

Resolution of Council

16 May 2022

Item 13.1

Access to Early Childcare for People Seeking Asylum

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

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the City of Sydney became a Refugee Welcome Zone in 2005 and reaffirmed this commitment in 2014. Our initiatives and programs to support refugees and people seeking asylum include providing this community group with free and low-cost access to a range of Council facilities and services including swimming pools, gyms, and libraries;
 - (a) the City of Sydney currently offers free after school and vacation care at Redfern, Surry Hills and Woolloomooloo Children’s Programs (Outside School Hours Care or OSHC services) to all vulnerable children, including people seeking asylum;
 - (b) at Hilda Booter and Broughton Street Kindergartens we offer prioritised places to vulnerable children and any child who is in the year before school. Currently children enrolled at Hilda and Broughton receive 600 hours of free care which the State Government is funding. Any care above 600 hours is provided at a cost to families; and
 - (c) the City of Sydney also offers prioritised places to vulnerable children, including people seeking asylum, at Alexandria Child Care, Redfern Occasional Care Centre, and Ultimo, Pyrmont and KGV Children’s Programs. Families who are seeking asylum currently pay to use these services as they are not eligible for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and it is not currently possible for a CCS registered service to offer free care; and

- (ii) while their cases are being assessed, people seeking asylum are unable to access early childhood subsidies that Australian families depend upon to make access to early childhood education more affordable. According to the Asylum Seekers Centre, there are 400 children of people seeking asylum in NSW under five years of age; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate how the City of Sydney might join the Inner West Council, Canterbury-Bankstown Council and others in providing free early education services to children whose parents are awaiting asylum seeker determination, and report back to Councillors on what might be possible, via the CEO Update.

Carried unanimously.

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