

Resolution of Council

20 February 2023

Item 13.3

Affordable Student Accommodation Shortage

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

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) student accommodation remains some of the most highly priced accommodation in major capital cities, including Sydney. The median unit rents for student accommodation far exceeds even the median rents for other rental accommodation. For example – one popular student accommodation provider in the City of Sydney charges \$729 a week for a large studio, \$569 for a single room in a five-bedroom apartment and \$419 for a shared room;
- (ii) students make an important contribution to the City of Sydney's communities, cultures and economy. The City of Sydney is home to approximately 40 per cent of all education providers in NSW;
- (iii) education and training was the fifth largest export market in the City of Sydney in 2020/21 (comprising 5.3 per cent of all exports). Two hundred and eight thousand international students are enrolled to study in NSW in 2023, 55,000 more than in 2022. In 2023, students are increasingly returning to on-campus study;
- (iv) rental market conditions in Sydney are particularly precarious for international students, who are vulnerable to high levels of exploitation and scams. In addition to high rental costs, international students experience work restrictions and / or precarious work. During the Covid pandemic, the City of Sydney supported a range of programs and initiatives to assist local and international students, including support free food hampers and food banks;
- (v) according to the 2022 *City of Sydney Housing Audit*, the number of student accommodation rooms in the City of Sydney has increased by 173 per cent in the 10 years to 2022, from 4,223 rooms in 2012 to 11,529 in 2022;

- (vi) recently, several higher education institutions within the City of Sydney have sold student accommodation properties to private companies, including the University of Sydney and the University of Technology Sydney, who are reported to have collectively sold approximately \$160 million in student accommodation properties; and
 - (vii) even with the high cost of student housing rents, in January and February 2023, media outlets began reporting that student housing in the City is at capacity, that wait lists exist for many student housing providers, and a large number of students are at risk of homelessness; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) provide a report to Council via the CEO Update, outlining the current support services and programs which the City of Sydney provides funding for, for both local and international students;
 - (ii) include advice about any current discussions with student bodies, education providers or others about strategies to address the housing and cost of living pressures faced by students; and
 - (iii) refer the issues outlined in this notice to the Housing for All Working Group, and to the Multicultural Advisory Panel, for consideration and advice.

Carried unanimously.

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