

Item 13.8**Notices of Motion****Concerns Regarding Governance and Political Censorship by Mardi Gras Board**

By Councillor Thompson

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras is one of the world's most longstanding celebrations of pride, grounded in a rich history as a political protest for queer rights;
- (ii) Mardi Gras originated in 1978 when, following a march for queer civil rights, NSW police descended upon rally-goers, violently arresting and beating dozens of people. The following year, thousands of people marched in solidarity, a tradition since memorialised each year;
- (iii) the City of Sydney has a long history of supporting Mardi Gras as a principal funder, recognising the political, cultural and historical significance of the parade; and
- (iv) this is in line with the City's longstanding position of standing in solidarity with the queer community and protecting the right to protest;

(B) Council further note:

- (i) on the eve of this year's march, Mardi Gras leadership gave notice to Pride in Protest, a queer activist collective campaigning for trans rights and against the continuing genocide in Palestine, prohibiting the participation of their float in this year's parade after finding that comments by Pride in Protest in relation to the genocide and zionism breached the Mardi Gras terms and conditions;
- (ii) that no other float was prohibited from marching based on this policy, including the NSW Police, an organisation with a long history of violence and harassment against the queer community;
- (iii) during the march, a number of queer activists carrying Palestinian flags, marching as part of the Sydney Drag Kings float, were subjected to police brutality, suffering physical injuries and being forcibly removed from the parade by NSW Police, some armed with long-arm rifles; and
- (iv) following the conclusion of the parade, the Mardi Gras board met to stand down both Pride in Protest Directors, Damien Nguyen and Luna Choo;

(C) Council note concerns about recent governance decisions, particularly in relation to the perceived political censorship of an activist group and the standing down of their 2 democratically elected board directors; and

- (D) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to write to the board of Mardi Gras to note these concerns as a principal funder and request that mediation be undertaken to resolve this situation urgently, with the ultimate goal to reinstating both board directors and ensuring that there is no perception of political censorship of community at future Mardi Gras events.

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