

## RP-2 COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

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**Summary:** On 14 April 2020 a Mayoral Minute was supported to establish a budget of \$10,000 towards a community support program. The purpose of this program was for Council to work in partnership with relevant agencies, to support food security for those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic close down period. This report provides an update on the completion of Council's response to this program, including the financial position for support of this program.

### Recommendation

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That Council:

- a receive and note the report
- b in accordance with Section 356 of the Local Government Act 1993, donate the remaining \$7,861.91 budget to Carevan, to continue providing the Community Support Program
- c thank Carevan, Anglicare, The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Sunflower House, Red Cross, Mission Australia and RivMed for the work that has been undertaken during the COVID-19 situation.

### Report

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#### Background

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council held 14 April 2020, Council approved the Mayoral Minute to establish a \$10,000 budget for the purposes of supporting an immediate food security community program response to the COVID-19 pandemic close down period. The aim was for Council to work with Carevan to further assist other community organisations, who would normally as part of their funded service provision, provide meals, staples and hampers to our community's most vulnerable members. In the COVID-19 pandemic, close down period, it was identified that there was a shortage of supply of food and labour to support community members in difficult situations. Council was able to assist in the short-term to enable this support to continue through the redeployment of staff who could not perform their normal duties.

For this response Council coordinated a working group between Carevan and other relevant agencies, including The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Anglicare, Sunflower House, Red Cross, Mission Australia and RivMed. In addition, Council staff were redeployed to cover previous volunteer labour for delivery of meals to the community and financial assistance was made available from the \$10,000 allocated budget. A \$5,000 budget was also provided by Anglicare to support the provision of meals by Carevan.

#### Council support of Carevan

Carevan was the lead agency in the preparation and cooking of the meals. Carevan prepared between 250 – 600 (average 550) meals per week over the lockdown period at their premises on Fernleigh Road. Carevan delivered across the Wagga Wagga local government area with precooked meals to all the above listed agencies. In

addition meals were also provided to Sisters Housing, Riverina Medical and Dental, Lilier Lodge (Can Assist), Wagga Family Support, Home at Heart and the Base Hospital, along with a number of churches and religious groups who provide a service to the community, including Church Street and Turvey Park Anglican Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Eight (8) Council staff were redeployed for delivery of meals and food to and from Carevan, including the Mayor's Executive Assistant who worked from the Carevan office three days a week for two months. Council staff returned to Council duties in June 2020, with Carevan continuing in the same format using volunteers. Council has continued to cover the cost of one Chef (displaced from a CBD food outlet during COVID) to work with Carevan ceasing 31 August 2020. Council staff hours and costs of service to Carevan, including the Mayor's Executive Assistant who provided approximately 18 hours a week for two months, are estimated at 313 hours at an approximate cost of \$12,500. Council has regularly met with community agencies in the working group. Recent advice received from NSW Community Justice is that they are working to confirm a lead agency, within the network of the funded non-government organisations, to continue the on-going coordination of the working group and the regular communication across those services, to meet food security and other welfare support programs, including the volunteer-based response groups like Carevan.

### **Council support of Meals on Wheels**

An additional five (5) staff were also redeployed over the period of the COVID lockdown to support Meals on Wheels with the delivery of food to their service clients. This included an average of 250 – 500 meals delivered to approximately 75 households a week, many of whom were older and or vulnerable community members. Staff provided approximately 587 hours to Meals on wheels at an estimated cost of \$21,675.

### **State and Commonwealth Government Response**

On 29 March 2020 in response to COVID the Commonwealth government announced a \$1.1 billion package to increase funding for services who provided support for mental health, domestic violence and emergency food relief during this time. A number of services involved in the food community support working group received additional funding through this package.

On 30 April 2020, the team leader from the Rapid Relief team contacted Wagga Wagga City Council to provide advice that a team had been set up in Wagga Wagga to assist people who were food insecure and impacted by COVID. The Rapid Relief Team (RRT) Food Boxes and Foodbank Emergency Relief Packages can be accessed through ServiceNSW by calling 13 77 88, reducing the need for not for profit agencies to meet the increased demand due to the pandemic. This service provides food boxes, within 24 hours of request, to individuals or families with enough supplies for a week or more. Links to this information are available through Council's COVID pages on the Council website.

### **Current Situation**

Since mid-June and in line with the relaxation of NSW public health orders, Council has now seen the recommencement of agency services, where they are able to go back to their core business operations, serving the community either from agency locations or by outreach service programs. Some services including Anglicare and Red Cross have received additional funding to support their clients and most vulnerable members of our community. Coinciding with this, Council re-opened their own services and facilities resulting in staff returning to their substantive employed positions. This

has meant that the funded and volunteer agencies have resumed their community welfare roles in meeting community needs.

As part of Council and each agency resuming their normal operations, the Social Planner will continue to provide operational support to services who attended the community food support meetings and will be making regular contact with the agencies to keep abreast of the community response and the service levels now afforded to our community.

In terms of the community support program total budget of \$15,000, where combined of Council resolved budget of \$10,000 and the Anglicare funds in the amount of \$5,000, there was a total expenditure of \$7,138.09 with a remaining amount of \$7,861.91. To enable Carevan to continue their valuable work, it is proposed that Council approve the transfer of the remaining funds in the amount of \$7,861.91 to Carevan.

In closing out Council's involvement for the community program, it is acknowledged that under a very challenging environment for our community, partner agencies and staff themselves, there was an overwhelming interest, care and commitment to fill the void in supporting those most vulnerable members of our community.

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### **Financial Implications**

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Council resolved a budget of \$10,000 to be made available to provide an immediate cash flow for the establishment of this community initiative. The funds were for the purchasing of food and supplies to cook meals. In addition, Anglicare provided \$5,000 to go towards the cost of purchasing food for Carevan to prepare meals.

Out of the total budget \$15,000 there was a total expenditure of \$7,138.09 with a remaining amount of \$7,861.91. To enable Carevan to continue their valuable work Council is seeking approval to transfer the remaining funds in the amount of \$7,861.91 to Carevan.

Job number: 20906

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### **Policy and Legislation**

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N/A

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### **Link to Strategic Plan**

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#### **Community Leadership and Collaboration**

Objective: We have strong leadership

Outcome: We are accountable and transparent

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### **Risk Management Issues for Council**

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N/A

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### **Internal / External Consultation**

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There was internal consultation across relevant internal staff teams to support the community services program. External engagement was through the community support working group and other agencies on a needs basis.

	Mail			Media				Community Engagement					Digital				
	Rates notices insert	Direct mail	Letterbox drop	Council news story	Council News advert	Media releases	TV/radio advertising	One-on-one meetings	Your Say website	Community meetings	Stakeholder workshops	Drop-in sessions	Surveys and feedback forms	Social media	Email newsletters	Website	Digital advertising
<b>TIER</b>																	
<b>Consult</b>								<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
<b>Involve</b>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Collaborate</b>																	

**Attachments**

1. Letter from Anglicare regarding Carevan Funds