

1.2 COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

(JP:FIN9, COM1, YTH1, CHLD1, AGED1, ETH1, COM68)

Responsible A/g Director: Geoff Loftus

RECOMMENDATION*That Council:*

- 1. Adopts the Policy Guidelines and endorses the priorities set for its Community Support Program in 2009.*
- 2. Adopts the Terms of Reference for the Community Support Program Evaluation Panel.*
- 3. Advertises the Community Support Program in local newspapers in the City of Monash, and ethnic and indigenous press, during June 2008, inviting applications from eligible community groups serving the City's residents for the period, 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009.*
- 4. Assesses applications received in the context of its service priorities and budget allocations.*
- 5. Appoints Councillor Dimopoulos to the Community Support Program Evaluation Panel.*

INTRODUCTION

Council, on an annual basis, provides funding to community organisations and groups through the Community Support Program. Each year Council adopts policy guidelines, priority areas and assessment procedures to support this process.

BACKGROUND

Council provides a range of community services to Monash residents. In addition to its role in direct service delivery, Council encourages and supports the work of local organisations involved in community development and service provision. The aim of the Community Support Program is to assist these organisations in specific service provision.

ANALYSIS

The funding provided from the Community Support Program falls within six service/program areas:

1. Aged & Disability Services;
2. Multicultural Services;
3. Family & Children's Services;
4. Counselling & Community Support;
5. Youth Services; and
6. Community Strengthening and Participation.

The 2009 Community Support Program will comprise the following grant categories:

1. Community Partnership Funding (recurrent funding up to three years – subject to annual approval through the budget process);
2. Innovation Funding (one year funding in excess of \$3,000);
3. General Community Support Funding (up to \$3,000); and
4. In Kind Support.

Category Definitions

Community Partnership Funding provides funding for services that would otherwise have been provided by Council. Established, experienced and relevant agencies may seek funding periods longer 12-months (up to three years recurrent), subject to additional Council approval.

Innovation Funding allows for single year funding exceeding \$3,000, to support costs associated with the delivery of new and innovative programs. Projects need to be consistent with Council's priorities for the 2009 Community Support Program and the 2006 – 2010 Council Plan. Evaluation criteria for this category will be weighted towards programs that demonstrate linkages to other services, and innovative responses to new and emerging community needs.

General Community Support Funding (up to \$3,000) to support the operational costs of small community groups, minor equipment costs for small community groups, hall hire subsidies for the use of facilities owned by not-for-profit organisations (if a suitable Council facility cannot be provided) or for the provision of seeding funding for small innovative projects. In the case of Senior Citizens Clubs and Neighbourhood Houses, this grant will be paid on a three year recurrent basis.

In Kind Support assists community groups with printing/photocopying and subsidised/free use of Council's buildings or halls.

Priority Areas

Community Partnership Funding

Services where a demonstrated need has been established.

Submissions are sought from established, experienced and relevant agencies to deliver services where there is a clearly demonstrated need. Applicants are required to demonstrate evidence of the need. Proposed services cannot be a duplication of existing services or be the core responsibility of State or Federal Government.

Innovation Funding

Community Strengthening and Community Participation Programs

Submissions/proposals are sought from suitable organisations for projects and programs that will:

- strengthen local communities;
- build community capacity; and
- increase participation of residents in their community.

Projects in this category will need to demonstrate long-term sustainability and financial viability.

General Community Support Funding and In Kind Support

Priorities include operational and/or in kind support for community groups operating in the City of Monash that benefit members of the community specifically, including:

- senior citizens;
- multicultural groups (especially emerging communities);
- people with disabilities;
- projects that facilitate reconciliation with indigenous Australians;
- projects that promote a safe community; and
- projects that address social isolation.

Community Support Program priority areas that are set for the 2009 period have been developed in consultation with all relevant Council areas, involving Council Officers and reflect strategies in relevant Council documents.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Organisations with Recurrent Funding

It is Council policy to provide three year recurrent operational funding to seniors groups and neighbourhood houses. 2007 was the first year of this triennial funding. Consequently all senior citizens and neighbourhood houses will not need to re-apply for three year recurrent funding this year.

As part of the 2007 and 2008 Community Support Program a number of organisations were granted three year Community Partnership Funding. For 2009 these organisations include:

Seniors Groups	\$66,277
Neighbourhood Houses	\$27,000
Wavecare Counselling Service	\$140,000
Waverley Emergency Adolescent Care (WEAC)	\$58,578
Connections – Family, Youth & Children’s Services	\$64,390
Waverley Community Learning Centre	\$27,150
New Hope Migrant and Refugee Centre (MRC)	\$28,000
TOTAL	\$411,395

This amount of \$411,395.00 is thus already committed.

Funding Implications for 2008/09

The 2008/09 Community Support Program has an allocation of \$735,000.00 for direct financial assistance. However, with the amount already allocated to groups for 2009, the actual available funds for direct financial assistance in 2009 is \$323,605.00. Additionally, provision is made in the 2008/09 budget for hall hire costs to the value of \$525,000.00.

In response to the needs of local services, Council has maintained its priority of supporting agencies, which are locally focussed, and responsive to municipal needs. During the 2007 Community Support Program process, applications received were valued well in excess of the Community Support Program budget. It should be noted that the grants allocations operate on a calendar year basis.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

General

The provision of a Community Support Program is based on Council's values and strategic objectives as set out in the 2006 – 2010 Council Plan, in particular "An Inclusive and Connected Community". It is the Council Plan that is the foundation of the Community Support Program 2009, Policy and Procedures document (See Attachment 1) that provides the framework for administering the program. It is recommended Council adopts the policy guidelines, and endorses the priorities set for the Community Support Program 2009

Organisations seeking funding will additionally be required to demonstrate their awareness of and relevance of their projects to key Council strategies including: Council Plan, Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, Multicultural Framework and Action Plan, the Municipal Public Health Plan and the Indigenous Framework and Action Plan. It is anticipated that this requirement will further align community service planning and activities to that of Council.

Terms of Reference

To assist the Evaluation Panel in its role of assessing applications, draft Terms of Reference have been developed. These Terms of Reference provide the Evaluation Panel with clear guidelines for the operation of the panel as well as decision making. Issues covered by Terms of Reference include:

- objectives of the committee;
- membership;
- the chairperson;
- length of membership;
- timing, duration, location and frequency of meetings;
- eligibility and assessment criteria;
- voting;
- problem solving; and
- delegations.

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation Panel are considered a best practice initiative. The Terms of Reference can be found in Attachment 2 of this report. It is recommended that Council adopt these Terms of Reference.

Service Improvements

As a result of reviewing the program and gaining feedback from the Client Satisfaction Survey a number of service improvements will be introduced in this next funding round. These service improvements will include:

- The application to book a hall for the next year and apply for funding has been streamlined into one document/process. In the past, groups had to apply to two different parts of Council to book a hall and apply for in kind support to fund it.
- All application documentation will be translated into Greek, Italian and Chinese.
- Groups will be able to submit applications in any language (Council will have these applications translated into English).
- Information sessions will include application writing workshops.
- Information sessions will have interpreters available upon request.

EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

Satisfaction Survey

Council Officers surveyed all applicants to the 2008 Community Support Program. Of the 167 organisations surveyed, 75 responded (including unsuccessful applicants). This is a response rate of 45% which is considered significantly high. The survey examined areas such as adequacy of publicity, quantity and quality of information sessions, understanding of the policy and procedures, clarity of application forms, transparency and length of the process, and understanding of the funding agreements. Analysis of the responses reveals an overwhelming level of satisfaction in all areas examined from those who responded.

Promoting the Program

In order to assist community groups with their service and financial planning for 2009, it is proposed to again advertise the Community Support Program. This will include the three local papers and relevant ethnic and indigenous newspapers in the weeks beginning 9 and 16 June 2008. Applications will open on Monday, 16 June 2008 and must be submitted by 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 28 July 2008.

IMPLEMENTATION

With Council's endorsement, the Community Support Program for 2009 will be advertised and implemented within relevant guidelines and budget allocations. Previous applicants, recipients, and new requests, are incorporated into an extensive mailing list. These organisations will be written to with advice on how to obtain application forms and guidelines (i.e. downloading off Council's website or how to obtain a hard copy) following the appearance of the public notice and date and times of information sessions.

Evaluation Panel

At the Council Meeting of 29 January 2008, Council resolved that the Community Support Program Evaluation Panel will be made up of Crs Baines, Banerji, Brown, Klisaris, McGill and Shiel. Should Council approve recommendation 5 of this report, Councillor Dimopoulos will also be a member of the Panel. Upon receipt of applications, Council Officers will collate and assess the applications. Council Officers will resource the panel and provide advice on allocations (based on the priorities listed in this report). The Evaluation Panel will consider all applications in the context of Council priorities and the Terms of Reference.

Once the Evaluation Panel has finalised its recommendations, Council Officers will prepare a report on behalf of the Evaluation Panel for Council's consideration.

CONCLUSION

The Community Support Program is a major community development and capacity building program for the Monash community. It enables small community groups to meet and/or carry out their activities, promoting wellbeing and social inclusion. In addition, the program enables Council to support and work collaboratively with local agencies with the aim of delivering services in response to community need.