

## Proposed Budget 2020/2021

The Fitzroy Residents' Association welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposed 2020/21 Budget. Overall we commend the Yarra City Council in its response to COVID19 and the \$7.46m Community and Economic Support Package.

However, we call on the Council to look forward to post-COVID19 and the needs of a City that will need to move from surviving to thriving. This will require investment in community infrastructure that will be of benefit to our economic, social and environmental well-being. We need to ensure that Yarra can also ride out the future stresses and shocks that will confront us.

We focus on a number of Council initiatives that require funding to ensure that the effort and commitment made by the Council and community will be realised in coming years.

The proposed budget 2020/21 has a number of strategic objectives and fund allocations which we believe should be increased or reallocated to act on those initiatives in the coming financial year.

Our response therefore covers the following initiatives:

- Brunswick Streetscape Master Plan
- Yarra Climate Emergency Plan
- Yarra's Heritage Strategy
- Yarra's Draft Open Space Strategy

### **1. Brunswick Streetscape Master Plan**

The FRA's submission to the Council prioritised the following to ensure the viability and sustainability of Brunswick Street, Fitzroy.

- Community spaces and places for people to meet and gather
- Footpaths and pedestrian access
- Trees, greenery and landscaping
- Safety
- Cleanliness, maintenance, recycling bins
- Public art

Brunswick Street is an iconic street and its history, culture and vibrancy have underpinned this suburb, city and inner urban region for many years.

The Street has been shaken and severely disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Before this crisis Brunswick Street was struggling, with many traders being forced to close resulting in a high turnover of shops and disrupting the trading of neighbouring shops. The Masterplan process was welcomed and undertaken to address some of the issues and difficulties that the Street was experiencing for traders, residents and visitors.

The FRA therefore calls on the Council to –

- Undertake an immediate capital works costing for the introduction of the Brunswick Street Masterplan in 2020/21.
- Implement the Masterplan with borrowings accessed through the State Government's Community Infrastructure Loans Scheme.

## **2. Yarra Climate Emergency Plan**

The City's response to the climate emergency is to be commended and the plan developed provides opportunities over the coming financial year to ensure that the emergency that is recognised widely is not exacerbated by a lack of action.

A priority for the FRA is to 'mobilise and engage the community to respond to the climate emergency'. The 2020/21 budget should establish a climate emergency community grants program to provide funding to ensure that a commitment to action can be sustained during the current pandemic.

The 2020/21 budget should also provide funding for additional public open space opportunities for tree planting in partially or fully closed streets and the laneways that criss-cross the City. This will provide the

canopy cover, traffic calming and beautification necessary for a healthy, adaptive and safe environment.

### **3. Yarra's Heritage Strategy**

The City of Yarra has a rich heritage of places, buildings, landscapes, streets, laneways and objects. An allocation of funds is needed to establish a Heritage Unit with sufficient resources to ensure the protection of our heritage. A Unit would strengthen the City's Heritage Policy in the Yarra Planning Scheme and also ensure that 'heritage' was a shared responsibility across senior managers.

There is a 20/21 budget bid for a Heritage Project Officer and a part-time Aboriginal Heritage Officer. The FRA sees a need for an additional Heritage Project Officer so that more of the short-term projects within the Heritage Strategy 2019-2030 can be developed and completed. These projects include:

- Develop better community - including YCC officer - understanding of heritage precincts through heritage walks, precinct information sheets, and by providing easy access to heritage citations on the YCC website for community to access and view.
- Develop a process/project to identify and protect objects and areas of natural heritage significance in Yarra including trees of heritage value.
- Prepare a Heritage Communications Plan to regularly update staff, residents and other community members about heritage programs, financial assistance and advice, and to encourage community celebration of heritage. The plan should include the capacity for regular review to ensure communication is tailored for the time and audience, and is actively and effectively delivered.

### **4. Yarra's Draft Open Space Strategy**

The provision of additional public open space across the City of Yarra is a high priority for residents. Open space provides a healthy, active and safe environment for our diverse community. Fitzroy has the second lowest area of public open space in the City and we need creative responses to meet current and future needs.

There is a lack of open space where Fitzroy and Collingwood meet at the corner of Johnston and Smith Streets, but there are space opportunities in that area at present. The FRA urges Council to attempt collaboration with State government to acquire a development site and turn it into an open space asset.

The Brunswick Street Masterplan with its use of road space at streets intersecting with Brunswick Street is a creative response for which we see the need for immediate action. Car park spaces along Brunswick Street provide an obvious option for planting larger trees. The feasibility study proposed for the Fitzroy Town Hall precinct is welcomed and we urge the Council to proceed with haste in both its planning and implementation.

We would also encourage the Council to consider in its laneways restoration the provision of tree plantings and vegetation in selected locations as an additional means of providing open space and canopy cover for residents.

The 202/21 Budget is an opportunity to adopt more radical measures and funding allocations to ensure a city that is liveable, sustainable and equitable. The reduction in Capital Works funding and its allocation does not reflect the urgent needs of the City.

The FRA would therefore urge the Council to adopt a budget that will give support where needed and investment that will secure the City's future as a resilient and sustainable city.

Thank you.

Martin Brennan  
Chair

Greg Chenhall  
Deputy Chair

19 June, 2020