

Relevant Information for Council

FILE: X100274 **DATE:** 17 March 2025

TO: Lord Mayor and Councillors

FROM: Veronica Lee, Executive Director City Services

THROUGH: Monica Barone PSM, Chief Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Information Relevant To Item 6.7 – Tender - T-2024-1314 - Mobile Planter Display Program

For Noting

This memo is for the information of the Lord Mayor and Councillors.

Purpose

To provide further detail regarding item 6.7 - Tender – T-2024-1314 – Mobile Planter Display Program regarding the background to the service, specification and details in relation to plant selection.

Background

At the meeting of the Corporate, Finance, Properties and Tenders Committee on 10 March 2025 and Question on Notice 5, further information was sought on the following:

Value and length of existing contract versus the proposed contract

The value and length of the existing and proposed contract is detailed in Confidential Attachment A.

Core works are delivered under a schedule of prices. Schedule of rates works cover reactive work and allow for flexibility in future servicing for example potential future change over to semi-permanent planters in the pedestrianised areas of the light rail corridor. Increases in the schedule of prices are attributed to transition of light rail planters from schedule of rates to schedule of prices (\$2.1M), preliminaries and general requirements (\$1.86M), new storage requirements (\$0.1M), new displays (Macleay Street and Christmas), increased freight costs (\$0.9M) and improved asset management requirements (\$0.02M). The total estimated schedule of rates increase is largely attributable to a new allowance for a potential change to semi-permanent planters in the pedestrianised areas of the light rail corridor.

Citywide Service Solutions are engaged under the existing contract. The breakdown of actual costs for the Living Colour Floral Display Program Contract 1980 is detailed in Confidential Attachment A.

Total budget for the planter box program

Budgets by financial year for the existing living colour program can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Budgets

	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26 Draft
Living Colour Program (Floral Display and Decorations, Landscape Projects and Plant and Asset)	\$2,908,000 *including plant and asset	\$2,730,000	\$3,086,000 *including plant and asset	\$3,250,501 *no plant and asset budget. Increase due to CPI, new displays, storage and preliminaries / general requirements.
Al Fresco - City Funding Outdoor Dining	\$48,321	\$52,710	\$55,925	\$55,000
Total	\$2,956,321	\$2,782,710	\$3,141,925	\$3,305,501

Planter box program - Council's current budget and operational documents

The budget for this program is rolled up within the long term financial plan within the resourcing strategy. The detailed income and expenditure statement is under:

- Other operating expenditure
- Infrastructure Maintenance
- Plant and asset budget

The long term financial plan is contained in the publicly available Resourcing Strategy:

<https://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/strategies-action-plans/resourcing-strategy>

Pricing of plants

The plants required for the core display sites is included in the schedule of prices. The schedules of prices rate is for the full service including plant supply (including up to 10% contingency for replacement of damaged/stolen plants), maintenance, logistics (bump in and bump out), overhead and contract margin. Plant numbers and sizes fluctuate between displays. As a result, it is not possible to pull an individual plant rate out of the schedule of prices. On rare occasions where additional plants are required beyond those specified in the schedule of prices the relevant schedule of rates is used.

Through this open tender, value for money is calculated based on the total pricing (of the schedule of prices and anticipated schedule of rates expenditure) together with the evaluation criteria listed in the subject report. Bidders may structure their pricing differently and attribute their profit/overheads differently across the schedule of prices and individual schedule of rates.

Australian standard for plant stock

There is no Australian Standard for plant supply of the nature required for the mobile planter display program. Australian and Natspec standards relate to trees only. As part of the contract specifications, the City has specified detailed requirements for plant supply and quality to ensure healthy, vigorous plants are provided. Suppliers for plant stock hold relevant memberships to industry associations and accreditations such as the Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia.

Plant selection and criteria for identifying spaces for the planter boxes

Street greening (both through permanent street gardens and in mobile planters) are living things growing in a very unnatural environment. City streetscapes are a challenging environment in which it is difficult for plants to thrive due to shade, limited soil, utilities, damage from people, pedestrian desire lines and competition for space, nutrients and water.

Our key plant selection objective is to ensure the selection of the 'right plant for the right place', ensuring the selection of the species is optimised for the local environmental conditions and any other constraints of the planting location. To achieve this the City uses a mix of native and exotic plants depending on their location, aspect and environmental conditions. Wherever possible, consideration has been given to planting plants which expand and provide a connection between open spaces or other vegetated areas. Although native plants are preferable in this regard, exotic species also have some habitat value.

In the first instance the City endeavours to install permanent planting where feasible. This is in line with Direction 1 of the Greening Sydney Strategy which aims to turn our streets from grey to green contributing toward a target to increase our overall green cover to 40% across the local area by 2050. Over the last 5 years the City has converted approximately 20,000m² of road and footpath space to permanent street gardens.

Where permanent street garden beds are not possible the Mobile Planter Display Program is used to bring greening to the area. Sites selected for mobile planter displays typically are high profile/heavily utilised spaces within the CBD or main streets/commercial areas and include those with utilities, shallow soil profiles, challenging microclimatic conditions and heavy usage (pedestrian movements, periodic events where the planters need to be removed) which prevent permanent planting from being installed. Sites may also be added as part of larger capital works projects (for example Macleay Street where a combination of permanent gardens and hanging baskets have been used).

Within the mobile planter display program specifications there is a requirement for 20% of plants to be natives, perennial and herbs. This mix has been determined as appropriate for the site conditions of the display sites.

The mobile planter program is one of many greening programs delivered by the City of Sydney. Permanent planting of natives are also completed through our bush restoration, park maintenance, park renewal, public domain landscaping, community greening and urban forest programs.

Employment arrangements for staff responsible for installation, maintenance and disposal of the planter boxes

As an external supplier is appointed to provide this service, that supplier has full responsibility for managing the employment arrangements for its staff employed to provide the service under the contract. This includes payment of wages and management of leave and other benefits.

The submission by the recommended tenderer proposes staff to be paid under the Local Government Award NSW.

All City of Sydney contractors are required to comply with applicable Australian Industrial Relations law and pay staff in accordance with those laws.

Details of the current contract

Details of the contract are publicly available on the City of Sydney website in the register of contracts, in compliance with the NSW Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA). ([Contracts over \\$150,000 awarded by the City of Sydney - City of Sydney](#)).

Estimated cost of preparing tender T-2024-1314 - Mobile Planter Display Program

Costs for tendering are part of existing corporate service costs and are not separately recorded or itemised.

Changes to the program since 2000

The program has continued to evolve since 2000. The contract is designed to allow flexibility to allow for future changes in display sites and infrastructure. Some of the main changes since 2000 include:

- (a) additional sites to increase greening and in response to new projects and pedestrianised areas (light rail, streetscape upgrades, alfresco dining).

- (b) more variety in display types (pyramids, garsy's hanging baskets, planters, green wall) to enhance the displays.
- (c) increased focus on asset management to enable the sustainable management, repair and renewal of display infrastructure to ensure it is safe, structurally sound and fit for purpose.
- (d) requirements to store display infrastructure.

Disposal of plants after they are removed from the planter displays

All potted plants that are in a suitable condition after each spring and summer display are given away to community groups. Two weeks prior to the end of each display communications are sent to all registered community groups (groups include local community centres, customer service centres, community gardens, childcare centres, schools etc). Groups that confirm that they would like plants from the display receive a confirmation date and time for the delivery, an assortment of the plants is then delivered to their site. Up to 300 plants per group are given away. Remaining plants that have not been given to community groups are given to the City Farm and park maintenance teams to use in parks and street gardens where possible. Plants that are damaged, end of life or in poor condition are not given away and are instead taken to a nursery facility to be separated into green waste, soil, and pots. The green waste is composted, the soil is reconditioned and pots reused.

City staff are aware of 1 complaint in relation to plant disposal. This related to a resident concerned that plants were being thrown away. On this occasion, the plants were at the end of life and had gone to seed. For this reason, they were not suitable to give away and were instead composted. City staff are not aware of any complaints from groups receiving plants.

Longer-term, semi-permanent or permanent options to encourage biodiversity in locations where planter boxes are being used

There is a current project underway investigating converting existing mobile planters used on the pedestrianised section of the light rail corridor to semi-permanent planters. These semi-permanent planters have been designed to be predominantly planted with natives. Further information on the project will be provided to Council via the CEO Update.

Memo from Veronica Lee, Executive Director City Services

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Attachments

Attachment A. Existing and Proposed Contract Value and Terms (Confidential)

Approved

P.M. Barone

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Chief Executive Officer