

## 6.2.5 COVID-19 Community Relief Provider Support Grant Program

**File Reference:** Nil  
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### Recommendation(s)

That Council note the report.

### Attachments

Nil

### Executive Summary

The COVID-19 Community Relief Provider Grants program formed part of Council's Community and Business Support Package which includes initiatives to help community members to cope with the impacts of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

This grant program opened for applications on 13 May 2020 and closed 12 August 2020. Grants were available to not-for-profit organisations, locally based groups and/or groups servicing Cardinia Shire residents to meet emergency relief needs of residents, increase capacity of services or to improve resident health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

22 applications were received and assessed. These projects totalled \$164,440.79 and applicants requested \$94,880.38 in funding.

Due to the time critical nature of the grant program, an expedited grant assessment process was implemented, with twice weekly grant assessment panels and grant payments processed weekly. A turnaround time of 2 weeks from each application submission to grant outcome was achieved.

Following an extensive assessment process involving a multidisciplinary panel of staff and senior leadership, a total of 11 grants to the value of \$45,645.50 were approved.

### Background

From 27 March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Council established a Relief and Recovery Committee to oversee the emergency relief needs for community during the Pandemic. Evidence from this group, as well as Council staff, indicated that the social and economic health of the community was negatively impacted, issues were increasing and continuing to rise because of the Pandemic. These included, but were not limited to food shortages, financial hardship, loss of employment, family violence, homelessness, schooling from home impacts, increased poor mental health presentations, substance abuse, social isolation, and reduced community connection.

To support the community through this difficult time, Council developed the COVID-19 Community Relief and Recovery Funding Program, part of Council's Community and Business Support Package. The funding package demonstrated to Cardinia residents a partnership approach in supporting our community during this critical time.

Part of this package was the Community Relief Provider Grants. The total budget allocation for these grants was \$50,000. Grants of up to \$5,000 were available for community groups and organisations to increase capacity of services, improve resident health and wellbeing and meet emergency relief needs of those in the community arising from COVID-19.

Applications were assessed by a multidisciplinary panel of Council staff and senior leadership. Below are the outcomes following this process:

Application status	COVID-19 Community Relief Provider Grants
Fully supported	9
Partially supported	2
Not supported	11
AMOUNT ALLOCATED	\$45,645.50

Below is a breakdown of applications received via Ward:

	Central Ward	Port Ward	Ranges Ward
COVID-19 Community Relief Provider Grants	10	8	4

Total applications and amounts approved via Ward:

	Central Ward	Port Ward	Ranges Ward
COVID-19 Community Relief Provider Grants	5	3	3
Total Allocated	\$24,411.50	\$10,500.00	\$10,734.00

Successful grant recipients:

- ADRA
- Baba Budha Ji Charitable Association Inc
- Beaconhills Christian College
- Bunyip and District Community House
- Cockatoo Community House (Taskforce Community Agency)
- Cranbourne Christian Fellowship Centre (Turningpoint KWR)
- Emerald Centre for Hope and Outreach (ECHO) Inc
- Emerald Community House Inc
- Empower Australia
- Follow Bless Collective
- Mums Supporting Families in Need

Total applications and amounts declined due to ineligibility and/or not meeting grant criteria:

	Ward	Number of applications	Total amount
COVID-19 Community Relief Provider Grants	Central	5	\$24,943.00
	Port	5	\$18,706.88
	Ranges	1	\$705.00

### Policy Implications

This grant program aligns to Council priorities and objectives and with Council's Liveability Plan 2017 - 2029.

### Relevance to Council Plan

Our Community:

We will foster a strong sense of connection between Cardinia Shire's diverse communities.

1. Our diverse community requirements met
2. Engaged communities
3. Increased levels of community participation
4. Improved health and wellbeing of our residents

Our People:

We support a variety of needs and lifestyles through programs and activities that promote and develop the wellbeing of Cardinia Shire's people.

1. Access to a variety of services for all
2. Access to support services and programs for young people
3. Learning opportunities for all ages and abilities
4. Improved health and wellbeing for all
5. Variety of recreation and leisure opportunities
6. Increased awareness of safety
7. Minimised impact of emergencies

### Climate Emergency Consideration

Nil.

### Consultation/Communication

A comprehensive communications plan was developed which saw the grants widely promoted through various internal departments, Council's Relief and Recovery Committee, newsletter distribution through various Council and community newsletters, community leaders, local media, Councils web and Facebook pages.

The grant round opened on-line via Smarty Grants on 13 May 2020 and closed on 12 August 2020.

The staff assessment panel consisted of staff from the following areas: Risk, Social and Community Planning and the Pandemic Response and Emergency Management Team. The assessment panel recommendations were then provided to the Manger Pandemic Response and Emergency Management Team and the General Manager – Customer, People and Performance for final assessment and approval.

Successful grants are currently being promoted on Council's web and social media pages and through local media.

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

The budget for the Community Relief Provider Grant program was \$50,000.

This grant program has provided support to 11 applicants, totalling \$45,645.50.

The COVID-19 Community Connection Grant program closed on 30 June 2020 and was over expended by \$5,682.83. Due to a decline in applications for the COVID-19 Community Relief Provider grants and budget not expended, at the time it was decided to fund the over expenditure of the Community Connections grants from the Community Relief Provider grants budget.

The two COVID-19 community grant programs had a combined budget of \$80,000 and have provided funding to the community in the amount of \$81, 328.33.

The Victorian Government recently released a grant program called Let's Stay Connected Fund. The fund provides grants between \$5,000 and \$200,000 to support community-led initiatives. The program will support innovative, community-led and community-based initiatives that build connection, reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation and can be implemented quickly – providing much-needed support across the state. It will also support existing initiatives that can be rapidly scaled up to a local, regional or state level – delivering innovative and practical solutions that will benefit communities as soon as possible.

This means that community groups within Cardinia Shire can now apply for this Victorian Government funding.

### **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 Community Relief Provider Grant program formed part of Council's Community and Business Support Package which includes initiatives to help community members to cope with the impacts of Coronavirus (COVID-19), and provide emergency relief during the social distancing period.

The program has supported 11 grants to the value of \$45,645.50. It is recommended Council note the approved applications and budget expenditure.