

Subject: LMM 28/03/2023 - CITY OF NEWCASTLE HOSTS WORLD-CLASS EVENTS

MOTION:

That City of Newcastle:

1. Notes that many successful events have been held in recent weeks, seeing an increase in local visitation to the City of Newcastle, including;
 - a. Country Mayors Association of NSW which met for the very first time outside of Sydney for their recent general meeting and tour of the Port of Newcastle;
 - b. International Women's Day Morning Tea 2023 with inspirational guest speaker Vanessa Alexander, an award-winning screenwriter and humanitarian who received a Key to the City of Newcastle after her keynote speech at the annual Lord Mayor's International Women's Day Morning Tea at City Hall speaking about her work to help more than 100 Afghan women and their families at risk of retribution from the Taliban after the fall of Kabul in August 2021, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This event also raised \$3,200 from Vanessa Alexander's chosen beneficiary, refugee support service Talent Beyond Boundaries;
 - c. Supercars Newcastle 500 which saw thousands of locals and visitors alike enjoying the race;
 - d. Surfest, the largest festival of surfing in the Southern Hemisphere, which Newcastle has sponsored since its inception, with Joel Vaughan and Bronte Macauley claiming victory at the Burton Automotive & Speaking in Colour Pro World Surf League Qualifying Series;
 - e. *Come from Away* which saw more than 21,500 theatregoers attending from across the Hunter and beyond, who flocked to the Civic Theatre during the three-week extended run to share in the incredible real-life story of the 7,000 air passengers from around the world who were grounded in Newfoundland Canada in the wake of 9/11;
2. Notes that as part of the Supercars Newcastle 500, City of Newcastle was able to facilitate the raising of more than \$40,000 for its partner charities *Got Your Back Sista* and *Nova for Women and Children*, which will support victims of family and domestic violence (with more than \$100,000 now raised since 2017 for domestic violence charities from this event alone);
3. Congratulates Freeman of the City of Newcastle, Mr Warren Smith, upon his receipt of the Peter Troy Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2023 Surfing Australia Awards for his lifelong dedication to the sport of Surfing, in particular, for his commitment to Surfest, the largest festival of surfing in the Southern Hemisphere.
4. Acknowledges City of Newcastle has also won the right to host two further large scale business events this October, with more than 500 delegates to descend on the city injecting more than \$1.6 million into the local visitor economy, being the highly-coveted 2023 Australian Regional Tourism convention at City Hall and will welcome the nation's best town planners for the Planning Institute of Australia's regional conference.
5. Extends our gratitude and thanks the work of local businesses, City of Newcastle employees and the Newcastle community for their support and cooperation in hosting these successful events and promoting our beautiful city.

BACKGROUND

Country Mayors Association meeting in Newcastle



COUNTRY mayors who toured the Port of Newcastle say a Newcastle container terminal would mesh with the Inland Rail when it connected with the line between Newcastle and Narrabri.

The Port of Newcastle played host today to a delegation from the Country Mayors Association of NSW, which has been chaired since November by the Mayor of Gunnedah Shire, Cr Jamie Chafey, following a welcome reception hosted by City of Newcastle.

Cr Chaffey said the association usually held its quarterly meetings in Sydney to enable it to get its message across more easily to state parliamentarians, but a new executive had decided to move the meetings around.

Cr Chaffey said 92 of the state's 128 local councils were eligible to join the Country Mayors Association. He said 79 were members, with more expected to join soon.

He said 35 councils were represented at the Newcastle meeting, mostly by mayors and council chief executives.

Inspiring humanitarian receives Key to the City on International Women's Day

An award-winning screenwriter and humanitarian has received a Key to the City of Newcastle after a compelling keynote speech at the annual Lord Mayor's International Women's Day Morning Tea at City Hall.

From her Newcastle home, Vanessa Alexander helped more than 100 Afghan women and their families at risk of retribution from the Taliban out of Afghanistan after the fall of Kabul in August 2021, amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fifty-six of these refugees are now living in or around Newcastle, 32 are in Ireland with the support of Ms Alexander's sister, Elise, while others have resettled in Brazil and the US. Some of the people pivotal to this mission joined Ms Alexander and Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes for a panel discussion, facilitated by Councillor Carol Duncan, including: Darwish Ahmadzai, who helped hundreds of women and children flee; Richelle Aiken, head of Friends of Refugees Newcastle; Megan Smith, Director at Prosperity Advisers, who helped find local jobs for women; and Tooba Azami, a female Afghan doctor who sought refuge in Newcastle on an emergency visa.



In addition to this, Ms Alexander is a writer and producer, best known for her work on *Vikings: Valhalla* (Netflix) and *The Great* (Hulu). For *The Great*, she was nominated for Best Comedy and Best New Series at the Writers Guild of America Awards in 2021. The same year, she went on to co-executive produce *Valhalla* from her bedroom in Newcastle during lockdown while home-schooling three children.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said Ms Alexander exemplified the attributes of an ambassador for the city and embodied the spirit of the 2023 International Women's Day theme, Embrace Equity.

"After the fall of Kabul, Vanessa was inspired to organise a group of local women to coordinate urgent and meaningful assistance for vulnerable Afghans, linking a global network of contacts via WhatsApp," Cr Nelmes said.

"Hers is an incredible story of courage and hope, and I am proud to induct Ms Alexander as a City of Newcastle ambassador and give worthy recognition to her wonderful work with a Key to the City."

Captivating a packed Concert Hall, Ms Alexander said she was honoured to accept the award for and on behalf of those who had helped coordinate support.

"Some of those people join us today on the panel. Darwish helped over 300 women and children to safety, and it inspired me to set up a Dungog Refugee support group who helped me secure Darwish a job and housing there. Richelle established Friends of Refugees Newcastle and provided support to the first 25 refugees who arrived, including housing Tooba and her brothers. Erin Beard, a social worker, was the other half of this mighty effort. Megan, together with Richelle, Rosanna Fuller and Lisa Toohey, helped me relocate a young female accountant by giving her and funding her skilled visa," Ms Alexander said.

"While I was personally involved in helping close to 100 Afghan women and their families, the ripple effect was manifold as hundreds more received crisis support through the network Darwish and I established with the Canberra based woman's activist, Susan Hutchison."

The morning tea raised \$3,200 through a raffle and online donations for Ms Alexander's chosen beneficiary, refugee support service Talent Beyond Boundaries, adding to the \$1,800 raised in 2022 for suicide prevention charity R U OK? and \$3,100 for domestic violence organisation Got Your Back Sista in 2021.

Newcastle 500 wraps up with more chances for community to have their say

The race may be over for 2023 but the chequered flag has not yet fallen on the chance to have a say about the return of the Newcastle 500.

The recent event was the final race to be delivered under the agreement between City of Newcastle, Supercars Australia and Destination NSW signed in 2016.



Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said City of Newcastle was committed to capturing views from across the community on the future of the Newcastle 500.

"The community have now experienced the Newcastle 500 four times, so we're really keen to hear their thoughts on the Newcastle 500 and the possibility of extending its time in our city," Cr Nelmes said.

"At this time, no decision has been reached on the future of the race.

"If the NSW Government decides it wants to extend the Newcastle 500 for another five years then our Council will have the final decision on whether Newcastle continues as the host city.

"We're committed to undertaking a robust, open process of consultation through consultants KPMG, who are using a range of online, in-person and telephone surveys before, during and after the race period to gather feedback from as wide a range of people as possible.

"This feedback will allow councillors to better understand the community's views on issues around liveability, economic benefit or challenges, perceptions of the event and its impact on the visitor economy."

Thousands of people have already responded to an online survey launched last month ahead of the event, while face-to-face questionnaires completed during the race weekend will provide insight into the behaviours of racegoers, including their visitation to local businesses.

Randomised telephone surveys commenced this week to capture views from across Newcastle's demographic profile while an upcoming letterbox drop of every property in the Newcastle local government area will include information on how to provide their feedback online.

Residents, business and industry representatives will be asked to provide additional commentary during four post-event stakeholder workshops next month, with the feedback from all consultation activities to be completed in a report to be released mid-year.

The online survey can be completed via the City of Newcastle website until 5pm on 31 March.

Warren Smith recognised for Surfest success with Peter Troy Lifetime Achievement Award

Surfest linchpin Warren Smith said the Peter Troy Lifetime Achievement Award presented to him on Thursday night was recognition for the team behind Newcastle's surfing carnival rather than himself.

Smith was named the recipient at the Surfing Australia Awards at the QT Gold Coast hotel after being one of three nominees.

He said it was a "nice acknowledgement" but it belonged to everyone who had contributed to Surfest over the past 37 years.

"It was lovely, it was a great night and really nice," Smith said.

"I see it as a representation of Surfest and what we've all done as a team.

"Not one person can do this and I'm just lucky to have the support of a beautiful family, a fantastic partner and a great team.



Libby Troy, the widow of Peter Troy, with Warren Smith and his award on Thursday night at the QT Gold Coast.

"There's been so many people over the years who have played their part.

"It's an award for Surfest and an award for the community, and a recognition of what Surfest has done, rather than just one person."

Also at the awards night, Jack Robinson (male) and world champion Stephanie Gilmore (female) were named Australian surfers of the year.

Sierra Kerr (female) and Willis Droomer (male) received the rising star awards.

Mark Lane was a life membership inductee and Tom Whittaker was coach of the year.

'Facing Monsters' was surf video of the year, while Ted Grambeau won surf photo of the year.

Come From Away cast takes final bow in Newcastle to rave reviews

The curtain will come down one last time tonight bringing *Come From Away's* record-breaking Newcastle season to a close, after sweeping audiences to their feet for a standing ovation after all 23 shows.

More than 21,500 theatregoers attended from across the Hunter and beyond, who flocked to the Civic Theatre during *Come From Away's* three-week extended run to share in the incredible real-life story of the 7,000 air passengers from around the world who were grounded in Newfoundland Canada in the wake of 9/11.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said *Come From Away* has impressed theatregoers during its Newcastle debut and whet the city's appetite for more musical theatre already proven on Broadway.



"Newcastle has waited 30 years to see the return of a professional Broadway production and *Come From Away* has been well worth the wait. Having smashed previous box office ticket sales records, our city's appetite for live musical theatre is alive and well," Cr Nelmes said.

"Attracting a professional Broadway production of this calibre is a testament to Newcastle's growth as a world-class cultural city and indicative of our thriving live performing arts scene. As a city, we can't wait to welcome the next Broadway hit to Newcastle."

Of the more than 21,500 theatregoers, almost 50 per cent of tickets were purchased by visitors outside of Newcastle and the Hunter, from intrastate destinations like Narrabri and Bellingen to interstate destinations like Tasmania, delivering a ripple effect to accommodation providers, local businesses and the wider visitor economy.

Local accommodation providers like QT Newcastle have been welcoming guests from far-flung country NSW to Melbourne during the past three weeks according to General Manager Michael Stamboulidis.

"We've been run off our feet with guests here to catch a glimpse of Broadway," Mr Stamboulidis said.

"Our accommodation/theatre packages have been popular among theatregoers and the hotel has seen high demand whilst *Come From Away* has been showing."

Among the opening night crowd was Canadian-born super fan Zarina Varley Scott, who travelled to Newcastle from Sydney's Northern Beaches to experience *Come From Away*'s Newcastle debut.

"This is the ninth time I've seen *Come From Away*, in various locations around the world, and I couldn't wait to see it again in Newcastle. It did not disappoint," Ms Varley Scott said.

Novocastrian Di Flemming was also thrilled to see *Come From Away* in Newcastle at the historic Civic Theatre on the opening night.

"It was a rollercoaster of a ride, I had the best time," Ms Flemming said.