

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee**Agenda item 6.5****Night Time Economy Advisory Committee****15 March 2022****Presenter:** Andrew Wear, Director Economic Development and International**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to update Future Melbourne Committee on the preliminary vision and recommendations for Melbourne's night time economy developed by the Night Time Economy Advisory Committee (NTEAC) (refer Attachment 2).
2. The night time economy describes the social, cultural and economic activities that take place between 6pm and 6am. Prior to COVID-19, Melbourne had Australia's fastest growing night time economy. Melbourne's night time economy was a key city differentiator and research from the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors estimated the 2018-19 night time economy in Melbourne contributed \$3.5 billion in annual turnover and represented 31,000 jobs.
3. While COVID-19 restrictions have substantially lifted, sectors that are still being significantly impacted in the city include accommodation, hospitality, theatre, the arts and retail. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the night time economy due to government policy settings such as restrictions on trade for hospitality and venue density limits. There have been some positive signs in recent weeks, with night time pedestrian activity in Lygon Street in the week ending 26 February 2022 exceeding the 2020 benchmark by 5.1 per cent. However, other parts of the city continue to struggle, with night time pedestrians in Chinatown down 18.5 per cent against the 2020 benchmark.
4. Terms of reference adopted by Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) indicated the committee should: Provide advice to Council on the growth and sustainability of the night time economy; provide feedback on proposed City of Melbourne initiatives that support the night time economy; and contribute to City of Melbourne decision-making with data and expertise. The establishment of NTEAC contributes to Major Initiative 1 in the Council Plan ('Continue to strengthen Melbourne's economic recovery').

Key issues

5. Given the threat to Melbourne's economic prosperity caused by rolling lockdowns over the past two years, the Committee chose to focus its immediate attention on advocacy to the Victorian Government concerning the safe reopening of the retail, hospitality, entertainment and performing arts sectors. In particular, this involved advocacy and advice on the planning and implementation of a vaccination/health pass.
6. Since its first meeting in June 2021, the committee's progress and key milestones have included:
 - 6.1. Consultation and feedback used to inform the design of the second – and now third – iteration of the Melbourne Money program, including the emphasis on weekday trading and a larger percentage rebate to the consumer.
 - 6.2. Support for – and cooperation in – the COM's Project Night Justice project, which includes the Night Safety Summit, Night Safety Charter and toolkit aimed at supporting women and gender diverse people to feel safe at night in the city.
 - 6.3. Development of a position statement for advocacy to State Government around vaccine/health pass trials and provision of recommendations from the sector on the reopening roadmap. On 21 September 2021, FMC endorsed the committee's advocacy position calling for the piloting of a vaccine health pass system.
7. Given the current status of the pandemic, and the particular importance of city visitation drivers, NTEAC recently shifted its attention to the development of a vision and set of recommendations for Council's consideration. The committee has developed and agreed on a collective vision statement and produced five key recommendations for Council's consideration (refer Attachment 2):

- 6.1. Create a marketing campaign to promote the night-time economy
 - 6.2. Bring people back
 - 6.3. Inspire fearless creativity
 - 6.4. Make Melbourne the City of Yes
 - 6.5. Advocate for the State Government to prioritise the night-time economy.
8. The vision and recommendations represent an initial set of recommendations to Council, informed by the experience of committee members. These recommendations will provide the architecture for further work by the committee.
9. To inspire people to visit the city at night, the committee recommended the creation of a campaign to promote the night time economy, including greater emphasis to the concept of 'twilight'.
- 9.1. As part of future marketing campaigns, management will ensure that night time activity is integrated as a strong theme.
 - 9.2. Management will work with businesses and other stakeholders to promote the concept of 'twilight,' particularly through extended opening hours and activations. The period of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival (30 March-24 April) and the Grand Prix (7-10 April) will be an ideal opportunity to trial such an approach.
10. To 'bring people back' the committee suggested the expansion of voucher schemes such as Melbourne Money. The Victorian government's recent announcement of \$10 million in funding for another round of Midweek Melbourne Money – along with additional state-wide voucher programs for entertainment (\$30 million) and accommodation (\$30 million) – will assist to encourage people to visit the city at night.
- 10.1. The City of Melbourne is the state's premier centre for music, theatre, the arts, events and tourism. It will therefore be important that Victorians are reminded of the strong case for redeeming their vouchers in the City of Melbourne.
11. COM is also 'pulling every lever possible' through the 'Clean Melbourne Graffiti Blitz' which involves a doubling its street cleaning team to combat graffiti, improve public spaces and ensure the city is sparkling clean as visitors return to the city at night.
12. To drive the economy, the committee suggests simplifying the regulatory environment for business and innovators.
- 12.1. COM is currently moving to a digital permit application system that will reduce time consuming and detailed assessments for low risk activity.
 - 12.2. The Business Concierge service also supports businesses to navigate available support. Management will further explore the potential to improve access to the Business Concierge service for businesses that trade outside of office hours.
 - 12.3. Invest Melbourne will work with entrepreneurs and business people looking to invest in new night time ventures. It is well-placed to offer facilitation services and other assistance, to ensure it is easy to invest in new Melbourne-based businesses.
13. The \$200 million Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund (being delivered in partnership with the Victorian government) should be considered as a source of funding for night time economy initiatives, as it is focussed on initiatives that reactivate and revitalise the city. Management will work with the Victorian government to explore the potential to progress further initiatives via the fund.
14. While the Victorian government does offer strong support for the creative sector, unlike other jurisdictions such as NSW (which has a '24 Hour Economy Strategy'), the Victorian government does not have an explicit focus on the night time economy. An explicit night time economy focus from the Victorian government (involving a strategy, advisory committee and/or Ministerial responsibility) would bring greater strength to efforts to revitalise Melbourne's night time economy.

15. The NTEAC terms of reference provide that committee members are appointed for 12 months (with the option for Council to extend committee members' tenure) and that the committee should evaluate its performance on an annual basis.

Recommendation from management

16. That the Future Melbourne Committee:
 - 16.1. Endorses the Lord Mayor writing to the NTEAC Chair, thanking the committee for its contributions and encouraging it to further develop the ideas aligned with each of its five recommendations.
 - 16.2. Requests management:
 - 16.2.1. Ensure the night time economy is a strong theme in future marketing campaigns promoting the city.
 - 16.2.2. Work with businesses and other stakeholders to promote the concept of 'twilight,' particularly through extended opening hours and activations.
 - 16.2.3. Develop a campaign to remind Victorians of the enormous range of music, theatre, arts, events and tourism opportunities in the city, and hence the strong case for redeeming their entertainment and accommodation vouchers in the City of Melbourne.
 - 16.2.4. Make it easy for entrepreneurs to invest in the Night Time Economy by providing assistance through Invest Melbourne.
 - 16.2.5. Identify ways to improve access to the Business Concierge service for businesses that trade outside of office hours.
 - 16.2.6. Work with the Victorian government to pursue funding opportunities through the Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund to develop initiatives to respond to the NTEAC recommendations.
 - 16.2.7. Provide a report for Council consideration in May 2022 evaluating committee performance and proposing future steps for the NTEAC.
 - 16.3. Notes that through the 'Clean Melbourne Graffiti Blitz' the City of Melbourne is doubling its street cleaning team to combat graffiti, improve public spaces and ensure the city is sparkling clean as visitors return to the city at night.
 - 16.4. Notes that the NTEAC recommended 'Making Melbourne the city of Yes' by simplifying the regulatory environment, and that the City of Melbourne is currently moving to a digital permit application system that will reduce time consuming and detailed assessments for low risk activity.
 - 16.5. Endorses the Lord Mayor writing to the Premier calling for a more explicit Victorian Government focus on the night time economy.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 4 of 6)
2. NTEAC recommendations summary (Page 5 of 6)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

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

Finance

2. Funding for night time economy initiatives will be sought via the \$200 million Melbourne City Revitalisation Fund (being delivered in partnership with the Victorian government) with management working with the Victorian government to explore the potential to progress these initiatives. Additional funding for these initiatives will be subject to Council decisions as part of its budget approval procedures.

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 this report, environmental sustainability issues have been considered and no direct issues were identified.

Night-time Economy Advisory Committee

Recommendations to the City of Melbourne – February 2022

The challenge we face:

Melbourne at night has lost its energy and momentum because people lack the confidence that it's (COVID) safe to be in the city and people have a limited concept of what the city at night can offer them.

Our Vision:

Melbourne at night is a creative, bustling, resilient, vibrant and inclusive meeting place for the world.

Melbourne is a city where the day and the night-time economies work together seamlessly to inspire confidence in our residents, artists, visitors and businesses that the streets are safe and the opportunities for new experiences are endless. A meeting place for the world.

To support this vision we have five recommendations:

1. Create a marketing campaign to promote the night-time economy.
2. Bring people back.
3. Inspire fearless creativity.
4. Make Melbourne the city of Yes.
5. Advocate for the State Government to prioritise the night-time economy.

1. Create a marketing campaign to promote the night-time economy.

We want to inspire people to find new ways to imagine how they can live, work and play in Melbourne at any time of the night or day.

NTEAC suggestions for this include:

- The campaign could form a part of a larger “Melbourne” brand campaign or could be a “Melbourne at night” campaign of its own.
- Engaging with Melbourne’s artists, businesses and community to create a paradigm shift around when a ‘day’ starts and ends. It could focus on building excitement around the concept of ‘twilight’.
- It could also use technology to inspire interaction with what the city has to offer.
- Expanding when people want to access the city to create demand for art, entertainment, food, drink and commerce across the day and night.

2. Bring people back.

Pull every lever you have to, to get people back into the city at night. When people are confidently enjoying the city, it comes back to life.

NTEAC suggestions for this include:

- Facilitating the return of the City of Melbourne's workforce as soon as possible, and encouraging city-based businesses to facilitate the return of their workforces also.
- Expand voucher and giveaway programs such as Melbourne Money, activate all pockets of the city, inspire students to live and play in the city.
- Explore approaches to traffic management that would support participation in the night time economy.

3. Inspire fearless creativity.

Artists create fearless work to bring Melbourne's night time to life. Use city spaces for creative adventure and risk taking. Remove roadblocks, invite artists back and step back so they can bring the underground to life.

NTEAC suggestions for this include:

- Cut red tape, simplify all permits, reduce costs, don't shy away from risk, back artistic audacity.
- Provide funding that is easy to access and simple to acquire.
- Let the bold run wild in the city for a year and see what happens.

4. Make Melbourne the City of Yes.

Drive the economy by providing funding and a simplified regulatory environment for business and innovators to realise their big and bold ideas for the night.

NTEAC suggestions for this include:

- Audit and then simplify the permit process for business.
- Create a culture in the City of Melbourne of saying "Yes, yes, yes...and what else can we do to help?"
- Provide a night-time concierge for night-time businesses, cut the time and effort it takes to innovate in the night-time economy.

5. Advocate for the State Government to prioritise the night-time economy.

The night time economy needs a voice at the table. Work together with decision makers to realise the economic and cultural powerhouse of Melbourne's night-time economy.

NTEAC suggestions for this include:

- Ensure there is ministerial responsibility and engagement with the night-time economy. Create further opportunities for NTEAC members to sit on advisory boards and panels.
- Encourage the State Government to allocate funding in the state budget to invest in the creative and economic recovery of the night-time economy.
- Advocate for a round table with government to collaborate on night time economy policies