

2.1 2020/21 MONASH QUICK RESPONSE GRANTS PROGRAM RECIPIENTS

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of successful applications to the Quick Response Grant program (QRG).

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

Monash Council is committed to supporting the community to adapt positively to the challenges of COVID-19. The Quick Response Grants were designed to support the adaptation and continuation of local community groups and individual creative efforts to help build community resilience, cohesion and connectedness during and after the pandemic.

6 applications were assessed between the period of 10 – 24 March 2021 and funding of \$12,044.59 has been awarded to three successful applications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Quick Response Grants program is funded from the existing 2020/21 Monash Community Grants Program budget. The Quick Response Grant program has an allocation of \$135,000, of which \$12,044.59 has been allocated in this period. Including these decisions the total allocations made to date are \$66,866.59, with a remaining budget for the program of \$68,133.41.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The Quick Response Grants successful recipients for the period 10 – 24 March 2021 are presented to Council within the available budget, recognising the implications on future Council budgets given the impact of COVID-19 and the social distancing measures currently in place.

These projects have demonstrated how resilient, adaptive and caring the Monash community is during this challenging time.

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the successful applications that have been funded through the Quick Response Grant program during the period 10 – 24 March 2021 to a total of \$12,044.59.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of successful applications to the Quick Response Grant program (QRG).

BACKGROUND

Monash Council is committed to supporting the community to adapt positively to the challenges of COVID-19. The Quick Response Grants were designed to support the adaptation and continuation of local community groups and individual creative efforts to help build community resilience, cohesion and connectedness during and after the pandemic.

Monash Council has one of the largest community grant programs in Victoria and is proud of its commitment in supporting and valuing the dedicated community groups and organisations within our municipality. The establishment of a Quick Response Grant Program has enabled Council to continue to support the local community groups and artists to remain agile and innovative as they respond to the impacts of COVID-19.

As per the Guidelines that were endorsed at Council on 9 June 2020 the process is as follows:

- Applications will be submitted via SmartyGrants from 1 July 2020 until the allocation has been exhausted
- Applications will be assessed by an internal Council Officer Panel
- Applicants will receive a response from Council within four weeks of the application being received
- Once receiving notification of a successful application, applicants must commence the project within four weeks and complete by 30 June 2021
- All successful applications will be formally acknowledged at the next applicable Council meeting

DISCUSSION

The current COVID-19 pandemic has posed many challenges for Council and community alike, both from an operational and economic perspective. Council is acutely aware of the importance of many of our community groups and the role that they play in combating social isolation and loneliness amongst our community members.

The establishment of a Quick Response Grant Program (QRG) has enabled our community to apply for a once-off grant of up to \$5,000 for a project that demonstrates innovation in response to the impact of COVID-19 on their group and our local community.

It is important to note that Quick Response Grants were developed for the community to provide innovative ways to respond to the issues that have arisen as a result of COVID-19 and are not to be a duplicate of an existing program, whether funded through MCGP or other avenues.

The QRG have been promoted through multiple Monash platforms, including:

- Monash Bulletin
- Monash social media – Facebook, Instagram and twitter
- As part of a mail out to current grant recipients
- Art & About e-newsletter
- Sustainability e-newsletter

The grants opened on 1 July 2020 and will remain open until the allocation of \$135,000 is exhausted.

Six applications were received via the SmartyGrants portal for the assessment period 10-24 March 2021. Applications were assessed by an internal officer assessment panel.

The assessment criteria consisted of the following:

1. Addresses an evidence-based community need or opportunity
2. Demonstrated response to the impacts of COVID-19 on an organisation/community
3. The number of Monash residents that will benefit
4. The capacity of the organisation/community/individual to undertake the project
5. Budget expenditure

An evaluation matrix was developed, taking into consideration the guidelines, ensuring the applications were considered and assessed in an equitable and transparent way. This provided the assessment process with rigour and consistency.

A total of **\$12,044.59** has been awarded to 3 successful applications, outlined in the table below. These amounts were determined by the project, amount and specific items requested in the application budget.

Recipient	Project Name	Amount Awarded
Telugu Association of Australia	Women and Carer Empowerment in New Normalcy	\$4,845.09
Peter Vadiveloo	Clayton Community Drum Circle	\$3,309.50
Telugu Ladies Club	Flavours of India, Cooking Mela	\$3,890.00
	Total	\$12,044.59

Details of this project is as follows:

Telugu Association of Australia (2021QRG0097) – \$4,845.09

The project is to conduct a hybrid workshop on 22nd May 2021 to educate and empower the women, parents and carers for post-COVID normalcy. The focus areas are:

- 1) Cyber Hygiene at homes as the online schooling, online shopping and remote working activities exponentially increased during COVID times.
- 2) Family Harmony - COVID has forced us to isolation and people being confined to homes, increasing the distress within the family. To reduce this friction among the family members (partners/parent-kids) there is a need to find creative ways of bonding and having better family time. Communication with the adolescent and digitally literate kids is also a challenge and there is a need to fill the gap between the carers and children to building stronger and better relationships.
- 3) Mental health - There is increased pressure due to reduced revenues, socialising aspects like FOGO (Fear of going outside) or not able to stay inside.

Peter Vadiveloo (2021QRG0104) – \$3,309.50

The proposed project is a weekly community drum circle that will run at the Clayton Community Centre. The artist/facilitator will be Peter Vadiveloo.

The aim of the project is to assist in community mental health recovery following COVID-induced lockdowns and restrictions.

There has been a documented increase in mental health issues in the community as a result of COVID lockdowns and restrictions. A drum circle is proposed to help address these problems based upon a recent medical study that found participation in community drum circles resulted in improved mental health outcomes with respect to depression, anxiety and social resilience.

The drum circle will run on Thursdays from 6.30-8.00pm for 12 weekly sessions (8 April – 24 June), and will be open to all members of the community. An evening time was chosen so that it is accessible to those who work during the day, and because evenings can be a time when people can feel most isolated and lonely. There will be a 15 minute break during each session to allow participants to chat and get to know each other.

Telugu Ladies Club (2021QRG0105) – \$3,890.00

Telugu Ladies Club (TLC) would like to organise an Indian food fair for the Monash residents. The project will be implemented on a specific weekend in late May/early June. It will be a demonstration of a few popular Indian dishes by local chefs (women). This will promote Indian cuisine to food lovers of Monash residents and provide a platform for residents to get together after a year of COVID restrictions. Participants get to see the dishes being prepared, know about the spices and their good properties and taste the food. Printed copies of the recipes will be available for attendees.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Monash Quick Response Grants program is a subset of the Monash Community Grants Program Policy that has been implemented with the intention of supporting the Council Plan as well as A Healthy & Resilient Monash: Integrated Plan and other relevant strategic documents.

The Program encourages community connectivity and participation, as well as focusing Council's support on the groups most in need. The MCGP Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it meets the changing needs of both Council and the community.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Monash community sector has a rich history of innovation and promoting community participation. The establishment of a Quick Response Grant will enable many community groups to respond effectively and innovatively to the impact that COVID-19 has had on their members and local community.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

The 2020/21 Monash Quick Response Grants Program addresses the four key themes: freedom, respect, equality and dignity of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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CONCLUSION

The Quick Response Grants successful recipients for the period 10-24 March 2021 are presented to Council within the available budget, recognising the implications on future Council budgets given the impact of COVID-19 and the social distancing measures currently in place.

These projects have demonstrated how resilient, adaptive and caring the Monash community is during this challenging time.