

Community Recovery Plan

Quarterly Report #7



Sydney Summer Street Party - Stanley Street, Darlinghurst, 12 March 2022. The City of Sydney programmed a series of high street closures in 6 village locations throughout January, February and March. The series was partly funded by a NSW Government Open Streets grant. The street parties provided local communities with the opportunity to celebrate together in a Covid-safe way, while supporting local businesses.

Results of a survey of participating businesses showed 84% of respondents agreed they received higher patronage and spend than a normal day. 55% reported an increase in revenue of more than 50%, and 33% reported an increase of 100%. 97% of respondents stated they would like more events like this in their area.

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Where are we now?

State of the city update

Note regarding this data

Currently only limited up-to-date data is available at the City of Sydney level on the impact of Covid-19. Much of this data is collected or reported at different points in time, given different publication lags. The current situation continues to evolve rapidly, making much of the available data quickly out of date. Every attempt has been made to present the most recent data.

The substantial easing of health restrictions in NSW coincided with the arrival of the Omicron variant in the last two weeks of 2021. In consequence, the City economy entered the first quarter of 2022 with hesitant steps into a Brave New World of 'learning to live with Covid-19'. In January and February most remaining travel and health restrictions were eliminated - not only in NSW but elsewhere. The balance of the immediate health v economy issues shifted substantially towards the economic side. Much of this was enabled by the lower hospitalisation and mortality rates of the Omicron variant.

However, the transmissibility of Omicron saw an exponential surge in the number of positive and 'close contact' cases. This also had immediate negative economic consequences. Unlike previous variants, the circumstances saw supply-side and labour shortages come to the fore. The ABS "Household Impacts of Covid-19 Survey" in the quarter indicated that in March, 20% of Australians reported that Covid-19 had impacted work arrangements in the household in the previous four weeks. Similarly, almost one in five (19%) of employing businesses had staff unavailable due to Covid-19, either as a positive case or a 'close contact'.

The quarter was very much a transitional period in terms of dealing with Covid-19 at the same time as the easing of health-based restrictions for affected people, and the need to ensure a continuation of the momentum of community economic recovery.

For the period January – March 2022:

- **City output (GDP):** City modelling indicates that the February-March part of the quarter saw output rebound quickly after the seasonal absenteeism of January and the initial fear of the Omicron surge given its widespread transmission as cases rose dramatically. While still below pre-Covid levels, output still represented growth of about 3% on an annual basis over the March quarter.

The newly released ABS Monthly Business Turnover (derived from monthly Business Activity Statements) shows that many of the City-focussed industries had the largest growth. These included Transport and Travel; Arts & Recreation Services; Retail Trade; Other Personal Services, Professional & Business Services and Information & Communication. The latest (February) ABS Retail Sales figures confirm this quick rebound.

Unfortunately, many businesses encountered global and local supply-chain issues as Omicron continued to spread. Many businesses with staffing issues from employees contracting the virus or becoming a close household contact in isolation and were forced to restrict opening hours/days or staffing levels. This would have impacted on the rate of growth of GDP from what it might have been.

- **Employment:** The increased activity evident over most of the December 2021 quarter continued into the March 2022 quarter. The ABS Payroll Tax Jobs Index for the week ended March showed a 2.8% increase compared to the end of December – having peaked at 94.1 in mid-February. Given that the index is set for 100.0 for the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, this means that the City employment has yet to recover fully from the impact of the pandemic and restrictions.

With the absence of a scheme like JobKeeper – linking employees to businesses – this meant that businesses had to advertise for appropriate labour as they required staff to re-open in response to pent-up demand from the end of health restrictions. According to the ABS the number of job vacancies in February 2022 in NSW was 7.5% higher than in November 2021. A decline in the participation rate occurred as people had withdrawn from the labour market or were attempting to consolidate multiple jobs. In consequence, many businesses faced skill shortages and difficulty in obtaining necessary labour. This was particularly so for businesses in the ‘Accommodation and Food Services’, the ‘Arts and Recreation Services’ and ‘Real Estate Services’ industries. These are all customer-facing industries for which employment and hours have been particularly impacted during the pandemic. They are all more concentrated in city CBDs such as the City of Sydney.

- **Visitation:** City of Sydney Pedestrian Count figures show that footfall numbers increased from 27% of pre-Covid levels at the beginning of January 2022 as the holiday period and the onset of Omicron threat took hold, to end the March quarter at 47%. This was similar to the early December 2021 figure of 53%.

Notably, Saturday pedestrian numbers were significantly higher and at times almost out-numbered ‘working-day’ figures. Opal Card commuter usage data shows a similar pattern of return to early December figures, albeit 44% below pre-Covid levels, although the number of tap-offs increased by 35% in March. The end of March quarter saw the proportion of pre-Covid usage at its highest level since May 2021, prior to the Delta outbreak.

As a point of comparison, the Property Council of Australia’s estimates of office occupancy levels show a similar pattern, increasing from 7% in January to 18% in February and up to 41% in March. All of which are still below the 68% occupancy recorded in May 2021.

- **Spend:** SpendMapp data provided to Council indicates the direct impact of the pandemic on the City of Sydney. (*Note that the confidential data sighted by Council in previous reports is no longer available*). The current data relates to domestic Australian consumers and does not include international visitors. However, it does identify domestic visitors to the City of Sydney area as distinct from residents.

This shows that despite the Omicron outbreak, spending largely continued the recovery indicated in the strong December 2021 quarter.

For the period from January – March 2022 (compared to the December 2021 quarter):

- Total retail spending by domestic consumers decreased by 8%
- Total retail spending by domestic visitors decreased by 7%
- Spending at dining and entertainment establishments decreased by 1%
- Spending on personal services decreased by 14%
- Spending at department and clothing stores decreased by 25%

Most pertinently, excluding the January holiday/Omicron surge, the monthly change from February to March 2022 shows turnover continuing to regain lost momentum caused by the peak of the Omicron outbreak:

- Total retail spending by domestic consumers increased by 22%
- Total retail spending by domestic visitors increased by 23%
- Spending at dining and entertainment establishments increased by 28%
- Spending on personal services increased by 20%
- Spending at department and clothing stores increased by 20%

However, the cumulative total since the pandemic began gives an understanding of the impact on cash flow of city businesses and their economic viability following the end of JobKeeper and other support arrangements, and in consequence why businesses have been increasingly concerned with the economic impact. Compared to the equivalent quarter in 2019 (ie pre-Covid), spending in the quarter was as follows:

- Total retail spending by domestic consumers decreased by 12%
- Total retail spending by domestic visitors decreased by 14%
- Spending at dining and entertainment establishments decreased by 14%
- Spending on personal services decreased by 17%
- Spending at department and clothing stores decreased by 16%

- **International travel and students:** As the heart of a global city, the City economy is heavily reliant upon international and interstate visitors. The imposition of international visitor caps and border restrictions during the pandemic has impacted significantly on many City businesses. This quarter saw the relaxation of many of these restrictions.

The City's hotel occupancy rate for the March quarter maintained the average 42% from December 2021 (reaching a peak of 48% in the second week in December). These figures compare to an average 85% pre-Covid and over 50% prior to June 2021. The lack of international visitors particularly impacts on the Restaurant, Hospitality and Arts sectors.

The ABS Overseas Arrivals data shows that the number of arrivals in the March quarter was about double the number in the last quarter of 2021. However, it is still substantially below pre-Covid levels which suggests that it will take some time to recover.

In relation to international students, these are particularly important economically for the City with an average local spend of \$25,000 per trip – six times the spend of the average international traveller. The international student enrolments data for January-February 2022 (NSW-wide) indicated that, compared to the same period in 2021 is down a further 12% on top of a 16% decline in full-year enrolments in 2021 and a 9% decline in 2020. Only about a quarter have switched to online learning, so the number of campus-based students has declined significantly.

This has particularly impacted on local businesses and shops servicing the resident student community. The significance to local businesses of the lack of international students, travel and migration on the City of Sydney can be seen in the ABS estimated resident population of the City actually declining by 6,431 or more than 2.5%, between June 2020 and June 2021. This is virtually unprecedented in modern times. Similarly, the City of Melbourne, which also has a high proportion of international students, suffered a 16,000 resident population decrease.

More particularly these ‘missing’ students may slow the rate of recovery of the hospitality sector as it seeks to expand, given their significance as a source of labour, with job vacancies being difficult to fill. Additionally, according to Study NSW, 59% of student visa holders from China (our largest source of students) remain offshore due to domestic Covid restrictions and flight shortages. The international education sector will take several years to recover given the ‘pipeline’ effect of lost multi-year enrolments, and intense competition from other Australian cities as well as Canada, New Zealand, UK and USA.

Confidence

- **Business confidence:** With the onset of Omicron, Business Confidence fell significantly to end the quarter almost 20% below the March 2021 figure. This was the lowest figure for March for over a decade (with the exception of the result at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020). This possibly arose from supply-side and labour shortage issues as well as inflation and interest rate fears.
- **Consumer confidence:** Nationally Consumer Confidence over the quarter was clearly affected by Omicron and its transmission rate. Up to the peak in cases (early March), Consumer Confidence fell steeply by approximately 10% to 91.1, 21.2 points below the same period a year ago. As cases began to stabilise and fall, so too did Consumer Confidence begin to stabilise, to end the quarter at 94.8 – the lowest March figure since 1992 (with the exception of the initial Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020).
- **Recent trends – towards the “Brave New World” of Covid-normal:** The first quarter of 2022 can truly be described as an important transition period. The emphasis switched from reacting predominantly to the prevailing health issues towards managing economic issues.

There seems little doubt that Omicron (and how the economy and governments grapple with it) will dominate in the next quarter of 2022. Already we can see differences with the experience of the early stage of the pandemic in March 2020 and the Delta variant of June 2021. Unlike the others, Omicron has a ‘long tail’ of cases compared to the ‘bell-shape’ of the other variants. This means we really will have to learn to live with it, or some other variant that arises.

There is little doubt that we need to continue to encourage more workers to return, more often, to their city-based employment. Similarly, we need to encourage more visitors, particularly domestic locals, overseas visitors and international students to ‘experience’ the benefits of the City.

Unlike previous Covid waves, the economic impact caused by Omicron will be largely determined by consumer hesitancy, business capacity and labour supply issues rather than government restrictions.

The Omicron wave has generated domestic supply chain disruptions that have largely been absent since the initial stages of the pandemic. Staff shortages are the main reason for the disruption, which raises the question of skill shortages and a mismatch of skills on the demand and supply of labour.

Other headwinds, such as the geo-political situation and the state of the global economy that may occur could further boost inflation, interest rates and slow growth.

How we deal with these economic issues becomes critical to the next phase of the recovery.

Summary of the plan

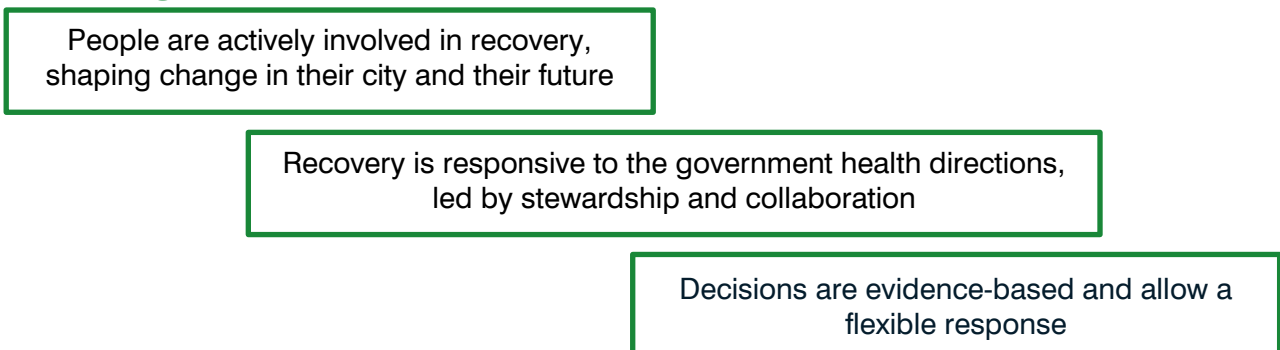
Recovery goals

- 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
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Action Areas



Guiding principles



What we have done

This section provides an overview of activity under each of the recovery plan actions for the period 1 January – 31 March 2022:

	Total Actions	Actions Underway	Activity this Quarter
Business as usual/transformed actions:	39	39	37
New actions:	18	18	14
Recovery plan total actions:	57	57	51

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 re-allocated and businesses can successfully reopen.

What we are doing to support recovery

1.1 Prioritise our business concierge service to support businesses to open and operate safely

- There were 262 contacts to the business concierge service in quarter 3 21/22 and 1,901 since commencement as follows:

	Q3 21/22	Since Commencement
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Calls:	90	764
Emails:	172	1,137

- The majority of these enquiries were about the City's grants program.
- In addition, the Concierge team supported planning for the upcoming *Sydney Summer Streets* program. The team visited small businesses located in Glebe, Pyrmont, Surry Hills, Redfern and Potts Point to inform them of the planned events, opportunities for participation and merchandising.

The team serviced 590 combined face to face, email and telephone interactions with businesses about the *Sydney Summer Streets* program as follows:

• Crown Street, Surry Hills:	167
• Darlinghurst Rd/Macleay Street, Potts Point	164
• Glebe Point Road, Glebe	152
• Harris Street, Pyrmont	56
• Redfern Street, Redfern	51

What we are doing to support recovery

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| 1.2 | Continue the acceleration of the capital works program to upgrade city streets, parks and playgrounds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Accelerated landscaping program is now complete. – The sports field development program is underway and includes planning for outdoor synthetic fields at Perry Park, The Crescent and Alexandria Park Community School. |
| 1.3 | Clean public places and streets to a high standard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – City staff and City contractors experienced significant strains on staff resources in January due to Covid-related absences. To accommodate the changing requirements of public health orders and cases where workers had to isolate, there were delays to some collection services, including green organics, booked bulky household collections, and reported illegal dumps.

General red bin waste and yellow bin recycling collections were prioritised. These collections continued as per regular schedules with minimal missed collections despite more waste being generated and limitations on available staff resources. – High traffic areas were prioritised for street cleansing while there were reduced staff resources available and once staff resources returned Cleansing Operations focused on areas missed during January. – Community recycling event was held on Saturday 26th February with 816 vehicles attending and a total of 22 tonnes of material collected for recycling. – The Home Recycling Trial continued which allows residents to have items collected from their front door with a contactless pick up and recycled via RecycleSmart. – The City’s cleansing operations team continued to provide additional cleansing and support where required. This included removing any urgent illegal dumps, steam cleansing footpaths and street furniture and emptying and cleaning street litter bins. – Additional mobile street litter bins around hospitals and testing venues have been deployed as required. – Areas with high pedestrian activity, especially on weekends, have continued to be prioritised for servicing, including providing more litter bins and more frequent cleansing and waste collections. |

What we are doing to support recovery

- 1.4 Promote safe alternatives to single-use items to address emerging waste issues
- Pop-up stalls on safe reuse restarted in February and March. City staff delivered 5 community pop-up stalls at Eddie Ward Park in Surry Hills, Dr HJ Foley Rest Park in Glebe, Wulaba Park in Waterloo, Fitzroy Gardens in Potts Point and Pirrama Park in Pyrmont. Despite the wet weather, 115 people were engaged with on safe alternatives to single use items, such as reusable coffee cups and take-away containers. In Millers Point, City staff held an information session about the NSW single use ban and reusable alternatives was held inside the Millers Point Coop building and 10 residents engaged with City staff, asking multiple questions. To help educate the community about safe reusable alternatives to single use items and prepare for the NSW single use ban, more community pop-ups will be scheduled in the coming months on this topic
 - In January, City staff attended the Redfern Scavenge event at Redfern Park, in partnership with event organizer's Seaside Scavenge, and provided education about waste avoidance, recycling, and City services, and an opportunity for residents to recycle batteries, mobile phone and lightbulbs. City staff engaged with 87 residents at their stall and collected over nine kilos of e-waste, whilst the total scavenge event re-directed 78kg of ocean-bound litter (42kg of waste and 36kg of recycling).
 - Through the City's online 'Ask A Waste Expert' service, outreach officers responded to responded to 261 questions from 150 residents on a range of topics and items. Common questions were about safe reuse alternatives and how to recycle different kinds of plastics, electronic items, bulky cardboard, metals, food and garden waste.
- 1.5 Communicate that Sydney is safe, clean and open for business
- The City's major city centre revitalisation campaign was able to be fully rolled out towards the end of the quarter.
 - The campaign has been refreshed under the strapline *Your city is waiting for you*, inviting residents, workers and students back into the city centre – to eat, drink, dwell, see, and shop. This campaign is funded by the \$20 million CBD Revitalisation partnership with NSW Government.
 - The campaign uses digital, outdoor and podcast advertising, content marketing and utilises our What's On website – a one-stop hub to find the best things to do in the city centre.

What we are doing to support recovery

- A new feature of the campaign during the quarter is a set of co-branded marketing materials that the City has created for Property Council of Australia and Business Council of Australia. These associations have provided the City’s resources to their corporate members who are based in the CBD as a way for them to easily share with their teams positive messages about returning to the city.

The materials include:

- Campaign messaging for internal staff communications (intranet, social media)
- Advertising, from outdoor formats to a full suite of digital ads
- Video content and photography
- Written guides
- List of upcoming major events in CBD

Sitting alongside these assets is the whatson.sydney/cityworker landing page. This page is curated for a Monday to Friday city worker audience and to help city businesses better utilise the What’s On website with relevant content and guides.

Members have found the toolkit and assets useful, easy to use and engaging

- We have scaled back Covid related content articles on City of Sydney News somewhat, but still provide essential and relevant information. The following articles continued to be promoted via City’s social channels and to 16,000 weekly email digest subscribers:

Page Views:	Q3	Total
• Covid-19 page on CoS website:	5,302	32,119
• Face masks required in City venues:	79	6,584
• Get your Covid vaccination:	3 538	18 859
• Covid testing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community:	1,203	3,533
• Ultimo pop-up vax clinic:	124	3,518
• City community hotline promotion:	154	1,408
• Summer Streets (new content):	6,618	6,618

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

- Since the commencement of the outdoor dining in new spaces program in November 2020 until 31 March, 436 applications have been approved, of which 126 relate to reallocated road space and 310 relate to reallocated footway space.
\$4,916,346 in footway dining fees have been waived.
- The City continues to advocate for greater priority for pedestrians at crossings to reduce crowding.

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	–	Waived footway dining fees have been extended to June 2022:	Since commencement
			Fees waived	\$ 4,916,346
		–	Continued rent relief on commercial properties (excluding QVB):	Since commencement
			Total rent relief forecast	\$13,162,682
			Total rent deferral estimate	\$ 4,109,327

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| 1.8 | Invest in the pedestrianisation and activation of south George Street | – | Construction to permanently convert the southern end of George Street to a pedestrian boulevard, as part of creating 9,000m2 of additional pedestrianised space began in March 2021 and is largely complete. |
| | | – | Bathurst Street to Rawson Place is now open on the east side and from Bathurst Street to Ultimo Road on the west side. People can move freely across the light rail tracks from Bathurst Street to Hay Street. |
| | | – | Additional public domain improvements including wider footpaths, new trees and street furniture are underway in Hay Street and will soon begin in Ultimo Road and Thomas Street. |
| | | – | Works to pedestrianise Devonshire Street between Chalmers and Elizabeth streets began in February and is progressing well. |
| | | – | The project’s Community Liaison Officer will continue to work with local residents and businesses to ensure they are well informed ahead of works in the area. Regular updates will continue to be provided to the community as construction continues. |
| | | – | The initiative is viewed as a positive step in the recovery by providing space for physical distancing, creating new outdoor space for businesses to utilise, and improving the look and feel of the street for people. It will also help to the reinvigorate the southern CBD. |
| | | – | In March 2022, street observations showed although the number of pedestrians using George Street south remained similar to previous years, there were significantly more people lingering in the newly completed spaces. The average number of people sitting on bench seats or outdoor dining areas doubled outside the cinemas and World Square. |

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.

What we are doing to support recovery

- 2.1 Direct existing grant support towards addressing emerging community issues and funding those most in need
- In response to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, the City community emergency quick response grants were provide urgent support for vulnerable groups in the city for activities up to 31 January 2022.

In this quarter seven organisations were supported with \$65,000 across seven grants. Three were for food security projects, two for a community cohesion project and two were for digital inclusion projects.
 - Additionally Round 1 of the City’s annual grants and sponsorship was open throughout the quarter for cash and in-kind grant support across the following programs:
 - Community Services
 - Matching Grants
- 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
- 210 program sessions were provided in the City’s community facilities, online and face-to-face from 1 January to 31 March.
 - In the last quarter 8,063 people engaged in online and face-to-face programming via City Libraries, Community Centres and Social Programs. Since City Community Centres re-opened in January there have been 34,853 people attend overall.
 - 28 programs were delivered to 752 people and online Auslan and English Storytime attracted almost 2007 views.
 - 12 lunchtime conversations were delivered with online and face to face participation, options at Darling Square and Green Square Libraries
 - Face to face makerspace programming at Darling Square Library returned post lockdown with free and low cost making activities for children and adults.
 - 4 online Auslan and English Storytime videos, featuring Deaf presenters as literacy role models were produced and 24 videos were hosted on the City’s website and face to face delivery resumed at Glebe Library.

What we are doing to support recovery

- Libraries were unable to deliver programming in January and February due to Covid restrictions and impacts on staffing. Library Outreach collaborated with Redfern Community Centre and Reginald Murphy Community Centre and delivered basic digital skills group sessions from the 1 March 2022. Our weekly sessions covered topics that included how to search the Internet, access library online resources, use email and setting up a Facebook. The pilot program has been well received by the community and will continue in the future.
 - However, programming that was possible during the quarter included:
 - 10 Digital Literacy sessions were held, providing tech support to community members with a total of 41 attendees across two locations
 - 3 online book club meetings were held with a total of 18 attendees
 - 1 face to face book club meetings were held with a total of 8 attendees
 - 46 face to face early literacy programs (Rhymetime/Storytime including Bilingual and Auslan) with a total of 1,067 attendees (589 adults and 478 children).
- 2.3 Manage community spaces, services and facilities to ensure safe, equitable and affordable access and participation
- Accessibility and inclusion were supported through the provision of Auslan interpretation and live captioning at online events and alternative programming such as online Auslan and English Storytime, digital workshops and online webinars. 41 events in this quarter were Auslan interpreted, 24 events were captioned
 - Of 671 survey responses across all cultural programming, 83% of people attending programs reported feeling welcome and included. While personal connections ratings were low (reflecting the online nature of many events), overall feelings of community were higher with 75% of respondents agreeing that the program helped them feel part of the community and 79% of respondents reporting that the program inspired their own creativity.
 - Online programming continued to feature alongside face-to-face and hybrid events to broaden the reach of programs and provide accessible options for the community.
 - This quarter saw confidence continue to grow in the community with highest attendance across all library branches since March 2020.
 - Home library service made 273 deliveries.

What we are doing to support recovery

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| <p>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</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 10 Digital Literacy sessions were held, providing tech support to community members with a total of 41 attendees across two locations – 13,220 PC sessions used by visitors to libraries. |
| <p>2.5 Work with other government agencies and organisations working in the homelessness sector to support those at risk of or experiencing homelessness</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Seven-day coverage provided by the City’s homelessness unit and public space liaison officers who continue to engage with people experiencing homelessness. Staff continue to provide rough sleepers with the most up to date information from NSW Health, along with information about service provision and accommodation available. |
| <p>2.6 Continue to leverage the City’s existing Supported Accommodation, Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund to create more affordable housing</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No activity scheduled this quarter |
| <p>2.7 Advocate to federal and state governments for increased investment in social and affordable housing as well as no forced evictions and tenants' rights</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City continues to advocate to the NSW Government and housing providers for the retention and increased supply of social and affordable housing on the following projects: Waterloo (South) redevelopment, the Pyrmont Place Strategy and Blackwattle Bay State Significant Precinct, 600 Elizabeth Street, Redfern and Redfern North Eveleigh Precinct Renewal site. – Public exhibition for the Waterloo Estate proposal by the NSW Government opened on 3 March and closes 29 April. The City is advocating for a greater amount of social and affordable housing to what is proposed. In addition, the City continues to communicate and support the Waterloo community. |
| <p>2.8 Prioritise the provision of food security services for our vulnerable communities through partnerships, networks, grants and existing services</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meals on Wheels delivered 11,358 meals to 236 residents. – The City continues to work with the three main food suppliers in the LGA and coordinate the Sydney Food Operations Group, made up of 34 core agencies, to respond to ongoing demand during the pandemic. In the period 4,995 food hampers, 19,879 meals, and 9,803kgs of individually requested items have been distributed. |

Other actions we will take

<p>2.9 Work with charities to support their fund-raising to provide ongoing services to people in the local area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Both OzHarvest and Foodbank expended the City’s donation of \$100,000 each in the last quarter. – In the period 7 new projects were supported through Covid-19 community emergency quick response grants to provide food relief and digital inclusion.
<p>2.10 Advocate to the federal government for the continuation of financial and other support packages and broadening access to assistance</p>	<p>In February, the City provided a submission of the NSW Parliament’s Inquiry into food supply and production in NSW. In this submission, the City called on the NSW Government to advocate to the Federal Government to Raise the Rate of income support payments such as JobSeeker. There is recent data indicating that inadequate income support and low income can contribute to food insecurity in our community. This was also raised by the City’s expert witness during the public hearing for the Inquiry.</p>
<p>2.11 Connect impacted international students to accommodation and mental health support services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City’s International Student Leadership Ambassadors (ISLA) attended the University of Sydney’s three International Student Reorientation events to promote the City and ISLA services and programs. Over 300 students attended the City’s information stall. – 3 Career Essentials workshops took place with the City’s ISLA ambassadors as guest speakers sharing their experiences. In total 41 international students attended the workshops. – The City’s ISLA ambassadors participated in consultations to provide input to services and strategy impacting on International students including: Centre for Volunteering CALD Strategy and Surf Life Saving NSW - New Beach and Coastal Safety Resource Hub.
<p>2.12 Advocate to the NSW Government to direct energy efficiency support to low-income residents and strata communities in the local area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City is collaborating with NSW Govt to ensure energy efficiency stimulus, incentives and support include strata communities and also low-income communities. The City has successfully advocated to the NSW Government to ensure sustainability infrastructure and associated by-laws and decision-making support are included in the evolution of relevant legislation. This work is ongoing. – The City has supported the NSW Government’s development of the new NABERS Renewable Energy Indicator for apartment buildings launching mid-2022.

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.

What we are doing to support recovery

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| <p>3.1 Provide grants that facilitate community engagement in City owned spaces and public places</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Due to the second lockdown, the City continued to provide rent relief for childcare centre providers for an approximate value of: <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">Fin YTD</td> <td>Since Commencement</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\$ 632,189</td> <td>\$2,298,377</td> </tr> </table> | Fin YTD | Since Commencement | \$ 632,189 | \$2,298,377 |
| Fin YTD | Since Commencement | | | | |
| \$ 632,189 | \$2,298,377 | | | | |
| <p>3.2 Provide residents with links to support services and practical assistance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City provided information and referral pathways to residents in a range of formats online and in print with links to relevant health, safety and support contacts. – The community hotline received 14 calls for requests to information or support. – 3,000 hardcopy flyers were distributed, <i>Your guide for support during the Covid-19 pandemic</i>, targeted specifically at support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. – Key safety and crime prevention messaging was provided to over 5,200 residents monthly on themes on women’s safety and Covid-19 key support information. | | | | |
| <p>3.3 Support the provision of health and safety information to residential strata owners</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City has continued to provide health, safety and resilience information to strata communities through the Smart Green Apartments program and the Residential Strata Sustainability Group. Staff continue to work together to ensure essential information is circulated to high-density strata communities with four e-newsletters circulated to City residents and strata businesses. | | | | |
| <p>3.4 Advocate to ensure environmental sustainability is of high importance in fast-tracked urban renewal programs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Advocacy has continued to NSW Government for environmental outcomes aligned to City targets in the following renewal projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterloo Estate • Central Station | | | | |

What we are doing to support recovery

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| <p>3.5 Coordinate local emergency response through Local Emergency Management Committee</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City continues to coordinate the activities of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), including the response and recovery to Covid-19. This includes regular reporting on activities and emerging issues. Progress update includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortnightly LEMC meetings. • Ongoing support to the NSW Health public health response through the use of City facilities as vaccination and testing clinics. • Coordinated support to vulnerable communities through emergency food distribution (hampers and kitchens), dedicated community hotline, targeted communications, personal protective equipment, and community quick response grants. • City of Sydney Crisis Management and Incident Response and Recovery Teams continue to meet to address strategic, operational and business continuity requirements of the organisation and community. – Fee waivers for all parking, including the Goulburn St car park and the Kings Cross car park have now expired. This action is now complete. |
| <p>3.6 Work with the Resilient Sydney network to share best practice and establish cross boundary recovery initiatives</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Resilient Sydney program continued to support councils with information and advice through the ongoing adaptations required during the continuing pandemic. |

Other actions we will take

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| <p>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</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City hosted the quarterly Domestic and Family Violence Forum on 15 March attended by over 35 sector representatives. The theme of the forum was ‘sharing best practice across our network’ to ensure people from diverse backgrounds can access and engage with services and are included in primary prevention and advocacy efforts. – The City has built the capacity of over 60 trusted frontline organisations to deliver food and support to vulnerable communities during the 2021 lockdown. |
| <p>3.8 Facilitate capacity building workshops with the community sector and community led organisations to support their planning for the reopening of their services</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Due to the ongoing impacts of the Omicron wave throughout the quarter, no activity against this action was scheduled. Support for reopening will be reported in the next quarter. |

Other actions we will take

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| <p>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 <i>Sorry Business</i> during the pandemic, and to provide an opportunity for support, collective reflection and acknowledgement for community members who have passed away.</p> | <p>– No activity against this action was scheduled this quarter.</p> <p>The focus of the City’s work with the community continued to focus on providing support access to services such as on testing, food relief and vaccinations.</p> |
| <p>3.10 Celebrate the work of the community groups and volunteers including at the annual Lord Mayor volunteer thank you event</p> | <p>– No activity against this action was scheduled this quarter.</p> |

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.

What we are doing to support recovery

- | 4.1 | Direct existing grant support to sustain cultural organisations and stimulate development opportunities for local creatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Round 1 of the City’s annual grants and sponsorship is currently open for cash and in-kind grant support across the following programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business support – live music & performance • Culture & creative • Festivals & events – artform • Festivals & events – artform major • Festivals & events – village & community | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|--|---------|--------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------|----------|-----------|
| 4.2 | Advocate to federal and state governments for targeted support for culture and no net loss of cultural space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City participated in an event on 16 February at the Joynton St Creative Centre to release the insights report of the Making Space for Culture Incubation program (reported against Action 4.2). The event was attended by the NSW Government. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.3 | Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and knowledge sharing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City is working to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grant applications through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion • Training • Application • Assessment <p>The current round of grants is open and will be reported in the next quarter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As busking returns to the city streets, the City can continue to cultural practice in the public domain by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.4 | Continue work to maximise opportunities for cultural sector in City owned spaces and community venues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City provided rent relief for creative spaces, short-term empty property, creative accommodation grant and live/work Waterloo and William St tenants for an approximate value of: <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px; margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: right;">Fin YTD</th> <th style="text-align: right;">Since Commencement</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>• Creative spaces:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$28,225</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$201,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Other cultural:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$83,883</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$381,483</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Other social:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$44,292</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$181,991</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This action is now complete</p> | | Fin YTD | Since Commencement | • Creative spaces: | \$28,225 | \$201,000 | • Other cultural: | \$83,883 | \$381,483 | • Other social: | \$44,292 | \$181,991 |
| | Fin YTD | Since Commencement | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| • Creative spaces: | \$28,225 | \$201,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| • Other cultural: | \$83,883 | \$381,483 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| • Other social: | \$44,292 | \$181,991 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

What we are doing to support recovery

- In total, the City has provided rent relief for Accommodation Grant Program recipients and creative tenants to the value of:

	Fin YTD	Since commencement
Rent relief	\$788,589	\$3,062,851

This action is now complete

- All cultural tenants continue to be provided proactive contract management support through a period that continues to be challenging for the creative industries. Cultural Tenants and Grantees were also provided with a semi regular news digest of links to applicable government support and other opportunities.
- The City opened an Expression of Interest for two City owned spaces to be made available to the cultural sector under the Accommodation Grants Program. Applicants can apply to lease the spaces with a rental subsidy of up to 100% of the market rate.
- Program highlights include the delivery of performance event "Them Heavy People" at Green Square Library which celebrated migrant stories in Sydney from the 1980s through to the 2010s and a panel event featuring Sydney Lunar Festival artists.

4.5 Enable diverse local cultural infrastructure and activation through the City's Open and Creative planning reforms

- The Open and Creative planning reforms, a set of measures to make it easier for small businesses to trade later, or host performances and shows are still with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for finalisation. Once drafting by Parliamentary Counsel is complete, the reforms will be published and able to be implemented. The City is reviewing submissions to the draft entertainment sound planning controls and will report back to Council in 2022.

Other actions we will take

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| <p>4.6 Facilitate opportunities for collaboration and capacity building to ensure cultural sector resilience and sustainability</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Outcomes of the Making Space for Culture Incubation Program were reported in March. This pilot program was funded through the Knowledge Exchange grant program and was undertaken by Left Bank Company. <p>The program brought together 8 participants from the cultural sector and 7 from the property sector to learn from best practice models for developing and delivering creative space. The program focussed on building the capacity of Sydney’s cultural organisations to own and manage affordable creative space, while concurrently helping the property sector to effectively tap into the value created by creative and cultural uses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Key insights include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sector needs intermediaries to de-risk and bring specific skillsets to development cycle • Measuring the value of proposition of creative spaces remains a hurdle • Strategic partnerships need to be established before project opportunities are explored • Cultural sector want to own their properties, but need help to get there • Affordability of creative space poorly defined • Delivery of sqm space cannot come at expense of quality or viability. |
| <p>4.7 Continue to explore opportunities for making space for culture in partnership with public and private sectors</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City has contracted Arup Australia to develop guidance materials for the design and delivery of cultural infrastructure projects. Titled “Creative Spaces Design Guides”, the documents outline the spatial, operational and structural requirements for best-practice, fit-for-purpose creative spaces like rehearsal rooms, recording studios, small theatres and light industrial workshops. The guides were provided to Councillors for information in quarter and will now be made available to the cultural and property sectors as a free resource to help guide planning and decision making on new creative space projects. |
| <p>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</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Action complete |

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.

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
- We continued to see a significant jump in activity this quarter with a 43% increase in page views of What’s On, reflecting the community’s enthusiasm to get back out and about as soon as was possible.
 - Leveraged whatson.sydney as the primary event platform:
 - Events submitted: 3,902
 - Page views per month: 105,635
 - Sessions per month: 205,194
 - Email subscribers: 31,596
 - The city centre reactivation marketing campaign *Your city is waiting for you* continued throughout the quarter. Refer to action 1.5 for a full report.
- 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
- The City implemented the *Sydney Summer Streets* program from January to March 2022. Six village high streets around the City of Sydney were closed to vehicles, providing space for communities to re-engage with local businesses after the pandemic lock downs. In total, 148 businesses activated as part of the program, attracting more than 17,000 participants and employing 170 musicians and performers.
 - The Sydney Lunar Festival attracted more than 500,000 people in January and February, with a renewed focus on the revitalised George Street promenade and Haymarket precinct.
 - *I am responsible* by Kristian Molloy was installed in late March for Art & About Sydney. Thoughtful messages encouraging people to stop and question their present situation are presented on billboards in Glebe, Ultimo, Pyrmont, Redfern and McDonsaltdown.
- 5.3 Continue to partner with Business Events Sydney (BE Sydney) to build the pipeline of business meetings for Sydney
- The Omicron wave saw the postponement of domestic business events planned for early 2022. However, many of these events will reschedule. Globally, international clients continue to prepare and plan for events in 2023 and beyond. Activity is expected to pick up further by the end of 2022.

What we are doing to support recovery

- BESydney’s events pipeline continues to grow, with:
 - 98 national and global events confirmed for Sydney between 2022-2026
 - More than 75% of these events are due to take place in 2022-2023
 - 18 of the 40 meetings and incentives to take place in 2023 will attract more than 1,000 delegates
- NSW Government has released the second round of the Accelerate Sydney Business Events Fund, designed to stimulate the return of business events. It offers up to \$60,000 in matched funding for business events held between July 2022 - June 2023. This is part of the Covid-19 Economic Recovery Package announced in late 2021 and is administered by BESydney in conjunction with Destination NSW.
- In February 2022, Council approved a cash sponsorship of \$300,000 (ex GST) per annum for two years (2021/22 and 2022/23) to support Business Events Sydney in its ongoing activities to attract both domestic and global business events to Sydney.
- In October, a new \$6M funding program was announced to support the recovery of business events in 2022. BESydney will administer the program in conjunction with Destination NSW.

5.4 Continue to engage with the accommodation and entertainment sector to ensure sustainability is promoted and prioritised

- Sustainable Destination Partnership – A leadership panel of the Sustainable Destination Partnership met to commence strategic development of the next phase of the partnership.
- 13 hotel ratings grants were acquitted with savings just under 2,000 tonnes of carbon
- Work commenced to participate in the Global Destination Sustainability Index in 2022

5.5 In line with health advice, welcome people back to Sydney through roaming ambassadors, maps and digital services

- The Destination Ambassador program has not yet resumed as the international borders only re-opened to international travellers in late February 2022. This will be reviewed as we start to understand forward booking patterns of international travellers over the coming months.
- The contract with Citrus Media, producers of the Official Visitor guide and Map will be bought to a close. Ongoing discussions with Destination NSW and visitor economy partners will continue to better understand the need for printed collateral including maps, but it is anticipated that maps will be offered via digital platforms in the future.

What we are doing to support recovery

- 5.6 Advocate to state and federal governments for ongoing support for international students while they continue to be impacted by the pandemic
- *The following activity was not reported in the Oct-Dec 2021 quarter:* On 26 November the Australian Government released the Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030. The City participated in workshopping its development. The strategy includes strengthening connections between local communities and students, and the importance of students to meet Australia’s skills needs.

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
- As part of the \$20 million partnership with NSW Government, the City continues to work closely with grant recipients of the \$3 million dollar CBD Activations Grant Program.
- Various funded activations were delivered through February and March, including Oxtrovaganza and the Glittering Mile, two multi-day activations across Oxford Street and Potts Point, both successfully leveraging visitation to the Mardi Gras Festival.
- By 31 March, 80 of the total 96 funded activations in the program had been completed (accounting for \$2,915,000 of the \$3 million grants program).
- Between January and March 2022, the City delivered *Sydney Summer Streets*, a series of 6 neighbourhood events that transformed high streets into car-free zones for a day, with roving musicians and performers, welcoming residents and visitors to celebrate local businesses (also reported against Action 5.2). More than 140 businesses activated onto the streets.
- A post-event survey conducted with businesses across all 6 high streets showed that 84% of respondents agreed they received higher patronage and spend than a normal day. 55% of respondents reported an increase in revenue of more than 50%, and 33% reported an increase of 100%. 97% of respondents stated they would like more events like this in their area.
- 5.8 Partner with Destination NSW to develop a local and domestic visitor marketing campaign for Sydney, with focus on the cultural offering over the 2020–2021 summer
- This action is now complete, however the City’s marketing team continues to liaise with Destination NSW to ensure ongoing marketing activity by the two organisations to promote Sydney is complementary.

Other actions we will take

- 5.9 Encourage and facilitate the return of international students back to Sydney in partnership with education sector
- The City hosted two University of Sydney international student interns to support the coordination of Lord Mayor's Welcome for International Students.
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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.

What we are doing to support recovery

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| <p>6.1 Facilitate dialogue with heavily impacted sectors to support their recovery</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The City has been conducting an annual Business Needs Survey since June 2020 to hear directly from businesses about the impact of the pandemic on their business and their immediate and long term needs to support their recovery. <p>In March 2022, the results for both the 2020 and 2021 surveys were published and made available as open source data to the local business community via the City of Sydney's Data Hub. By making this data available through the Data Hub it also becomes a useful open resource for other government organisations, business advocates and/or research institutions.</p> <p>The 2022 Business Needs Survey will be held in June</p> |
| <p>6.2 Direct existing grant support for organisations, businesses and industry, including those dominated by women, to assist them to innovate, adapt and grow</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Round 1 2022 of the City's grants program was open during the period and will be reported in the next quarter. |
| <p>6.3 Continue to support collaboration across the innovation precincts within the Camperdown Ultimo collaboration area</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A Council report was submitted to the March meeting to provide a strategic overview of the Tech Central innovation precinct and an overview of projects in which the City is involved. <p>A community engagement approach is now being prepared and will be reported in the next quarter.</p> |
| <p>6.4 Implement the Central Sydney planning strategy to support a pipeline of development and investment certainty</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Central Sydney planning framework including new planning controls and a new contributions plan was finalised in November 2021. The City is continuing to progress site specific planning proposals in line with the adopted strategy. |
| <p>6.5 Continue to use City procurement to support local businesses and a shift to a circular economy</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No scheduled activity this quarter. |

What we are doing to support recovery

- 6.6 Continue to support communities and businesses to accelerate their uptake of renewable energy to stimulate the green economy
- Action to support businesses is largely delivered through the flagship programs of the Better Buildings Partnership (BBP) and CitySwitch Green Office. Key activities in Q3 included:
 - The CitySwitch annual report and two lunch and learn webinars with participating businesses on *Pathways to Renewables for SMEs* and the distribution of the online guide *GreenPower for SMEs* via the City’s business marketing channels.
 - Commencement of BBP projects focused on circular economy and resilience
 - Collaboration with City of Melbourne to deliver a new service design for the evolution of the CitySwitch program
 - There is now 19.8 MW of rooftop solar installed on 1,971 rooftops in the LGA, an increase of 800kW from last quarter.
 - The Solar Villages project support residents to switch to renewables through a Knowledge Exchange Grant commenced in October. The first two of six sessions have now been held, with at least four attendees proceeding to the solar installation phase. The information nights will continue until July 2022.
- 6.7 Continue to assist businesses and apartment buildings owners’ corporations to implement retrofits for increased efficiency
- The Smart Green Apartments program has reduced emissions by 28,818 tonnes CO₂e per year and saved owners’ corporations \$4.2 M.
 - The Strata Sustainability Reference Group was held in February and focused on sustainability and resilience support for high density communities.
 - To date, the City has supported 119 apartment buildings to get a NABERS rating with a total of seven procuring GreenPower. In Q3, 30 strata schemes received a NABERS energy rating and 27 strata schemes received a NABERS water rating.
 - 22 Smart Green Apartments buildings and 31 grant recipient buildings are participating in the City’s food scraps recycling trial.
 - One e-news was sent to 3,323 subscribers.
 - The City continued to advocate for improved environmental standards for apartment buildings.
 - The City has supported the NSW Government’s development of the new NABERS Renewable Energy Indicator for apartment buildings launching mid-2022.

What we are doing to support recovery

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| 6.8 | Prioritise investment in City projects that provide significant local green economy benefits | – The City continues to work with Investible to establish the new Greenhouse climate technology startup innovation hub at Circular Quay, due to open 2023. |
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Other actions we will take

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| 6.9 | Produce skills development programs to enhance innovation, collaboration, digitisation and e-commerce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supported by City of Sydney, the Australian Fashion Council’s The Fashion Tech Lab launched their 6 month incubator program for local Australian fashion brands to help them accelerate their adoption of technology to become more resilient, profitable, sustainable and customer oriented. In February 2022 they welcomed 10 participants to the program (a mix of emerging and well-established labels) including Cue, Bianca Spender, Matteau, Commas, Daniel Avakian, Eupheme, Palasade, West 14th, Arthur Ave, Ramp Tramp Tramp Stamp. The program includes a series of workshops to identify opportunities to digitise the early stages of their design process. The program will run until June 2022. – City of Sydney’s 2022 Reboot Webinar Series launched on 29 March with more than 360 business registrations. This year, City of Sydney has partnered with NSW Government's Business Connect to grow the reach of our successful Reboot Program into regional businesses. Reboot is an annual capacity building program designed by the City in response to the feedback from businesses through our annual Business Needs Survey. The 2022 Reboot program includes a series of nine free webinars to support businesses recover, rebuild, engage and grow their customers and revenue streams. The launch event featured entrepreneur and founder of Red Balloon, Naomi Simson, speaking on the essentials of brand building. |
| 6.10 | Advocate to federal and state governments to invest in green economy as major generator of jobs | – No activity scheduled this quarter |

