

ITEM 13 CROWN STREET MALL ACTIVATION AND MARKET PROGRESS REPORT

Council at its meeting on 31 October 2016 resolved -

'A report be submitted to Council in 12 months on the impact of increased activation, inclusive of the Markets on CBD business operations, as measured against the aims, desires and outcomes of activating the Mall and the relevant Markets Development Control Plan'.

This report provides a progress update as per Council's resolution.

RECOMMENDATION

Council note this report.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Sue Savage, Manager Community Cultural and Economic Development (Acting)
Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Community Services - Creative and Engaged City (Acting)

ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments for this report.

BACKGROUND

Council continues to implement a program of activation and business attraction activities for Crown Street Mall. This function was delivered by Destination Wollongong until 30 June 2016 when it was brought back to Council.

Wollongong City Centre is recognised in the Illawarra Regional Plan as the region's capital. The City Centre accommodates a concentration of numerous uses including a strong commercial and employment component alongside retail, residential and community opportunities for participatory and passive engagement and activation.

Council's Crown Street Mall Activity Policy (endorsed 27 June 2016) provides a clear and transparent framework to guide the decision-making and approval process for activity in the Mall. At the same time it encourages various forms of activity to create a vibrant and revitalised City Centre and a strong sense of place for the community and other stakeholders. It also recognises the Crown Street Mall is a unique space located within a retail and business environment, and that this is a key factor for determining the types of activation that take place.

Over the last 12 months Council has implemented a program of activations and events that offer a range of experience modes for visitors from large to intimate audience experiences. This includes Council produced programs, as well as the facilitation of community and commercial use of City Centre precincts.

Activation is not limited to event based programs, but also includes attraction initiatives such as the expansion of the *free City Centre WiFi service*, business recognition (*Illawarra Business Awards*), and the installation of the *Crown Street Mall Public Art Project*.

In addition, Council has entered into Hire Agreements for markets in the Crown Street Mall – *Thursday Night Eat Street* and *Friday Forage*, which play a key part in activating our spaces on a weekly basis.

Christmas on Crown

A seven week, full program of Christmas activities, performances, carols event, decorations and retail promotions throughout the Crown Street Mall precinct. One component of this activation is the *One Day Sale* which provides businesses with the opportunity to promote their offer during a peak trading period. Last year 22 businesses participated in this initiative, growing to 37 businesses participating this year.

Nights on Crown

A winter themed event where visitors were invited to come out on a chilly evening, take a stroll and see illuminated buildings while enjoying the food on offer in Wollongong City Centre. CBD businesses were provided with the opportunity to participate by offering patron promotions during this event.

Summer Sessions

Live music performances in Crown Street Mall as part of the *Live Sites* initiative. This activity brought vibrancy to the Mall and surrounding businesses. It also delivers toward achieving the outcomes identified in Council's Cultural Plan – Live Music Action Plan.

Chinese and Lunar Festivities

Chinese and Lunar New Year community celebration in Crown Street Mall, attracting audiences from a range of cultural demographics including the Wollongong Chinese business community, Burmese and Vietnamese communities. *"It's a great event and we are looking forward to collaborating again!" Wollongong Chinese Business Association*

Markets

Since November 2016 both the *Thursday Night Eat Street* and *Friday Foragers* Markets have operated under Hire Agreements between the Markets organiser and Council. Both Hire Agreements have been in place for close to 12 months, and reflect the findings of an independent market review (Review) commissioned by Council in 2016, the findings of an independent Valuation process, and Councillor input.

The Review took into consideration perceptions of market organisers, stall holders, surrounding retailers, market users and governance bodies to establish a pathway forward that balanced community and commercial demands. The Review also recognised that a balance needs to be achieved between a thriving temporary retail economy, and existing demand for market activations by the community with community development initiatives that provide both public and economic gain.

Specifically, the Review identified there was an opportunity to improve the standards and presentation of the Markets, and the promotion and the position of the Markets as a regional event. With the focus being on:

- Improved management
- Locally authentic and authentic new products.
- Support new start-ups or home-based businesses.
- Point of difference from existing retail offer – event in the case of food offers.
- High standard of presentation and cleanliness.
- Provide a wide variety of entertainment and activities in association with the Markets.

The Hire Agreements incorporate performance standards to be met by the Markets organiser. These include a target of 90% local stallholder representation; 30% stallholders to be start-up or home-based businesses; a minimum of three new or rotating stalls to be presented per month; a minimum of two weekly marketing promotion activities; and an entertainment component.

An annual review against these performance standards has been conducted. The Markets organiser has been able to meet these performance standards with the exception of the target 90% local component for the *Friday Forager* Market. In this instance, a large proportion of the stallholders who operated under the previous Hire Agreement (which did not include this performance standard) have come over and now are required to operate under the new Hire Agreement. The transition to achieving the target local component is proving challenging as some of the stallholders have a strong community client base, even though they are not fulfilling the local criteria.

The *Friday Forage* Market is attracting up to 4,000 people per market day, while the *Thursday Night Eat Street* Market is attracting up to 15,000 people per market night. These Markets have attracted new audiences to our Mall and changed negative perceptions of the Wollongong City Centre, particularly on a Thursday night when Mall visitation was previously under 2,000 people per night and safety identified as a major issue.

In addition, the data is showing that in 2015, 80% of *Thursday Night Eat Street* Market attendees came specifically into the Mall to attend the market, and 20% specifically to shop. In 2017 this changed to an equal 50/50% split demonstrating that the permanent commercial outlets are also receiving increased foot traffic and economic benefits. This is supported by feedback received from GPT Management.

The Markets also contribute positively to delivering creative and vibrantly activated spaces, and the objectives of the City Centre Evening Economy, Cultural Plan and Wollongong 2022.

Extension of City Centre Free WiFi Service

Following Council's endorsement to maintain the existing City Centre Free WiFi service area and to extend it to include the dining precincts in Corrimal and Keira Streets, the procurement process has commenced.

This will result in a City Centre Free WiFi that encapsulates public domain in Crown Street between the Railway Station and Corrimal Streets, Globe Lane, Ethel Hayton Walkway, Arts Precinct and the dining precincts in Corrimal and Keira Streets. WiFi positioning information technology will also be included.

Illawarra Business Awards

The Wollongong City Centre Business and Retailers Awards were integrated into the Illawarra Business Chamber Awards (IBC) for the first time this year. In addition to being able to enter the standard 16 award categories, Wollongong City Centre businesses had their own dedicated category – the *Wollongong City Centre Business Excellence Award*.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Economic Development Unit, Wollongong City Council

Central Business District businesses

Activation organisers

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Wollongong 2022 Goal 2 “*We have an innovative and sustainable economy*”. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan	Delivery Program 2012-2017	Annual Plan 2017-18
Strategy	5 Year Action	Annual Deliverables
2.3 The profile of Wollongong as a regional city of the Illawarra is expanded and improved	2.3.1 Wollongong's City Centre is revitalized and active	Deliver a new and refreshed integrated marketing and activation program

CONCLUSION

Over the past 12 months Council has monitored and assessed activations, many of which have been trials to inform the way forward. In addition, research has recently been commissioned to understand the current visitor and non-visitor profile and visitation habits to Crown Street Mall, which will be used to benchmark and inform future activation planning.

There is also the opportunity to tap into the growth that we have had in the City Centre over the last four years where we have seen over \$1.3B worth of construction take place, with more than \$300M in the pipeline. As a result of this expansion, the City Centre population is expected to increase by over 150% in the next two to three years.

All of this will inform future activation within the City Centre while continuing to ensure that these initiatives deliver against Wollongong 2022 and Council's Cultural Plan. Crown Street Mall activation will continue to be informed by the Crown Street Mall Activation Policy which encourages various forms of activity that contribute towards creating a vibrant and revitalised mall and a strong sense of place for the community and other stakeholders, including Central Business District businesses.