

Christmas Festival Planning Phase 2021

20 July 2021

Presenter: Katrina McKenzie, General Manager Economy and Activation

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to present the planning phase for the 2021 Christmas Festival (CF).
2. The CF is a City of Melbourne owned and delivered event program running from mid-November to 25 December. The CF positions Melbourne as the preferred Christmas destination, highlighting and communicating the city's rich diversity, festive atmosphere and unique cultural, retail and hospitality offering. Independent research into the impact of the CF 2019 estimates that the CF generated an additional \$31 million economic impact from those who were prompted to visit the city.
3. According to the Australian Retailers Association, approx. \$13.8b is spent in retail and hospitality in Victoria during the festive season. Some retailers will secure up to 60 per cent of their annual sales in this period alone. These figures highlight the importance of driving visitation and spend in the city during this crucial period of trade for city businesses.
4. The delivery of the 2021 CF program will be compliant with the public health advice at the time regarding mass gatherings and safety requirements as a result of COVID-19.

Key issues

5. The strategic direction for the 2021 CF aims to:
 - 5.1. Significantly extend the scope and duration of the CF with an exciting program of refreshed and new activity that drives visitation, supporting the city's economic recovery with a focus on the retail and hospitality sector;
 - 5.2. Deliver content that positions Melbourne as the preferred Christmas destination. Highlight, promote and communicate the city's rich diversity, festive atmosphere and unique cultural, retail and hospitality offering
 - 5.2.1. Increase family focused programming and activity that has destination appeal;
 - 5.2.2. Program unique experiences that encourage exploration, engagement and shared experience (across various audiences – balance day and night);
 - 5.2.3. Deliver a diverse program of activity and content that is free and accessible;
 - 5.2.4. Balance always on content with key events/scheduled activity throughout the festival period;
 - 5.3. Engage in strategic partnerships to enhance and support the city's Christmas offering whilst supporting/providing a platform for businesses to leverage and engage with audiences.
 - 5.4. Ensure programming is flexible and scalable in order to respond to any sudden shift in the COVID-19 environment/restrictions on public events/gatherings;
6. CF 2021 will deliver a program of 'always-on' activity and scheduled feature events and activation across the municipality over an extended six week festival period commencing 12 November 2021 including:
 - 6.1. A city-wide decorations program that distributes existing and new assets across key precincts and locations.
 - 6.2. A Christmas Festival hub featuring;
 - 6.2.1. Landscaped and themed space including the 16m LED Christmas tree, a new Santa's Workshop, and a range of programming and interactive activities for families;
 - 6.3. A diverse range of activation including Christmas lighting projections, a Christmas Cinema, creative workshops, a Christmas scavenger hunt, a Christmas Carnival, street parties, retail activation, live performance and much more;

- 6.4. The Christmas Collective initiative will return providing businesses and artists/producers funding to deliver Christmas themed events and activities in the municipality. Successful applicants receive up to \$5,000 in funding support and activities will be promoted as part of the festival program.
7. The CF marketing campaign will be festival led and complimentary to the City of Melbourne Always-On activity, and will include retail and hospitality offers. The campaign will;
 - 7.1. Target and engage families with a focus on free family events and activity.
 - 7.2. Increase appeal for leisure visitors by profiling new after-dark, city-wide offerings;
 - 7.3. Profile the new event offerings and integrate retail and hospitality offerings into content marketing;
 - 7.4. Include an enhanced digital offering with a dedicated Christmas Festival website elevating retail and hospitality business offerings through digital functionality and a gift finder tool; and
 - 7.5. Leverage media partnerships to profile the city-wide festive experience.
8. Market research will be undertaken with both consumers and participating businesses to measure the impact of the festival.

Recommendation from management

9. That the Future Melbourne Committee endorses the 2021 Christmas Festival event model.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 3)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. No direct legal issues arise from the recommendation from management. Legal advice will be provided as and when required.

Finance

2. Council's 2021-22 budget includes \$4,684,328 in operating expenditure budget for the delivery of the CF, excluding net revenue. A further \$1,160,000 in capital works funding is also allocated as part of the 2020-21 Council Works Program for the delivery of Christmas decorations and event assets.

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. The Health and Safety of the staff, contractors and event attendees is at the forefront of planning for the CF. A number of strategies are put in place to ensure the event environment is safe and enjoyable for all. CoM and the appointed Risk Manager are responsible for all safety and emergency management plans for this event including addressing any requirements related to COVID-19.

Stakeholder consultation

5. During the planning phase of the CF, consultation will occur with a range of external stakeholders including emergency services, transport authorities, key contractors and other stakeholders to ensure they are across all elements of the event delivery model.

Relation to Council policy

6. This report is consistent with the overall strategies contained in the Council Plan.

Environmental sustainability

7. CoM will engage with internal and external sustainability leaders for feedback, collaboration and innovative approaches to sustainable event practices, including engagement of suppliers that undertake environmental and social sustainability practices.