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# MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**The 4754 (Special) meeting of the Brisbane City Council,**

**held at City Hall, Brisbane**

**on Tuesday 10 December 2024**

**at 9am**

**Prepared by:**

**Council and Committee Liaison Office**

**Governance, Council and Committee Services**

**City Administration and Governance**

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## PRESENT:

The Right Honourable, the LORD MAYOR (Councillor Adrian SCHRINNER) – LNP

The Chair of Council (Chair), Councillor Sandy LANDERS (Bracken Ridge) – LNP

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| **LNP Councillors (and Wards)** | **ALP Councillors (and Wards)** |
| Krista ADAMS (Holland Park) (Deputy Mayor)  Adam ALLAN (Northgate)  Lisa ATWOOD (Doboy)  Fiona CUNNINGHAM (Coorparoo)  Tracy DAVIS (McDowall)  Julia DIXON (Hamilton)  Alex GIVNEY (Wynnum Manly)  Steven HUANG (MacGregor) (Deputy Chair  of Council)  Sarah HUTTON (Jamboree)  Kim MARX (Runcorn)  Ryan MURPHY (Chandler)  Steven TOOMEY (The Gap)  Andrew WINES (Enoggera)  Penny WOLFF (Walter Taylor) | Lucy COLLIER (Morningside) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)  Emily KIM (Calamvale)  Charles STRUNK (Forest Lake) |
| **Queensland Greens Councillors (and Wards)**  Seal CHONG WAH (Paddington)  Trina MASSEY (The Gabba) |
| **Independent Councillor (and Ward)**  Nicole JOHNSTON (Tennyson) |

## OPENING OF MEETING:

The Chair opened the meeting with prayer and acknowledged the traditional custodians, and then proceeded with the business set out in the Agenda.

Chair: I declare the meeting open.

## APOLOGIES:

Chair: Councillors, I draw your attention—oh, sorry. Are there any apologies?

Councillor DIXON.

**317/2024-25**

An apology was submitted on behalf of Councillors Vicki HOWARD, Danita PARRY and Greg ADERMANN, and they were granted a leave of absence from the meeting on the motion of Councillor Julia DIXON, seconded by Councillor Alex GIVNEY.

Chair: Councillor COLLIER.

**318/2024-25**

An apology was submitted on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Jared CASSIDY, and Councillor Steve GRIFFITHS, and they were granted a leave of absence from the meeting on the motion of Councillor Lucy COLLIER, seconded by Councillor Emily KIM.

## CONSIDERATION OF MOTION:

### CLAUSE D OF THE ESTABLISHMENT AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE REPORT OF 25 NOVEMBER 2024

The Chair then drew the Councillors’ attention to item 2 listed on the agenda, and called on the LORD MAYOR to move the motion. Accordingly, the LORD MAYOR moved, seconded by the DEPUTY MAYOR—

*That Clause D of the Establishment and Coordination Committee Report of 25 November 2024, which was moved at the Council meeting on 3 December 2024, requested to be put seriatim, and was adjourned to the Council meeting on 4 February 2025 for debate and adoption, be brought forward for consideration at this meeting and adopted.*

Chair: Is there any debate?

LORD MAYOR: Yes, Madam Chair. Item D is the proposed amendment to the Story Bridge Adventure Climb Operating Agreement. We know the Story Bridge is an icon of our city and we know that our city needs more tourism opportunities, particularly as we lead into the Games in 2032. Creating more to see and do is something that we have consistently supported and whether it is the original Story Bridge Adventure Climb—although I suspect that was originally put in place by Labor—we’ve supported that. We’ve supported the development of the Howard Smith Wharves precinct, the most popular entertainment precinct in the city, and one that’s linked, obviously, to this particular Adventure Climb, with the Howard Smith Wharves owners being the new owner of the Adventure Climb.

It makes sense to have a precinct approach, and that’s what we’re seeing here, reflected in this proposed new agreement. So, this amendment today is required to allow the operators of the Adventure Climb to invest in a new visitor centre, as well as additional tourism infrastructure on the bridge.

Madam Chair, before I continue on the submission, I just wanted to clarify the time imperative of this submission and the reason that I have asked the CEO to recall Council for a special meeting. The urgency in progressing this submission relates to 2 important things. Firstly, the Story Bridge Adventure Climb currently operates out of a visitor centre on the Kangaroo Point side of the bridge. Many people would know it. It’s close to the 4EB radio facility, down in between 4EB and the Story Bridge Hotel there. The current lease of that space is due to expire on 31 January next year, obviously before the first Council meeting back, which is proposed on 4 February.

The operators have identified a new location over at Howard Smith Wharves to commence operating out of when the lease expires on the Kangaroo Point site. The certainty of Council’s support for amending this operating agreement will allow the operator to acquire adequate finance and, in turn, be able to undertake the fit out and improvement works to this new visitor centre. This will allow for a seamless transition of operations in early 2025. This is about providing certainty to a local business that is prepared to invest in the tourism offering in our city, as I said, something that we support and we know is needed in a city where more and more tourists are visiting every single year.

The certainty of this amending agreement with Council will provide the operators with the confidence they need to secure finance, but also the additional step required to lodge relevant and appropriate applications for the changes that they are proposing on the bridge. This will include modification of the existing stairs, a new safety line between the north peak and the south peak, and the additional infrastructure in the new agreement will require a change application to a development approval which was granted in April 2021. The operator will also need approval of a Heritage Exemption Certificate from the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science, Innovation if the works are considered to be low‑impact development.

Now, Madam Chair, I just wanted to touch on some of the discussion that’s happened publicly on part of this proposal which is a proposal at this stage and certainly is not within Council’s realm to approve, other than as the owner of the asset, but that is the potential for having a drink on top of the bridge.

Now, it’s been quite fascinating to see some of the ludicrous debate and discussion that’s occurred, this is wowzah stuff that is just way over the top. What we are talking about here, and what is proposed, is for people to have the option to have a single drink once they’ve reached the top of the bridge.

You know, you can imagine it’s a pretty spectacular view up there, a lot of people like to climb at sunset or sunrise. The opportunity to have a drink, particularly at sunset, will be there. No one’s going to be holding your mouth open and pouring alcohol down it. No one’s going to be having more than one drink and everyone must be required to stay below the legal alcohol limit. That legal limit has been determined to be appropriate, for people who are below that limit, to drive a car.

So if it’s okay to drive a car if you’re below that limit then, in my view, it’s also okay to climb the Story Bridge and have a single drink. Now, I’ve heard some commentators talking about people barfing off the bridge. Well, I don’t know whether they can handle their alcohol or not but after a single drink, I don’t imagine people are barfing off the bridge. So, as I said, there’s some ludicrous, ludicrous debate that’s happened on this. The reality is it’s a single drink, people will be required to stay below 0.05.

The ultimate decision on this will actually not rest with Council. But we’re saying we’re okay with the concept but they will have to go through the appropriate State Government liquor licensing approval for this. Now the State Government may, or may not, approve it but we’re certainly open to allowing them to make that application and we’re not against it in principle. We think it’s just another additional tourism opportunity and an addition to the experience, to have a single drink on top of the Story Bridge. They’re not talking about opening a bar on top of the bridge.

*Councillor interjecting.*

LORD MAYOR: They’re not talking about having barflies sitting up there leering into people’s windows. It is all ludicrous and this is just one drink proposed on the top of the bridge, which the State Government will ultimately decide is approved or not. As I said, what we’re proposing here is to allow them to make the application, because in principle we think it has some merit to put forward as an idea.

The other thing I just wanted to say is there’s no expenditure implications to Council in relation to this proposal, but there is income that will be received. Just as we’ve made it clear that activation of assets that deliver an income to Council help relieve the pressure on ratepayers. Every dollar received in income in a commercial sense like this, is a dollar less that ratepayers are asked to fork out.

Just as we’ve seen with the new Kangaroo Point Bridge, which will open on Sunday, the opportunity for a restaurant in the bridge that will provide an income to Council, which will help to support ongoing maintenance requirements of the bridge. This will provide an income to Council on an ongoing basis.

Now, it will be interesting to hear the Opposition’s views on this, given that they, as I pointed out—I believe they originally approved the Story Bridge climb, which was commercialisation of a public asset. Whether they’ve changed their view will be interesting to see. But certainly I commend this proposal to the Chamber. It is something I support. I support tourism activation in our city.

*Councillor interjecting.*

LORD MAYOR: I support things to see and do. In my view there can be fewer, more iconic Brisbane experiences than the Story Bridge climb. It is a wonderful way to experience our beautiful city and is certainly something that we support on an ongoing basis. So I commend this item to the Chamber.

Chair: Further speakers?

Councillor COLLIER.

Councillor COLLIER: Yes, thanks very much, Chair, and it is great, of course, to see that the LNP actually have decided to show up to work today to debate the most important, the most pressing issue. The one that couldn’t wait, the one that couldn’t wait. Not housing and homelessness.

*Councillor interjecting.*

Councillor COLLIER: Not amendments to budget cuts, not restoring public transport cuts, not restoring library cuts. No, we’re here today to talk about the bridge. What we have seen is that this LNP regime are masters, actually, at finding something new and exciting to put out there to the people of Brisbane to distract from what is really going on beneath the surface.

What we see here today is an amendment to the contract for the Story Bridge Adventure Climb to allow for an extension of their climbing routes, an ability to serve booze on the bridge and a new visitor centre at Howard Smith Wharves. All while, at the same time, the Story Bridge, of course, is crumbling down.

*Councillor interjecting.*

Councillor COLLIER: It’s interesting, very interesting, that this amendment here before us today—that this amendment is here and at the same time the LORD MAYOR is begging, begging the Federal Government for funding to keep the Story Bridge upright. This clause, as the LORD MAYOR mentioned in his comments, makes it very clear that Council receives a cut of the sales and revenue from the bridge climb. Surely if the LORD MAYOR says it’s going to be put back into maintenance, surely those funds could be used to pay for a business case by now, surely. Or are they being used to plug budget black holes and fund flashy parties?

We know that this LNP regime have their priorities all wrong. They have spent almost $80 million on the bridge over 5 years, just to find out that they need to fund a business case to repair it. The LNP has overseen this Council for 2 decades now, 2 decades. What is their legacy for that? They have failed to maintain our city’s assets.

The Story Bridge restoration was poorly planned and it’s been poorly managed. So if you look at where this LNP Council is prioritising their spend, it’s very clear. They have decided to simply throw their hands in the air and make the Story Bridge someone else’s problem. Council could have funded the Story Bridge repairs business case. They are happy to say that repair works are all too much for them to handle but then go around on the other hand splashing cash on overseas travel, lavish parties and unnecessary advertising.

We absolutely agree that the Story Bridge is one of Brisbane’s best assets. We also know that that the climb is a massive drawcard for visitors to our city. But, at the end of the day, we know that Council could be taking much, much better care of it.

Chair: Further speakers?

Councillor JOHNSTON.

Councillor JOHNSTON: Yes, thank you, Madam Chairman. I rise to speak on item 2 on the agenda. I note, with some interest, that the LORD MAYOR has brought one item back to Council today after he and his colleagues failed to maintain a quorum at the last Council meeting.

Instead of bringing all the items back, he’s brought Council back for one thing. So what that does, in a situation where we have huge cost pressures, according to the LORD MAYOR.

We’ve brought all the Council officers who run the meeting behind the scenes back, at significant cost. Because the LORD MAYOR used to point this out to me, he blamed me for the cost of the meetings for years. For years he would stand up and say that thousands of dollars we need to run these meetings, it’s all Councillor JOHNSTON’s fault. Well, the LORD MAYOR, it’s your fault, through you, Madam Chairman, today.

The issue, of course, is they can’t run a meeting. They cannot run a meeting. The LORD MAYOR left the Chamber last week and the DEPUTY MAYOR—

Chair: Councillor JOHNSTON, please come back to the report.

Councillor JOHNSTON: —yes, failed to keep people in the Chamber to debate this item last week. It’s interesting that this is the item that the LORD MAYOR has brought back and I heard this morning—Spencer Howson’s back filling in for a couple of weeks on ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) and I heard the discussion on ABC Radio this morning. It was very interesting that all the speakers thought it was about alcohol and they thought it was about—you know there was a 90%—more than 90% Spencer said—of the talkback callers were ‘no’ to serving alcohol on the bridge.

But it’s not about alcohol. We know it’s not about alcohol, we know this LORD MAYOR has got his hand down the back of the couch of Brisbane residents and he is looking for every cent he can get, just to keep the lights on in Brisbane. That is not a good look, that is not a good look.

It is unfortunate that the LORD MAYOR wants to do something like this—and I’m talking about the alcohol component, I’ll say something about the extension of the walk in a minute—because there is no need. The bridge is a popular tourism attraction. You do not need alcohol while you are walking up and down a significant structure. Okay, your plastic cup can be attached to your hip but someone’s got to carry the bottles and the cans and everything else.

Meanwhile, there are multiple venues directly below the bridge, including the Story Bridge Hotel, an excellent little craft brewery called Sea Legs and the Jazz Club is at the end of the street as well. So right under the bridge, where this company goes from—and you see them walking up the street—you know, there are plenty of venues where you could stop and have a drink after and celebrate.

Now, you can’t do this on the Story Bridge climb. So that, of course, you know is a pretty good example. Certainly there are places in the rocks to have a drink after and celebrate your climb. But for safety reasons, not just for the climbers but for those who are driving underneath, this just isn’t necessary.

Now I would support extension of the bridge climb itself. Certainly making more of the asset, I think, would be worthwhile from a tourism point of view and give people more options. So I would certainly support extension of the bridge. But I do not support the LORD MAYOR’s intention to allow alcohol.

We heard him today stand up and say, in this place, something that’s clearly untruthful. Everybody will just be allowed to have one drink. Now, this decision today does not do that. It is not the LORD MAYOR’s decision to determine the liquor licence and the conditions on the liquor licence, that is done by the State Government. Now maybe he’s already worded up his mate, Crisafulli up in George Street, I have no idea. But what I do know is the LORD MAYOR has been untruthful today in standing up and saying this will only allow people to have one drink on the bridge. It does not.

If someone can be as untruthful about something as simple as that—

LORD MAYOR: Point of order, Madam Chairman.

Chair: Point of order, LORD MAYOR.

LORD MAYOR: Claim to be misrepresented repeatedly.

Chair: I note your claim to be—

*Councillor interjecting.*

Chair: Councillor STRUNK.

Thank you, LORD MAYOR.

Councillor JOHNSTON.

Councillor JOHNSTON: On multiple times, the LORD MAYOR has stood up and said, ‘you’ll only be allowed to have one drink, this is not about having a lot of drinks.’ Well, it’s not the LORD MAYOR’s decision, it’s not this Council’s decision. So he’s giving the green light to something that he has no control over. Because it’s decided by somebody else.

So, you know, I would have thought we’d be here talking about a plan to fix the Story Bridge. To talk about what we need to do to maintain infrastructure in our city. This funding’s not even tied back to doing that. So certainly I’d support an extension but not the booze on the bridge.

Chair: Councillor JOHNSTON, your time has expired.

Further speakers?

LORD MAYOR: The point of order.

Chair: Sorry, LORD MAYOR, your point of misrepresentation.

LORD MAYOR: I was very clearly misrepresented by Councillor JOHNSTON. I claimed that the decision on alcohol would be made by the State Government. In fact I said that a number of times. I said we support this in principle but the decision is not ours. I also said the proposal is for one drink and to keep people below 0.05.

*Councillor interjecting.*

Chair: Further speakers?

Councillor CHONG WAH.

Councillor CHONG WAH: Thank you, Chair. I rise to speak on the amendment to the terms of the Story Bridge Adventure Climb Operating Agreement. As usual, we have an important change to Council contracts being put to these Chambers. But they—but sorry—that do not provide the information or transparency that we require, as Councillors, to make a decision. Why is this happening? Because this LNP Council does not care one iota about democracy or transparency or good decision making. We can also see that this is a Council that again and again does not care about the views of residents.

This change to a contract for a major expansion of commercial operations on a major historic and iconic asset of this Council, of the city, should be undergoing a resident consultation. A real consultation process to understand the impacts on local residents before the LNP Administration forces through contract amendments for its big business friends.

We know, only through news media, that local residents are concerned at losing privacy amenity. But the Councillors are being asked to vote on a contract amendment to allow expansion without resident consultation. The Artemus Group, owners of Howard Smith Wharves, who bought Story Bridge Adventure Climb in February this year, wasted no time in wanting to expand the Story Bridge climb business and to introduce alcohol to the business model.

This is probably the only adventure climb in any safety-conscious country in the world that proposes to serve alcohol. As I understand it, again from the news media, as there is nothing in the Council reports on this, that the alcohol will be served in cups strapped to the waists. What the LORD MAYOR has mentioned today, this should have been in the report. While at the same time, the Sydney Harbour Bridge requires visitors to have blood alcohol concentration of less than 0.05 to climb. What happens if someone has a drink beforehand? Are we going to be breathalysing? I seriously doubt it.

I have serious doubts that serving alcohol to climbers would even meet the relevant standards for adventure climbing, including the Abseiling and Climbing Australian Good Practice Guide. But we know that this LNP Administration’s priorities are to commercialise every public asset they can to help their elite business friends.

Our iconic Story Bridge is in such bad condition that the Brisbane City Council is seeking more than 4 million from the Federal Government, not actual for repairs but just for a business case to do urgent repairs and restoration. At the same time, this LNP Administration is happy to oblige their business friends by holding an emergency Council meeting to urgently change one business contract, while this iconic bridge is rusting away.

This Council should not be holding a special, urgent meeting to push through this contract amendment for such an important, historic and iconic city asset. Especially without community consultation.

Chair: Further speakers?

Councillor STRUNK.

Councillor, can you put your mic on, thank you.

Councillor STRUNK: Is it on?

Chair: Yes.

Councillor STRUNK: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Listen, anyone that has watched what’s been happening in the media, whether it be on talkback, in the papers or anything and that is that Brisbane has spoken in regards to the alcohol allowance that this Council is proposing. That they had no problem with, to be entered into—on to the Story Bridge.

Now, as a previous speaker said, no other climb in the world actually allows it. There’s not many climbs, by the way, I think there’s only 4 and we’ve got 2. It doesn’t happen in the Sydney Harbour Bridge right, and everyone is breathalysed and I believe we’re even breathalysed here in Brisbane as well. So my understanding, if you read the website and the information.

Now, this sends a ridiculous message, right, that it’s okay to drink once you get up on top of the bridge. We breathalyse people because we don’t want them to drink. Yes, they can be—they can have up to 0.05 and they’re allowed to climb, right. But what happens when they get up to the top of the bridge? Are they going to be banned from drinking? I don’t think so, right, I would be very surprised.

This just sends the wrong—and why do you have to toast at the top of the bridge with an alcohol beverage. You can toast with anything else. You can toast with a Coke, you can toast with a non-alcoholic sparkling wine.

*Councillor interjecting.*

Councillor STRUNK: Why does it have to have alcohol in it? I’ll tell you what, if you listen to talkback—and I hope that your members on that side, the LNP members on that side have been listening to talkback. Because your constituents have rung up—and I think it’s probably higher than 90%. But the ABC said it was 90%, Spencer Howson. That they are against the alcohol aspect of it. They’re not against the extra climb to the northern side of the bridge or from the northern side of the bridge.

I mean for goodness sake, Sydney Harbour you can walk right across the whole thing and that’s a 3 and a half hour—I don’t think it’s a 3 and a half hour walk but it takes about 3 and a half hours to complete it. So really—and what message does it send to the kids? So you can have alcohol, you can have up to about 10 members climb at a time, per climb.

What does is send to the kids? What is it—what’s the message it sends to the kids? That it’s okay for mum and dad or brother and sister who are of an age, that they can drink and then climb. I mean, honestly, I don’t know if anyone here in the Chamber has done the climb. I haven’t but—

*Councillors interjecting.*

Councillor STRUNK: You have. I have given climbs as gifts to friends and friends over the years. My—couple of goddaughters as well and they really enjoyed it. But I don’t think you want to be—have anyone even impaired a little bit, to do a climb like that. I mean our truck drivers, our bus drivers, all those are zero alcohol and I wonder why? Because there is some impairment, even at 0.04, 0.03, 0.02 and 0.01. There is some impairment and that’s why we ban them from drinking and driving their buses, their taxis, their trains and I wonder why we do that? Because there is some impairment.

What’s ludicrous is that this Council says ‘oh, it’s going to be the State Government that makes the decision’. Well no. You could have said to the company we will not support the introduction of alcohol at the platform at the top of the bridge or anywhere else on the bridge with your contract. So it’s not just the State Government’s decision, it’s Council’s decision as well.

I just hope the people that are watching, right, especially those media commentators that you just said were, you know—you weren’t very endearing to those commentators and to their callers either, right. That they’re all wrong, you’re all right and there’s nothing wrong with having alcohol on the Story Bridge during or—during the climb, basically. Because you’re only half way up, you’ve got to come back down. You haven’t completed the climb when you’re at the top platform.

So I would just think that—I hope the State Government will see sense here and not just comply with the wishes of an LNP Council, right, on this particular matter. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: Further speakers, Councillor MASSEY.

Councillor MASSEY: Thank you, Chair. I rise to speak on the amendment to the terms of the Story Bridge Adventure Climb Operating Agreement. I think no one in this Chamber can dispute how important the icon is of the Story Bridge. We are talking about a bridge that is not only iconic but really a part of the fabric of Brisbane. Not just visually but also, undeniably, as a part of our transport routes. Many people cross the bridge every day, whether it’s on e-mobility, on foot or otherwise, or in cars.

Another part of it, of course, is the fact that there’s no bad view from the Story Bridge. Whether you’re on top of it, whether you’re in it or you’re under it. It’s an incredible bridge, right. The thing about this bridge is that it is falling apart. It has been falling apart for years. The mismanagement of a 20-year—over 20-year LNP Administration, means that this will be their legacy. That one of the clearest icons of Brisbane is in disrepair.

Instead of being here today to collaboratively work out how we can sort that problem out, we’re instead here talking about changes to a leasing agreement. That, in itself, is insane, right? Because obviously the biggest challenge right now is the bridge. It’s not just this 4.3, 4.5 business case. We know that this bridge is going to take billions to repair.

Nonetheless, here we are talking about the amendment. As previous people that have spoken before me, they have talked about the alcohol consumption, but it’s not just about the alcohol consumptions. You know my role is also to represent my community and my community has been in contact with me. Kangaroo Point residents and small business have been very patient with Brisbane City Council. Again, because they understand the iconic significance of the Story Bridge.

But in this time since the works have occurred, not only are the businesses—have been hamstrung by the car parks taken up by Adventure Climb. Not only that but also, of course residents have dealt with many challenges, including temporary staircases built into areas that have diminished their amenity. Not only diminished their amenity, has created privacy issues.

Now people have commented before about the alcohol. Look, the Story Bridge is gorgeous, I’ve been on it, I’ve done the Adventure Climb myself. I think it was a great day out. The point that we’re trying to make here, the point that I’m trying to make here, is it’s not just about the alcohol. It’s also about other heritage elements to this bridge.

Intrinsically, this isn’t about the alcohol, this is about money. That’s why we’re here today. That’s why we’re here talking about a leasing agreement that would undeniably benefit Council more financially. Without actually discussing how we’re going to fix this bridge and the effects to local communities of any updates to this bridge, and also effects to the city of Brisbane by allowing alcohol to be on there.

Now we’re not here to be the people’s police. Earlier when the LORD MAYOR stated it is assumed that there would only be one drink but in stronger words than that. It was clear though, however, that that is not the decision that the LORD MAYOR will do. The LORD MAYOR and the LNP Administration could choose right now, or before this came to the Chamber, to remove this amendment. The LORD MAYOR could have—and the LNP Administration could have gone to consultation with community members to understand and bring everyone along for the journey.

However, none of that happened. Because none of that happens, we are here at a special meeting, not looking at the budget, not looking at other contracting, not looking at trying to fix the Story Bridge but to get this amendment through. This amendment will be forced through to ensure that the LNP get money for a budget that is desperately, desperately in the red.

That’s just insane. It’s a popular tourist attraction, expanding the routes would be supported especially if there is the right approvals with the heritage listing to it. Nonetheless, we could have made the decision to not put alcohol up there. We could have consulted with the local community and flagged the concerns. The fact that this is all being rushed is an indicator of how the LNP are doing things in secret without consultation and absolutely not for the best interests of Brisbane residents. They’ve spoken, 90% say no alcohol.

Chair: Further speakers?

Councillor CUNNINGHAM.

Councillor CUNNINGHAM: Thanks, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on item D, the amendment to the Story Bridge Adventure Climb Operating Agreement. The Story Bridge Adventure Climb, as we have heard, is one of only 3 bridge climbs in the world and it’s definitely one of Brisbane’s most iconic tourist attractions. As such, it features extensively in local, domestic and international marketing campaigns which help sell our city to the world.

In combination with Howard Smith Wharves, it’s a significant driver to Brisbane’s tourism offerings and our visitor spend. The operating agreement amendments before us today will allow the operators of the Adventure Climb experience to invest in a new visitor centre and additional infrastructure on the bridge.

It’s important that Council considers this item today, Madam Chair, for 2 reasons. Firstly, the Story Bridge Adventure Climb current visitor centre and climb operation headquarters are on the southern side of the bridge at Kangaroo Point. The lease on this space used by the climb operators is due to expire on 31 January 2025. A new northern visitor centre and climb headquarters at Howard Smith Wharves has been identified to operate climb activities out of going forward, once the lease at Kangaroo Point expires.

The certainty of Council’s support through an amended operating agreement will allows the operator to acquire the adequate finance required to undertake internal fit out works at this new visitor centre. Operations will be able to commence from the northern visitor centre in early 2025, which ensures business continuity for this important tourist attraction.

The certainty of this amended agreement with Council will provide the operators the confidence they need to secure finance and commit the time, energy and expenses involved in progressing an enhanced bridge climb experience for our city. The updated operating agreement will allow for the extension of the bridge walk to the centre of the bridge. Connecting, for the first time, the southern and northern climbing routes. Modification of the existing stairs and a new safety line between the north peak and the south peak will require a change application to the original development approval that was granted on 1 April 2021. The operator will also be required to seek heritage approval for the proposed installation of additional infrastructure on the Story Bridge.

Now, when it comes to the serving of alcohol, Madam Chair, the new agreement could allow the operator to serve a small amount of alcohol to climbers, if they get approval from the State. It’s a toast at the top, if you will. In fact, it reminds me a little of the Powerhouse restaurant named Vertigo, which is very popular with residents. The operator will continue to breathalyse every tour participant prior to climbing the bridge. All climbers must record a blood alcohol concentration reading of less than 0.05%.

The operator is required to seek the relevant approvals and satisfy liquor licensing and gaming Queensland with the regard to their compliance under the State Government’s Liquor Act. This is not the responsibility of Council. I couldn’t be more clear. By entering into this new operating agreement though, Madam Chair, the operator will be able to provide an improved offering which will benefit residents, visitors to our city and our community.

It’s an exciting addition and it allows Brisbane to showcase our city and bring people into the CBD and Howard Smith Wharves. The certainty of an updated operating agreement will provide ongoing support to a small business who are proactively trying to improve our visitors’ experience in the city and it’s one of Brisbane’s most iconic attractions.

Madam Chair, I’ve listened to the debate in the Chamber here today. I can’t help but think that this vote on an operating agreement to support a small business, which provides a great tourism opportunity for our city, will not age well for this Green‑Labor team. I highly commend it to the Chamber.

*Councillors interjecting.*

Chair: Further speakers?

No further speakers.

LORD MAYOR, right of reply.

LORD MAYOR: Thank you. As Councillor CUNNINGHAM has very eloquently put, we do not have the authority to approve alcohol consumption on the bridge and I made that clear in my speech. Councillor JOHNSTON has selective listening, as we’ve seen time and time again.

Councillor JOHNSTON: Point of order, Madam Chair.

Chair: One moment please, LORD MAYOR.

Councillor JOHNSTON.

Councillor JOHNSTON: Claim to be misrepresented.

Chair: I note your—

LORD MAYOR: I invite Councillor JOHNSTON, when the transcript comes out, to go and read it. Read the first section, read the follow up section. It’s all there. I made it very clear that any consumption of alcohol will be approved by the State Government through the normal liquor licensing process. What I did say is that we don’t have a problem with the principle of it.

It’s been quite extraordinary to hear the debate. Are we in a parallel universe? This side of politics, the left of politics tends to support a very small-L liberal approach when it comes to things like alcohol and drugs. The Greens have a policy to support the decriminalisation of hard drugs. Yet they don’t want you to have a single drink on top of the Story Bridge, it is ludicrous. What kind of parallel universe are we in?

*Councillors interjecting.*

LORD MAYOR: In Canberra, where they have a Green-Labor coalition government in the ACT, they are talking about removing all penalties for drug possession. They are talking about decriminalisation of hard drugs. Yet they don’t want you here to have a single drink on the Story Bridge. Many of these people are tourists, they’re not even Brisbane residents. It’s all about offering a choice. As Councillor CUNNINGHAM also pointed out, I really don’t think that their contribution will age well. We will remind them of this in the future.

*Councillors interjecting.*

LORD MAYOR: When people are toasting on the top of the Story Bridge and having a wonderful Brisbane tourism experience, we will remind them about what they said today. It does remind me when Labor Councillors railed against us offering free Wi-Fi in parks and public places, remember that?

*Councillors interjecting.*

LORD MAYOR: They were against that. They were saying ‘people shouldn’t be on their phones’. They railed against it. Kids are going to get killed because parents will be on their free Wi‑Fi. This is the kind of ludicrous approach that they’ve taken in the past. That didn’t age well, this won’t age well. We are simply saying we don’t mind people getting the choice to have a toast on top of the Story Bridge as part of their tourism experience.

Councillor STRUNK said no one else in the world does it. Well, I think there’s only 3 or 4 bridge climbs in the entire world and I’m pleased that we’ll be the first to consider this added opportunity. It will be one of those things that will add to the unique Brisbane tourism experience that is growing every year.

I am really, really quite shocked and amazed at the wowzah approach we’re seeing here from you know—particularly from parties that support the legalisation and decriminalisation of hard drugs. So, as I said, today we’re not voting on the liquor component or the drinking or alcohol component. We’re simply voting for the new and updated operating agreement, which is time critical, as I explained in my opening comments.

But we’ve seen Labor and the Greens make it about everything else except what this is actually about.

*Councillor interjecting.*

LORD MAYOR: So there’s no one like Labor and the Greens to throw up distraction techniques when it comes to what things are actually about. We see it time and time again and they want to talk about everything but the issues. It’s just like when they repeatedly refused to support sensible savings to help keep rates and rents down. They repeatedly throw up distractions, they repeatedly throw up inaccurate figures and facts to confuse media and the public.

But the reality is, just like this, we’ve made our position very clear. This something we support, it will be good for Brisbane, it will be good for tourism in Brisbane. Just like we’re being very open about making sensible savings to keep costs down for Brisbane ratepayers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: Councillor JOHNSTON, your point of misrepresentation.

Councillor JOHNSTON: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the LORD MAYOR accused me of selective listening when I spoke earlier. Earlier, he has misrepresented me. My point was that the LORD MAYOR had clearly stated that you could only have one drink on the bridge—or there’d only be one drink on the bridge. My point was that that was not his decision, that would be a decision of George Street.

Chair: I will now put the motion.

Upon being submitted to the Chamber, the motion for the adoption of Clause D of the report of the Establishment and Coordination Committee was declared **carried** on the voices.

Thereupon, Councillors Lucy COLLIER and Fiona CUNNINGHAM immediately rose and called for a division, which resulted in the motion being declared **carried**.

The voting was as follows:

AYES: 16 - The Right Honourable, the LORD MAYOR, Councillor Adrian SCHRINNER, DEPUTY MAYOR, Councillor Krista ADAMS, and Councillors Adam ALLAN, Lisa ATWOOD, Fiona CUNNINGHAM, Tracy DAVIS, Julia DIXON, Alex GIVNEY, Steven HUANG, Sarah HUTTON, Sandy LANDERS, Kim MARX, Ryan MURPHY, Steven TOOMEY, Andrew WINES and Penny WOLFF.

ABSTENTIONS: 6 - Councillors Lucy COLLIER, Emily KIM, Charles STRUNK, Seal CHONG WAH, Trina MASSEY and Nicole JOHNSTON.

#### D AMENDMENT TO THE TERMS OF THE STORY BRIDGE ADVENTURE CLIMB OPERATING AGREEMENT

**112/45/541/10**

**319/2024-25**

32. The Divisional Manager, Organisational Services, provided the information below.

33. Commercial-in-Confidence details have been removed from this report, highlighted yellow and replaced with the word [Commercial-in-Confidence].

34. Council is the owner of the Story Bridge (the Bridge). On 30 July 2003, Council and the operator of the Story Bridge Adventure Climb entered into an agreement for the design, construction and operation of a bridge walk program. The bridge walk program included a climbing route and ancillary activities contained on the southern half of the Story Bridge.

35. XBrisbane Pty Ltd is the current operator of the Story Bridge Adventure Climb under an operating agreement (as varied) that expires on 29 November 2035. The operating agreement grants the operator the exclusive right to carry out bridge walk operations on the Bridge’s walkways on the southern and northern ends of the bridge.

36. XBrisbane Pty Ltd is seeking to install additional infrastructure and carry out additional activities on the Bridge including the ability to serve beverages, extend its bridge walk operations to the centre of the bridge and connect the existing southern and northern climbing routes (refer Attachment D, submitted on file).

37. There will be additional capital expenditure requirements for the operator to build and install the new infrastructure and fit out a new customer visitor centre at Howard Smith Wharves. Connecting the existing climbing routes will allow the business to operate with more flexibility and reduce the impacts on their operation during any periods of bridge maintenance undertaken by Council.

38. The proposed additional bridge climb operations and activities, and installation of infrastructure, are proposed to be incorporated into a new agreement commencing following Council approval and upon full execution of the operating agreement by both parties.

39. The existing operating agreement (as varied) is to be brought to an end and the new agreement is to be entered into on terms consistent with the current operating agreement with such amendments that Council considers in its absolute discretion necessary to provide for the above and ensure that Council’s position with respect to its liability and control over its assets is protected (refer Attachment B, submitted on file).

40. The term of the agreement will be extended to enable the operator to finance the capital expenditure required. The commencing operating fee is to be amended to be the greater than [Commercial-in-Confidence] (excluding GST) per annum or a percentage fee calculated on the gross sales in Year 1 – 1%, Year 2 – 2%, Year 3 – 3%; and Year 4 onwards – 4%.

41. The lessee’s offered terms are within the range of comparative agreement fees for this type of operation, ranging between $15,000 (excluding GST) to $50,000 (excluding GST) per annum (refer Attachment C, submitted on file).

42. The operator will also be required to seek development and heritage approval for the proposed installation of the additional proposed bridge climb infrastructure and extension of the climb route.

43. By entering into a new agreement, the operator will be able to provide an improved operation which will benefit residents, businesses and the local community.

44. The Divisional Manager provided the following recommendation and the Committee agreed.

45. **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT COUNCIL RESOLVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DRAFT RESOLUTION, AS SET OUT IN ATTACHMENT A**, hereunder.

**Attachment A**

**Draft Resolution**

**DRAFT RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE TERMS OF THE STORY BRIDGE ADVENTURE CLIMB OPERATING AGREEMENT BY BRINGING TO AN END THE EXISTING AGREEMENT AND ENTERING INTO A NEW OPERATING AGREEMENT**

As:

(i) the Story Bridge Adventure Climb operates under an agreement (as varied) between Council, as owner, and XBrisbane Pty Ltd, the operator, that expires on 29 November 2035

(ii) the operator of the Story Bridge Adventure Climb is seeking to install and operate additional bridge climb infrastructure and activities to include the connection of the existing southern and northern climbing routes on the Story Bridge

(iii) the operator is to seek development approval for the installation of additional bridge climb infrastructure and activities on the Story Bridge

(iv) the operator is seeking to amend the commercial terms of their operating agreement by ending the current operating agreement and entering into a new operating agreement

(v) the additional bridge climb activities and amendment to commercial terms can be incorporated into a new operating agreement,

then Council:

(i) resolves, subject to XBrisbane Pty Ltd obtaining all relevant approvals including development approval, to end the current Story Bridge Adventure Climb operating agreement and enter into a new operating agreement to provide for the installation of additional infrastructure and the inclusion of additional bridge climb activities on the bridge, in accordance with the terms, as set out in Attachment B (submitted on file), and otherwise on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager, Property Services, Organisational Services, and the Chief Legal Counsel, City Legal, City Administration and Governance

(ii) resolves to delegate its power under section 242 of the *City of Brisbane Act 2010* to the Chief Executive Officer to enter into the Story Bridge Adventure Walk Operating Agreement

(iii) authorises the General Manager, Property Services, Organisational Services, to oversee the day-to-day management of the new operating agreement.

**ADOPTED**

Chair: As that now concludes the business of the special meeting, I declare this meeting closed. Councillors, I hope you have a happy and safe Christmas.

**RISING OF COUNCIL: 9.45am.**

**PRESENTED: and CONFIRMED**

**CHAIR**

**Council officers in attendance:**

Victor Tan (Council and Committee Coordinator)

Dorian Maruda (A/Senior Council and Committee Officer)

Ethan Van Roo Douglas (Policy Advisor)

Billy Peers (Personal Support Officer to the Lord Mayor and Council Orderly)