

**ITEM 2. PUBLIC TOILET STRATEGY – ADOPTION****FILE NO: S051743****SUMMARY**

This report recommends that Council adopt the draft Public Toilet Strategy (the Strategy).

The draft 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's Local Government Area and, subject to feasibility and funding availability/budget approval, recommends:

- construction of new public toilets in key village centres, including working with Marrickville Council to provide public toilets within the King Street, Newtown retail precinct;
- upgrading of public toilet facilities in neighbourhood parks;
- provision of accessible toilets at Town Hall House;
- investigate the installation of retractable pop-up urinals in the George Street, Oxford Street and Kings Cross entertainment precincts; and
- implementation of a voluntary scheme to encourage retailers, cafes and hotels to provide public access to their toilet facilities.

The Strategy was exhibited for public comment from 20 August to 30 September 2013. Following the exhibition period, 19 submissions were received from individuals, state government agencies and organisations. Where considered appropriate, the draft Strategy has been updated with minor modifications in response to the feedback received.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council adopt the amended Public Toilet Strategy, as shown at Attachment C to the subject report;
- (B) the Public Toilet Strategy be reviewed in five years to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with the City's policies and strategic direction; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to approve minor amendments, which do not change fundamental principles of the Public Toilet Strategy.

**ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A:** Resolution of Council – 29 July 2013

**Attachment B:** Submission and responses table

**Attachment C:** Amended Public Toilet Strategy (with additions shown in underline and *italics*)

**BACKGROUND**

1. The provision of public toilets contributes to the quality of the city's public domain and its liveability.
2. There are 117 public toilet facilities within the City of Sydney Local Government Area (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 of shopping centres and NSW Government agencies, including the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Royal Botanic Gardens, Centennial Parklands and RailCorp.
3. A review of the City's public toilet network and surveys of public toilet users in the city was undertaken to identify key issues and address these through the development of a comprehensive strategy.
4. On 29 July 2013, Council approved the public exhibition of the draft Public Toilet Strategy (the Strategy) for a minimum period of 28 days (refer Attachment A).

**Draft Public Toilet Strategy**

5. The draft Strategy outlines a vision for a highly regarded, safe and accessible network of public toilets to meet the current and future needs of a world-class city.
6. The draft Strategy's objectives are:
  - (a) Availability – public toilet facilities will be well distributed, appropriately located and open at times that meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors. The City aims to ensure that public toilets are available within 400 metres of any point within central Sydney and at all village centres and major neighbourhood parks with play or sports facilities.
  - (b) Inclusive access – public toilets will be accessible to everyone, and well connected to pedestrian areas and public transport.
  - (c) Safety – the location and orientation of public toilet facilities will meet best-practice principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.
  - (d) Easy to find – the City's public toilet network will be well publicised and promoted through a wide variety of media to ensure toilets and information about the toilet network is accessible to the community.
  - (e) Servicing and cleanliness – maintenance and servicing standards will ensure that the City's public toilet network meets community expectations at all times.
  - (f) Build quality and sustainability – the city's public toilets will be well-designed and built using robust, high quality, vandal-resistant materials and fixtures that reflect the character of their setting. They will incorporate best practice principles of Environmentally Sustainable Design and management.
  - (g) Decommissioning and adaptive re-use – the City has a number of decommissioned facilities which will be upgraded or replaced where demand is high, and demolished or adapted for alternative use at locations and areas with little demand.

7. To achieve these objectives, an action plan has been included in the draft Strategy, and, subject to feasibility and funding availability/budget approval, it recommends:
  - (a) construction of new public toilets in key village centres, including working with Marrickville Council to provide public toilets within the King Street, Newtown retail precinct;
  - (b) upgrading of public toilet facilities at identified neighbourhood parks;
  - (c) provision of accessible toilets at Town Hall House;
  - (d) investigate the installation of retractable pop-up urinals in the George Street, Oxford Street and Kings Cross entertainment precincts; and
  - (e) the implementation of a voluntary scheme to encourage retailers, cafes and hotels to provide public access to their toilet facilities.

### Summary of Submissions

8. In total, 19 submissions were received from individuals, NSW Government agencies and organisations including the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Surry Hills Police Local Area Command, Marrickville Council, Vision Australia (in consultation with Guide Dogs NSW), Council on Ageing NSW and Physical Disability Council NSW.
9. A summary of the submissions is contained in Attachment B. The comments contained in the submissions relate to:
  - (a) inclusive access (16 comments);
  - (b) promoting the toilet network through signage and maps (13 comments);
  - (c) recommendations for new facilities (10 comments);
  - (d) requests for additional facilities not included in the Strategy (nine comments);
  - (e) toilet design and management (eight comments);
  - (f) abolishing user fees for automated public toilets (seven comments);
  - (g) maintenance and servicing (four comments);
  - (h) the proposed retractable urinals (four comments);
  - (i) toilet availability, opening times and distribution (four comments);
  - (j) the proposed City Cares voluntary community toilet scheme (three comments);
  - (k) promoting the toilet network through the internet and apps (two comments);
  - (l) security (two comments);
  - (m) general support (two comments); and

- (n) decommissioning and reuse (1 comment).
10. The draft Strategy has been amended, where appropriate, in response to the feedback received. Additions to the Strategy are underlined and in *italics* (refer Attachment C).

## 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. The Public Toilet 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 draft 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 draft 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 draft 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 draft 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 participants.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

22. The draft Strategy's recommendations, if all are implemented, are estimated to cost in the order of \$8.3 million, which includes:
  - (a) \$6.1 million for new toilet facilities;
  - (b) \$0.8 million for upgrading existing toilet facilities;
  - (c) \$0.2 million 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) \$1.2 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. The funding for the remaining works will be subject to the annual budget process.
24. Servicing for the recommended 13 additional toilets is estimated to increase operational budgets by approximately \$0.4 million per year once all works are completed over the next five to 10 years.

**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. 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.
27. 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.
28. 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. The draft Strategy was placed on exhibition at the City's One Stop Shop and Neighbourhood Service Centres and on the City's website from 20 August to 30 September 2013.
30. The exhibition period was advertised in the national and local press including The Sydney Morning Herald, MX, Wentworth Courier, Central Courier and City News.
31. The City notified peak disability organisations and Police Local Area Commands about the exhibition period. Submissions were received from a number of disability organisations in addition to submissions from Marrickville Council, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and Surry Hills Police Local Area Command.
32. In total, 19 submissions were received, which commented on 86 different issues.

**GARRY HARDING**

Director City Operations

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