

ITEM 3. DRAFT PUBLIC TOILET STRATEGY – PUBLIC EXHIBITION**FILE NO: S051743****SUMMARY**

This report recommends that Council approve the public exhibition of the draft Public Toilet Strategy.

The Strategy outlines the City's role in the provision, management and promotion of public toilets. It contains an overview of the public toilet network in the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA) and, subject to funding availability and budget approval, recommends investigating:

- construction of nine new public toilets in key village centres;
- upgrading of six public toilet facilities in neighbourhood parks;
- provision of accessible toilets at Town Hall House;
- installation of retractable pop-up urinals in the George Street, Oxford Street and Kings Cross entertainment precincts;
- trialling the free use of automated public toilets that currently require a fee for use; and
- working with Marrickville Council to provide public toilets within the King Street, Newtown retail precinct.

The draft Public Toilet Strategy also recommends that the City take a lead role in promoting the public toilet network and consider the implementation of a voluntary scheme to encourage retailers, cafes and hotels to provide public access to their toilet facilities.

The draft Public Toilet Strategy will be exhibited for public comment for 28 days before being reported back to Council for approval with any recommended changes.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve the draft Public Toilet Strategy 2013, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report, for public exhibition and comment for a minimum period of 28 days; and
- (B) the draft Public Toilet Strategy and any recommended changes be reported to Council following the exhibition period.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Public Toilet Strategy 2013

BACKGROUND

1. The draft Public Toilet Strategy (the Strategy) defines public toilets as toilet facilities that are directly accessible to the public, including those located in parks, on streets, in some City-managed public buildings, at railway stations and in shopping centres.
2. There are 117 public toilet facilities within the City of Sydney LGA. The City owns and manages 54 of these, including toilets located on the street, in parks and in public buildings such as libraries. The remaining public toilet facilities are provided by a number shopping centres and NSW Government agencies (including the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Royal Botanic Gardens, Centennial Parklands and RailCorp).
3. Community perceptions of public toilet facilities are often unfavourable. Concerns raised by the community include:
 - (a) a lack of facilities;
 - (b) difficulty in finding existing facilities;
 - (c) limited operational times;
 - (d) poor cleanliness and servicing;
 - (e) public urination; and
 - (f) anti-social behaviour.
4. Public toilets provide convenience for residents, workers and visitors, including pedestrians and cyclists.
5. A lack of toilet facilities can cause significant inconvenience to families with children, seniors and people with a disability or health problems. For these groups, a lack of facilities and poor service delivery may affect their quality of life and restrict their mobility.

Draft Public Toilet Strategy

6. The Strategy:
 - (a) provides an overview of the public toilet network;
 - (b) assesses the adequacy of coverage and accessibility of the public toilet network;
 - (c) identifies locations where the availability of public toilets does not satisfy demand and recommends sites for the installation of new facilities;
 - (d) recommends upgrades of existing public toilets to reflect best practice design, inclusive access and sustainable management;
 - (e) identifies opportunities to better promote the public toilet network; and
 - (f) establishes an action plan to implement its recommendations.

Public Toilet Survey

7. Monitoring and surveys of public toilet use indicates that the city's public toilets are well used:
 - (a) 90 per cent of persons surveyed had used a public toilet facility in the past year, and 57 per cent used public toilets on a weekly or more frequent basis;
 - (b) toilets situated in City of Sydney parks with playgrounds attract high visitation by families with children (over 334 visits per day at Sydney Park);
 - (c) City of Sydney toilets situated in entertainment and tourist precincts attract high visitation, particularly at night (160 visits per day at Fitzroy Gardens and 213 visits per day at George Street); and
 - (d) toilets situated in shopping centres within central Sydney attract the highest usage (about 1,500 visits per day at popular retail centres such as the Queen Victoria Building).
8. Those surveyed showed a strong desire for public toilets to be more prominent and easier to find, with extended opening hours and enhanced servicing.
9. During consultation to inform the City's "Open Sydney" discussion paper, respondents commented there were insufficient public toilets, particularly at night. People wanted accessible clean toilets open around the clock to improve their experience visiting the city after dark.

Summary of Recommendations

10. The Strategy recommends investigating:
 - (a) the distribution of public toilets should aim to provide facilities within 5 to 10 minutes' walk (400 metres) of any point within central Sydney;
 - (b) construction of nine new public toilets in key village centres;
 - (c) upgrading of six public toilet facilities in neighbourhood parks;
 - (d) provision of toilets accessible to the public at Town Hall House;
 - (e) installation of retractable pop-up urinals in the George Street, Oxford Street and Kings Cross entertainment precincts;
 - (f) trial of free use of automated public toilets that currently require a fee (50 cents) for use;
 - (g) working with Marrickville Council to provide public toilets within the King Street, Newtown retail precinct;
 - (h) advocate for the provision of new public toilets to service urban renewal areas and projects including:
 - (i) George Street Light Rail Corridor;
 - (ii) Barangaroo; and

- (iii) Green Square;
- (i) promotion of the public toilet network through a range of media, including signage, toilet maps and the development of apps; and
- (j) implementation of a voluntary scheme where businesses promote and provide public access to their toilets.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

11. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This Strategy is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 2 - provides a road map for the City to become A Leading Environmental Performer – the Strategy recommends best practice for ecologically sustainable design and management to guide the design, provision, upgrade and servicing of the City’s public toilets.
 - (b) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling – the Strategy recommends the installation of new public toilets to improve coverage throughout the City’s LGA, including new facilities in parks, open spaces and streets to improve utility for all residents and visitors, including pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.
 - (c) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre – the Strategy recommends installation of new public toilets and the provision of pop-up urinals to improve public toilet provision in the city centre and support night time economy precincts.
 - (d) Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships – the Strategy recommends that the City introduce a voluntary community scheme for businesses to nominate and promote their toilet facilities for public use.

Organisational Impact

12. The Strategy recommends investigating the installation of new public toilets and upgrades and modification to existing facilities, which will require a capital works program.
13. A communications strategy is required to better promote the toilet network through toilet maps, signage and to establish the recommended voluntary community toilet scheme.
14. The Strategy recommends enhanced servicing of public toilets to meet community expectations, which will increase operational expenditure on public toilet maintenance.

Risks

15. The city's public toilets attract high usage (90 per cent of pedestrians surveyed had used a public toilet in the past 12 months). The quality and availability of public toilets will influence perceptions on the reputation and liveability of Sydney as a global city.
16. The availability of high quality public toilet facilities contributes to the desirability of the City and its Villages as a destination for recreation, tourism and retail activity. Limited availability and perceived poor quality public toilet provision bears the risk of discouraging visitation to the City and the use of active transport options.

Social / Cultural / Community

17. The Strategy's recommendations will have a significant benefit to the community through enhanced public toilet provision throughout the City's LGA.
18. A comprehensive network of accessible, well equipped and well maintained public toilet facilities will meet the needs of residents and visitors, including families with children and people with special needs. These improved facilities will enhance the use of the public domain and support improved community health and wellbeing.

Environmental

19. The Strategy's recommendations and action plan will reduce the environmental impact of the City's public toilets through the implementation of measures to reduce energy and water use, and through the use of low impact cleaning and building materials.

Economic

20. Enhanced public toilet provision may increase visitation and pedestrian travel within the City's recreation, tourist, entertainment and retail precincts.
21. The proposed voluntary scheme, in which businesses provide public access to their toilet facilities, may have an economic benefit to the participants.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

22. The Strategy's recommendations are estimated to cost \$8.26 million, which includes:
 - (a) \$6.055 million for new toilet facilities;
 - (b) \$840,000 for upgrading existing toilet facilities;
 - (c) \$200,000 for promotion of the public toilet network, addressing public urination and administration of the voluntary scheme for making private toilets available to the public; and
 - (d) \$1.15 million for the demolition and adaptive re-use of five redundant facilities.

23. Approximately \$2.6 million in funding has been allowed for in the City's Long Term (10 Year) Financial Plan. \$2.4 million of the recommended works are rated as a high priority. The funding of the remaining works will be subject to the annual budget bid process.
24. Enhanced servicing of public toilets and servicing for the recommended new toilets is estimated to increase operational budgets by about \$800,000 per year when all works are completed.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

25. Disability Discrimination Act 1992 – the City has a responsibility to ensure, as far as practicable, that people with disabilities have the same rights to access services and utilities, including public toilets.
26. Local Government Act 1993 – under the Act, a council's charter is to provide adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community and to ensure that those services and facilities are managed efficiently and effectively.
27. Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standard 2010 – the Standard requires that dignified, equitable access to buildings and facilities and services within (newly constructed) buildings is provided for people with disabilities.
28. The Roads Act 1993 – approvals and consent of the applicable roads authority are required to install or erect a structure on the footpath of a public road.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

29. It is recommended that the draft Public Toilet Strategy be exhibited for community comment for a period of 28 days.
30. The City will also contact relevant community organisations and peak bodies with an interest in public toilet provision.

GARRY HARDING

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