

Resolution of Council

6 April 2020

Item 12.2

COVID-19 Guidelines for Strata Buildings

Moved by Councillor Phelps, seconded by Councillor Vithoukas -

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note:
- (i) high-density apartment buildings with residents staying at home due to the coronavirus pandemic have the potential to have mass outbreaks of the disease, similar to those that have occurred on cruise ships;
 - (ii) in the City of Sydney local government area, 80 per cent of residents live in strata buildings;
 - (iii) outbreaks are possible and these high-density strata buildings need to be equipped to deal with them; and
 - (iv) without a set of clear guidelines to follow, there will be a lack of compliance and these blocks could see outbreaks, given such large groups of people living so closely together; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to urgently develop, with advice from the NSW Department of Health and the Strata Community Association NSW, a set of evidence-based guidelines to minimise the risks of outbreaks of COVID-19 in strata communities.

Foreshadowed motion. Councillor Scully foreshadowed that, should the motion moved by Councillor Phelps be lost, she would move an alternative motion.

The motion was lost on the following show of hands –

Ayes (1) Councillor Phelps

Noes (9) The Lord Mayor, Councillors Chung, Forster, Kok, Miller, Scott, Scully, Thalys, and Vithoulkas.

Councillor Scully then moved her foreshadowed motion, seconded by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) in the City of Sydney local government area, over 70 percent of residents live in high-density settings, such as apartment buildings;
- (ii) people live in many different high-density building types, including those managed by strata committees, or managed by owners through company title;
- (iii) the City of Sydney local government area has a significant population of vulnerable residents whose living arrangements include boarding houses, social housing and co-housing;
- (iv) outbreaks of COVID-19 are possible because residents are staying at home due to the pandemic, with increased contact in common areas, and some building managers may be unaware of what is required to protect residents in shared spaces;
- (v) residents living in high-density buildings of all kinds need to have the information they need to manage the risk of outbreaks occurring; and
- (vi) without clear information, the risk of compliance failures is increased, which could result in outbreaks, given large groups of people living so closely together;
- (vii) the Strata Community Association represents strata managers who provide facilities and building management services to approximately 90 percent of the strata buildings in the City of Sydney local government area, and around 75 percent of strata buildings across NSW;
- (viii) the Strata Community Association has prepared and distributed best practice guidelines for strata committees and building managers on how to manage and mitigate COVID-19 risks in high-density living areas, and is holding information sessions to educate committees and managers about their responsibilities;
- (ix) NSW Fair Trading is the key government channel for information on building management to strata communities, and also has some resources available to help strata committees prepare their responses to COVID-19, but these resources could be enhanced;
- (x) the NSW Minister for Families and Communities, the Hon Gareth Ward MP, has written to social housing tenants advising that the Department of Families and Communities is "increasing common area cleaning programs in multi-unit and high-rise building complexes in the inner city"; and

- (xi) local councils are responsible for enforcing safety and accommodation standards in boarding houses. They also have the power to fine operators if they are unregistered and order them to meet building, safety and accommodation standards. City staff are liaising with the Tenants Union of NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Communities and Justice to ensure boarding house residents and operators are aware of their rights and responsibilities around COVID-19; and
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the following ministers requesting that the state government work with the relevant community and industry bodies such as Strata Community Association to distribute evidence-based information and guidelines to minimise the risks of outbreaks of COVID-19 in residential settings, including strata communities, company title buildings, boarding houses and social housing;
 - (i) NSW Minister for Health and Medical Research;
 - (ii) NSW Minister for Water, Property and Housing;
 - (iii) NSW Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation; and
 - (iv) NSW Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services.

Variation. At the request of Councillor Forster, and by consent, the motion was varied such that it read as follows –

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note:
 - (i) in the City of Sydney local government area, over 70 percent of residents live in high-density settings, such as apartment buildings;
 - (ii) people live in many different high-density building types, including those managed by strata committees, or managed by owners through company title;
 - (iii) the City of Sydney local government area has a significant population of vulnerable residents whose living arrangements include boarding houses, social housing and co-housing;
 - (iv) outbreaks of COVID-19 are possible because residents are staying at home due to the pandemic, with increased contact in common areas, and some building managers may be unaware of what is required to protect residents in shared spaces;
 - (v) residents living in high-density buildings of all kinds need to have the information they need to manage the risk of outbreaks occurring; and
 - (vi) without clear information, the risk of compliance failures is increased, which could result in outbreaks, given large groups of people living so closely together;
 - (vii) the Strata Community Association represents strata managers who provide facilities and building management services to approximately 90 percent of the strata buildings in the City of Sydney local government area, and around 75 percent of strata buildings across NSW;

- (viii) the Strata Community Association has prepared and distributed best practice guidelines for strata committees and building managers on how to manage and mitigate COVID-19 risks in high-density living areas, and is holding information sessions to educate committees and managers about their responsibilities;
 - (ix) NSW Fair Trading is the key government channel for information on building management to strata communities, and also has some resources available to help strata committees prepare their responses to COVID-19, but these resources could be enhanced;
 - (x) the NSW Minister for Families and Communities, the Hon Gareth Ward MP, has written to social housing tenants advising that the Department of Families and Communities is "increasing common area cleaning programs in multi-unit and high-rise building complexes in the inner city"; and
 - (xi) local councils are responsible for enforcing safety and accommodation standards in boarding houses. They also have the power to fine operators if they are unregistered and order them to meet building, safety and accommodation standards. City staff are liaising with the Tenants Union of NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Communities and Justice to ensure boarding house residents and operators are aware of their rights and responsibilities around COVID-19; and
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the following ministers requesting that the state government work with the relevant community and industry bodies such as Strata Community Association to distribute evidence-based information and guidelines to minimise the risks of outbreaks of COVID-19 in residential settings, including strata communities, company title buildings, boarding houses and social housing:
- (i) NSW Minister for Customer Service;
 - (ii) NSW Minister for Health and Medical Research;
 - (iii) NSW Minister for Water, Property and Housing;
 - (iv) NSW Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation; and
 - (v) NSW Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Minister for Mental Health to seek advice on how City of Sydney Council may be able to assist in promoting good mental health for all residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Carried unanimously.

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