

Tuesday 4 February 2020

COUNCIL PROPOSES HARDSHIP FUND TO SUPPORT EASTWOOD

The City of Ryde is seeking to establish a \$500,000 Small Business Hardship Fund to support businesses located in Eastwood town centre.

The fund is in response to the downturn in trade many businesses in Eastwood have experienced since concerns were first raised in January about the alleged risks posed by the novel coronavirus.

Under the proposed Council resolution, Eastwood businesses with annual turnover of less than \$2 million will be able to apply for grants of up to \$2,000 via the fund to help them cope with a reduction in customers.

The fund would also be used to create a 'Return to Eastwood' promotional campaign designed to encourage people to shop and eat in Eastwood.

City of Ryde Mayor, Cllr Jerome Laxale, said some businesses had reported between 50 to 80 percent drop in turnover since concerns about the novel coronavirus first emerged.

"The hardship fund that we are proposing will provide appropriate support to businesses as we work our way through this unprecedented level of community concern. It will also fund a new campaign promoting the wonderful attractions Eastwood has to offer," Cllr Laxale said.

"I urge everyone to return to Eastwood, our community needs you."

The City of Ryde will also contact the NSW Health Minister, requesting regular and well broadcasted public health advice specific to Eastwood and Ryde.

"Unfortunately, Eastwood has been a target of misinformation about the novel coronavirus. This reiterates the need for accurate information about the risk posed by the novel coronavirus to be disseminated by NSW Health on a regular basis," Cllr Laxale added.

City of Ryde Deputy Mayor, Cllr Simon Zhou, said some small business owners have been forced to close their doors temporarily.

"If the current situation in Eastwood does not improve, the long term vibrancy of the town centre may never recover. The budget proposed for the hardship fund will ensure an effective promotion campaign can be undertaken that will encourage people to return to Eastwood and help local businesses get through this challenging period," Cllr Zhou said.

Meanwhile in a separate resolution, Council is proposing to waive the cancellation fees for swim schools and swimming carnivals between January and March, while also waive the notice period for cancellations at Council venues during the same time period.

Both resolutions will now be placed on public exhibition, as is required by the Local Government Act.

A report will then be brought back to an extraordinary meeting on 10 March 2020, where a determination on both resolutions will be made.