

Resolution of Council

19 August 2019

Item 12.14

Leptospirosis and Rat Eradication in the Sydney LGA

Moved by Councillor Phelps, seconded by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) public health relies on the provision of safe and clean public spaces by Council, and is one of the City's core responsibilities;
- (ii) the presence of rats and other vermin pose a threat to public health by acting as reservoir hosts for *Leptospira* bacteria, passing to other organisms in their urine;
 - (a) it is known that Leptospirosis, a bacterial infection which causes a systemic inflammatory response and organ failure, can prove lethal to dogs and humans and is transmitted via rat urine;
 - (b) the increasing number of rats in the City of Sydney LGA has resulted in an outbreak of Leptospirosis in Sydney;
 - (c) Leptospirosis has never before been seen in the Sydney area, but as of July 2019, five dogs have been reported to have died from the disease;
 - (d) the bacteria can survive for long periods in moist environments, with environmental flooding (such as occurred in Surry Hills following extensive ground disturbance due to light rail construction) prolonging the survival of these organisms in surface water;
 - (e) Questions and Motions have previously been submitted by multiple Councillors asking the City for details or reviews on the City's vermin control program including:
 - Question on Notice by Cr Scott on 14 September 2015;

- Notices of Motion by Cr Forster on 29 June 2015 and 26 June 2017; and
 - Question of Notice by Cr Vithoukias on 13 August 2018; and
- (iii) the recent reported significant increase of rodents and subsequent heightened risks to public health require a more extreme course of action for pest control; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) benchmark the City of Sydney against other cities' actions and best practice vermin control such as fitting drains with interceptor traps according to risk and requiring a 2-3m clear 'no-grow' zone or 0.5m clear zone from the bottom of vegetation around external walls;
 - (ii) intensify efforts on rat control in an attempt to control the outbreak of Leptospirosis;
 - (iii) increase the City's current budget and actions on rat and other vermin control; and
 - (iv) develop a new, intensified vermin control and eradication plan and report back to Council.
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Note – the motion above was not carried. The resolution below was carried.

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note:
- (i) public health relies on the provision of safe and clean public spaces by Council, and is one of the City's core responsibilities;
 - (ii) the presence of rats and other vermin pose a threat to public health by acting as reservoir hosts for Leptospira bacteria, passing it to other organisms in their urine;
 - (iii) it is known that Leptospirosis, a bacterial infection which causes a systemic inflammatory response and organ failure, can prove lethal to dogs and humans and is transmitted via rat urine;
 - (iv) rat populations have been stirred by an unprecedented number of major construction and infrastructure projects taking place across the City of Sydney area;
 - (v) the increasing number of rats in the City of Sydney LGA has been attributed to an outbreak of Leptospirosis in Sydney;
 - (vi) leptospirosis has never been seen before in the Sydney area, but as of July 2019, seven dogs have been reported to have died from the disease;

- (vii) the bacteria can survive for long periods in moist environments, with environmental flooding (such as occurred in Surry Hills following extensive ground disturbance due to light rail construction) prolonging the survival of these organisms in surface water;
- (viii) the City of Sydney has doubled its existing rat baiting stations and increased the frequency of inspections which has increased the budget from \$50,000 up to \$150,000;
- (ix) the City of Sydney has 860 rat bait stations in public areas, and will place additional baits in response to complaints from residents and businesses;
- (x) the Director of Planning has written to Sydney Trains, Property NSW and the Land and Housing Corporation, to request they increase baiting and monitoring of rats on their land in the City of Sydney;
- (xi) the City of Sydney will monitor the effectiveness of the enhanced baiting program through increased coordination across Council including mapping of hot spots which include areas where residents have complained about rats, where most rats are killed from baiting, and areas of poor waste management practice;
- (xii) the City of Sydney has benchmarked with local and international cities and will continue to focus on best practice regarding rodent management;
- (xiii) the City of Sydney has urged residents and businesses to take care with food scraps and other waste;
- (xiv) City of Sydney regulatory staff target poor waste management practices and illegal dumping in hot spots;
- (xv) City of Sydney residents are entitled to 52 free bulky waste collections every year, which aims to tackle illegal dumping and control pests and vermin;
- (xvi) the City of Sydney has recommended private property owners ensure regular pest control is carried out, and that they remove overgrown vegetation and accumulated rubbish that may attract vermin;
- (xvii) the City of Sydney has put signs in Ward Park Surry Hills recommending dog owners keep their dogs away from any puddles and mud to reduce the risk of contamination;
- (xviii) the signs also recommend that pet owners concerned about recent cases of leptospirosis in the inner city should contact their vet; and
- (xix) the City of Sydney has provided free vaccinations against the disease to dogs from the Northcott social housing estate, next to Ward Park in Surry Hills.

(B) The Chief Executive Officer be requested to:

- (i) report back to Council via CEO Update on the overall effectiveness of the program to reduce rodents, after six months; and
- (ii) urgently undertake a study of eradication options to suit our city conditions and utilise general contingency funds for this study and additional measures if required.

The foreshadowed motion, as varied by consent, was carried unanimously.

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