



City of Nedlands

Community Development Report

Committee Consideration – 12 November 2019

Council Resolution – 26 November 2019

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Committee	12 November 2019
Council	26 November 2019
Applicant	City of Nedlands
Employee Disclosure under section 5.70 Local Government Act 1995	Nil.
Director	Lorraine Driscoll
Attachments	1. Citizenship Ceremony 2019/2020 Budget Breakdown

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the recent changes to citizenship ceremonies by the Department of Home Affairs and to and seek Council approval for the additional expenditure required to accommodate these changes.

Recommendation to Committee

Council:

1. Approves an increase for the Citizenship Ceremony budget from \$10,000 to \$18,707 for the financial year 2019/2020 and; *
2. Approves the dress code as “attendees are required to dress in a manner appropriate to the occasion and that may also celebrate the history and cultural identity they bring to Australia”.

***ABSOLUTE MAJORITY REQUIRED**

Background

Granting citizenship is a federal government responsibility. The Department of Home Affairs is responsible for assessing citizenship applications and the power to hold citizenship ceremonies is on-delegated to local governments. Since the early 1950’s local governments have conducted the majority of citizenship ceremonies.

The Department of Home Affairs provides the local government with an approved list of conferees to invite to attend a citizenship ceremony. (A conferee is a person who has applied for Australian citizenship and whose final step to becoming an Australian citizen is to attend a citizenship ceremony). Conferees are expected to attend a citizenship ceremony in the local government area in which they live. The ceremony provides a celebratory opportunity for local governments to welcome new citizens who live in their area.

To date, the City has held three citizenship ceremonies a financial year: in September, January and May. Each ceremony reflects the significance of the occasion and conferees are invited to stay for refreshments after the formalities. To date, the cost to the City of holding these ceremonies has been approximately \$10,000 each financial year.

Discussion

The Department of Home Affairs has recently notified the following changes to citizenship ceremonies that will impact the City of Nedlands:

1. requirement to hold a citizenship ceremony on Australia Day;
2. requirement to develop a dress code for citizenship ceremonies; and
3. significantly increased number of conferees, beginning immediately.

Citizenship Ceremony on Australia Day

The requirement to hold a citizenship ceremony on Australia Day has been incorporated into the Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code and is therefore a statutory requirement.

To date, the City has not held a citizenship ceremony on Australia Day, instead holding a ceremony on a weekday evening in the week leading up to Australia Day. The reasoning for this has been because it is less expensive on an ordinary weekday compared to a public holiday; and avoids clashes with other events planned for Australia Day (community events, individual barbeques, street parties, conferees being away etc.)

Dress Code

The amended Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code requires the City to develop a dress code for citizenship ceremonies; and to notify the Department of Home Affairs of that code. This too is mandatory.

To date, the City has not experienced a problem with the standard of dress worn by attendees. An array of dress styles characterises the City's citizenship ceremonies, ranging from formal wear, smart casual and colourful traditional costumes. Therefore, it is proposed that the City's dress code is expressed as a simple statement that "attendees are required to dress in a manner appropriate to the occasion and that may also celebrate the history and cultural identity they bring to Australia".

Increased Numbers

The number of conferees receiving their citizenship in the City of Nedlands has been steadily increasing over the past year. However, the Department of Home Affairs has now notified the City to expect a sudden and significant increase in numbers for the immediate future. Where we were expecting a maximum of 55 conferees at the January ceremony, the Department of Home Affairs has notified that the City should expect up to 200 conferees for the same period.

The reason given for such a significant increase in conferee numbers is that the federal government has changed the way it processes citizenship applications. It is now able to process them more quickly, resulting in them getting through a large backlog of applications. Additionally, the Department of Home Affairs requires that at least 75% of conferees receive their citizenship within 3 months, and 90% within 6 months. Therefore, the City will need to process 200 conferees between now and the end of January (compared to 43 in the same period last year).

Proposed Solution

It is proposed that:

- An additional ceremony is added to the program this year (in December), to help accommodate the additional numbers.
- The City holds a ceremony on Australia Day.
- The ceremony on Australia Day is a morning ceremony, which will allow participants to still attend other Australia Day events if they choose. It will also be more cost-effective.

Holding one large event on Australia day is not a viable option as the City cannot accommodate the anticipated 200 conferees in one venue. Therefore, two ceremonies are required to accommodate the increased numbers. Given that one ceremony must be held on Australia Day, the other ceremony will be held in December in order to process the required number of conferees in the timeframes required by the Department. The last citizenship ceremony for the 2019/2020 financial year will be held in May as originally scheduled.

Timing

Conferees must be invited to the ceremony at least six weeks before the ceremony to allow time for all legal documents to be prepared by the Department of Home Affairs. Therefore, planning for the December ceremony is already underway with invitations already sent at the time of writing this report. This has been necessary in order to meet the notice to conferees required by the department.

While the December ceremony can be undertaken within the current approved budget of \$10,000 for citizenship ceremonies, a Council decision on the additional expenditure is required before Administration can commit to the January ceremony. Council approval of the additional expenditure is required by 30 November 2019, in order to proceed with the ceremony on Australia Day.

Key Relevant Previous Council Decisions:

Nil.

Consultation

N/A

Legislation

Australian Citizenship Act 2007

Budget/Financial Implications

There are significant budget impacts from:

- The requirement to hold a ceremony on Australia Day
- Holding an additional ceremony – required by the additional numbers and
- Additional catering – required by the additional numbers.

Holding the ceremony on Australia Day is more expensive for two main reasons:

- Staffing costs: working on a public holiday requires the payment of overtime rates. (To date, the City's practice has been to hold Citizenship Ceremonies on a weeknight. On a weeknight, Community Development staff do not claim overtime, but work on the basis of TOIL. This means there is no extra staffing cost to the City for the event. However, this option will not be available to the City when the event is held on a public holiday. Overtime rates will apply).
- Catering and some hire costs are higher on a public holiday.

However, the City can compensate for some of those additional costs by holding the Australia Day citizenship ceremony in the morning. A morning event is less expensive than an evening event because of catering. Catering for a morning tea – which will still result in a beautiful event – is cheaper than catering for an evening event, which requires food that is more labour-intensive to prepare, and requires more staff to serve. Also, no alcohol is required at a morning event, as it is for an evening event, further reducing costs. The morning event will also have the advantage of freeing up attendees to attend other Australia Day events they wish to attend. (Note: the option of holding the City's other citizenship ceremonies as morning events is not available. They are usually held on a weeknight for the convenience of conferees, who need to attend work and school on weekdays. Therefore, the morning event option only applies to Australia Day, as, being a public holiday, it should not clash with conferees' work or school commitments).

Budget Overview

The total impact of the increased numbers, the need for an additional ceremony and the requirement to hold a ceremony on Australia Day is expenditure of an additional \$8,707 on citizenship ceremonies in the current financial year. None of these factors were known at the time of budgeting for citizenship ceremonies in March 2018.

Citizenship Ceremony Additional Budget Required 2019/2020

Citizenship Budget 2019/20	\$10,000
Approved budget	
Amount required	\$18,707
Additional budget required	\$ 8,707

A detailed breakdown of the cost of each citizenship ceremony for the 2019/2020 financial year can be seen at Attachment 1 – Citizenship Ceremony Budget Breakdown 2019/2020

Conclusion

Therefore, it is recommended that Council approves the additional expenditure of \$8,707 required to host an additional ceremony and hold a ceremony on Australia day. This will ensure that Administration can continue to conduct citizenship ceremonies to a high standard while accommodating the recent changes.

Citizenship Ceremony Budget Breakdown 2019/2020

	19 September 2019	11 December 2019	26 January 2020	21 May 2020
Event Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Evening Event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Evening Event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Awards Event • Morning Event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship • Evening Event
Venue	John Leckie	John Leckie	John Leckie	John Leckie
Conferees	50	100	100	50
Conferee guests	51	70	70	100
City Guests	12	21	21	21
Awards Guests	-	-	10	-
City Staff	9	9	7	9
Total numbers	122	200	208	180
Catering Numbers	113	191	201	171
Additional Salary Cost	(TOIL)	(TOIL)	\$1,634	(TOIL)
Food and Drink	\$2,043	\$3,035	\$1,505	\$2,708
Photography	- (Comms staff)	- (Comms staff)	\$400	- (Comms staff)
Printing	\$410	\$550	\$550	\$450
Gift Coins	\$257	\$450	\$450	\$225
Flowers	\$120	\$120	\$120	\$120
Glassware Hire	\$424	\$508	\$500	\$487
Welcome to Country	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400
Entertainment	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400
Photo Printing	\$15	\$20	\$20	\$20
TOTAL COST	\$4,069	\$5,483	\$5,979	\$4,810