives such as mobility and transport, temporary footpath widening, cycleways, change signal timing, lower speed limits, travel demand planning and reprioritisation of roads

## Other actions we will take

- 1.7 Review and determine if current fee waivers should be extended to continue to support activation of space for community life, cultural participation and commercial use while maintaining accessibility
- 1.8 Invest in the pedestrianisation and activation of south George Street

**The City of Sydney will accelerate \$23 million of works to upgrade open spaces, such as parks, playgrounds and streets in the local area, to support our communities and businesses during recovery.**



Playground in Pirrama Park, Pyrmont. The City of Sydney will accelerate upgrade works in open spaces such as playgrounds, to support recovery.



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## Action area 2

### Provide equitable access to the essentials for safe and comfortable daily life for all residents

**Address rising inequality within our community by advocating for and supporting access to essential services for all. This includes housing, food, community services, digital resources and skills development.**

The pandemic has highlighted existing inequalities within our city. Many people who were already marginalised or experiencing disadvantage and inequity – including people identified within *The Sydney Equality Indicators Framework, Measures for a Just City*, have been more adversely affected by the pandemic than the general population. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disability, non-citizens, women, and those on low-incomes. Children and the elderly have also been impacted significantly due to the restrictions on movement and access to the services they need.

The City has a critical role in supporting communities already experiencing disadvantage to access essential services, support and food. This will help prevent these groups from being disproportionately impacted in the long-term.

An equitable society is founded on a principle that all people, no matter their income, can afford the essentials of daily life. These include fresh and healthy food, services such as health care and education, social supports and other items such as internet access. We would also expect recreational and cultural pursuits to be accessible to all.

All people should be able to live in comfortable housing that protects them from heatwaves and other extreme weather events that are becoming more intense and more frequent as a result of climate change. This is especially important if people are required to spend more time at home. Renters and those living in social housing often live in homes with low levels of energy efficiency and thermal comfort, which

can lead to higher utility bills. We will advocate for NSW and federal governments to invest funding to rectify this issue while stimulating the local economy, as well as reforms that protect renters' rights.

As we see increased numbers in unemployment and underemployment it will become even more important that the City continues to provide many of its core services and that these services are accessible for all. This will include continuing to provide a range of services online, which have actually increased access for some in our community, including some people with disability, or those who previously were unable to participate physically. Where the City is not directly responsible for a service, we advocate for essential needs, such as food, to be available for those most in need.

It is also vital that we continue to advocate for increased provision of affordable, energy efficient housing. Government and private sector investment in new affordable housing can support economic and social recovery while providing an environmental dividend.

We will continue to work with government agencies and service providers to support those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This is particularly important during the transition from the temporary to permanent accommodation solutions provided by the NSW Government in the wake of the pandemic.



*A rough sleeper in the city centre. The pandemic has highlighted existing inequalities within our city such as homelessness.*



*Customs House Library. The City's community facilities such as libraries, provide vital digital connectivity for our communities.*

### **Why we need to do this**

Many third parties who were responsible for the provision of essential needs such as charities and non-profit agencies and some City services, have had to reduce the provision of these services or stop them as facilities closed or volunteers were no longer able to offer support. This has included the provision of food support services, free internet access in libraries and community centres and the provision of general support services. This can have flow-on impacts on health and wellbeing (including mental health), employment prospects, and education and training.

In addition to those already most vulnerable within our community, new impacted groups have emerged because they have not been eligible for government support. This includes international students and temporary visa holders, short-term casual workers or those in insecure work many of whom are young, and

those who work in the sectors hit hardest by the pandemic, such as hospitality and the cultural sector.

The long-term impacts on young people in particular are of concern, as unemployment for this group is double the national average, both before and during the pandemic<sup>18</sup> and mental health and social cohesion outcomes have been dropping<sup>19</sup>.

At the time of preparing this plan, it is not known if JobKeeper and the increased supplement for JobSeeker will continue past September 2020. If not, this may lead to even more people finding it hard to access healthy and affordable food, accommodation and other essentials. The City will advocate for the continuation and broadening of these programs.

<sup>18</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, April 2020, Catalogue No. 6291.0.55.001, Table 01

<sup>19</sup> Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods, The initial impacts of COVID-19 in Australia 2020 [csmr.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/5/The\\_initial\\_impacts\\_of\\_COVID-19\\_in\\_Australia\\_2020\\_4.pdf](https://csmr.cass.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2020/5/The_initial_impacts_of_COVID-19_in_Australia_2020_4.pdf)

**Social enterprise Colombo Social is working with Mission Australia and the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service and has so far prepared and delivered over 13,000 nutritious, chef-prepared meals to those who most need them. A Covid-19 relief grant from the City of Sydney will help them continue their work.**

Issues relating to access to affordable rental housing, social housing and supported housing pathways existed before the pandemic. With increased unemployment and financial insecurity and over 60 per cent of residents renting within the city area, the need for appropriate long-term, affordable and stable housing solutions has been further highlighted.

This is a similar issue with people who sleep rough in the city. At the beginning of the pandemic, many rough sleepers were offered temporary accommodation through the NSW Government and it is important the complex needs of these people are addressed as part of long term affordable housing solutions.

### **What communities and businesses told us**

In late 2019, the City consulted extensively with our community to identify their priority issues. They told us that they do not want the vulnerable in our community to be exposed to further inequity.

In surveying our communities again as part of the City's recovery planning, 75 per cent of respondents to the survey<sup>20</sup> told us it was very important for the City to support vulnerable people. This was the most strongly supported action we could take.

The City's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory panel also told us they are concerned

about the impact of declining housing affordability and how this is undermining social diversity and forcing people to leave the communities where they have always lived.

Housing affordability continues to be one of the top three concerns people hold for the future of Sydney (57 per cent of survey participants).

About a third of respondents experienced feeling lonely or having mental health and wellbeing concerns during the pandemic.

Comments in the survey indicated that the absence of face-to-face service support can compound challenges for people with high support needs.

A recent wellbeing survey of social housing residents in Waterloo identified that digital access and social connections are of high priority<sup>21</sup>, however 24 per cent said they have insufficient or no digital connection.

Restrictions and financial worries meant that many have not been able to access or afford essential services and goods. Close to 1 in 5 of survey participants have not been able to access important services such as doctors, counselling and 15 per cent encountered a lack of availability of essentials such as food and medicine.

Charities providing food relief expressed concern about their long-term capacity to provide support due to diminished fund-raising opportunities, especially if demand increases when the federal government support packages end.

"People in disadvantage and with mental health issues will likely be having even further difficulties unless wonderful positive projects are implemented."

<sup>20</sup> City of Sydney recovery planning survey, May 2020

<sup>21</sup> Survey by Counterpoint Community Services of 100 Waterloo residents, May 2020



## What we are doing to support recovery

- 2.1 Direct existing grant support towards addressing emerging community issues and funding those most in need
- 2.2 Continue to provide online and face-to-face programming with a focus on supporting health and wellbeing, digital literacy, social inclusion, reskilling and employment
- 2.3 Manage community spaces, services and facilities to ensure safe, equitable and affordable access and participation
- 2.4 Increase utilisation of internet and digital access and participation through City libraries and community facilities and explore opportunities to support digital training and advocate for subsidised internet access beyond our own facilities
- 2.5 Work with other government agencies and organisations working in the homelessness sector to support those at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- 2.6 Continue to leverage the City's existing Supported Accommodation, Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund to create more affordable housing

## What we are doing to support recovery

- 2.7 Advocate to federal and NSW governments for increased investment in social and affordable housing as well as no forced evictions and tenants' rights
- 2.8 Prioritise the provision of food security services for our vulnerable communities through partnerships, networks, grants and existing services

## Other actions we will take

- 2.9 Work with charities to support their fund-raising to provide ongoing services to people in the local area
- 2.10 Advocate to the federal government for the continuation of financial and other support packages and broadening access to assistance
- 2.11 Connect impacted international students to accommodation and mental health support services
- 2.12 Advocate to the NSW Government to direct energy efficiency support to low-income residents and strata communities in the local area



The OzHarvest hamper hub distributed 1,000 food relief hampers a week to international students during the height of the pandemic.

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## Action area 3

# Strengthen community cohesion to build the resilience of local communities

### **Communities are connected, engaged and empowered to manage their own recovery and ready to respond to shocks and emergencies**

A resilient city is prepared, connected and informed. It has networks of individuals, local neighbourhoods, businesses and communities primed and ready to act together in an emergency or in response to chronic issues.

The City is committed to facilitating opportunities for individuals and communities to design and influence a shared recovery. This means providing opportunities for people to participate in decision-making and contributing to shared solutions.

Strong connections, a commitment to sharing knowledge between residents, service providers, government and businesses, and including a diverse range of perspectives are critical. These support our communities to adapt to changing situations, take the lead on their own recovery, come together as communities and thrive after disruptions, such as this pandemic, and deal with longer-term stresses. They also build resilience ahead of future shocks.

Only 44 per cent of residents in the City of Sydney local area have lived here for longer than five years<sup>22</sup> and about 50,000 – 60,000 residents move in or out of the City local area each year<sup>23</sup>. Our residents communicate in 140 different languages at home and the majority are born overseas (55 per cent)<sup>24</sup>, so they come from a wide range of backgrounds. They may have not had the opportunity to build connections with other residents, may not feel

part of the community and may not be aware of what services are available and who provides them. We need to ensure these people feel welcomed, included, informed and connected to other people and services.

This requires information to be available in multiple formats and languages. We also need to provide physical and virtual space for people to come together to plan their shared recovery.

We will work to support recovery planning within the City of Sydney local area, with groups of people who have been affected by the disruption, whether or not they share similar interests, affiliations, religious or cultural backgrounds.

In the wake of the pandemic, many community meetings, programs and forums moved online, reaching more people than previous events, particularly people with disability. But the lack of face-to-face engagement also means those without internet access or a suitable device miss out.

A continuing dialogue with our communities, sharing our insights and data with them and in turn valuing their knowledge and insights will strengthen the relationships needed to support effective community recovery. Trusted relationships within communities and with government contribute to a more resilient society.

The Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection provides guidance on national principles and practices for disaster resilience and the role of local government in the recovery process<sup>25</sup>. Existing structures can be used to coordinate localised response for the City of Sydney local area through the Local Emergency Management Committee coordinated by Resilience NSW.

<sup>22</sup> City of Sydney estimates based on Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2016 - Counting Persons, Place of Usual Residence (MB)

<sup>23</sup> City of Sydney estimates based on .ID population estimates [forecast.id.com.au/sydney/components-of-population-change](https://forecast.id.com.au/sydney/components-of-population-change)

<sup>24</sup> City of Sydney estimates based on Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2016 - Counting Persons, Place of Usual Residence (MB)

<sup>25</sup> [Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook. 2018.](#)





*Volunteers making quilts for people in need with non-profit organisation Wrap with Love at the Green Square community hall, 2018. Volunteering is an important way for people to make social connections but has been difficult to maintain during the pandemic.*

### **Why we need to do this**

The pandemic has threatened many of the elements that contribute to resilient and cohesive communities.

The loss of social connection through social isolation, physical distancing, closure of community facilities, cancellation of events and community forums, loss of volunteering opportunities, and not being able to participate in social, cultural and religious practices have all had an impact on how well communities can absorb the shocks of the pandemic – and how quickly they can reform those lost connections and recover.

Yet many residents quickly formed volunteer partnerships across public and private organisations facilitated by the City to work on shared goals. The pooled resources provided immediate food relief, assistance to international students and homeless people. These responses demonstrate the importance of these strong connections.

The travel restrictions and physical distancing requirements have had significant cultural impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The inability to carry out some cultural practices is long lasting and traumatic for many of our residents who could not travel to attend funerals and wakes.

Our local area will see several major urban renewal projects occur in the coming years and these can contribute to rebuilding the economy by stimulating activity and jobs. To support a resilient and cohesive community that can withstand future shocks, it is essential that environmental and social sustainability is prioritised in the design of these areas and that the local community is engaged in this process in a meaningful way.

### **What communities and businesses told us**

The most significant impact for most people of the pandemic is feeling concerned for people who are important to them (51 per cent).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> City of Sydney recovery planning survey, May 2020



Many in our community felt they were not adequately prepared to respond to the pandemic, or that organisations had planned their emergency response in isolation of services in the area.

40 per cent of respondents to the City's recovery planning survey felt that Sydney is not adequately prepared for an emergency.

The pandemic heightened concerns about increasing rates of domestic and family violence, alcohol and drug use, gambling, increased unemployment and racism, all of which are barriers to community recovery.

Respondents to the City's recovery planning survey were asked to rank a range of positive outcomes they may have experienced from the pandemic. "Strengthened connections with neighbours and other networks" was ranked fourth, suggesting that many have not experienced strengthened social cohesion during the pandemic and that further support is needed to help support our communities to withstand future shocks and emergencies.

Workshop participants told us that there is a need to build on the connections between organisations, governments and communities to work with them to recover from shocks and to deal with longer-term stresses together. While funding programs like grants are helpful, they are not the whole solution.

Our communities and businesses have told us they want to be part of shared recovery planning, to celebrate the end of the pandemic as a community, meet regularly and be part of the solution design and implementation.

"Sydney will bounce back to its charismatic self; there are enough people who care and who have the intelligence and resilience to spot adversity and correct course."

### What we are doing to support recovery

- 3.1 Provide grants that facilitate community engagement in City owned spaces and public places

### What we are doing to support recovery

- 3.2 Provide residents with links to support services and practical assistance
- 3.3 Support the provision of health and safety information to residential strata owners
- 3.4 Advocate to ensure environmental sustainability is of high importance in fast-tracked urban renewal programs
- 3.5 Coordinate local emergency response through Local Emergency Management Committee
- 3.6 Work with the Resilient Sydney network to share best practice and establish cross boundary recovery initiatives

### Other actions we will take

- 3.7 Empower communities to manage their own recovery by strengthening local connections through networks, events and forums, for example supporting community celebrations at the end of the pandemic
- 3.8 Facilitate capacity building workshops with the community sector and community led organisations to support their planning for the reopening of their services
- 3.9 Explore with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community the idea to facilitate a culturally sensitive commemorative event due to the impacts on participating in *Sorry Business* during the pandemic, and to provide an opportunity for support, collective reflection and acknowledgement for community members who have passed away.
- 3.10 Celebrate the work of the community groups and volunteers including at the annual Lord Mayor volunteer thank you event

## Action area 4

### Protect and empower the cultural sector by prioritising the role of local creativity, cultural spaces, talent and knowledge

**The resilience of our cultural sector is strengthened through involvement in recovery efforts, sustaining diverse cultural practice, protecting creative spaces and thriving community participation**

Australia's cultural and creative sector is a \$111.7 billion<sup>27</sup> industry essential to the identity, social cohesion and economic growth of our nation.



Culture plays a vital role in the economy, strengthening the tourism, education, hospitality and retail sectors. As part of our economic recovery, the City can support this sector to ensure its viability and ongoing contribution to the overall visitor economy.

30 per cent of the nation's cultural and creative industries operate in Greater Sydney and 6.5 per cent of the total workforce in the City of Sydney area is employed in the creative industries, representing 33,000 jobs<sup>28</sup>.

There are an estimated 1,800 creative businesses operating in the City of Sydney local area, of which 80% are small to medium organisations.<sup>29</sup>

Arts and cultural organisations make our city more than the sum of its parts. They are the very soul of our city, reflecting our diverse cultural composition, our local character, and our shared identity.

The City recognises the creative capacity of the people who work in arts, culture and creative businesses as key contributors to recovery efforts. We are committed to working collaboratively with our cultural leaders to nurture innovation, collaboration, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practice, sustainability and resilience.

Artists are part of the fabric of our national pride. If we let our creatives slip through the cracks and we fail to support our iconic institutions, we may have little to celebrate as a culturally rich nation in the future.

*Patchwork of Light by Lara Schnitger, Reiby Place. The cultural sector is essential to the identity, social cohesion and economic growth of our nation.*

<sup>27</sup> Bureau of Communications and the Arts, 2018

<sup>28</sup> City of Sydney floorspace and employment survey 2017

<sup>29</sup> City of Sydney floorspace and employment survey 2017

## Why we need to do this

The Covid-19 restrictions imposed by the federal government hit the cultural sector particularly hard. Within two weeks 53% of arts and recreational services had ceased trading<sup>30</sup>, making it one of the first sectors to experience shutdown and it may be among the last to fully reopen as physical distancing restrictions are relaxed.

In May, CreateNSW announced a \$50 million fund for arts and cultural organisations in addition to \$27 million provided from the federal government<sup>31</sup> to support areas of the cultural and creative sector most affected by the pandemic. While this stimulus is not enough to save the sector, it does offer hope to the major institutions and some smaller organisations. The City can continue to advocate to the federal and state governments for continued support.

Gratton Institute researchers estimate up to 26 per cent of the Australian workforce is likely to lose their jobs due to impacts of the pandemic

– but this rises to 75 per cent for those employed in the creative and performing arts.

The current crisis comes on top of many years of reduced funding of the creative ecosystem. This ecosystem includes individual creatives such as artists, musicians, performers and creative industry workers; the creative industries workforce in media, events and festivals, screen, print, design and architecture firms; and cultural and arts organisations.

Many creatives balance casual, freelance and seasonal working arrangements, which has rendered them ineligible for JobKeeper assistance and complicated their access to JobSeeker payments.

The 'gig-based' employment of many workers in the creative sector made them particularly vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic. Immediate cancellations, reduced employment opportunities and closures of local venues have all compounded the effects. This is particularly true for artists from emerging and diverse backgrounds and early to mid-career



*Client Liaison performs live for Sydney New Year's Eve, 2019. Live music like all performing arts, has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic.*

<sup>30</sup> ABS research on Trading Status of Australian Businesses, 7 April 2020

<sup>31</sup> [arts.gov.au/covid-19-update](https://arts.gov.au/covid-19-update)



workers who juggle multiple short-term contracts to fund their living costs and workspaces<sup>32</sup>.

Cancellation of large-scale performances, film productions, events and festivals means many businesses in this ecosystem will not survive. This is likely to have long term impacts on supply chains, skills and services of diverse small to medium businesses, as well as specialist sole traders.

In addition, in April the federal government temporarily suspended local content quotas for international streaming services<sup>33</sup>. This immediately reduced investment in producing Australian content and employment across film and media from writers to directors, set design to costume, actors to technicians, and has flow-on effects for the production sector which has already been impacted by widespread shutdowns.

The small to medium sector of community galleries, performance venues, sound recording studios, media services, production spaces and artist run initiatives are the seedbeds of our culture. These are the places where artists and performers can experiment and take risks, nurture their talent and build audiences and new local content to renew our major cultural institutions.

Cash flow for them is critical. Many landlords are not passing on rent reductions, organisers have been unable to conduct fundraising activities or obtain loans to cover rent, wages and even utility costs during the enforced shutdowns. Others are already in debt as finished productions are unable to be presented, meaning the production costs cannot be recouped with box office income.

Sydney already has a critical shortage of affordable workspace for cultural production, rehearsal, development and small to medium cultural enterprise with a loss of 100,000 square metres of cultural infrastructure over the last 10 years<sup>34</sup>. Loss of these grassroots organisations will stunt the vitality and authenticity of our local cultural products and identity.

## What communities and businesses told us

56 per cent of respondents to the City's recovery survey agreed that it was very important for the City to support the arts and cultural sector.

Cultural organisations have flagged potential insolvencies. This will put local, accessible and affordable creative space and cultural infrastructure, which was already in short supply, at further risk.

Representatives from the cultural industry who believe they may be able to survive the crisis, are concerned there will be limited opportunities and spaces for small-scale uses and live music once the restrictions are lifted. They are also concerned that the limited availability of creative spaces will mean many may not get the access they need. We know from previous discussions with the creative sector that the City can help with grants funding and regulatory change to make it easier for these businesses to trade.

And as with activating other parts of the economy, audience confidence to attend venues and events needs to be rebuilt through communication and demonstration that these places are safe to visit.

"Hopefully there is a unification of the cultural sector, working together to ensure that the many, not the few, can thrive."

"Please support the arts in every way possible. This includes festivals as well as smaller events, venues and public institutions. Without culture, Sydney would be without soul."

<sup>32</sup> [australiacouncil.gov.au/research/making-art-work/](https://australiacouncil.gov.au/research/making-art-work/)

<sup>33</sup> [theguardian.com/film/2020/jun/11/netflix-apple-and-stan-could-be-required-to-boost-australian-content](https://theguardian.com/film/2020/jun/11/netflix-apple-and-stan-could-be-required-to-boost-australian-content)

<sup>34</sup> City of Sydney floorspace and employment survey 2017

## What we are doing to support recovery

- 4.1 Direct existing grant support to sustain cultural organisations and stimulate development opportunities for local creatives
- 4.2 Advocate to federal and NSW governments for targeted support for culture and no net loss of cultural space
- 4.3 Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and knowledge sharing
- 4.4 Continue work to maximise opportunities for cultural sector in City owned spaces and community venues
- 4.5 Enable diverse local cultural infrastructure and activation through the City's Open and Creative planning reforms

## Other actions we will take

- 4.6 Facilitate opportunities for collaboration and capacity building to ensure cultural sector resilience and sustainability
- 4.7 Continue to explore opportunities for making space for culture in partnership with public and private sectors
- 4.8 Set up a working group comprising representatives of the cultural sector to agree sites for pop-up or future cultural activity and prepare a report to Council to approve these sites as Covid-19 recovery activity sites



Sam Hayward-Sweedman in the Musica Viva rehearsal room, Zetland. Providing space for culture will be critical to recovery.

## Action area 5

### Rebuild the visitor economy through promotion of our vibrant and safe city with activated main streets and nightlife

**People in the city are supported to safely return to a 24-hour Sydney through a phased and integrated approach, with government and industry working together**

Tourism is one of the state's most important industries and is also Australia's largest services export industry<sup>35</sup>. Sydney is the gateway to NSW and Australia, with over 50 per cent of all international arrivals into Australia coming through Sydney<sup>36</sup>.

There are around 779 tourism related businesses in our local area, employing around 20,000 full-time and part-time/seasonal workers<sup>37</sup>. In 2019, visitors to Sydney spent \$22.8 billion in the Sydney economy,<sup>38</sup> of which \$6.4 billion came from 12.7 million domestic visitors, making the domestic visitor market very important to Sydney's recovery.

The City has an important role to play in the re-activation and promotion of Sydney as a visitor destination to support a strong economic recovery. With the gradual easing of restrictions on travel within Australia, demand from Australians wanting to travel around their own country is expected to increase quickly.

We will work with Destination NSW and other tourism sector partners to build on the *Now's the time to love NSW* marketing campaign to develop a strong domestic and local visitor marketing campaign for Sydney as a cultural destination, telling the unique stories of place, people and history of our villages and city centre.



*The City of Sydney's volunteer ambassador program which provides information to visitors has been put on hold during the pandemic.*

We will present a safe, clean and sustainable city with a diverse cultural offering and range of cultural attractions that operate in a vibrant 24-hour economy.

Events that support retail such as Vogue Fashion's Night Out, or our night-time economy such as Vivid Sydney, are essential to rebuilding our status as an events capital and will be brought back as quickly as possible.

We have an opportunity to reimagine and pivot our programs and events such as Sydney Christmas, Sydney Lunar Festival and Sydney New Year's Eve, as well as our grants and sponsorships programs to be more inclusive of our local creative and cultural sector, drive footfall to our main streets, and share the benefit of increased visitors and programs with our local businesses and communities.



*The City of Sydney can reimagine events such as the annual Sydney Lunar Festival to support our local creative sector and provide safe public gatherings.*

<sup>35</sup> State of the Industry 2018-19, Tourism Research Australia

<sup>36</sup> [tra.gov.au/International/international-tourism-results](https://tra.gov.au/International/international-tourism-results)

<sup>37</sup> City of Sydney floorspace and employment survey 2017

<sup>38</sup> Destination NSW year-end 2019



We have seen our communities embrace their local businesses and high streets during this pandemic<sup>39</sup>. This gives us the opportunity to develop and promote a 'shop local, buy local' campaign for our local village centres, including the city centre, and support local businesses to activate and trade in new ways to respond to our communities' needs.

Our continued support of the business events and conference market will help ensure a future pipeline of international meetings and conferences is in place for when international travel restrictions are lifted.

Similarly, we will facilitate the return of international students by partnering with the education sector and supporting a safe and enriching student experience that rebuilds their sense of belonging and recognises them as valued members of our community.

While the timeframe for recovery is uncertain, maintaining the critical mass of tourism services and facilities across Sydney's visitor economy is essential, as is promoting Sydney as a welcoming, innovative city that is responsive to the welfare of its people and visitors. We need to ensure that when the coronavirus is contained and borders reopen, Sydney is well placed to reactivate the international visitor market, and rebuild the visitor economy quickly to support our local government area.

### **Why we need to do this**

The pandemic has had a deep impact on the entire visitor economy which includes travel providers, hotels and accommodation providers, retail, food, beverage and hospitality businesses, cultural and creative institutions, tour guides, visitor information services, destination icons and providers to the international education sector. Many of these businesses either closed or significantly scaled down operations when the borders closed to visitors in mid-March 2020. While our borders

remain closed we need to promote and rebuild domestic visitation to help compensate for the lost international visitor market.

The business visitor spends five to six times as much as a holiday visitor<sup>40</sup>, yet all international business conferences have been cancelled for the foreseeable future. This loss in revenue for Sydney is a significant blow to our visitor economy.

The impact on tourism has been compounded by the bushfires in late 2019 and early 2020, which limited visitor numbers – particularly at New Year – followed immediately by the pandemic.

Many workers in tourism are casual and seasonal employees, foreign visa holders and international students. The downturn in tourism as a result of the pandemic means that many of these workers have lost their jobs. At the time of writing, there has been no direct government fiscal support for the tourism industry apart from zoos and aquariums<sup>41</sup>, making many of these workers highly vulnerable and at risk of homelessness.

International students make a substantial contribution to the Sydney visitor economy with 287,000 students<sup>42</sup> contributing over \$13 billion to the NSW economy in 2019<sup>43</sup>. Students' families often visit Sydney multiple times during their years of study. Recent modelling suggests that Australian universities face a potential loss of \$19 billion in the next three years<sup>44</sup>.

While many international students were not able to return to Sydney for the start of the 2020 academic year, as at 26 April, 192,000 international students are still studying in NSW.<sup>45</sup>

International students have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic as they are not able to access government welfare such as JobSeeker or health care. Local services providing food relief have reported large numbers of hampers being

<sup>39</sup> [mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/emerging-from-covid-19-australians-embrace-their-values](https://mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/emerging-from-covid-19-australians-embrace-their-values)

<sup>40</sup> [besydney.com.au/media/1616/asian\\_incentive\\_events\\_nsw.pdf](https://besydney.com.au/media/1616/asian_incentive_events_nsw.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> [regional.gov.au/regional/programs/files/zoos-and-aquariums-fact-sheet.pdf](https://regional.gov.au/regional/programs/files/zoos-and-aquariums-fact-sheet.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> StudyNSW

<sup>43</sup> NSW Department of Education Research Snapshot December 2019

<sup>44</sup> [theconversation.com/australian-universities-could-lose-19-billion-in-the-next-3-years-our-economy-will-suffer-with-them-136251](https://theconversation.com/australian-universities-could-lose-19-billion-in-the-next-3-years-our-economy-will-suffer-with-them-136251)

<sup>45</sup> [homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/visa-statistics/study](https://homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/visa-statistics/study)

provided to international students<sup>46</sup>. Many are at risk of homelessness, prompting the NSW Government to launch a crisis accommodation service for stranded international students<sup>47</sup>.

The City of Sydney local area is home to 40 per cent of education providers in NSW. The City will work with all education partners to support the students here in Sydney and advocate for others to be able to return and attend their universities and education colleges when border restrictions are lifted.

use this moment to support businesses to respond to this new environment.

“Let’s work with big business to encourage staggering their employees’ hours, allowing for local businesses’ customer hours to be extended beyond 9 to 5. This will help with social distancing and public transport capacities.”

### **What communities and businesses told us**

The visitor industry is looking to the City to coordinate industry, government and precincts to prepare a strong value proposition to market Sydney to local and domestic audiences and demonstrate that the city is safe, healthy, green and with a vibrant cultural offering.

As we face the logistical need to stagger workers coming and going from the city centre over a wider timespan, businesses also see an opportunity to rebuild Sydney as a genuine 24-hour city. Business leaders believe we should



*Dancer at Yabun festival, 2019. We can partner with the cultural sector and Destination NSW to promote Sydney as a cultural destination, telling the unique stories of place, people and history.*

<sup>46</sup> OzHarvest Hamper Hub; Addison Rd Community Centre, Marrickville

<sup>47</sup> [NSW Government supporting international students through Covid-19](#), media release, May 2020

## What we are doing to support recovery

- 5.1 Use our communications channels to promote shop local and visit local to residents, workers and visitors
- 5.2 Continue to invest in local festivals and major events that demonstrate Sydney's vibrancy and encourage local Sydneysiders and others from around the state and country to visit
- 5.3 Continue to partner with Business Events Sydney to build the pipeline of business meetings for Sydney
- 5.4 Continue to engage with the accommodation and entertainment sector to ensure sustainability is promoted and prioritised
- 5.5 In line with health advice, welcome people back to Sydney through roaming ambassadors, maps and digital services
- 5.6 Advocate to state and federal governments for ongoing support for international students while they continue to be impacted by the pandemic

## Other actions we will take

- 5.7 Engage local creatives in the City's programs and work with others to do the same to activate precincts to support local businesses, sustain local culture and drive footfall on main streets
- 5.8 Partner with Destination NSW to develop a local and domestic visitor marketing campaign for Sydney, with particular focus on the cultural offering over the 2020–2021 summer
- 5.9 Encourage and facilitate the return of international students back to Sydney in partnership with education sector



## Action area 6

### Support businesses and organisations to innovate and adapt, so that industries can evolve and grow

**Connecting people to new ways of thinking and working, harnessing their creative capacity to solve problems, pivot and transform through skills development, new models and partnerships so more businesses can share in the benefits**

Heavily impacted sectors need to harness their creative capacity and innovate to give themselves the best chance to survive and grow. Innovation also presents opportunities to look beyond immediate economic repair towards outcomes that deliver sustainability benefits and build community wealth. This includes creating local jobs and investment, diversifying our economy and repositioning our reputation for a city of innovation which had already slipped in global rankings from 16<sup>th</sup> in 2015 to 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2019<sup>48</sup>.

Actions the City can take to support this innovation, adaptation and evolution will need

to consider the individual needs and impacts of the sectors they are designed to support – there won't be a one-size-fits-all approach.

For example, we can help businesses and organisations to do this through the supporting the development of new capabilities such as digitisation and e-commerce, by using our procurement power to support local business and a shift to a circular economy and by supporting the growth of the green economy as a pathway to recovery, adaptation and a sustainable future.

We also have a significant role to play in continuing to facilitate the development pipeline which will stimulate economic activity through construction and urban renewal.

#### Why we need to do this

In May 2020, 72 per cent of Australian businesses had less income because of the pandemic, 73 per cent of businesses accessed support measures, and 74 per cent of active businesses changed how they operate<sup>49</sup>.

Local businesses have had to grapple with reduced turnover, underused commercial space and experimenting with new technology to operate online.

Some businesses have moved quickly to meet these changing needs and the changing paths

to trade and consumption. Others, including many bricks and mortar retailers, urgently need to upscale their online businesses and shift their marketing efforts accordingly.

Businesses identified diversifying markets and product offering, pivoting production or operational capabilities, and creating and expanding digital business as common themes necessary for recovery.



Local restaurateur Hamilton Kings created "Love Local" a local restaurant delivery platform, with the help of a Covid-19 relief grant from the City of Sydney. This initiative is one example of how local businesses innovated during the pandemic.

<sup>48</sup> The Startup Genome Global Report Ecosystem Report, 2019

<sup>49</sup> ABS Business Impacts of Covid-19 Survey May 2020

Within the innovation and technology sector, the pandemic is exacerbating the challenge of accessing global talent – especially in niche and emerging areas such as robotics, AI, data science and quantum computing and making it more difficult for early stage startups to raise funding<sup>50</sup>. These companies can make positive contributions to net jobs growth following the pandemic as well as continue to influence the broader innovation ecosystem.

The City can support hyper-local, precinct-based innovation in collaboration with industry, universities, tech startups and creative businesses. Examples include continuing work already in progress within the Sydney Innovation and Technology Precinct and Camperdown Ultimo innovation precinct.

Refocusing efforts towards local business can create opportunities for our local startup ecosystem. 50 to 60 per cent of the City's annual procurement spend is with local businesses, but even with the highest density of tech startups and innovation in Australia, government procurement from this sector in Sydney is low.

Additionally, 12 per cent of small and medium businesses in the local area are registered on the City's procurement platform Tenderlink. By educating local businesses and community organisations on City procurement processes, such as tendering, we can direct more of our spending into the local area.

The Covid-19 pandemic temporarily directed community and business attention away from the climate crisis<sup>51</sup>. As we move into the recovery phase we must seize the opportunity to build back greener<sup>52</sup> – we do not want to see a return to business as usual on climate action at state and federal levels. Decisions made about stimulus funding can have long term positive or negative consequences for the severity of climate change. A low-carbon recovery could not only initiate the significant emissions reductions needed to halt climate change but also create more jobs and

economic growth than a high-carbon recovery would<sup>53</sup>.

The International Energy Agency has highlighted that energy efficiency upgrades are job-intensive and strongly support economic stimulus goals. The Energy Efficiency Council has stated that a major drive to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and industry could provide over 120,000 job-years of employment for Australians<sup>54</sup>. The Clean Energy Council of Australia calculates that bringing forward the pipeline of wind and solar projects across Australia would create over 50,000 new direct jobs during construction, and an additional 4,000 ongoing jobs in operations and maintenance<sup>55</sup>. This also provides a jobs and investment link between cities and regional areas so that more people can share in the benefits.

The City can actively pursue green economy initiatives and advocate for changes at the state and federal government level to aid economic recovery while addressing the significant threat of climate change.



*Solar panels on Sydney Town Hall. The City of Sydney can advocate for green economy initiatives as part of recovery while continuing to address climate change.*

<sup>50</sup> The Startup Genome [Impact of Covid-19 on Global Startup Ecosystems – Global Startup Survey, April 2020](#)

<sup>51</sup> McKinsey, [How a post-pandemic stimulus can both create jobs and help the climate, 2020](#)

<sup>52</sup> [Committee for Sydney, COVID19 Transition and Recovery Strategy, 2020](#)

<sup>53</sup> McKinsey, [How a post-pandemic stimulus can both create jobs and help the climate, 2020](#)

<sup>54</sup> [EEC, Building a Stronger and Cleaner Post-Pandemic Australia, 2020](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Clean Energy Council, A Clean Recovery, 2020](#)



## What communities and businesses told us

Of the 2,774 applications received for City of Sydney's initial round of small business relief grants, 49 per cent requested financial support to increase their online and e-commerce capabilities, and 34 per cent to innovate and adapt their operating models. In addition, businesses reported in the City's recovery survey and at engagement sessions that they will need to strengthen their marketing, strategy planning, e-commerce, digital, data, finance and customer relationship skills over the next 12 to 18 months. These were identified as critical skills to develop more resilient, lean and adaptable models to survive future shocks.

The tech startup community has told us that the ecosystem support network is under threat with many local incubators, accelerators and coworking spaces experiencing hardship, due to large membership cancellations and a decrease in corporate sponsorship. This support network could take five years to rebuild if lost.

Representatives of the hospitality and night time industry are also concerned about the labour market.

"There may be a potential talent drain down the track especially with the hospitality industry. Workers moving away from Sydney due to drop in jobs and cost of living. We may struggle to find talent to fill roles when we recover."

The tech sector also told us the City can run programs that support local entrepreneurs and creatives as drivers of innovation through the recovery and transformation phase.

Industry groups including the Australian Industry Group, Property Council of Australia, Business Council of Australia and the Australian Council of Trade Unions are calling for a 'clean recovery'. This is where stimulus funding is directed at initiatives that address climate change while boosting the economy, in particular energy efficiency, renewable energy generation and battery storage.

58 per cent of respondents to the City's recovery planning survey said that they are concerned about the impacts of climate change.

"This is a time for adaptation and innovation. An opportunity to partner with game changers. The City can help by streamlining approvals, fee concessions, engaging with local business, property and home owners who are willing to personally invest in development, growth and green spaces."



*InvertiGro co-founder Ben Lee tends to plants in an InvertiGro garden. InvertiGro applies innovative design and leading-edge technologies to profitably and pragmatically solve the real-world challenge of sustainable and affordable food production. Innovation and adaptation will be important for a successful recovery.*



## What we are doing to support recovery

- 6.1 Facilitate dialogue with heavily impacted sectors to support their recovery
- 6.2 Direct existing grant support for organisations, businesses and industry, including those dominated by women, to assist them to innovate, adapt and grow
- 6.3 Continue to support collaboration across the innovation precincts within the Camperdown Ultimo collaboration area
- 6.4 Implement the Central Sydney planning strategy to support a pipeline of development and investment certainty
- 6.5 Continue to use City procurement to support local businesses and a shift to a circular economy
- 6.6 Continue to support communities and businesses to accelerate their uptake of renewable energy to stimulate the green economy
- 6.7 Continue to assist businesses and apartment buildings owners' corporations to implement retrofits for increased efficiency
- 6.8 Prioritise investment in City projects that provide significant local green economy benefits

## Other actions we will take

- 6.9 Produce skills development programs to enhance innovation, collaboration, digitisation and e-commerce
- 6.10 Advocate to federal and state governments to invest in green economy as major generator of jobs

In the first 17 days of operation, the City of Sydney's business concierge service attended to 1,421 contacts from businesses to help them find the right support during the pandemic.

"This concierge service is great. Well done to the team. It's such an important initiative you're doing."

# Measurement and evaluation

It will be important to track the economic and social recovery of our local communities throughout the implementation of this plan. We will evaluate the effectiveness and influence of the actions, continually checking in with our communities as we go.

Periodic research and analysis will help us understand the progress of recovery. We will use these insights to inform and shape the City's work towards recovery, identifying gaps and focusing effort toward areas of greatest need.

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## Principles of measurement and evaluation

### 1. Practicality

Data is readily available or can be easily developed in a short time with low cost.

### 2. Consistency

The evaluation and measurement framework must match the action areas in the recovery plan. Measures should be developed in a consistent way so that they can be integrated with or compared to existing data and benchmarks.

### 3. Relevance

Measures should be designed to allow us to track the progress of the recovery plan implementation. External measures should be given higher value and priority if directly related to the City of Sydney local area and our communities and Greater Sydney. Data at the state, national or even global level may be used as reference. When necessary, these data can be modelled to form indicators for the local area.

### 4. Trends and changes

Measures should be based on data that can be updated at regular intervals or that is directly comparable to a pre-Covid-9 benchmark. This will enable us to measure trends and analyse changes.

### 5. Timeliness

Data should be captured and updated in a timely manner to reflect the most recent status or changes in areas of interest.

### 6. Adaptability

The framework is robust and flexible and can work with current and future City strategies and plans. It supports existing and new data as it becomes available and can adapt to the impacts of the pandemic on the organisation, such as resourcing and capacity.

### 7. Accountability

Clear goals and targets should be set to track the progress of implementation. Measures and data should be analysed regularly to provide insights, consider our communities' views and make recommendations to adjust the plan throughout implementation.

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## The framework

### Data

Both internal and external data are used to develop measures and indicators.

### Measures

A set of measures for each action will track the implementation of the recovery plan. Wherever applicable, standard measures are used for easy integration across actions, while custom measures are also included for some actions.

Examples of standard measures are the status of an action, number of programs, how much has been spent, how many people from key interest groups have been engaged, any partnerships formed, number of participants, or satisfaction scores.

### Indicators

Indicators are chosen to track how well the economy and communities are doing overall. Examples of indicators are the rate of unemployment, consumer expenditure or Gross Regional Product (GRP) which is an indicator for the size of the economy in our city.

We can also use indicators to track how well sectors of interest are recovering.

Indicators are also developed to monitor the wellbeing and needs of our community groups.

### Mapping and integration

Each action is mapped against the four recovery goals outlined at the start of this plan.

Each action is also allocated a category that assists in bringing together and analysing data. Examples of action categories are grants, sponsorships and value-in-kind, advocacy and coordination, planning and regulation, procurement, marketing and promotion, community engagement, direct services, capital works, City programs and activations and the provision of space.

Wherever applicable, indicators are mapped to the contributing action areas so that the effectiveness and influence of the actions can be assessed. When an outcome indicator is mapped to an action, a trend target should be set for evaluation.

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## Engaging with our communities throughout implementation

### Engagement objectives

The following engagement objectives will guide how we work with our communities to implement this plan and how we align with the City's community engagement principles of integrity, inclusiveness, dialogue and influence.

#### 1. Integrity

- We will provide our communities with clear, accurate and timely information.
- We will coordinate engagement and activation activities to ensure best value for our communities.

#### 2. Inclusiveness

- We will reach vulnerable people and strive to overcome barriers including lack of digital access and English literacy.
- We will work with community networks and services to broaden the reach of our engagement and to build community resilience.

#### 3. Dialogue

- We will check-in and respond to our communities about their needs throughout the recovery.
- We will make best use of the information our community-facing services and programs collect to fine tune the City's ongoing response.

#### 4. Influence

- We will strengthen relationships within our communities by regularly sharing our insights from engagement and research on recovery progress.
- We will ensure that people know we value the information and insights they give us and that we act on it.



## **How we will check in with our communities**

The City will regularly check in with our communities through:

- A standing agenda item for meetings of the City's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Inclusion (Disability) and Nightlife and Creative advisory panels.
- Feedback from vulnerable communities with whom the City regularly works
- Surveys conducted with people who attend the City's events and activations
- Regularly and consistently capturing community perspectives through the City's programs including library and community programs, grant applications, strata networks, enquiries to the business and community concierge services, hirers of the City's community spaces and sporting facilities and activities programmed for communities in new urban areas, such as Waterloo and Green Square.

