

Report to the Future Melbourne (Prosperous) Committee

Agenda item 6.6

COVID-19 Quick Response Grants

7 July 2020

Presenter: Katrina McKenzie, General Manager City Economy and Activation**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Future Melbourne Committee of the quick response grant programs endorsed by Council to support Melburnians impacted by COVID-19.

Key issues

2. COVID-19 is an enormous health challenge that has major economic and community consequences. The City of Melbourne has responded with a comprehensive suite of initiatives that responds to the health challenge, supports vulnerable communities and assists struggling small businesses and artists. The response has included measures such as additional cleaning, support for rough sleepers, food vouchers for international students and rent relief for tenants in council-owned businesses
3. One aspect of the response has been a range of quick response grant programs responding to the diverse range of challenges experienced in the city:
 - 3.1. Aboriginal community grants helping community controlled organisations experiencing a substantial increase in demand due to COVID-19.
 - 3.2. Community grants assisting organisations and community groups to support local communities affected by COVID-19.
 - 3.3. Arts grants providing financial assistance to eligible artists affected by COVID-19 in the Arts and Entertainment Industry, who are sole artists or a small arts organisation who are impacted by cancellations and lost opportunities.
 - 3.4. Business grants enabling small to medium-sized businesses to transform their business models through capital works, online and ecommerce and training and development activities.
4. There was an overwhelming response to these programs, with 10,790 applications received across the four programs. A total of 2450 applications were recommended for funding to the value of \$8.25 million:

Program	Applications received	Number of grants recommended	Funding recommended	Average grant size
Aboriginal Community Covid-19 Quick Response Grants	6	6	\$60,000	\$10,000
Coronavirus Response Community Grants	61	57	\$200,000	\$3,509
Quick Response Arts Grants	2257	777	\$2,495,158	\$3,211
Quick Response Business Grants	8466	1,610	\$5,497,901	\$3,415
Total	10,790	2450	\$8,253,059	

5. These grants have assisted Aboriginal (refer Attachment 2) and community organisations (refer Attachment 3) to care for vulnerable people impacted by COVID-19. Hundreds of artists have been able to invest in new works and the digital presentation of works and performances (refer Attachment 4). The grants have also supported businesses to transform their businesses to respond to the challenge of COVID-19 (refer Attachment 5).

Recommendation from management

6. That the Future Melbourne Committee notes the outcomes of the COVID-19 Quick Response Grant programs.

Attachments:

1. Supporting attachment (Page 2 of 9)
2. Aboriginal Community Covid-19 Quick Response Grants - program highlights (Page 3 of 9)
3. Coronavirus Response Community Grants - program highlights (Page 4 of 9)
4. Quick Response Arts Grants - program highlights (Page 5 of 9)
5. Quick Response Business Grants - program highlights (Page 7 of 9)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no direct legal issues arising from the recommendations from management.
2. Successful applicants to the grant programs will be required to enter into a funding agreement with Council and complete an acquittal report.

Finance

3. The recommendations as listed in this report have the following effect on program budgets:

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Conflict of interest

4. All Council staff and external assessment panel members were required to declare any direct or indirect interests they may have in relation to the applications.

Health and Safety

5. As part of Council's funding agreements, all successful applicants will have to have insurance relevant to their business, comply with all legislative requirements and meet occupational health and safety standards when delivering their outcomes.
6. All grant recipients will carry out obligations under the agreement and include providing and maintaining a safe working environment.

Relation to Council Policy

7. Recommended applicants demonstrate alignment with Council goals, including A City with an Aboriginal Focus, A Knowledge City, A City That Cares for its Environment, A Connected City, A Deliberative City and A City Planning for Growth.

Stakeholder consultation

8. Consultation with the various branches of Council has been undertaken in preparation of this report.

Environmental sustainability

9. The COVID-19 Quick Response Grant programs reflect many activities impacting on environmental sustainability. Many of the recommended applicants address these themes effectively and most engage well with this requirement.

Aboriginal Community Covid-19 Quick Response Grants - program highlights

The following (6) Aboriginal community controlled organisations were successful applicants:

- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Bunurong Land Council
- Victorian Aborigines Advancement League
- Djirra (formerly Victorian Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Centre)
- Koories Ltd trading as First Peoples' Health and Wellbeing
- Ngwala Willumbong Aboriginal Corporation (Health, rehabilitation, and homeless services)

GRANTS HELP ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS MEET INCREASED DEMAND

We have supported Aboriginal community organisations with \$60,000 in grant funding to help them care for vulnerable people as COVID-19 unfolds.

The grants are helping organisations that have experienced a substantial increase in demand provide a range of support for Aboriginal people, including emergency accommodation, meals, medical supplies and home visits.

Among the grant recipients is Victoria's oldest Aboriginal community organisation, the Aborigines Advancement League.

Founded in 1957 by pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls, Doris Blackburn, Stan Davey and Gordon Bryant, and now led by Chief Executive Officer Doctor Esme Bamblett, the organisation works with the most vulnerable Aboriginal people in Melbourne.

'COVID-19 has meant that we have not been able to provide face-to-face

Dr Bamblett said COVID-19 has been particularly difficult time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as they have to contend with fear (because they are in the most vulnerable category), as well as cultural issues associated with the lockdown.

'As we are a particularly close people, we normally see each other on a regular basis. This has not been able to occur because of visitation restrictions and this has caused extra stress on our people,' Dr Bamblett said.

'We also know that our households are bigger than non-Aboriginal households and therefore we need more food supplies, causing an additional strain.

'We have had feedback from our clients that the groceries we were able to purchase for them were exactly what they needed at this time.'

Find out more about the work of the Aborigines Advancement League at [aaal.org.au](#)



Dr Esme Bamblett

Coronavirus Response Community Grants - program highlights

The Coronavirus Response grants aimed to assist community organisations and community groups support local communities affected by COVID-19 to provide essential goods and services, assist those at home who were isolated and create innovative ways to improve social connection. We also delivered more than 1700 meals to vulnerable people and partnered with local organisations who received grants to support their distribution of food.

Of 57 grants that were funded, 24 provided new ways to remain connected during isolation and into the future, 17 projects provided food and 16 providing essentials such as personal items, medications, clothing, food vouchers and payment of utility bills. The reach of the program was broad and included those experiencing homelessness, young people, families and children, seniors, people with disabilities, international students, refugees and our CALD community members.

Some examples of grant recipients include:

Many Rooms partnered with Melbourne City Mission to feed homeless youth housed in temporary accommodation. A lockdown situation prohibited access to nutritious food. Many Rooms provided a daily warm meal delivered through Melbourne City Mission.

CAN Community Support (Church of All Nations Carlton) provided emergency relief through food, bill support and pharmacy prescriptions to people experiencing financial distress. It ensured clients had the necessary digital devices and/or data access for their children to continue with schooling. It staffed phone lines to undertake well-being checks of isolated and vulnerable members in the community.

East African Women Foundation – established technology and provided a regular time to contact women in their own language including pre-recorded messages. The foundation also organised for meals to be cooked and delivered and provided information updates about COVID-19 and support to community members.

One Good Street - #lettertomypreCOVIDself campaigned to capture and share what the experience of COVID-19 isolation had been like for individual community members. It asked community to reflect on the ways people had grown and adapted to the changing times. Questions were developed in conjunction with a psychologist with expertise in positive psychology and elicited positive reflections from community members.

Youlden Parkville Cricket Club - Funding was provided for adolescents and their parents to engender a feeling of hope in a COVID-19 environment. The project aimed to reconnect young people with friends and peers, to have some fun and support their return to sport by offering free outdoor cricket coaching activities.

Housing Choices Australia - Funding was provided to design and deliver one-to-one digital education training and recorded webinars for community housing residents. COVID-19 restrictions led to increased resident need to engage in online services such as myGov, online banking/shopping, video call platforms for health appointments and social contact.

North Melbourne Language and Learning Inc – Funding was used to “bridge the divide” and provide access to devices, and data for NMLL students experiencing disadvantage related to digital access and inclusion and to progress their learning.

Kensington Neighbourhood House - Funds were used to purchase laptops which were loaned to students to attend a Study Support Program. Families who accessed the program ranged in size from 4 to 10 children and were mostly from the Somali community.

Quick Response Arts Grants - program highlights

Council's immediate financial commitment to the creative and entertainment sector reflected a willingness to support the significant impact on the closure of performing and exhibiting arts spaces to all those impacted.

Artists and specialists across all art forms including writers, craft and visual artists, performers, dancers and technicians immediately lost capacity to plan and deliver work to wide and varied audiences in accessible spaces. Council's financial support to the development and on line presentation of work within the week of the Government lockdown represented a life-line to over 700 artists across Melbourne. This initiative represented the first substantial financial support to artists across the State and has been acknowledged by peak organisations and artists alike.

On line and development projects supported 777 initiatives. They have captured a deep and lively creative response to the significant impact of COVID-19 on our community lockdown.

Arts Grants – successful applicants

Gender (excludes organisations)	
Female	42.3%
Male	35.0%
X (indeterminate, intersex, unspecified)	4.0%
Development/Online	
Development	66.7%
Online	33.3%
Artform	
Film	9.1%
Dance	4.1%
Music	27.0%
Theatre, live art	19.2%
Multimedia	10.9%
Visual, craft	18.9%
Writing	9.3%
Circus, physical theatre	1.4%
Career stage	
Emerging artist	32.8%
Mid-career artist	37.2%
Established	11.3%
Aboriginal applicants	4.1%
*First time applicant	65.9%
*Previous grant recipient	15.7%
Artists living with disabilities	9.6%

*Not all applicants answered this question

Katrina Rank (Online presentation)

Dance for Parkinson's Online Classes offer regular, positive creative dance experiences to people with this progressive neurological condition. During class, participants identify as dancers with artistic and creative potential, not as patients.



Kids' Own Publishing (Online presentation)

Kids' Home Publishing is a program of online engagement with children and families to create their own folded books with a focus on building community and identity



Badra Aji (Online presentation)

Lonely Is Not Always Quiet is a series of video works showing the artist in the middle of a conversation with a different version of himself. Examining life in Australia during Covid-19, -poetry is created out of loneliness and our ability to overcome it.



Jen Rae (Online presentation)

Description: *Ready, Steady, Go* is an online platform/creative repository dedicated to climate emergency disaster preparedness, response and recovery through an artistic lens and aesthetic.



Quick Response Business Grants - program highlights

The Quick Response Business Grants provided support to businesses impacted by COVID-19 to transform their business models through capital works, online and ecommerce and training and development activities. The program is not aimed at supporting all businesses; rather, those with the strongest proposals for transformation. This has been in the context of a highly competitive process, due to the unprecedented level of interest from businesses in Melbourne. Examples of applicants recommended for funding include:

Brunswick Aces

A hospitality venue impacted by significant loss of customer base. Drinks are prepared on site and consumed at various other venues. Previous marketing and sales methods relied upon personal interaction through site visits and tastings for businesses and consumers. The business has pivoted to producing new products such as hand sanitiser and disinfectant and seeks to deliver new products, improve their online presence and up skill staff in online marketing. Funding is provided to contribute towards a new vehicle to enable delivery, videography to be used on the website and online marketing to promote new products and services and broaden reach. In addition, the business plans to train three staff in online marketing to promote new products, better utilise the website and measure the impact of their marketing activities.

Kep Whitley

A chocolate and ice cream shop in the Docklands impacted by the drop in city workers in Victoria Harbour. The business is seeking to pivot from a strategy focused on onsite events and corporate clients to a new and expanded product range sold through an online store. Funding provided for the purchase of equipment for the production of new chocolate moulds to create custom chocolate figures for online sales, photography to produce video content on the chocolate creation process and attract a new customer base to offset the drop in sales, and digital marketing training to enable an expanded product offering.

Super Normal

A vibrant restaurant in Flinders Lane serving Asian inspired cuisine, and a much loved venue for Melbourne's dining community. The restaurant usually trades seven days a week for lunch and dinner, as well as private dining space available for functions. Super Normal was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions and plans to pivot with a new offering of an essential service bakery and grocer operating Wednesday to Sunday. Funding is recommended for the development of an e-commerce website to provide a fast and efficient digital shopping solution for customers.

Poppyshop

A children's toy and game shop providing quality educational toys, games, puzzles. Due to COVID-19, foot traffic has reduced by 80 per cent resulting in a decrease in business revenue. The proposal to upgrade their existing website to introduce an e-commerce platform and undertake e-commerce and digital marketing training is supported in order to generate revenue and support business continuity.

DragonBear Studios

A game development studio planning to pivot to online development to create a new sales driven website that automatically feeds into social media and press updates. This will drive more traffic, engagement, and search results, culminating in significantly more sales and views.

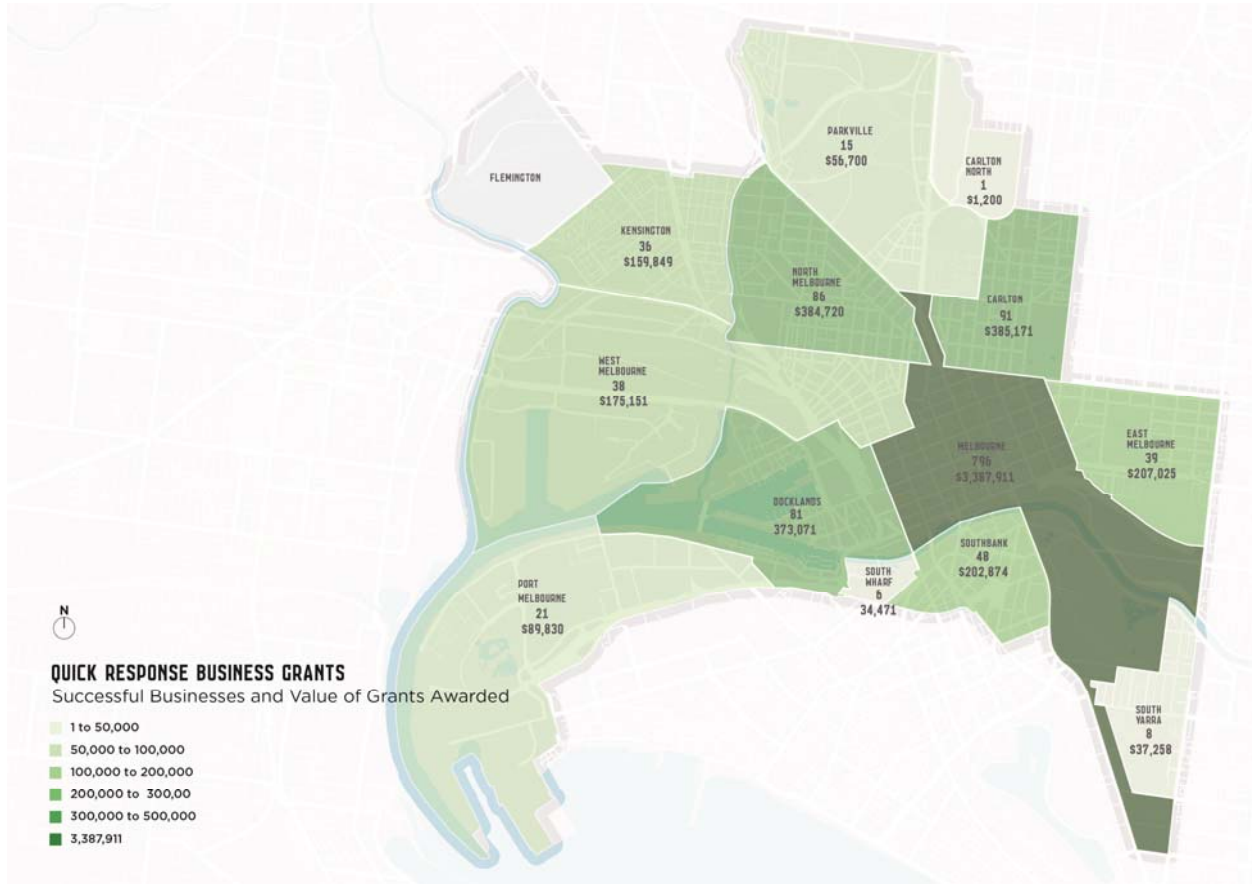
Pieces of Eight

A retail space showcasing local and international jewellers and specialising in exhibitions and bespoke commissions. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the business was forced to close and stand down staff. The business was funded to implement a new digital marketing strategy to support the pivot to on online sales and communicate more regularly about upcoming online exhibitions, artists and their process. Part funding was also provided for training and development to up skill their jewellers in 3D modelling, a service which had previously been outsourced to a third-party provider. Up skilling staff and bringing this expertise in-house will reduce cost and improve business capability in the long-term.

Fresh Start Australia

A majority First Nation owned waste management company providing sustainable waste management and facilities management services. Due to COVID -19, Fresh Start is unable to visit clients, conduct business development or acquire face-to-face new clients. The business seeks to pivot to digital bookings to acquire new clients. Funding will be used for website design and development, digital marketing and to train staff in digital business development.

Quick Response Business Grants – successful applicants by post code



Quick Response Business Grants – Share of funded applicants by industry

Industry sector	Percentage
Hospitality	26.0%
Retail	12.4%
Other	8.7%
Health services	8.5%
Professional services	8.1%
Creative and arts industries	6.3%
Business services	5.9%
Education	5.3%
Information and communication technologies	4.4%
Fashion	2.5%
Design	2.4%
Financial services	2.0%

Industry sector	Percentage
Media and marketing	2.0%
Property services	1.8%
Advanced manufacturing	1.7%
Tourism	1.1%
Environment services	0.6%
Music	0.3%
Waste and recycling	0.3%
Biotechnology	0.1%
Total	100%