

ITEM-12 LMM 26/05/2020 - COVID-19 Update June 2020

MOTION

That City of Newcastle:

Part A: NSW Health update

1. Notes that as of 22 June 2020, NSW Health, through Hunter New England Health, report that there are no new cases of COVID-19 in Newcastle, and there are currently no COVID-19 cases with an unknown source;
2. Hunter New England residents are urged to reconsider visiting Melbourne, following an outbreak of new community-transmitted COVID-19 cases with an unknown source.

Part B: Jobs and employment

1. Notes that according to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, there have been almost 10,000 jobs lost in Newcastle since March 2020, with an unemployment rate of 7.7%;
2. Raises concern regarding youth unemployment, with 18.7% of Newcastle's young people currently unemployed.
3. Notes with concern that current unemployment figures do not include those who are receiving JobKeeper payment, and those who are not actively seeking employment, which may be masking the true extent of the unemployment situation across Newcastle.

Part C: City of Newcastle Community and Economic Resilience Package

1. Notes that City of Newcastle has developed a comprehensive community and economic support package designed to help locals through the unprecedented effects of COVID-19.
2. Notes that the Community & Economic Resilience Package has seen \$5.5 million invested into initiatives to support vulnerable community members and businesses affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic;
3. Notes that the package provides economic incentives aimed at maximising cash flow for small business, while supporting vulnerable residents, including
 - Interest-free rate deferrals,
 - 50% discount on rent for City of Newcastle owned buildings
 - Relaxation of a range of fees/policies
 - Promoting local procurement.
 - Providing substantial grant funding to support community sector partners provide direct support to the vulnerable community members
 - Grant support targeted for industries most affected by COVID-19.

Part D: The Newcastle Response:

1. Notes that the City of Newcastle City Taskforce has released 'The Newcastle Response', the first unanimously endorsed advocacy document (**Attachment A**) aimed at providing

NSW and Federal Government representatives with the collective policy position of the City of Newcastle;

2. Notes that the Newcastle Response provides strong support for Newcastle's community sector, including the endorsed position that:
 - *The City Taskforce advocates for a permanent and sustainable increase in support for the unemployed and vulnerable to prevent social security payments falling back to an inadequate rate. The Taskforce believes that current and ongoing social security payments should be independently reviewed and monitored to ensure that all Australians are adequately supported through unemployment and disadvantage. Furthermore, we ask the State and Federal Governments, through the National Cabinet, consider the development of policy measures to support the financial sustainability of the community sector, including dedicated engagement with First Nations Peoples and the disability sector.*
3. Notes that 'The Newcastle Response' also saw the City Taskforce unanimously endorse City of Newcastle's infrastructure advocacy list (**Attachment B**) which includes advocacy to the NSW and Federal Governments for the following projects:
 - Catalyst Areas for Greater Newcastle projects, as identified in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan
 - Large-scale priority infrastructure projects including:
 - i. Coastal management planning and erosion management, especially at Stockton Beach
 - ii. Flood mitigation at Wallsend
 - iii. Newcastle Airport Expansion
 - iv. Port of Newcastle Diversification
 - v. Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct
 - vi. Newcastle Light Rail Expansion
 - vii. Lower Hunter Freight Corridor
 - viii. Affordable housing initiatives
 - ix. Metropolitan wide active transport (walking and cycling) improvement
 - x. John Hunter Hospital upgrade
 - xi. Newcastle Art Gallery Expansion
 - xii. Local sporting amenity upgrade
 - xiii. Local playground upgrades, particularly for disability inclusion
 - xiv. Ferry terminal at Wickham
 - xv. Pensioner rate rebate increase
 - Local priority infrastructure project, including:
 - i. Summerhill Waste Management Centre – Organics Processing Facility
 - ii. Richmond Vale Rail Trail
 - iii. Newcastle Beach Community Facility (Stage 2, Newcastle Beach – Bathers Way)
 - iv. Newcastle West Bi-directional Cycleway – West End Stage 2, Phase 1
 - v. Newcastle East End Streetscape Upgrades and Cycleway
 - vi. Foreshore Park All Abilities Playground
 - vii. Wallsend Active Hub
 - viii. Local Centres Program

Part D: City Taskforce: Leadership Team & Action Team

1. Notes that the City Taskforce has been established to provide local leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. First meeting was in mid-April and Taskforce will conclude at the end of the year. The City Taskforce has established five clear work streams including advocacy, direct industry support, developing a local evidence base, transforming the local skills base, and most importantly, providing a collaboration forum for new ideas.
2. Thanks City Taskforce Members - 17 key city leaders from across manufacturing, small business, tourism, transport and logistics, arts and culture, workers, education, business and community sectors, for their valuable contribution to our City's recovery. Industries represented, and their representatives on the City Taskforce are:
 - Health - CEO Hunter New England Health, Mr Michael DiRienzo
 - Education - Vice Chancellor University of Newcastle, Professor Alex Zelinsky AO
 - Industry - CEO Port of Newcastle, Mr Craig Carmody
 - Finance - CEO Newcastle Permanent, Ms Bernadette Inglis
 - Insurance - CEO NIB, Mr Mark Fitzgibbon
 - Sport & Hospitality - CEO Wests Group, Mr Philip Gardner
 - Industry - CEO Newcastle Airport, Mr Peter Cock
 - Business - CEO Hunter Business Chamber, Mr Bob Hawes
 - Industry - CEO Hunternet, Mr Tony Cade
 - Community - CEO Samaritans, Chair of Third Sector Group, Mr Brad Webb
 - Tourism - CEO Alloggio, Mr Will Creedon.
 - Arts - Independent Creative Alliance, Ms Justine Cogan.
 - Finance - CEO Greater Bank, Mr Scott Morgan
 - Unions - Secretary Hunter Workers, Mr Daniel Wallace
 - Development & Property - Director, Newcastle, Colliers International, Mr Peter Macadam
 - State Government Coordination - Director Regional NSW, Ms Alison McGaffin
3. Thanks the members of the City Taskforce Action Team for their contribution to our City's recovery, including:
 - First Nations – CEO Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council – Mr Rob Russell
 - Sport & Hospitality - CEO Wests Group, Mr Philip Gardner
 - Industry - CEO Hunternet, Mr Tony Cade
 - Community – Executive Officer Samaritans, Ms Emma Granger
 - Business – Policy and Public Affairs Manager Hunter Business Chamber, Ms Amy Delore
 - Health - Executive Director, Partnerships Innovation and Research, HNEH, Ms Jane Gray
 - Industry – Campaigns Organiser Hunter Workers – Mr Leigh Shears
 - NSW Government - Deputy Director Regional Development, Hunter and Central Coast, Regional NSW, Mr Mark McClean
 - Development & Property - Director in Charge Colliers International, Mr Peter McAdam

- Industry – Executive Manager Corporate Affairs Newcastle Airport, Mr Stephen Crowe
 - Arts - Independent Creative Alliance, Ms Justine Cogan
 - Tourism – CEO Alloggio, Mr Will Creedon
 - Finance - Chief Customer and Product Officer Newcastle Permanent, Mr James Cudmore
 - Education – Head of Government Relations University of Newcastle – Ms Fiona Bastian
 - Finance - Head of Corporate Affairs & Investor Relations NIB – Mr Matthew Neat
 - Finance - Group Executive Sales, Marketing and Distribution Greater Bank – Mr Craig Newham
 - Industry - Special Project Director Port of Newcastle – Mr Ross Caddell
 - Development & Property - Regional Director Hunter Property Council – Ms Anita Hugo
 - Innovation - Regional Manager, Hunter Central Coast and North Coast NSW AusIndustry – Mr Tim Cotter
 - Industry – Australian Industry Group – Mr Trevor Stuart
 - Employment - Hunter Region Employment Facilitator, Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment – Mr Warrick Jordan
 - Youth / Young Adults – President, Hunter Young Professionals – Ms Kate David
 - Multicultural Communities – CEO Hunter Multicultural Communities – Ms Annette Gebhardt
 - Youth / Young Adults – Vice President – Hunter Young Professionals – Ms Danielle O'Neill
 - Youth – Youth Mayor, Newcastle Youth Council – Ms Ashley Harrison
 - Disability Communities – Executive Officer, Community Disability Alliance Hunter, Mr David Belcher
4. Notes that collectively the city leaders have begun work to chart a path for our community and economic recovery.
 5. Notes that in a jointly penned a letter, the City Taskforce called on the NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, to consider the plight of international students in the COVID-19 climate and calling upon the NSW Government to provide urgent financial and in-kind assistance.
 6. Notes that the NSW Government subsequently announced financial support for international students in financial distress caused by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Part E: Affected Industries Roundtable

1. Notes that on 3 June 2020, the City Taskforce held an *Affected Industries Roundtable*, bringing together industries that have been hardest hit by COVID-19, to discuss how City of Newcastle can best support the recovery of their important sectors (**Attachment C**);
2. Thanks Industry representatives for providing important insights into the most affected industries, including;
 - Retail and Hospitality – Mr David Bliss (Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association)

- Hotel Industry – Ms Nikki Taylor (Australian Hotels Association) and Mr Michael Starkey (AHA)
 - Live Music – Ms Nikki Taylor (AHA) and Mr Marcus Wright (Big Apachee)
 - Tourism – Mr Will Creedon (Alloggio), Mr Kent Warren (Newcastle Tourism Industry Group), Mr Colin Law (NTIG)
 - Arts – Ms Annette Hubber (Screen Hunter), Ms Justine Cogan (Independent Creative Alliance Newcastle), Ms Karen Crofts (Hunter Writers Centre)
 - Business Improvement Associations – Ms Cornelia Schulze (Newcastle City), Meg Purser (Purser Communications)
 - Makers & Traders – Ms Anne Kempton (Timeless Textiles)
3. Notes that industry representatives have been encouraged to work with the City of Newcastle to consider collaborations for the Industry Response Program, and to continue to engage with the City Taskforce as restrictions on their industries begin to ease.

Part G: Newcastle Business Club presentation

1. Notes that Deputy Lord Mayor Declan Clausen and City of Newcastle's Simon Massey today presented an update to the Newcastle Business Club regarding the City's support for businesses during the COVID-19 global pandemic (**Attachment D**);
2. Notes that the City's strong support measures for local businesses includes economic incentives that make sense and maximise cash flow, including:
 - Financial hardship relief - \$1.17 million in interest-free deferred rates. This includes 35 tenanted businesses with signed commitment from landlord.
 - Improving payment terms to seven days provided a \$4.5 million liquidity spike in April during the depth of the COVID-19 crisis. Invoices continue to be paid on 7-day payment terms
 - Rent relief (50%) for CN premises through to end of September. Providing \$28k savings to businesses / community organisations across the city each week.
 - Relaxation of a range of fees / policies that made sense including waiving library fees, relaxation of restrictions on the use of footpaths, supporting doctors' surgeries to stay open longer and providing more flexibility for truck movements around supermarkets.
 - Local procurement weighting increased where possible to provide opportunities for local suppliers.

BACKGROUND:

City of Newcastle – Our Response:

The safety and wellbeing of our communities, customers and employees is our top priority.

Our dedicated emergency response team is working with government partners and local stakeholders on maintaining essential services, delivering community and economic support, and planning for the City's recovery from COVID-19.

City of Newcastle is responding to COVID-19 in the following ways:

- The City of Newcastle COVID-19 Emergency Response Team is leading all aspects of the City's response and includes People and Culture (and WHS), Legal (Emergency

Management and Risk) and Corporate Affairs (Communications and Community Engagement).

- Our Community and Economic Resilience Package has been launched to provide comprehensive support to help locals through the unprecedented effects of COVID-19.
- We comply with the NSW Government's Public Health Orders relating to public spaces.
- We are actively involved in the Local Emergency Management Committee's response to COVID-19 which includes NSW Police, NSW Fire Brigades, SES, Health, Transport for NSW and neighbouring councils. This is allowing us to establish joint approaches and provide consistent advice.
- We have activated the Emergency Management Action Plan (EMAP) for Newcastle. This Plan is aligned to State and National emergency plans and City of Newcastle's suite of Emergency Management Plans. The EMAP outlines strategies for CN in accordance with readiness and key actions which CN is committed to in accordance with relevant legislation, Acts and Regulations.
- We have eased regulatory enforcement to give businesses flexibility to reduce the impacts of COVID-19, allowing more truck deliveries to supermarkets, and longer hours for doctors' surgeries.
- We are promoting the NSW Health as the primary source of information and health updates.

City Taskforce - Industry Representation

A City Taskforce, led by the City of Newcastle, has been established to oversee the recovery phases of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The purpose of the City Taskforce is to bring together the City's key partners to develop place-based solutions to support the recovery of the City.

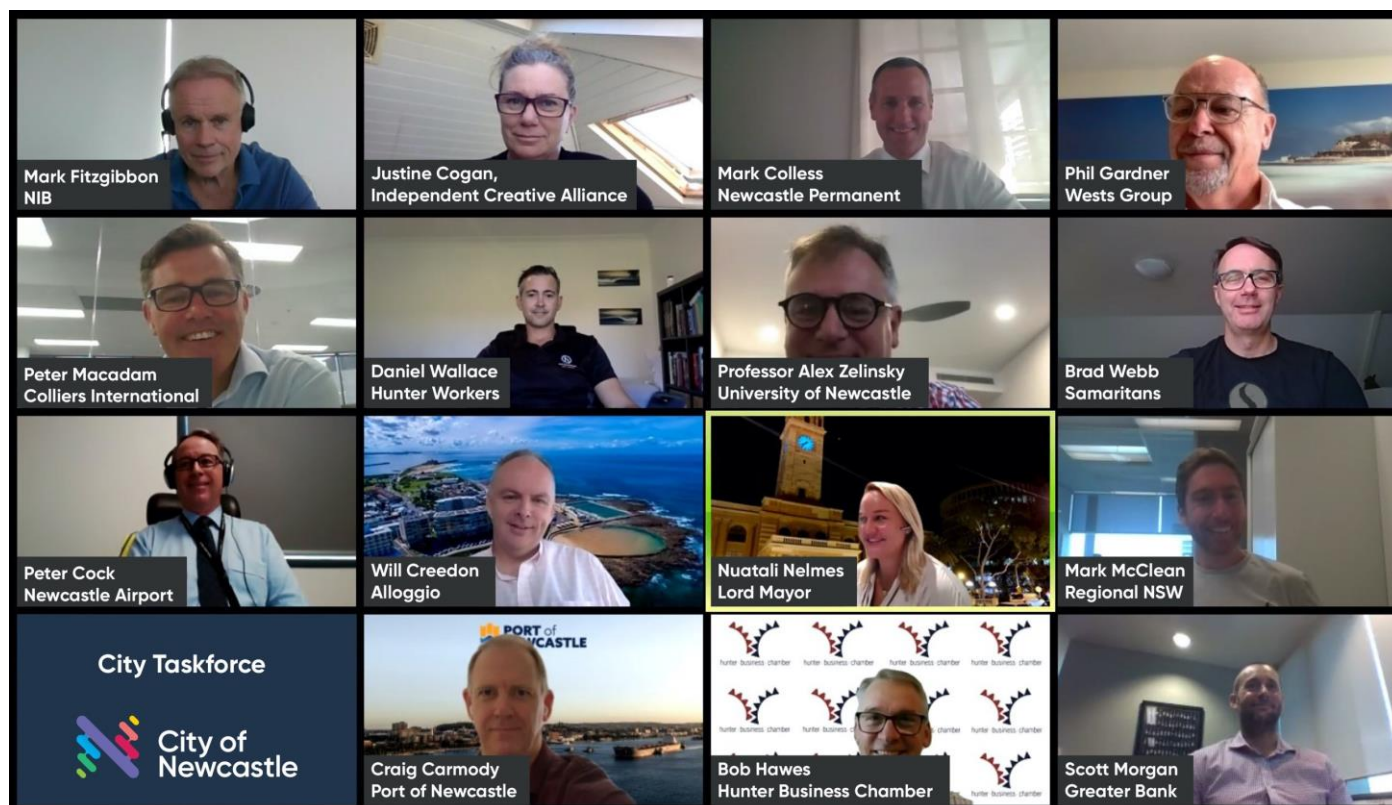
The City Taskforce provides leadership on local issues and act as the local coordinating advisory committee for community and economic resilience. Taskforce members will make recommendations to Council, Industry Organisation and the State Government on support measures to assist local industries and community well-being.

The City Taskforce consists of 17 civic, industry and government leaders representing key sectors across the Newcastle economy.

These City Partners will represent their sector by seeking innovative ideas and proposing new programs of work to support Newcastle's recovery from COVID-19. Taskforce members will use their local knowledge and industry expertise to make recommendations to Council in relation to the types of support provided through economic resilience programs.

The City Taskforce is comprised of a Leadership Team and Action Team made from City Partners. The Leadership Team provides direction to the Action Team, who are responsible for implementing the Economic Resilience programs.

City Partners will assist to facilitate the delivery of these programs through in-kind support. The City Taskforce will be effective from 17 April through to the end of 2020.



The City Taskforce consists of 17 civic, industry and government leaders representing key sectors across the Newcastle economy.

City Taskforce Industry Response Program

The City Taskforce Industry Response Program (IRP) is a component of City of Newcastle's COVID-19 Community and Economic Resilience Package. CN has contributed \$500,000 to the program and expressions of interest (EOIs) are now being considered from industry groups, businesses, community organisations and collaboratives for funding that will enable city-shaping outcomes that target the hardest hit industries and population groups.

City Taskforce Update 5 June 2020

5 June 2020

MEETING OF THE CITY TASKFORCE

The City Taskforce, a collaboration of 17 leading organisations and employers, chaired by Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes City of Newcastle, held its fourth meeting today via Zoom. The Taskforce was formed to develop a collaborative approach to the City's response to COVID-19, from crisis to recovery and beyond. City leaders focused their discussion on the first edition of The Newcastle Response, which highlights the challenges facing the community sector, as well as the forecasted impacts of the end of Government supplements, such as JobSeeker and JobKeeper, legislated to 27 September 2020. The Taskforce was also briefed on the Affected Industries Roundtable, facilitated by City of Newcastle on 4 June 2020, at which representatives from industries such as retail and hospitality, tourism, live music and arts and culture shared their experiences and local insights.

The Newcastle Response – Community Sector

City leaders endorsed the first Newcastle Response, forging their support as joint signatories to this powerful advocacy framework. The document presents case studies of the hardship and disadvantage Novocastrians have faced as a result of COVID-19, particularly vulnerable groups such as the elderly and temporary visa holders, with many turning to emergency relief services for the first time during the COVID-19 crisis. The community sector is bracing for further demand if Federal Government social security payments fall back to an inadequate level. The Newcastle Response calls upon State and Federal decision-makers, to whom it is addressed, to develop policy measures that support the financial sustainability of the community sector and establish dedicated engagement with First Nations and disability organisations.

In addition to The Newcastle Response being circulated to State and Federal decision-makers, Director Regional NSW, Ms Alison McGaffin, will act as a conduit between the City Taskforce and State Government Taskforces to facilitate discussions and form recommendations.

Future issues of The Newcastle Response will cover the tourism sector, affordable housing, arts sector, mental health and international student advocacy. An immediate need to support the containerisation work of the Port, and its subsequent impact on other sectors across the city, was also identified.

Affected Industries Roundtable

Among the industries that participated in City of Newcastle's Affected Industries Roundtable, including retail and hospitality, hotels, live music, tourism, arts and culture, and Business Improvement Associations, there was a strong appetite to use the City Taskforce's joint advocacy as a springboard for collaboration and policy action.

City leaders heard how these industries expressed concerns for what lay beyond September, when support measures end. For example, licensed venues, if still unable to operate at full capacity by then, anticipate a second jobs crisis, which would have a flow-on effect to local supply chains. With the retail and hospitality industry being a large employer of young people in the region, and the youth unemployment rate for Newcastle and Lake Macquarie climbing to 18.7% as a direct result of the pandemic, this has the potential to impact young workers at the start of their careers for years to come.

Industry Response Program

City leaders received an update on City of Newcastle's Industry Response Program, which opened today. Expressions of interest are being sought from industry groups, businesses, community organisations and collaboratives for funding that will enable city-shaping outcomes that target the hardest-hit industries and population groups.

The University of Newcastle and the Hunter Business Chamber, both of which have representatives on the City Taskforce in Professor Alex Zelinsky and Mr Bob Hawes, have volunteered to sit on the Assessment Panel.

Infrastructure remains a priority

Infrastructure projects remain a key priority and focus of the Taskforce, not only in terms of job retention, but also job creation. Collective support exists for a large and diverse range of infrastructure projects across the City, as indicated in The Newcastle Response. This includes the Newcastle Airport expansion, complementing the recent announcement of a Special Activation Precinct at Williamtown; Newcastle Art Gallery expansion; as well as the containerisation of the Port of Newcastle to unlock trade and retail opportunities.

City Taskforce Update 15 May 2020

15 May 2020

MEETING OF THE CITY TASKFORCE

The City Taskforce, led by City of Newcastle and chaired by Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes, held its third meeting today via Zoom. The Taskforce was formed to develop a collaborative approach to the City's response to COVID-19, from crisis to recovery and beyond. City leaders focused their discussion on sharing aggregate data from each of the 17 organisations they represent to paint a clearer picture of COVID-19's impacts on Newcastle and the Hunter Region, as well as refining work streams to inform faster policy decisions. The Taskforce received the latest briefings and analysis on health, policy and economy with the national labour force data.

The Newcastle Response

City leaders endorsed a proposal by the City Taskforce Action Team to develop a fortnightly Newcastle Response. The 3-4-page brief, co-signed by each organisation on the Taskforce, will provide key local insights, data and intelligence that might not otherwise be readily accessible by State and Federal government decision-makers.

Each Response will deep-dive on particular themes, including:

- International Student Advocacy;
- Community Sector;
- Global Trade Infrastructure, including International Relations;
- City Mobility;
- Training and Skills, including Redeployment Opportunities;
- Arts Sector;
- Recreation Sector;
- Tourism Sector; and
- Affordable Housing.

The Newcastle Response aims to identify gaps in existing State and Federal Government policy suites whilst highlighting the City's ability to pilot new programs and approaches to COVID-19 challenges. The strategy will not only advocate for much-needed infrastructure but capture and share human stories and shared experiences.

The first letter will be sent on 1 June 2020; the second on 8 June 2020; the third on 15 June 2020; and fortnightly thereafter.

Advocacy for international students impacted by COVID-19

The Newcastle Response will initially focus on the community sector. This is expected to make further gains to the advocacy work the Taskforce has already undertaken, having jointly penned a letter to NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, urging the Premier to consider the plight of international students in the COVID-19 climate and calling upon the NSW Government to provide urgent financial and in-kind assistance.

Further local collaborations

Taskforce leadership endorsed a skills and talent development work stream, noting the challenges faced across multiple industries in retraining, skills, talent retention and attractions. With the University of Newcastle introducing a number of short courses for people whose employment has been affected by COVID-19, an opportunity was identified to further explore areas that would provide the greatest benefit to Newcastle's key industries and employers.

Reviving the visitor economy

Newcastle's visitor economy has been one of the hardest-hit sectors of the community, along with accommodation and food services and arts and recreation. City leaders resolved to identify gaps and opportunities in Newcastle's visitor economy landscape to increase brand awareness and capitalise on the city's proximity to Australia's second-largest domestic market, Sydney, as travel restrictions around COVID-19 ease.

Actions to explore included:

- Collaborating with industry to develop new products and experiences;
- Developing skills and training packages;
- Developing marketing campaigns that redefine Newcastle's identity as a leisure destination, with abundant lifestyle and amenity for those seeking a sea change;
- Supporting the development of events that leverage Newcastle's natural strengths in the sports, arts and cultural sector to grow brand recognition;
- Investigating how Newcastle can leverage Australia's position, alongside New Zealand, as one of the countries least impacted by COVID-19 due to its swift response and natural isolation, and how this could benefit the international student market; and
- Implementing programs to support local independent businesses through initiatives such as buy local campaigns.

Strengthening international ties

City leaders unanimously agreed to show diplomacy to strengthen international trade and manufacturing relations where there was a mutual benefit to Newcastle, including to key sectors such as the international student market and visitor economy.

City Taskforce Update 1 May 2020

01 May 2020

MEETING OF THE CITY TASKFORCE

The City Taskforce, led by City of Newcastle and chaired by Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes, held its second meeting today via Zoom. The Taskforce was formed to develop a collaborative approach to the City's response to COVID-19, from crisis to recovery and beyond. The Taskforce focused its discussion on work streams and resourcing to implement priority programs and initiatives aimed at getting the City back up and running and supporting the community's most vulnerable.

City Taskforce work streams identified

Staff and industry leaders from each of the 17 organisations attended a digital workshop on 24 April following the inaugural City Taskforce meeting on 17 April. Priorities identified in the City's COVID-19 response included implementing programs that enable people, businesses and events to return to normal; transformative economic programs providing long-term strategic benefits; community resilience and social connection; as well as initiatives to address common issues faced across industries.

As a result, the following work streams were proposed to, and unanimously supported by, the Taskforce:

- An industry-specific response program;
- Infrastructure advocacy program;
- City data and analytics program;
- NewSkill citywide upskilling program; and
- A collaboration forum.

Additional concepts raised and backed by the Taskforce were a local insights and impacts platform; buy local program; a skills training and talent strategy; and a re-emergence program focused on events and activities and how these might take shape post-COVID-19.

Collegiate efforts to seek Government support for regional priorities

As well as being a mechanism for collaboration and sharing local insights, a major role of the Taskforce is to advocate for infrastructure priorities in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area, such as the diversification of the Port of Newcastle and the Newcastle Airport Expansion, which is critical to both the economic and social recovery of the City and region through job creation and increased visitor economy, noting job losses of 19,000 across the Hunter and a sharp decline in discretionary spending due to COVID-19 impacts.

The Taskforce resolved to support Newcastle Airport in lobbying the Federal Government for project funding as a joint signatory on correspondence.

Similar support was sought and agreed upon to assist international students of the University of Newcastle, both current and future. The Taskforce will co-sign a letter to the NSW Government, calling for humanitarian aid for those international students who have lost employment and do not qualify for support payments, whilst they are also unable to receive financial assistance from their families abroad as they too are impacted.

Building community resilience during the COVID-19 recovery phase

Leaders proposed the Taskforce could offer itself and the region as a pilot for relevant Family & Community Services programs focused on building community resilience, which is important in managing wellbeing as many navigate complex situations they have suddenly found themselves in.

This dovetails with the Lean In Newy initiative, which City of Newcastle is developing for launch in May. The smartphone app connects community organisations and not-for-profits in need of volunteers with those who want to do good, offering rewards and offers redeemable at local businesses. Opportunities are categorised by community service, neighbourhood help, social connections, and local business support.

Sharing the good news

Leaders recognised the Taskforce's power as a united voice and determined to share case studies and good news stories of community resilience and connection with local media.

An opportunity was identified to involve the arts and cultural sector, critically affected by COVID-19, in those narratives, as well as engage with Indigenous Elders and communities as the source of cultural knowledge and storytelling.

Community Grant Program:

- \$172,466 rapid response grants committed to local community organisations.
- 32 Boost Our City Community Sector Grants Approved Funding \$512,172

Online Training:

The City has entered into service agreements with TAFE NSW, University of Newcastle and Novaskill to upskill local business people.

\$311,300 of training grants have been provided to 560 individuals directly employed by small businesses to complete their upskilling training by December 2020.

MEDIA RELEASES:

June 2020

City's libraries set to reopen

8 June 2020

Plans for a staged reopening of Newcastle's libraries will progress from 15 June after home library services resumed last week.

"The City has developed a staged approach to reopening our libraries' doors to its members that prioritises public and employee safety," Manager Libraries and Learning Suzie Gately said.

"We'll start with reopening the Newcastle and Wallsend branches to library members on 15 June, limiting the number of customers inside to allow for

social distancing and we will monitor browsing and attendance time using a 'Library Express' model."

"We have modified our opening schedule to allow for adequate cleaning of the facilities. The City's libraries have also expanded their online offerings during the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to an increase in downloads of the Library app of 233 per cent. Our expanded online program will continue."

The Libraries' membership has increased by more than 1,000 during the pandemic to 93,640 after the City invested \$60,000 in 5,800 additional e-book and audiobook titles, plus a new video streaming platform 'Medici TV'.

This follows a 213 per cent increase in usage of an online learning package offered through Newcastle Libraries, with 2,291 sessions streamed free of charge in April alone.

The Library has continued to engage its audience through 52 online programs such as Facebook Live story times, stop motion Lego clubs, kids online crafternoons, podcasts, author talks and creative workshops.

In May, almost nine hours of video content was published and more than four hours of Facebook Live kids' programs were delivered receiving 11,433 views during the month.

Newcastle Museum will reopen to the public on 23 June, however the facility's interactive attractions will remain closed for safety in line with State guidelines.

Blackbutt Reserve's animal exhibit boardwalk reopened last week.

Want to help during the COVID-19 pandemic? This app is how

3 June 2020

An app that allows everyday people to help local businesses struggling through the COVID-19 pandemic has been launched today.

'Lean In Newy' connects organisations that need support, with people wanting to help, while providing added encouragement through \$50,000 in vouchers and discounts redeemable at local businesses.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said Novocastrians have been brimming with community spirit in response to COVID-19 and Lean In Newy would direct people's desire to help where it's most needed.

"COVID-19 has had an unprecedented effect on our community, with older people experiencing increased isolation and businesses suffering a downturn in trade, while other people have found themselves suddenly with more time on their hands," the Lord Mayor said.

"We have been hearing from many people in the community wanting to help but not knowing how. Lean In Newy is the answer to those asking, 'How can I help?'.

“Charitable organisations like OzHarvest, Dog Rescue Newcastle and Take 3 For The Sea have registered with Lean In Newy to put out a call for volunteering opportunities, and those who put their hand up will be rewarded with incentives like a free coffee at a local café.

“There are already 23 businesses and 11 not-for-profits signed up, with more in talks, and City of Newcastle is funding the discounts or incentives offered through businesses during the COVID-19 recovery phase.

“Lean In Newy is a fantastic way for us to play our part in helping local businesses and community organisations get back on their feet.”



(L-R): Family Support Newcastle CEO Sue Hellier, Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes and Zebra Finch owner Kate McNally assemble kids' activity packs.

Family Support Newcastle is one of those community organisations. CEO Sue Hellier said the organisation's role in promoting the wellbeing of children and their families, individuals and communities was more vital than ever in light of recent hardship caused by COVID-19.

“Many of our activity groups and face-to-face support services have been impacted by COVID-19, but our mission remains the same. There are still ways the community can assist, like purchasing items and assembling kids' activity or sanitisation packs at home and dropping them off at our Waratah centre,” Ms Hellier said.

“Lean In Newy will be a great help for organisations like us that need more support during this challenging time, and we're very thankful to City of Newcastle for developing this initiative.”

Likewise, local business owner Kate McNally, who operates Zebra Finch at Marketown and Kotara, said she was grateful for the helping hand to encourage customers back to the stores.

“As a small business, we have felt the impacts of COVID-19 closures and social distancing measures quite profoundly, with a significant downturn in trade,” Mrs McNally said.

“It’s a relief to have the City’s support to help get back on track.”

Download Lean In Newy from the App Store or Google Play or visit leaninnewy.com.au.

Creatures of Blackbutt Reserve welcome back visitors

Blackbutt Reserve’s animal exhibit boardwalk will reopen to the public today.

Animal encounters, wildlife exhibits and shows remain on hold under the current social distancing and public gathering restrictions, while the kiosk also remains closed.



“Blackbutt Reserve is one of our City’s most popular attractions and we’re pleased people can once again enjoy the boardwalk and see some of the 60 species of animals that live there,” Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said.

“Safety is our priority and when you visit Blackbutt Reserve, you can expect social distancing measures in place to protect visitors and our staff.

“Novocastrians have done a fantastic job of limiting the spread of COVID-19, and as we reopen facilities to the public, we encourage everyone to keep up the good work including practising good hygiene and staying home if you’re unwell.”

During the Reserve’s closure, Blackbutt’s koalas became social media stars with a 360-degree live stream of feeding time, allowing young and old to join them daily for lunch.

“Over seven days, the stream of feeding time with koalas attracted 30,000 views on Facebook proving just how popular and loved our animals are.”

Adding to the experience at Blackbutt Reserve, playgrounds, walking trails, open spaces, shelters and barbecues are open.

MEDIA RELEASES – MAY

Libraries resume outreach services next week

29 May 2020

Newcastle Libraries will resume its home library outreach and begin inviting members to pick up items reserved before COVID-19 restrictions limited operations to digital services.

Resumption of the home library service will help vulnerable members access library items once again, while those who reserved collection items prior to the March closure of branches will be able to collect them after being notified by the library.

Staff will first contact those members awaiting reserved items to advise of the collection point and time.

“Starting with our outreach services only, we are taking a cautious, phased approach to re-opening our libraries to ensure we are able to meet the Public Health Order requirements, which include changes to service delivery and preparing our spaces with additional measures to keep everyone safe,” Manager Libraries and Learning Suzie Gately said.

“We will resume our home library service on Monday for existing members while adhering to public health orders that require returned books to be quarantined for 24 hours.”

Libraries staff have made and received more than 6,500 support phone calls over the past two months, produced a host of online programming podcasts and activities and welcomed more than 1,000 new members on the back of a \$60,000 e-library expansion.

“We are looking forward to welcoming the public back to our branches very soon, which we hope to announce in the next couple of weeks,” Ms Gately added.

Newcastle Museum remains temporarily closed to the public while a plan for its safe re-opening, mindful of the facility’s interactive attractions and popularity with children, is developed.

Art Gallery to re-open next week

29 May 2020

Newcastle Art Gallery will re-open Tuesday following the NSW Premier’s announcement that cultural institutions can re-open from 1 June amid easing COVID-19 restrictions.

The Gallery will re-open to visitors with separate, two-hour daily sessions from Tuesday 2 June - 10am to noon and 2pm to 4pm.

After first booking their attendance online, up to 40 people per session will be able to view *HOMEWARD BOUND: the art and life of Tom Gleghorn* and *REPEATER: from the collection*, an exhibition exploring repetition drawn from the Gallery’s collection.

Visitor numbers will be monitored through a ticketing system and extra cleaning and touch-free hand sanitisers will be provided as part of our focus on keeping our guests and staff safe. Signage and floor decal markers will help ensure social distancing.

“We are delighted to re-open Newcastle Art Gallery in a way that’s safe to the public,” Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said.

“With regional tourism permitted from 1 June we’re looking forward to safely welcoming visitors back to our Gallery while giving some of the 1,000 people who have viewed our current exhibition online the chance to see Tom Gleghorn’s works of art in person.

“Thanks to our staff who over the past two months have delivered a range of quality online programs, such as virtual exhibition tours, a collection recreation challenge, weekly Art Cart activities, Youth Week programming as well as a collaborative online exhibition with regional Galleries across NSW.”

While public programs remain suspended, the Gallery will continue to share the collection and digital experiences via its website and social media.

Newcastle Museum remains temporarily closed to the public while a plan for its safe re-opening, mindful of the facility’s interactive attractions, is developed.

City of Newcastle tackles COVID-19 unemployment through action and advocacy

27 May 2020

Youth unemployment has been identified as a focus area for the COVID-19 City Taskforce.

The Taskforce was formed by City of Newcastle and consists of 17 leaders and CEOs working to deliver localised responses to the economic and social challenges posed by COVID-19.

Hunter Research Foundation’s Lead Economist Dr Anthea Bill, who has been providing briefings to the Taskforce, highlighted in a forum with Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes on Monday that 18.7% of young people aged 15 to 24 in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie are now unemployed.

Nationally, swathes more have been left underemployed with their work hours reduced due to widespread closures and social distancing measures, bringing the national youth underutilisation rate – that is, unemployment and underemployment combined – to a staggering 37%, affecting more than one in three young people.

The Lord Mayor said this had been felt most profoundly throughout the City across the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors.

“We know from the City Taskforce’s joint, industry-specific response to COVID-19, that some sectors have been impacted more than others, and naturally this has affected specific population groups such as youth,” the Lord Mayor said.

“This has been a driving force behind the Taskforce’s advocacy work, directing support where it’s most needed.”

Since its inaugural meeting on 17 April, the Taskforce has jointly penned a letter to NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian, urging the NSW Government to consider the plight of international

students in the COVID-19 climate – many of whom have lost casual jobs and are unable to return home – and provide urgent financial assistance.

Looking at the bigger picture, the overall unemployment rate for Newcastle and Lake Macquarie jumped from 3.6% in January to 7.7% in April, with 9,900 people estimated to have lost their jobs between March and April.

“No economy is prepared to deal with the fallout from a global pandemic,” the Lord Mayor said.

“However, owing to City of Newcastle’s strong financial position going into COVID-19, we are committed to delivering a record capital works program next year as part of our broader range of community support, which will help create local jobs and provide training to ensure our youth have the necessary skills to be employable in the emerging economy.

“This in addition to our joint advocacy work with the City Taskforce, neighbouring Councils and State and Federal members to attract stimulus funding for catalyst areas, including the Newcastle Airport expansion and Port of Newcastle diversification, on top of the City’s \$2.5 million investment in graduate, apprentice and trainee recruitment this financial year.”

Strong take up of City’s COVID-19 support

24 May 2020

Almost \$1 million in household and commercial rate payments have been deferred and substantial rent relief has been extended to small businesses and community organisations under City of Newcastle’s COVID-19 support package.

The \$965,000 in rate deferrals have been made under 410 separate payment plans set up by both residents and businesses in consultation with the City as part of the \$5.5 million Community and Economic Resilience Package adopted by Council in March.

Fifty per cent rent reductions on City-owned buildings have eased the total burden on tenants by \$28,000 a week, while around \$450,000 has been allocated in grants to enable the community sector to support the most vulnerable in our city.



Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes with Craig Budden at Baptist Care Hope Street's Wallsend Centre, which received \$25,000 in support through the City's Rapid Response grants last month.

Free online training, a \$100,000 e-Library expansion and firm commitment to a record capital works program, with an emphasis on local procurement and quick payments, are also part of the package.

“In supporting the city, we are focusing on areas where local government has a clear strength and mandate, and it’s pleasing to see the take up has been strong to date,” Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said.

“As well as the interest-free rate deferrals for up to 15 months, we have rolled out an \$800,000 grants program to boost the community sector and halved rents to provide much-needed relief for small businesses in City-owned buildings.

“We understand that every business is suffering enormously right now and have provided as much support as possible as a local council.

“Many in our community are now unemployed and the elderly and those without family may become more vulnerable as they stay isolated, so we will further promote the City’s existing financial hardship policies and support the taskforce of City leaders to map out the local economic recovery.”

Council will help small business owners and staff undertake professional development training and accreditation as part of a \$500,000 education package.

This follows a 213 per cent increase in usage of an online learning package offered through Newcastle Libraries, with 2,291 sessions streamed free of charge in April.

The Libraries’ membership has increased by more than 1,000 during the pandemic after the

City invested \$60,000 in 5,800 additional e-book and audiobook titles, plus new video streaming platform 'Medici TV'.

For the latest updates on the City of Newcastle's response to the COVID-19 and changes to services, visit www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/covid-19

Public spaces re-open but social distancing remains

15 May 2020

City of Newcastle is encouraging residents to continue social distancing as parks, playgrounds, skateparks and beaches re-open in line with a relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions.

Under a new Public Health Order, from today outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people will be allowed across the state and leaving the home for leisure will be permitted.

"I'd like to thank and commend the Newcastle community for their co-operation and understanding in observing social distancing rules and stay-home orders over the past couple of months," Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said.

"From today we have removed restrictions on outdoor spaces and re-opened playgrounds, skateparks and outdoor equipment including basketball and netball courts.

"We ask the community to continue to respect the NSW Government health restrictions by maintaining social distancing and continuing to practise good hygiene to ensure everyone can enjoy our public spaces.

"It is everyone's responsibility to adhere to the restrictions, so when there's 10 people at a skatepark or basketball court, users are encouraged to respect everyone's right to access the facility."

Blackbutt Reserve's open space areas will re-open to the public ahead of the Carnley and Richley Reserve playgrounds on Saturday following scheduled maintenance Friday. Animal encounters, wildlife exhibits and shows remain suspended under the current social distancing and public gathering restrictions.

The red-and-yellow flags are back up at Newcastle Ocean Baths, Merewether Ocean Baths; Nobbys, Bar and Merewether beaches in line with winter-season patrols, with lifeguards continuing to encourage social distancing while monitoring swimmers.

More information will be known soon on organised sport as the City follows the national guidelines for the resumption of sport and recreation activities, and the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Framework for Rebooting Sport in a COVID-19 Environment <https://ais.gov.au/health-wellbeing/covid-19>

The NSW Office of Sport is working on the development of guidelines for each sport in line with

the AIS Framework.

While continued restrictions on gatherings mean the City's cultural facilities, such as libraries, Newcastle Museum, Civic Theatre and the Art Gallery, remain closed, a range of experiences are being offered online, from Art Gallery exhibitions to animal feeding at Blackbutt.

Civic Digest Café will resume table service for up to 10 patrons, in line with the easing of restrictions on hospitality businesses, and continue its takeaway service.

While the City's face-to-face customer service desk remains closed, customers can instead access support between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday, on (02) 4974 2000, on webchat or via our online Customer Request Form.

City of Newcastle develops information toolkit to support community wellbeing

14 May 2020

A free wellbeing toolkit designed to help people navigate financial, psychological and public health concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is now available to the community.

City of Newcastle has developed a COVID-19 Wellbeing Information Pack to support the community and local businesses through this challenging time.

The 34-page pack includes tips for boosting your immune system, like getting enough sleep and eating well; improving your mental health through mindfulness exercises; looking after your social wellbeing by staying connected with friends and family and more.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said COVID-19 had far-reaching impacts on almost every aspect of our lives, making access to resources like the Wellbeing Information Pack particularly important.

"Every one of us has been impacted by the coronavirus and we're all doing the best we can to keep ourselves and our families safe and healthy," the Lord Mayor said.

"City of Newcastle's COVID-19 Wellbeing Information Pack contains useful resources to support the health of our community and connect people to the services they may need in this challenging time.

"We are living through history, so it's OK to press pause and access the help you need to stay well – physically, mentally, socially and financially."

The information pack links to support services such as Lifeline and Beyond Blue and references trusted news sources whilst providing tips to limit media exposure to reduce stress and anxiety.

There are also home workouts for adults and children to try, particularly for those working from home and home-schooling, while the Pack also includes financial resources and a directory of domestic and family violence support services.

The COVID-19 Wellbeing Information Pack is available via the City of Newcastle [website](#) and will be distributed across the city's community and business networks. The City's Emergency Services Relief Guide can also be accessed [online](#).

City of Newcastle makes thousands of online training courses available free to community

3 May 2020

Thousands of courses are available to Novocastrians to upskill during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Newcastle Libraries members can access free of charge more than 8,000 e-learning courses and 13,000 video tutorials on topics such as resume writing, skills for retraining, and how to start a business, via social networking site LinkedIn's online learning platform, Lynda.

Courses will be curated for strategic business development opportunities, including digital literacy for small business, online retail, digital marketing and business transformation.

It's part of City of Newcastle's \$5.5 million COVID-19 Community and Economic Development Resilience Package, under which a raft of support measures aims to foster community connections in the wake of the pandemic.

The City has also expanded the libraries' subscription to online tutoring program Studiosity.

For students in Years 3 to 12, Studiosity provides access to free one-to-one tutoring in mathematics, science and English 24/7, year-round, through the Newcastle Library App.

This is particularly useful for students who are currently home-schooling or engaging in online learning as a result of the coronavirus.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said with COVID-19 changing the way we live, work and play, resulting in more downtime at home for many, City of Newcastle had moved to fill the void with practical, accessible tools for personal and professional development.

"We know that the ability to learn and relearn is a critical skill for the 21st Century," the Lord Mayor said.

"The benefit of these courses is the upskilling of the local workforce during a period of economic downturn, empowering people to learn and improving community wellbeing."

Beyond formal education, there is also the opportunity to take up a new hobby, learn a language or research that project you've been meaning to start, with several reference and research electronic databases, such as Mango languages, Hobbies and Craft reference centre, Carters Price Guide to Antiques, Encyclopaedia Britannica, and many more at your fingertips.

The antidote to writer's block or the value of grandma's antique plate are just a few clicks away.

These resources are available to all Newcastle Libraries members.

You can become a member online to gain instant access at home via the free Newcastle Library App or the website, newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Library. It is free to join if you live or work in the Newcastle region.

For further support, you can phone 4974 5300 to speak with a library staff member between 9.30am and 5pm on weekdays, and 9.30am and 1.30pm on Saturdays.

ATTACHMENT:

- Attachment A:** The Newcastle Response, 9 June 2020
Attachment B: City of Newcastle Infrastructure Advocacy List
Attachment C: City of Newcastle, City Taskforce *Affected Industries Roundtable*
PowerPoint presentation
Attachment D: Community and Economic Resilience Package Newcastle Business Club
Event

The Newcastle Response

Community Sector

City of Newcastle acknowledges that we operate on the grounds of the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land and waters, and that they are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of dispossession. Council reiterates its commitment to address disadvantages and attain justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this community.

Job losses since March = 9,900

Unemployment rate in April = 7.7%

Youth unemployment rate = 18.7%

*All data represents Newcastle / Lake Macquarie SA4. Sourced from ABS Labour Force Detailed Data, April 2020.



Newcastle is an emerging global city well positioned to respond to the local community and economic challenges of COVID-19. We are resilient and dynamic; we welcome the piloting of

new programs and approaches. Newcastle is also a gateway to both global and regional connections; we can play an important role in restarting and providing new job opportunities for the future.

Most importantly, the leaders of Greater Newcastle are a united voice providing collaborative governance for our city. In response to COVID-19, a City Taskforce made up of 17 key city leaders from across, manufacturing,

small business, financial services, tourism, transport and logistics, arts and culture, workers, education, business and community sectors have been charting a path for our community and economic recovery.

The City Taskforce will be sharing our local stories and experiences to equip you to make decisions on COVID-19 policy responses. Called 'The Newcastle Response', these memos will outline the local community and business impacts, the effectiveness of current government measures, details on how we are mobilising our own resources and identify opportunities to partner with State and Federal Government bodies to accelerate and increase impact.

Each issue of the 'The Newcastle Response' will include a focus topic. The first edition examines our Community Sector, and how they have been responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

Nuatali Nelmes
Lord Mayor of Newcastle
Chair of Newcastle Taskforce



Newcastle's Community Sector

Policy Ask:

The City Taskforce advocates for a permanent and sustainable increase in support for the unemployed and vulnerable to prevent social security payments falling back to an inadequate rate. The Taskforce believes that current and ongoing social security payments should be independently reviewed and monitored to ensure that all Australians are adequately supported through unemployment and disadvantage. Furthermore, we ask the State and Federal Governments, through the National Cabinet, consider the development of policy measures to support the financial sustainability of the community sector, including dedicated engagement with First Nations Peoples and the disability sector.

Local insights

With COVID-19 and the necessary enforcing of physical distancing and lockdowns, our community services sector has seen many issues impacting vulnerable populations compounded and amplified. While not unique to the Greater Newcastle Region, the exacerbation of inequality has been identified as a primary challenge for our marginalised communities.

This letter only covers a small representation of the experiences of our community and it is important that we acknowledge the breadth of issues we are facing. We cannot cover all of them within this letter, so we welcome the opportunity to partner with government to dive deeper and to make connections with relevant organisations to ensure that all people are represented in those discussions.

Key local insights include:

Digital Inclusion/Exclusion

Our new world has rapidly turned online in a very short period of time. For our older community members, there are many who are ill-equipped to adapt to the technology, leaving them socially isolated and cut off from the most up to date information. There are similar issues for people with disability, however they also face challenges in relation to the accessibility of information and equipment.



People with disability who attend day programs have had to remain at home. For many people, this is their only social interaction with their peers. This can be compounded by difficulty in using or accessing technology. It is also difficult for their families, some of whom rely on day programs to give them an opportunity to work or take a break from caring.

Community Sector Survey May 2020

Financial Disadvantage

For many people who were already financially disadvantaged, there have been challenges adapting to home schooling due to unreliable access to technology or internet. Young people from low-income households already have lower educational outcomes than their peers and the increased exclusion from education because of digital access issues means they are at significant risk of falling further behind. People who are without work and ineligible for government support are deeply impacted, with no income to pay for food, bills or housing.

On the opposite side of this conversation are the thousands of people on JobSeeker who are finally able to afford the essentials. Community service organisations are hearing stories from their clients who, because of COVID-19 supplement, have been able to afford to fix their car, replace their broken fridge, and are catching up on their bills without having to skip meals.



COVID related requests for counselling and food and financial support have continued to increase. The planned expiration of the job keeper allowance will see a spike in support enquiries

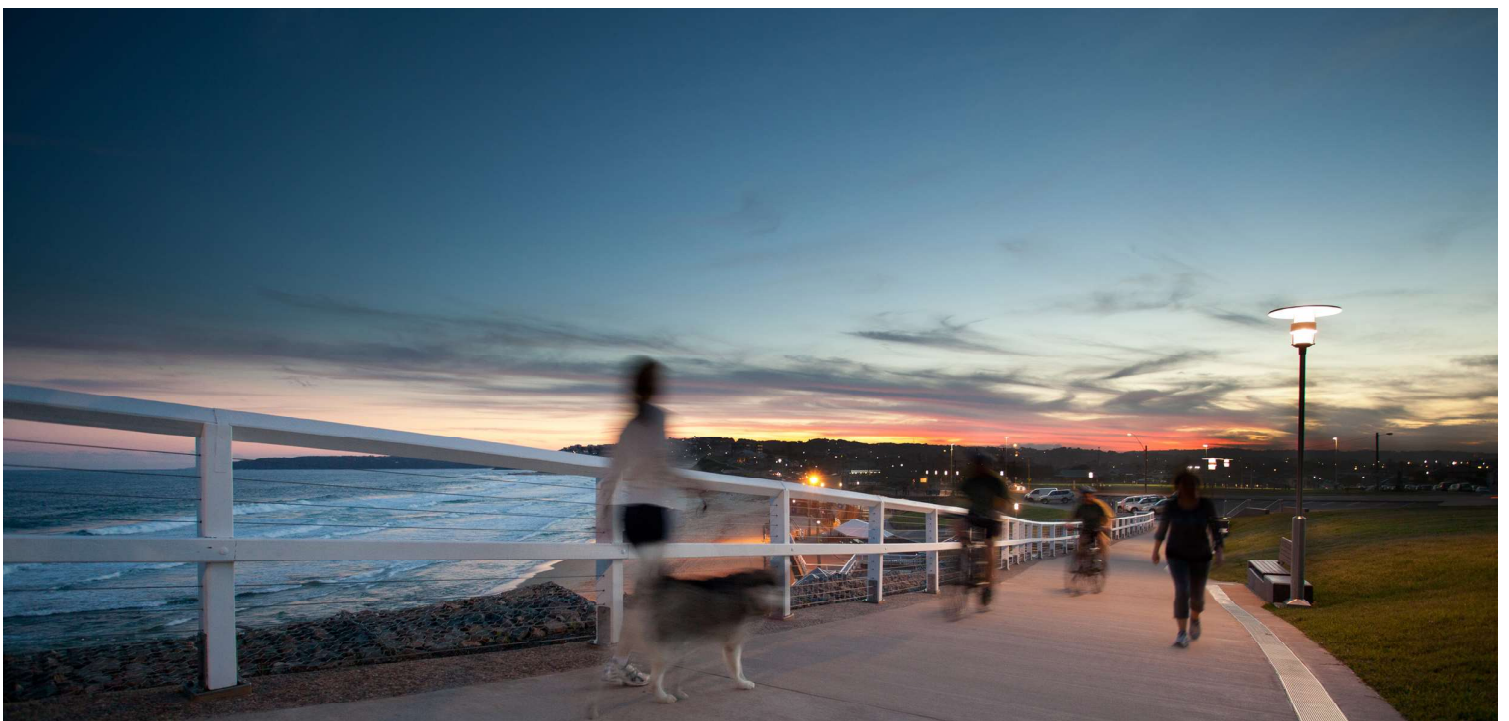
Community Sector Survey May 2020

Food and Emergency Relief Provision

Our region has witnessed a substantial increase in the number of people seeking help for emergency relief and food services, particularly in the last month as the impacts of layoffs are being felt and people's savings have dried up. Many of those people are seeking help for the first time and are unsure where to turn. Newcastle has a vibrant multicultural community and many of our migrant citizens are not supported by JobKeeper and JobSeeker.

Social Isolation

The impact of social isolation on mental health is pronounced and the sector have witnessed a steep increase in people seeking help. Those who were already isolated have been the worst hit, including people with disability, CaLD communities and older people, as for various reasons it is often harder for them to take up the virtual options on offer.





Vishal and Soniya's story

||

In March we found out that the restaurant where I work as a chef would close for a while and we would be stood down. I knew I was part of the team there and I thought that whatever happened to the team would be the same for me.

When the government announced the coronavirus supplement for JobSeekers we realised we were not eligible because it was linked to Centrelink payments, which we cannot get as temporary visa holders. This was pretty upsetting because my wife had lost her job as well.

When we heard a week later about JobKeeper I felt hopeful again. Then the eligibility criteria was announced and we realised we were not eligible for that either, it was crushing.

We had family visiting at the same time and we were worried about them. They have been unable

to get home because India has been totally locked down. They were supposed to fly back on the 20th of May but the flights have been cancelled into India.

When the restaurant reopened for takeaways our boss started to give me some hours, even though they had enough staff on JobKeeper.

We had bills that we could not pay. I had already spent the holiday pay I had received from work and I had to contact the electricity company to ask them for advice about how to pay our bills. They gave us some numbers for organisations that could help us.

I was speaking with the head chef from my work at the same time and he got in touch with our bosses. My colleagues and bosses all spoke about it and put together some money to help us out. The Samaritans helped us with our bills and St Vincent DePaul helped us with some groceries. My landlord has also been really helpful, she has waived the rent on our apartment. Our friends and community in Newcastle have helped us through this so far.

We have had to apply for a new visa during this time as well because of the length of stay conditions, which has been very expensive.

There are many people who don't know how to get help or who to ask, and I want them to know that help is out there in the community. I have many friends who have support from the government, but it has been the community that has helped me most.

Vishal Sharma and his wife, Soniya, are in Australia on temporary work visas. When they lost their jobs because of the lockdowns, their friends and the community rallied behind them to make sure they had what they needed.

Local Responses

The case studies below have been sourced from the City of Newcastle's Boost our City Community Sector grants, which have provided funding for existing service providers to cope with increased urgency and demand. They demonstrate how the local community sector has taken the first steps to address COVID-19 barriers by pivoting, scaling and innovating to support vulnerable people in our Greater Newcastle community.



COVID-19 will be with us for a long time and therefore the way the world operated before the pandemic will not be the same and we will always need to be adjusting to the current situation at the time. Adaptability along with resilience will be required in order to survive.

Community Sector Survey May 2020

Digital Inclusion/Exclusion

Cerebral Palsy Alliance (CPA) used Boost Our City community grants to digital care and support. CPA supports more than 440 children and adults with disability, and their families, in the Newcastle area with therapy, programs and supports.

"On Friday 27th March, CPA suspended all face-to-face therapy due to COVID-19. With respiratory illness the leading cause of death for people with cerebral palsy, the immediate risk to the people we support was simply too great to continue. CPA's Telepractice service enables us to deliver evidence-based, industry-leading therapy via the healthdirect video-conferencing platform, designed specifically for health service delivery. Telepractice allows our clients to continue their vital therapy, which is critical to managing pain, maintaining wellbeing, and supporting quality of life, from the safety of their own homes."

Justiz Community also presented innovative ways to respond digitally. Justiz works locally with Aboriginal people with a disability and the Awabakal Elders Women's group. They have

received financial support to enable them to supply smart devices to their clients who are isolated and at risk of severe mental illness because their usual face to face supports could not continue. The devices have allowed them to stay connected, including through virtual cooking classes.

Financial Disadvantage

Zara's House Refugees and Partners are supporting asylum seeker families who are experiencing financial hardship because of COVID-19.

"Our greatest need is to support our asylum seeker families. Some have lost paid work and have no Centrelink. We feed and house them from our funds and donations received. Some are homeless and couch surfing with friends. They are feeding them. They have not enough for mobile connection. One left his student accommodation and lives in his car. He has nothing. He formerly worked in Charlestown. One is a mum with two little girls. She used to do aged care assistant in nursing. An elderly Australian couple cared for the children but are in isolation so she has nobody to care for the children. She and the children are living on beans and tomatoes. Another lives in my home garage as he was living in his car. Another is weeks behind in his rent. Nobody can afford fuel for their cars. It's cold and they need warm clothes. All face isolation."

Boost Our City grants were approved for many organisations supporting the community with basic needs including Nova for Women and Children, who support women and their children who are experiencing domestic violence and Muloobinba, which supports Aboriginal families.



I think we need to seek out the possibility of a living wage for those who are unable to work or who are seeking employment. There will be many who remain unemployed or underemployed...

Community Sector Survey May 2020

Food and Emergency Relief Provision

Food and emergency relief providers are responding to increased community demand and to a growing cohort of people experiencing financial hardship and vulnerability, potentially for the first time. Gateway Care is a key local enabler:

"A big challenge for us is ensuring non-profits have access to enough free food supplies. Gateway Care is appointed as the official Coles Second Bite Hub for the Newcastle district and supports all organizations in Newcastle. Currently we provide free bulk food & grocery items to several non-profit organisations including The Grainery, Soul Café, Baptist Care, Development and Relief (DARA), East Lakes Family Support, SDA Pantry Hamilton - the list is growing each week."



We need to ensure information on where to access assistance is available for those who have never been in a situation to need it.

Community Sector Survey May 2020

Social Isolation

In the city, sector feedback indicates that social isolation continues to be a primary concern. Agencies across the city have looked for innovative ways to keep their communities connected or connect vulnerable groups to appropriate care in the times of crisis. Home-Start National shifted their award-winning Volunteer Home Visiting Program to videoconferencing, and Path to Change delivered a new 'Empower Me' Life Skills program, which empowers homeless young people with life skills while engaging and connecting them with others and the community. Victims of Crime Assistance League, Hunter Women's Centre and Healthy Change Challenge are also examples of agencies keeping their community connected to support health and wellbeing.

Local Solutions

We are part of the solution. A number of City Taskforce members have contributed significantly to our community sector.

City of Newcastle (Local Government):

- **Boost our City Community Sector Grants program** worth \$800,000 in Phase I, including a rapid response component that enabled \$175,000 to be released to community organisations within two weeks of the declared pandemic. Council received 67 applications in the space of five weeks totalling more than \$1.2 million in asks (maximum grant amount = \$30,000). This highlights the level of need across our community.
- **Lean in Newy** – a new app to harness and guide our community spirit to the places where it's needed most. Lean in Newy connects people who want to help with charities and people who need support. It enables community to find creative ways to stay connected. Each challenge that is completed earns points redeemable for discounts or benefits at a selection of local business. The City of Newcastle is funding the value of the redeemed discount to the business during the COVID-19 recovery phase.

Newcastle Permanent:

- The Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation has brought forward the allocation of \$750,000 for new initiatives to provide immediate support to overcome specific community hardship. This has included delivering care packages and outreach services, support for mental health including assisting Batyr to launch online mental health discussions with school and university students for Term 2, a partnership with government health services to deliver targeted information on the impact of financial hardship to mental health and matched support for the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal.

NIB

- \$1.5 million donated to community and clinical initiatives with NIB foundation
- \$250 wellness benefit for frontline healthcare workers
- 100,000 surgical masks donated to healthcare and allied healthcare workers

The opportunity to partner with us

The City Taskforce asks all decision-makers, at both a State and Federal level, to develop policy measures that support the financial sustainability of the community sector and establish dedicated engagement with First Nations and disability organisations.

As JobKeeper is reviewed by the Federal Government in the coming weeks, we ask that the access requirements for community organisations be simplified. The community sector is uniquely facing significant increases in demand for services, as evidenced by the local stories in Greater Newcastle, while facing significant reductions in donations / income sources. We ask that additional support measures be put in place to support the community sector when JobKeeper is wound back. The services provided by the community sector are vital to the well-being of our community in Newcastle. We're all leaning in to support them, we ask that all levels of Government do the same.



Those that were already unemployed prior to COVID-19 will find it harder to find employment once restrictions are lifted as there will be so many other people seeking employment they will be up against. Once the COVID-19 supplement from the government ends it is going to make it harder for the unemployed to survive financially and emotionally.

Community Sector Survey May 2020

Across our community the impacts of the COVID-19 restrictions have been felt very differently. We recognise that you can only understand the experience of a community if you are living that experience yourself. For this reason, it is important that whatever policy decisions are made, specific attention must be given to engaging with First Nations and disability organisations to ensure that the solutions proposed encompass strategies that meet the needs of all of our communities.

Furthermore, as JobSeeker is reviewed by the Federal Government in the coming weeks, we ask that a new approach be considered. The City Taskforce are proposing that an independent body be introduced that is responsible for monitoring social security rates and allowances. This would ensure that people are not living in poverty and able to afford essential living costs. Importantly, this would provide increased capacity for our local community sector to support underlying and inherent disadvantages that exist in our population.

Continue the Conversation


Mr Brad Webb, CEO of Samaritans, is a community sector representative on our City Taskforce. He also convenes a group of third sector leaders in the Greater Newcastle Region. Mr Webb can provide more insights on the local impacts to the community sector and is available to co-design future policy solutions. Mr Webb can be contacted on ceo@samaritans.org.au.

Further Updates

The City Taskforce warmly welcomes the announcement of Williamstown as a NSW Government Strategic Activation Precinct [SAP]. The new SAP will bring together planning and investment to focus on growing local jobs and economic activity in the area. Williamstown is set to become the state's premier location for defence and aerospace innovation. The City Taskforce will provide further local insights and advocate for the expansion of the Newcastle Airport in a future issue.

The next Newcastle Response will focus on our local tourism sector.

City Taskforce Members


Cr Nuatali Nelmes (Jun 4, 2020 20:52 GMT+10)

Signature

Nuatali Nelmes
Lord Mayor Chair
City of Newcastle Newcastle Taskforce





Signature

Peter Macadam
Director in Charge
Colliers International





Daniel Wallace (Jun 4, 2020 21:54 GMT+10)

Signature

Daniel Wallace
Chief Executive - Secretary
Hunter Workers





Signature

Peter Cock
Chief Executive Officer
Newcastle Airport





Craig Carmody (Jun 5, 2020 07:08 GMT+10)

Signature

Craig Carmody
Chief Executive Officer
Port of Newcastle





Signature

Brad Webb
Chief Executive Officer
Samaritans Foundation




Scott Morgan (Jun 5, 2020 15:32 GMT+10)

Signature

Scott Morgan
Chief Executive Officer
Greater Bank




Tony Cade (Jun 5, 2020 09:22 GMT+10)

Signature

Tony Cade
Chief Executive Officer
Hunternet





Signature

Bernadette Inglis
Chief Executive Officer
Newcastle Permanent Building Society





Signature

Alex Zelinsky
Vice-Chancellor
University of Newcastle




Will Creedon (Jun 5, 2020 09:21 GMT+10)

Signature

Will Creedon
Chief Executive Officer
Alloggio

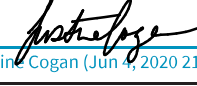



Bob Hawes (Jun 5, 2020 09:06 GMT+10)

Signature

Bob Hawes
Chief Executive Officer
Hunter Business Chamber




Justine Cogan (Jun 4, 2020 21:16 GMT+10)

Signature

Justine Cogan
Co-Founder
Independent Creative Alliance





Signature

Mark Fitzgibbon
Chief Executive Officer
NIB Health Funds




p gardner (Jun 5, 2020 09:31 GMT+10)

Signature

Philip Gardner
Chief Executive Officer
West's Group



1. Catalyst Areas for Greater Newcastle Projects, as identified in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan

Large-scale priority infrastructure projects:



Coastal Management Planning and Erosion Management, especially at Stockton Beach



Flood mitigation at Wallsend



Newcastle Airport Expansion



Port of Newcastle Diversification



Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct



Newcastle Light Rail Expansion



Lower Hunter Freight Corridor



Affordable housing initiatives



Metropolitan wide active transport (walking & cycling) improvements



John Hunter Hospital campus upgrades



Newcastle Art Gallery Expansion



Local Sporting Amenity Upgrades



Local Playground upgrades, particularly for disability inclusion



Ferry Terminal at Wickham



Pensioner Rate Rebates

3. Local priority infrastructure projects:



Summerhill Waste Management Centre – Organics Processing Facility



Richmond Vale Rail Trail



Newcastle Beach Community Facility (Stage 2, Newcastle Beach – Bathers Way)



Junction to Merewether Cycleway



Newcastle West Bi-directional Cycleway – West End Stage 2, Phase 1



Newcastle East End Streetscape Upgrades and Cycleway



Foreshore Park All Abilities Playground



Western Corridor Active Hub



Local Centres Program

1. Catalyst Areas for Greater Newcastle Projects, as identified in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan

2. Large-scale priority infrastructure projects:



Coastal Management Planning and Erosion Management, especially at Stockton Beach



Flood mitigation at Wallsend



Newcastle Airport Expansion



Port of Newcastle Diversification



Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct



Greater Newcastle Light Rail Expansion



Lower Hunter Freight Corridor



Affordable housing initiatives



Metropolitan wide active transport (walking & cycling) improvements



John Hunter Hospital campus upgrades



Newcastle Art Gallery Expansion



Local Sporting Amenity Upgrades



Local Playground upgrades, particularly for disability inclusion



Ferry Terminal at Wickham



Pensioner Rate Rebates

3. Local priority infrastructure projects:



Summerhill Waste Management Centre – Organics Processing Facility



Richmond Vale Rail Trail



Newcastle Beach Community Facility (Stage 2, Newcastle Beach – Bathers Way)



Junction to Merewether Cycleway



Newcastle West Bi-directional Cycleway – West End Stage 2, Phase 1



Newcastle East End Streetscape Upgrades and Cycleway – Stage 1, Phase 1



Foreshore Park All Abilities Playground



Western Corridor Active Hub



Local Centres Program, including: Joslin Street, Kotara; Llewellyn Street, Merewether; Shortland; and Stockton (Stage 1, Queen Street – King Street)



City Taskforce Affected Industries Roundtable

3 June 2020



Meeting etiquette

The following etiquette will ensure that the City Taskforce meeting flows smoothly:

- During the meeting, mute your device unless you are speaking, this will minimise disruptions from background noise.
- Use a headset or headphones to help make voices clearer and lessen background noise.
- Position your device camera to be as close to face height as possible.
- All participants must act in accordance with the City of Newcastle's Code of Conduct.
- Any technical difficulties, please contact Natalie Peattie on npeattie@ncc.nsw.gov.au or (02) 4974 2834

Acknowledgement of Country

Simon Massey



1. Welcome

Simon Massey

Today we're here for a discussion with representatives of key industry and business groups who have been and continue to be significantly affected by COVID-19. Explore opportunities to work together.

Agenda:

- City Taskforce Overview – Simon Massey
- City of Newcastle Community and Economic Resilience Package – Matt Murray
- Local industry and business impacts – All
- City Taskforce Work Streams – Simon Massey and Dr Nathaniel Bavinton
- Digital Workshop – Dr Nathaniel Bavinton
- Summary and next steps



2. City Taskforce

Simon Massey

- City Taskforce has been established to provide local leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. First meeting was in mid-April and Taskforce will conclude at the end of the year.
- The City Taskforce is made up of 17 key city leaders from across manufacturing, small business, tourism, transport and logistics, arts and culture, workers, education, business and community sectors.
- Collectively the city leaders have begun work to chart a path for our community and economic recovery. The City Taskforce has established five clear work streams including advocacy, direct industry support, developing a local evidence base, transforming the local skills base, and most importantly, providing a collaboration forum for new ideas.
- In-kind contribution of staff / human resources to support the programs of work.





Mark Fitzgibbon
NIB



Justine Cogan,
Independent Creative Alliance



Mark Colless
Newcastle Permanent



Phil Gardner
Wests Group



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Daniel Wallace
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Bob Hawes
Hunter Business Chamber



Scott Morgan
Greater Bank

3. City of Newcastle Community & Economic Resilience Package

Dr Nathaniel Bavinton

City of Newcastle Community & Economic Resilience Package

- \$5.5 million investment in our city
- Economic incentives that make sense and maximise cash flow for small business and vulnerable residents – interest-free rate deferrals, 50% discount on rent for CN owned buildings, relaxation of a range of fees / policies, promoting local procurement.
- Distinctive of our Resilience Package is the direct investment in our community including \$800,000 in grants for local community organisations, \$500,000 for online training accreditation, a new social action / economic incentive app “Lean-In Newy”, significant expansion of our e-Library.
- The Resilience Package also proposed the formation of a City Taskforce and an initial \$500,000 to support targeted and innovative support to industries most significantly affected by COVID-19. To be discussed further.



4. Local industry and business impacts

Simon Massey

- Opportunity to share your business / industry / customers / personal experience of COVID-19.
- Three questions were included in the agenda to shape the discussion
 - *How has COVID-19 impacted your business / industry?*
 - *What do the easing of restrictions look like for your business / industry?*
 - *How can the City Taskforce support your recovery over the coming weeks / months / years?*
- Three-minute time limit to ensure everyone has the opportunity to share.



Retail / Hospitality Sector

Mr David Bliss, SDA

- 1. How has COVID-19 impacted your business / industry?**
- 2. What do the easing of restrictions look like for your business / industry?**
- 3. How can the City Taskforce support your recovery over the coming weeks / months / years?**

Hotel Industry

Ms Nikki Taylor, AHA

Mr Michael Starkey, AHA

- 1. How has COVID-19 impacted your business / industry?**
- 2. What do the easing of restrictions look like for your business / industry?**
- 3. How can the City Taskforce support your recovery over the coming weeks / months / years?**

Live Music

Ms Nikki Taylor, Live Music Taskforce

Mr Marcus Wright, Big Apachee

- 1. How has COVID-19 impacted your business / industry?**
- 2. What do the easing of restrictions look like for your business / industry?**
- 3. How can the City Taskforce support your recovery over the coming weeks / months / years?**

Tourism Sector

Mr Will Creedon, Alloggio

Mr Kent Warren, NTIG

Mr Colin Law, NTIG

- 1. How has COVID-19 impacted your business / industry?**
- 2. What do the easing of restrictions look like for your business / industry?**
- 3. How can the City Taskforce support your recovery over the coming weeks / months / years?**

Arts Sector

**Ms Annette Hubber, Screen Hunter /
ICAN**

Ms Justine Cogan, ICAN

**Ms Karen Crofts, Hunter Writers
Centre**

- 1. How has COVID-19 impacted your business / industry?**
- 2. What do the easing of restrictions look like for your business / industry?**
- 3. How can the City Taskforce support your recovery over the coming weeks / months / years?**

Business Improvement Associations

Ms Cornelia Schulze, Newcastle City

Ms Tiffanie Campbell, Wallsend

Mr Warren Pulbrook, Mayfield

Ms Janice Musumeci, Hamilton

- 1. How has COVID-19 impacted your business / industry?**
- 2. What do the easing of restrictions look like for your business / industry?**
- 3. How can the City Taskforce support your recovery over the coming weeks / months / years?**

5. City Taskforce Work Streams

Simon Massey

Advocacy:

- Regular letter on behalf of City Taskforce members to key State and Federal Government decision-makers.
- Called “The Newcastle Response”, these memos outline the local community and business impacts, the effectiveness of current government measures, details on how we are mobilizing our own resources and identify opportunities for State / Federal Government to partner with us.
- First issue focused on the Community Sector. Next issue on the Tourism Sector.

Direct Industry Response:

- City Taskforce Industry Response Program, worth \$500,000, opens on Friday (5 June) for three weeks.
- Expressions of interest are being sought from industry groups, businesses, community organisations and collaboratives for funding that will enable city-shaping outcomes that target the hardest hit industries and population groups.
- Recommended funding range is \$100,000 - \$200,000, however all proposals will be considered.
- Think big, think innovation, think collaboration.



5. City Taskforce Work Streams

Dr Nathaniel Bavinton

Local Evidence Base:

- The value of a local evidence base is unquestioned. The more information we have on the nature of the challenge, the better the decisions we will make on how best to address it.
- Crucially, there is a need for locally-specific data and insight to compare with general trends and to understand their local impacts.
- The local evidence base can be a valuable collaborative resource for the city, building on existing programs and our research and technology capabilities. It will underpin both the infrastructure advocacy and industry response workstreams. It will set Newcastle apart from other cities and regions.
- The Action Team identified a range of priorities to define the workstream:
 - Telling the local stories that communicate human impacts
 - Advocate for Newcastle as a research site (including positioning a policy lab/sandpit)
 - Leveraging open data to generate shared value for the city
 - Data analysis features including modelling and visualisation
 - Developing a robust research program to translate data to insight

5. City Taskforce Work Streams

Dr Nathaniel Bavinton

NewSkills:

- Taskforce Leadership has endorsed a skills and talent development workstream. Retraining, skills, talent retention and attraction all featured consistently as issues cutting across multiple affected industries.
- This is a longer trajectory of implementation but is a transformational initiative.



6. Digital Workshop

Dr Nathaniel Bavinton

Problem: Tailoring Taskforce activities to support our heavily-affected industries

Four mentimeter activities

1. Word cloud: what is needed right now
2. What are the priority issues for your industry/sector?
3. Prioritising the broad response
4. What is common across all heavily affected industries/sectors?

Go to www.menti.com and enter the code 90 76 70



6. Digital Workshop

Dr Nathaniel Bavinton

Problem: Identifying Opportunities for Cross-Sector Collaboration

In Zoom breakout groups (5 mins)

- Come up with two potential collaboration opportunities that support recovery across multiple sectors or industries

Nominate a spokesperson who will have a minute to brief the broader group.



7. Meeting Summary and Next Steps

Simon Massey

- Feedback / discussions from today will be presented to City Taskforce Leadership Group
- Encourage everyone to consider submissions / collaborations for the Industry Response Program, which opens on Friday.
- Use the City Taskforce as an avenue for providing local insights and policy asks to Government. Strength is in our collective voice.
- We are keen to continue the conversation. The recovery from COVID-19 will be extremely challenging, but we want to ensure that the capacity and speed of our recovery is maximized.
- Meeting communiques and updates available on [website](#).





Community and Economic Resilience Package Newcastle Business Club Event

23 June 2020

Deputy Lord Mayor Cr Declan Clausen
Mr Simon Massey

Program Principles

Due to the rapidly changing nature of the crisis, CN will continue to pursue new program ideas / opportunities that will deliver community and economic resilience for the people of Newcastle.

Our Principles:

- Direct actions to support our community well-being.
- Timely responses that address cash-flow for small business.
- Innovative programs that provide long-term strategic benefits.
- Collaboration with partners and contribution to existing initiatives.
- Financial responsibility for the long-term sustainability of the organisation.



Community and Economic Resilience Package

- \$5.5 million investment in our city that was adopted by Council on Tuesday 24 March 2020.
- Economic incentives that make sense and maximise cash flow for small business and vulnerable residents including:
 - **Financial hardship** - \$1.17 million in interest-free deferred rates. This includes 35 tenanted businesses with signed commitment from landlord.
 - **Improving payment terms** to seven days provided a \$4.5 million liquidity spike in April during the depth of the COVID-19 crisis. Invoices continue to be paid on 7-day payment terms
 - **Rent relief** (50%) for CN premises through to end of September. Providing \$28k savings to businesses / community organisations across the city each week.
 - **Relaxation of a range of fees / policies** that made sense including waiving library fees, relaxation of restrictions on the use of footpaths, supporting doctors' surgeries to stay open longer and providing more flexibility for truck movements around supermarkets.
 - **Local procurement** weighting increased where possible to provide opportunities for local suppliers.

Community and Economic Resilience Package

- Distinctive of our Resilience Package is the direct investment in our community including:
 - **Community Grant Program (\$800k in total)** - \$175k in rapid response grants in two weeks following the announcement of a pandemic. 32 Boost Our City Community Sector Grants approved totaling \$512k. Key projects funded include scale / pivot for food prep and distribution, care packs for isolated people, tech for vulnerable communities and increased counselling / case management / support.
 - **E-Library** expansion worth \$100,000 including increases in e-books / e-audio (+70%), media streaming (+20%), e-paper / magazines (+67%), Library App downloads (+233%) on this time last year.
 - **Online learning** (Lynda) via Library – 89% increase on this time last year
 - **Lean in Newy** launched. Have you leaned in?! More on next slide.
 - **Online Training Program** – we've engaged three local training providers / tertiary institutions to provide online accreditation to small business owners and their staff. The comprehensive package of programs will be rolled out in July.



OZHARVEST
NOURISHING OUR COUNTRY

OZHARVEST
Nourishing Our Country

35-130

Lean in Newy

Put simply: Lean in Newy is an app which:

- Enables our community to contribute to our COVID-19 response
- Connects people who want to help with charities and communities who need support
- Encourages pro-social interaction and community resilience and wellbeing
- Rewards people who invest in our community
- Supports our local businesses
- Provides and leverages investment into small businesses through a Rebate Scheme.



Questions from members

It would be helpful to understand how much was utilised and how many people did it actually help, and are there still funds left in that package for business to access through this COVID period?

How do you work out who gets a rate increase and who gets the rate reduction?
Why are you actually looking for a 2.6% increase in overall rates during this COVID period?

City Taskforce: our understanding is that you have met 3 times now is that correct?
Could you please explain what challenges the Task Force has experienced, and what actions are they taking to help the city recover from COVID?



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- Collectively the city leaders have begun work to chart a path for our community and economic recovery. The City Taskforce has established five clear work streams including advocacy, direct industry support, developing a local evidence base, transforming the local skills base, and most importantly, providing a collaboration forum for new ideas.
- In-kind contribution of staff / human resources to support the work streams. This support is facilitated through an Action Team (25 members) and smaller working groups. The Action Team includes representatives from all City Taskforce members, as well as from diverse population groups across the city including young people, Indigenous community, multicultural community and disability community.
- An affected industries roundtable has also been held with people representing the tourism, arts / culture and hospitality / retail attending.



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 - Developing a robust research program to translate data to insight

The NewSkills and Youth / Young People work streams that are in development.

Questions from members

The \$116m Infrastructure budget which forecasts a \$275 million boost to the economy was announced last Tuesday. Of that \$116m Capital Works Program, what proportion is capital works backlog? How is the remainder of the backlog is going to be dealt with in future budgets?

Application Processes - is what are you doing to speed up application processes such as Development applications, 0007 application processes? An example of this was given by a business that has put in an application 10 weeks ago which was meant to be a 6 – 8 week process, but they have been told that due to COVID there is a backlog and as a result NSW Procurement is experiencing huge delays. This can be devastating to business already struggling, how are you addressing these delays?

Further questions???