

Resolution of Council

22 August 2022

Item 12.2

Co-Funding for Aerial Bundled Cables (ABCs) with Councils

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

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the City of Sydney is aiming to increase its tree canopy to 27 per cent cover by the year 2050. It has earmarked \$377 million to invest in parks, green roofs and walls, streetscape gardening and improved urban forests across the whole Local Government Area, including the planting of at least 700 trees a year;
- (ii) the NSW Government is aiming to plant five million trees across Greater Sydney by 2030 to help achieve its goal of increasing canopy cover to 40 per cent;
- (iii) increasing the tree canopy in our local parks, streets and neighbourhoods will provide much needed shade and shelter from heat, improve our air and water quality, improve health and wellbeing and build our resilience to climate change;
- (iv) street trees provide the most urban cooling benefit, as they shade hard surfaces like buildings and asphalt;
- (v) electricity distributors only consider small trees suitable for planting under powerlines. Pruning to ensure safe clearances by electricity distributors can often significantly reduce the urban canopy;
- (vi) when overhead low voltage bare wire cables are upgraded to insulated cable known as aerial bundled cable (ABC), trees can grow closer to the wires and can be directionally pruned around the wires, allowing for larger trees and greater canopy cover;
- (vii) local residents regularly express concern regarding the heavy pruning of street trees by Ausgrid contractors as overhead bare wire cables cannot come within close proximity of tree canopy;

- (viii) currently if a council wants to upgrade the network from bare wire to ABC, it would need to hire an Accredited Service Provider and would bear the full cost of the upgrade;
 - (ix) in preparing for its Draft Plan 2024-29, Ausgrid consulted with Councils through various working groups. At the vegetation management and resilience groups, several Councils asked for more aerial bundled cabling;
 - (x) Ausgrid is working with Councils to co-fund upgrades to ABC, as part of a broader climate resilience program;
 - (xi) the City of Sydney was previously involved in a similar co-funding program with Ausgrid that ended roughly 10 years ago. Since the end of this program, city staff have continued to advocate for ABC and undergrounding of cables;
 - (xii) the proposal includes a priority funding program for councils with low urban canopy cover and low proportions of ABC in their overhead network. Priority councils would receive a 70 per cent funding contribution from Ausgrid. It also includes a non-priority program which provides 50 per cent co-funding contribution;
 - (xiii) under the terms of the draft program, the City of Sydney may be eligible for roughly \$277,000 in non-priority program funding to upgrade 63 spans over 2024-2029;
 - (xiv) Ausgrid is seeking a letter of 'in-principle' support from councils for the program when they release their Draft Plan 2024-29 for consultation on 31 August 2022;
 - (xv) councils should consider the benefit if both Essential Energy and Endeavour Energy, the network operators for the Greater Sydney area and regional NSW, were to implement similar co-funding programs for Councils; and
 - (xvi) this would facilitate the City of Sydney's Greening Strategy to increase canopy cover of the Local Government Area by 50 per cent by 2030 and enable the NSW Government to achieve their canopy cover goal of 40 per cent;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to write an in-principle letter of support to Ausgrid for the ABC co-funding program; and
- (C) Council submit a motion for consideration at the next Local Government NSW Annual Conference which:
- (i) explains the opportunity and asks NSW councils to consider supporting the co-funding proposal;
 - (ii) asks LGNSW to write to Essential Energy and Endeavour Energy to encourage implementation of similar programs across NSW; and
 - (iii) asks LGNSW to write to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment for funding to support Councils with their contribution towards the program.

Carried unanimously.

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