

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee

Agenda item 6.8

Bi-annual report to Council on the activities of the M9 group of Councils

7 June 2022

Presenter: Justin Hanney, Chief Executive Officer

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a bi-annual update to Councillors on M9 advocacy as resolved by Council on 25 May 2021.
2. On 7 December 2021, Council noted M9 progress to date, which included the development of their strategic objectives from which advocacy priorities have been developed. These strategic objectives were:
 - 2.1. Waste and Circular Economy
 - 2.2. Affordable and Social Housing
 - 2.3. Climate Change and Renewable Energy
 - 2.4. Economic Recovery
 - 2.5. Active Transport
 - 2.6. Community Resilience

Key issues

3. Despite disruptions associated with Omicron sub-variant driving a new COVID-19 wave at the beginning of the year, which continues to impact our community, M9 has maintained regular meetings monthly and proactively engaged Federal and State Government.
4. The State Government has well-received M9 advocacy. M9 advocacy has been particularly successful around priorities focused on removing impediments to the return of International Students, introducing COVID events insurance scheme, Jobs Victoria funding to address skills and labour shortages, and support for retail, hospitality, and creative sectors. M9 played a role in successfully enabling the following:
 - 4.1. From 15 December 2021 onward, fully vaccinated international students were able to travel to and from Australia without needing to apply for a travel exemption.
 - 4.2. State Government introduced pilot scheme that provides up to \$230 million in cover for events that are cancelled or held a reduced capacity due to government imposed COVID-19 restrictions.
 - 4.3. State Government announced \$34.2 million of Jobs Victoria to place 1500 jobs across hospitality, warehousing and logistics, tourism, and food processing.
 - 4.4. State Government funded \$100 million voucher scheme to rebate to Victorians for entertainment, dining and travel. This included a \$10 million round of Melbourne Money.
5. Following Mayoral elections at fellow M9 Councils new Mayor Representatives were inducted and provided an overview of M9 advocacy priorities.
6. On 16 December 2021, M9 Mayors met with the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Shaun Leane MP, to formally introduce M9 and outline the advocacy priorities. The meeting was productive. The Minister shared his desire to champion M9 in the Parliament of Victoria.
7. M9 originally planned to launch advocacy priorities at the Parliament of Victoria in the New Year, however, due to COVID disruptions this was delayed. It has now been rescheduled for August 2022 which is well timed with the upcoming state election.
8. To support the establishment of M9, a website was created to establish web presence. This website outlines M9's advocacy priorities, about us, and provides for a means for residents and other stakeholders to contact M9 – m9.org.au.

9. On 3 December 2021, a meeting was held with M9 Council CEOs to review findings of a study commissioned by M9 in mid-2021 to investigate options to better manage Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO), glass and recycling processing and residual waste for the M9 Councils.
 - 9.1. M9 Councils have commissioned further work on the feasibility of waste shared services to address market failures in all three streams of waste. Findings of this further study will support advocacy leading into the state election, these are likely to be received by late June.
10. The Minister for Planning, the Hon. Richard Wynne, is currently considering a proposal to return buildings to council's Municipal Building Surveyor (MBS), where the Minister has previously declared the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) as the MBS. The return of the MBS function from the VBA to Councils for high and extreme rated buildings with combustible cladding and orphaned building permits, will result in Council taking on significant risk.
 - 10.1. M9 have been clear that any cost-shifting attempts by the State Government will be openly denounced but are open to receive commensurate funding support to undertake this transition. M9 is currently authoring a paper on the risks, and feasibility of a shared service, this will be used to support advocacy to the State Government on a suitable model and required funding.
11. A key M9 advocacy priority is to introduce mandatory affordable housing controls to deliver social and affordable housing. On 17 February 2022, the State Government announced a new Social and Affordable Housing Contribution (SAHC) to be introduced, this included an exemption of social housing properties from paying rates.
 - 11.1. While M9 were pleased to see a measure introduced to improve social and affordable housing stock, Councils expressed concern and disappointment with imposed rate exemptions. Prior to arranging a meeting with the Minister for Housing this initiative was cancelled by the State Government. M9 continue to engage government around how government can improve outcomes in social and affordable housing.
12. Many of the advocacy priorities of M9 are State focused. Hence, this federal election M9 Councils supported the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) [Don't Leave Communities Behind](#) campaign.

Recommendation from management

13. That the Future Melbourne Committee note the progress of M9 to date.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 3)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. The M9 Committee was formed and is governed under an MoU.

Finance

2. The costs associated with the operation of M9 are provided for in the current M9 budget.

Conflict of interest

3. The Lord Mayor and CEO are current members of M9.
4. 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

5. In developing this proposal, no Occupational Health and Safety issues or opportunities have been identified

Stakeholder consultation

6. Members of M9 were consulted and involved in all advocacy activities.

Relation to Council policy

7. On 25 May 2021 Council resolved to dissolve its membership of IMAP and join M9. Management are required to provide a bi-annual update on M9 advocacy activity.

Environmental sustainability

8. In developing this proposal, no environmental sustainability issues or opportunities have been identified.