



**The Lord Mayor presents the
2019/2020 Annual Report
Monday 22 February 2021 at 7:30pm
The Ballroom, Hobart Town Hall**

2019/2020 was one of exceptional circumstances and challenging times, with the last six months of the reporting year being a time of great uncertainty. Despite this, Council was able to make good progress toward achieving some major actions and initiatives set out in our Annual Plan for 2019/20.

Like so many in our community, this organisation was impacted financially by the COVID-19 global pandemic and some of the initiatives, programs and projects we had planned were either cancelled or postponed. In many cases, funding was redirected to provide assistance packages and community grants to help the community get through the pandemic period.

While COVID-19 saw us in uncharted waters and facing devastating impacts, there was a commitment from Council to be there for its community.

We developed a suite of measures to support our community through the economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

These included rent relief for tenants of city-owned buildings; waiving of some fees for businesses; extension of the Council's Hardship Policy to include rate remissions and rate postponements; quick response grant programs to support businesses, creative industries and activities that build capacity, strength and resilience in the Hobart community.

This community support package cost \$3.5M and was very much appreciated by people experiencing hardship. The significant downturn in income and the impacts to our services saw the COVID-19 pandemic have a direct and significant effect on our 2019/20 operating result.

The Council ended the year in a deficit position of \$7.12M. This deficit was caused by COVID-19 and the income lost in rates, parking, rents for Council-owned properties, Aquatic Centre fees and Salamanca Market fees as well as accounting for depreciation and asset write-offs.

Also impacting this result is the continued costs of the May 2018 flood event, an event that is estimated to have caused the City \$16 million in damage. Whilst we are still finalising claims for insurance and seeking funding through the Australian Government's National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangement, there will be a multi-million dollar a gap that the City will need to absorb.

It is a sobering reminder about the increasing impact that extreme events and climate change can have on City finances.

Pre-COVID-19, we worked hard to progress year four of our capital works program, with some of the more significant projects completed including:

- The Rose Garden Bridge, an all-abilities bridge connecting the city centre with the Queens Domain and enhancing our pedestrian and cycling network;
- Works to refurbish the Salamanca precinct to connect the Morrison Street waterfront area to Salamanca Place continued.
- All works at the Fern Tree Visitors Node including bus shelter, public toilets, barbeque, shelter facilities and roadworks and the Fern Glade car park and pathway works. This project received \$800,000 in Australian Government funding.
- Replacement toilets at Swan Street, North Hobart to now include an accessible toilet with parenting facilities and two ambulant toilets.
- The internal refurbishment of the toilets at Hobart Central Car Park.
- The redevelopment of the South Hobart Community Centre to a multi-purpose community space offering new and exciting opportunities for events, programs, and community gatherings with a new undercover outdoor area integrating the centre with the adjacent park. This \$620,000 project received \$200,000 in funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund and South Hobart Progress Association contributed \$5,000.

We endorsed several strategies and programs that will make a positive and long-term impact in our community. These include:

- The Capital City Strategic Plan 2019-2029
- Aboriginal Commitment and Action Plan 2020-2022, detailing the Council's commitment to supporting the city's Aboriginal people and their heritage.
- Connected Hobart Smart City Action Plan, to guide the implementation of smart technologies and initiatives in the city across the next decade
- Protecting our Wild Heart – an action plan for Hobart's Bushland that outlines Hobart's rich biodiversity and our plans for protecting Hobart's bushlands, ecosystems and native plants and animals.
- Resilient Hobart, in response to COVID-19 a way of helping Hobart communities respond to the pandemic, providing support, access to information and advice.

On issues of community importance, the Council agreed to a collaborative planning process with the State Government to prepare a Central Hobart Precincts Plan. This Plan will address building height limits as well as current and future population, social, environmental and economic trends, traffic, housing supply and other issues of significance to the city centre.

During the year, the Baseline Report and Economic Study were completed however COVID-19 disrupted the community engagement phase which is on hold pending a further review of the economic impacts underway prior to recommencing community engagement.

We continued our war on waste by becoming the first Australian city to introduce a by-law to reduce single-use plastics at takeaway food retailers in Hobart.

We launched a new food organics + garden organics (FOGO) collection service, the first of its kind in Southern Tasmania that will see 3200 tonnes of household waste diverted from landfill each year.

The City also worked with TasTAFE to expand a recycling service for difficult-to-recycle items by installing a recycling unit in the foyer of TasTAFE's Campbell Street campus. People can recycle such items as x-rays, toothbrushes, light bulbs, plastic bottle tops and mail satchels that might otherwise end up in landfill.

The Council continued its action on homelessness by forming the Greater Hobart Homelessness Alliance. The group comprises the four Greater Hobart Councils, Huon and Brighton Councils and the homelessness sector.

The Alliance progressed a range of projects and it provided support as part of the successful campaign to waive the Tasmanian housing debt.

The City also supported the Salvation Army and Hobart City Mission to establish a safe night space pilot program to provide a bed and shelter for people sleeping rough in the City. This pilot led to the State Government providing funds to develop a more permanent program.

Following the Council's decision to become a signatory to the Welcoming Cities Network, a network of local governments committed to everyone belonging and participating, we launched a new campaign to help combat racism. The Hobart Respects All calls on bystanders to think about how they can support people in the community who are being targeted by racist behaviour. The campaign was recently recognised with a Tasmanian Human Rights Award.

As part of enhancing liveability and amenity in the city, the Hobart CBD became smoke-free in April. We designated the Hobart CBD bordered by Collins, Liverpool, Murray and Campbell streets to join some of our public places in Hobart that are were already smoke-free including parks and playgrounds, outdoor dining areas and car parks.

Council continued working with the Australian and Tasmanian Governments alongside Clarence, Glenorchy and Kingborough Councils to progress the Hobart City Deal with the Hobart City Deal Implementation Plan being delivered in October 2019.

The Deal will guide and encourage development of Greater Hobart over the next 10 years and it identifies key projects needing government support such as improved public transport, housing and urban renewal.

Whilst only in its first year of implementation, there have been some achievements across the seven focus areas of the Plan, including the \$20.8 million commitment to new park and ride and bus services in Kingston which will help reduce congestion in the Hobart City.

In addition to the Hobart City Deal, the Councils worked with the Tasmanian Government to collaboratively draft the Greater Hobart Act 2019 which was presented and passed by the Tasmanian Parliament in August 2019. This Act provides a framework to support collaborative decision making between the Councils and the Government.

In closing, we acknowledge former elected member Alderman Tanya Denison who served the City from 2014 to January 2020.

Our sincere thanks goes to the residents, businesses and people of our city for your contribution, resilience and spirit of community in such a confronting time.

To the many volunteers in our community who spent many hours making a positive contribution as part of the COVID-19 response. At the height of the pandemic as the ripple effect of COVID was felt by many, but particularly our most vulnerable community members, you devoted yourselves to helping others. All your efforts were critical to keep our community functioning – thank you.

To the General Manager, his Executive Team and staff, thank you for your commitment and dedication and successfully navigating through a very challenging year.

As we reflect on a year that has been unlike any other and we work toward recovery in 2020/21 and beyond, I would like to sign off my address with a very poignant and relevant extract from community vision work done in 2018. Hobart: A community vision for our island capital:

“Hobart’s isolation and scale have required resilience. We know that future challenges will demand that we work hard and work together. But we are our best selves in times of adversity and vulnerability. We are caring, helpful and supportive of everyone at all times but especially when things get tough. We flourish in times of hardship.”

Thank you.