

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee

Agenda item 6.5

Night Time Economy Advisory Committee

21 September 2021

Presenter: Andrew Wear, Director Economic Development and International

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the Night Time Economy Advisory Committee's position statement that calls on the Victorian government to pilot a Health Pass system in the City of Melbourne (refer Attachment 2). This pilot would enable reopening as soon as possible, ensuring the safety of staff and patrons of our hospitality, arts and entertainment venues whilst also facilitating trade at normal density.
2. Prior to COVID-19, Melbourne had Australia's fastest growing night time economy. Research from the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors estimated the 2018 night time economy in Melbourne contributed \$3.5 billion in annual turnover and represented over 31,000 jobs.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the growth of night-time economy businesses due to government policy settings such as lockdowns, night-time curfews, distance of allowable travel, working from home arrangements, international and interstate border closures and restrictions on trade for venues which include takeaway only and density limits.
4. On 15 December 2020, Council endorsed the creation of a Night Time Economy Advisory Committee (NTEAC) in recognition of the importance of the night time economy and to ensure the City of Melbourne harnesses strategic input from relevant industry and government representatives to ensure considered responses to the impacts of COVID-19 and support Melbourne's economic recovery.
5. NTEAC is comprised of 18 committee members selected through an expression of interest process and includes representatives of our hospitality, arts and entertainment sectors includes academia and City of Melbourne Councillors. A full list of committee membership is provided at Attachment 3.

Key issues

6. Given the current status of the pandemic, the NTEAC has recognised that finding a way to safely re-open is the most important issue for the immediate future. Until Victoria reaches a satisfactory vaccination threshold, it is unlikely that hospitality, entertainment and arts venues will be able to trade safely at normal densities.
7. NTEAC has therefore developed a position statement that calls on the State Government to introduce a temporary Health Pass System for safe entry into hospitality, arts and entertainment venues across Victoria to protect staff, patrons, and all Victorians. A health pass system would facilitate proof of vaccination or exemption, thereby minimising health risks and getting businesses open sooner.
8. NTEAC requests that the City of Melbourne volunteer itself as a municipality to test and pilot the Health Pass system before a statewide roll out. Participating hospitality, arts and entertainment venues would have a chance to open earlier within the parameters of the trial and the opportunity to provide data and input into the refinement of the program before it is potentially implemented more broadly.
9. The City of Melbourne is uniquely placed to trial the scheme because of the high concentration of night time economy businesses and a strong culture of patrons who typically attend multiple venues in one night.
10. Such a trial will require streamlined technology and processes to minimise the compliance burden on businesses and venues of all sizes, and to ensure the system is rolled out quickly and effectively.

11. This would be a temporary measure, required only until such a time as National Cabinet-endorsed vaccination targets are reached at which time there should be an end to trading restrictions.
12. The NTEAC is seeking endorsement of the position statement by Council.

Recommendation from management

13. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 13.1. Endorses the position of the Night Time Economy Advisory Committee in relation to calling for the piloting of a vaccine Health Pass system in the City of Melbourne.
 - 13.2. Endorses the Lord Mayor writing to the Premier, offering the City of Melbourne as a pilot municipality for the purposes of piloting a vaccine Health Pass System.
 - 13.3. Endorses management working with Victorian government, the NTEAC and other stakeholders to implement a Health Pass pilot program.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 5)
2. Night Time Economy Advisory Committee Position Statement (Page 4 of 5)
3. Night Time Economy Advisory Committee Membership (Page 5 of 5)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no direct legal implications for Council in the recommendation of this report.

Finance

2. No significant financial implications arise from the recommendation contained in this report.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. In developing this proposal, Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified. One of the key factors in development of the Position Statement has been the protection and safety of all staff, patrons, residents and visitors to arts, entertainment and hospitality venues in the City of Melbourne.

Stakeholder consultation

5. In developing the position statement, all NTEAC members were invited to put forward individual, business and sector representative positions.

Relation to Council policy

6. The Council's Diversity Policy – Appointments to Key Melbourne City Council Advisory Committees, Bodies and Boards of Subsidiary Companies aims to ensure that opportunities for new or replacement appointments are made known to the broadest cross section of the community. For the purposes of the Policy, diversity includes gender, age, ethnicity and cultural background.

Environmental sustainability

7. In developing the Position Statement, environmental sustainability issues have been considered and no direct issues were identified.

Night Time Economy Advisory Committee Position Statement

Calling on the City of Melbourne to advocate for the Victorian Government to pilot a Health Pass system in the City of Melbourne to enable the early reopening of venues

The Night Time Economy Advisory Committee (NTEAC) recognises that the health, safety and wellbeing of all Melburnians – including the staff and patrons of our hospitality, arts and entertainment venues – is of paramount importance.

It is crucial that Melbourne reopens on an unrestricted basis as soon as is safely possible. However, in the meantime there are important steps that can be taken to enable an earlier reopening while minimising health risks.

NTEAC is fully supportive of the City of Melbourne's Vaccination Hero Campaign, and believes that the only way Melbourne can safely re-open and stay open, is by reaching the vaccination targets endorsed by National Cabinet.

Until those targets are reached, the NTEAC understands that Federal and State Governments are considering a range of initiatives, such as a health pass system, to minimise health risks and get businesses open safely sooner. A health pass system would facilitate proof of vaccination or exemption.

The NTEAC is calling on the City of Melbourne to advocate to the Victorian Government to pilot a health pass system and similar initiatives through an opt-in trial in night-time economy businesses in the City of Melbourne. The NTEAC notes that this gives participating businesses a chance to open earlier within the parameters of the trial and the opportunity to provide data and input into the refinement of such programs before they are implemented more broadly.

While there will be many issues that are likely to arise while testing such initiatives, an opt-in trial in the City of Melbourne is the perfect opportunity to identify and resolve issues in partnership with industry.

The NTEAC recommends that a trial will require streamlined technology and processes to minimise the compliance burden on businesses and venues of all sizes, and to ensure the system is rolled out quickly and effectively.

The NTEAC recognises that the introduction of such initiatives would be temporary measures required only until such a time as National Cabinet endorsed vaccination targets are reached at which time there should be an end to trading restrictions.

It is imperative that we encourage and support all efforts to bring back the vibrancy, stimulate the economy, and allow all Victorians to safely enjoy our city again.

Night Time Economy Advisory Committee Membership

NAME:	ORGANISATION
James Young (Chair)	Owner, Cherry Bar, Yah-Yah's and Westwood Hotel
Jason Chang	Councillor, City of Melbourne
Roshena Campbell	Councillor, City of Melbourne
Andrew Abbott	Deputy Secretary, Creative, Sport and Visitor Economy, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
Angie Giannakodakis	Owner, Epoque Restaurant and Elyros at Home
Andrew Walsh AM	Artistic Director and Executive Producer, Accolade Event Management. Former Artistic Director and inaugural CEO, White Night Melbourne and Commonwealth Games
David Haberfeld	Electronic dance music producer, performer, DJ and educator. Editor Noisegate.com.au. Sessional lecturer, Monash University
Jackie Middleton	Director, EARL Canteen
Kenneth Ngov	Founder and CEO, Tang Events. Managing Partner, Baroq House. Partner, Ms Collins.
Kenneth Ngov	Managing Director, Bond Melbourne
Lauren O'Dwyer	Associate Director of Strategy and Advocacy, Arts Centre Melbourne. Board Member, Arts and Cultural Management Advisory Board, Deakin University. Board Director, PBS 106.7FM. Chair of Theatre Works Board
Elizabeth Rodriguez	Co-owner, Grossi Restaurants. Victorian State Council Member, Restaurant and Catering Industry Association
Matthew Mullins	Owner, Garden State and Waterside hotels. Company Director, Sand Hill Road
Patrick Donovan	Director, Patrick Donovan Creative Consulting. Former CEO, Music Victoria
Penny Miles	Executive Director, Circus Oz
Simon Abrahams	Creative Director and CEO, Melbourne Fringe
Virginia Lovett	Co-CEO, Melbourne Theatre Company. President, Arts Projects Australia
Michele Acuto*	Professor of Global Urban Politics and Director of the Connected Cities Lab at the University of Melbourne
Nicole Kalms*	Founding Director of the Monash University XYX Lab

* ex-officio members.