

8.3 MEALS SUBSIDY FOR MULTICULTURAL SENIOR CITIZENS GROUPS

(AGED16)

Submitting Councillor: Cr Klisaris

NOTICE OF MOTION

That Council approves the trial of a subsidy program for multicultural senior citizens groups that provide meals at their regular meetings for a three year period, commencing in 2009/10.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to propose the introduction of a subsidy to multicultural senior citizens groups whose regular social activities include the sharing of a meal.

BACKGROUND

Monash has a number of senior citizens groups that meet in Council and other community venues, generally at weekly, fortnightly and monthly intervals. A number of these groups, mostly multicultural senior citizens groups, share a meal on all or most of the occasions when they meet which allows them to enjoy a meal relevant to their culture within a positive social context. These groups are an important source of social support and engagement for their members. The cost of the meals is generally met through annual membership fees. Most groups prepare, or part-prepare, meals at the meeting venue.

DISCUSSION

Currently, the Council provides financial support to senior citizen groups by assisting some groups to source their meals from the supplier of Council's delivered meals ("Meals on Wheels") program. However as the Council's meals program has only four daily options it is not possible, through this program, to cater for all cultural groups. Council also has a lower level of participation by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) residents in its delivered meals program. Whilst over 37% of Monash residents aged 65 years plus are from CALD communities only 22% of the clients using the delivered meals service are from these communities. Whilst this is a greater proportion than was the case when Council expanded its delivered meals program in 2005 it has not reached the levels Council had desired. This proposal will allow Council and the State Government to support the provision of nutritional meals to individuals who have not taken up the available delivered meals program.

It is proposed that Council allocates approximately \$50,000 pa to trial for a three year period, from 2009/10, a subsidy program for the more than 30 multicultural senior citizens groups that prepare meals on some or all of the occasions they meet. The subsidy received by each group would be based on the frequency with which the group has a meal and the average number of participants at each meeting who are Monash residents. The purpose of the subsidy would be to help meet the costs of preparing the meals.

To be eligible for the subsidy groups would need to agree to provide a nutritional meal, to have the kitchen approved by an Environmental Health Officer and provide details of their members aged over 60 years (or with a disability) and residing in the City of Monash.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The proposal is consistent with Council's strategic objective of an inclusive and connected community as it will support groups that play an important role in helping elderly Monash residents who are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to participate in community activities.

It will also allow Council to support the nutritional needs of older CALD residents who do not access the delivered meals service due to the limited range of ethnic-specific meals. The State Government has also been supportive of the proposal as it is an initiative that broadens the means by which the nutritional needs of older residents can be met.

FINANCIAL

The funding for this proposal will be drawn from Home and Community Care (HACC) funding received by Council. Currently the Council receives nearly \$6 million per annum for the provision of a range of HACC services at target service levels negotiated with the Department of Human Services. Council officers have worked in partnership with State Government officers to change these targets so approximately \$50,000 can be released for a three year period to trial this proposal.

It is proposed that the following level of annual subsidy apply.

<i>Average Number of Attendees Who Reside in Monash</i>	<i>Meet Weekly (or twice weekly)</i>	<i>Meet Fortnightly</i>	<i>Meet Monthly</i>
0 – 20	\$800	\$400	\$200
21 – 50	\$1,500	\$750	\$375
Over 50	\$2,500	\$1,250	\$625

It is anticipated that 30-35 groups will apply for the subsidy. Most have 21-50 members or over 50 members.

CONCLUSION

This proposal will allow Council to support multicultural senior citizens centres to maintain the provision of meals at their regular meetings through the provision of subsidy to help meet the costs of meals.