

SUBJECT: LMM 28/05/19 - HUNTER STREET MALL RATE RELIEF FROM DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION

MOTION

That City of Newcastle:

- 1 Notes that a number of businesses have contacted City of Newcastle to express concerns regarding current and future trading levels due to construction in Newcastle East, in particular in the Hunter Street Mall;
- 2 Recognises that the level of construction will remain high during the delivery of the Iris Capital East End project and the *Hunter Street Newcastle East End Stage One Streetscape Plan* adopted by Council in April 2018;
- 3 Implements a rate assistance plan designed to assist local small and medium businesses who are feeling financial pressure from ongoing development construction in the Hunter Street Mall and Newcastle's East End.

Background:

City of Newcastle recognises the concerns of small and medium business operators in the Hunter Street Mall and Newcastle's East End regarding the level of ongoing and impending construction associated with the East End Development and the upcoming *Hunter Street Newcastle East End Stage One Streetscape Plan* works.

It is suggested that under this proposal, property owners who pay the City Centre – City East benefit (Special Rate) and Hunter Mall Special Rate may apply for rate assistance of an amount up to 50% of the special rate levied for 2019/20.

This assistance is conditional on the property owner committing this reimbursement to their tenant/s whose business is suffering financial hardship due to development construction in Newcastle East and the Hunter Street Mall.

Property owners and tenants will be required to complete and submit an application form with supporting evidence to City of Newcastle to be eligible.

This proposal should follow the model of financial assistance offered to inner-city businesses suffering hardship from the construction of the Newcastle Light Rail.

Related previous decisions:

In July 2018, City of Newcastle announced financial assistance to inner-city businesses suffering hardship from construction of the city's light rail project to apply for financial assistance.

Media Release: Financial assistance offered to inner-city businesses

26 July 2018

City of Newcastle has invited businesses suffering hardship from construction of the city's light rail project to apply for financial assistance.

The assistance will be made available to properties within the City Centre Benefit Special Rate Area following Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes' successful amendment to Council's 2018-19 budget.

Eligible properties are entitled to financial assistance equalling half of the City Centre Special Rate they will pay in 2018/19. Property owners seeking the rebate can only do so if they commit in writing to passing on the rebate to businesses leasing from them.

"Council took this decision to provide direct rate relief to those businesses suffering from the disruption that the construction of light rail has brought about," Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said.

"We understand that their bottom line has been impacted, and this rate relief was a legal mechanism Council could use to ensure they received some financial assistance."

Financial assistance is available:

- to the tenant(s) of the property, or
- to the property owner - providing the property is solely owner occupied and no part is leased out

To access this assistance, property owners must pay at least the first quarterly rates instalment shown on their 2018/19 Rates and Charges Notice.

Then they should complete an [application form](#) together with details of tenants (with their signature) where applicable.

If more than one tenant occupies the property, a separate form is required for each tenant.

Council will then provide half of the amount they would have paid for the 2018/19 City Centre Special Rate in to the bank account nominated on the application form.

Both property owner and tenant(s) will be notified by email once Council makes the financial assistance payment is made.

Background

Stylish overhaul for the East End

27 Mar 2018

Blue stone footpaths, cobblestone laneways and new outdoor eating and retail opportunities are part of a vision to give Hunter Street East a cool urban feel straight out of Soho New York.

The Hunter Street Newcastle East End Stage One Streetscape Plan will complement the current redevelopment of the David Jones building and nearby projects to reinvigorate two blocks bound by Perkins, Newcomen, King and Scott streets.



Including a safe, separated two-way cycleway, new furnishings, street plantings and street art, the plan -- on public exhibition for four weeks from next Monday -- stands to reinvent the city's former commercial centre as a tourism, residential and hospitality hub.

Other features of the proposed overhaul include:

- A two-way cycleway separated from traffic and the footpath by an 80cm island and 30cm kerb respectively (on Hunter Street's southern side)
- New street trees and furniture with smart city connectivity
- A broad, raised cobblestone pedestrian crossing at Market Street
- A bitumen roadway for westbound traffic with kerb and guttering
- Accessible ramp in Market Street to replace the Morgan Street laneway ramp to make a direct connection to the waterfront from Hunter Street

"This is a very exciting plan for Newcastle," Lord Mayor Nuatali Nemes said.

"It details a visionary project to support the growth of residential development, boutique retail, hospitality and tourism in Newcastle East.

"It will see Hunter Street revert to a traditional high street with kerb and guttering that better define usages and help attract more residents, students and visitors to the precinct.

"Avenue tree-planting, increased public seating and footpaths with distinctive finishes and historical interpretation will encourage more outdoor dining and create a whole new Soho-like feel with vastly improved connections between the harbour foreshore and Cathedral Park."

If eventually supported, the plan will see the 40km/h speed limit for westbound motorists replace the current 10km/h limit, with parking retained along the northern side of Hunter Street.

The surrounding Laing and Morgan Street laneways are also set for dramatic improvements under the plan.



New retail opportunities, street art, seating and planting could transform the former while detailed paving with interpretative inlays and catenary lighting stand to help the latter flourish as a pedestrian-friendly space.

Also under the plan, the Morgan Street staircase will be reorientated north-south and offer seating on double height stairs next to access stairs.

Shade trees and other plantings along the terraces will make the area a cooler, more attractive place to relax and access Cathedral Park, as a Masterplan to turn it into an open air museum takes shape.

Council also voted last night to adopt a public domain plan to make Birdwood Park the main civic space of the city's future West End CBD.

Under the West End Stage One - Public Domain Plan, Birdwood Park could feature an outdoor café, pedestrian plaza and open green space for civic and cultural events, such as outdoor cinema.

Little Birdwood Park, across King Street, will be expanded to integrate with the Marketown shopping centre, while Parry Street west of National Park Street will be transformed with new pavements and a greener street scape.

Additional shading in Birdwood Park and play elements for both parks, as suggested by members of the public, have been incorporated into the final domain plan following a public exhibition period.