

Resolution of Council

13 March 2023

Item 11.8

Supporting the Student Affordability ‘Get a Room’ Campaign

Original motion moved by Councillor Ellsmore, seconded by Councillor Scott.

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the City of Sydney includes a large percentage of young people. The Local Government Area is home to a number of student campuses, including but not limited to the main campus for the University of Sydney (USyd), the main campus for the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), and the Ultimo TAFE;
- (ii) living standards amongst young people are falling, and poverty is growing. The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) and the University of New South Wales found that Youth Allowance (i.e. the payment for a young person living away from home) is more than \$100 below the poverty line (2020, Poverty in Australia Report). They also reported that nine in 10 young people on Youth Allowance had skipped meals and 1 in 3 had withdrawn from their studies because of a lack of funds;
- (iii) housing is the largest single cost for most households, and this is particularly the case for young people living away from home;
- (iv) in recognition of the lack of affordable housing for students, on 20 February 2023 the Council requested that the Chief Executive Officer provide advice on:
 - (a) the current services and programs for both local and international students, which are provided by or supported by the City; and
 - (b) any current discussions with student bodies, education providers or others about strategies to address the housing and cost of living pressures faced by students;

- (v) in recent weeks, the National Union of Students has launched the 'Get a Room' Campaign to lobby governments of all levels to address the problems facing students and young people;
 - (vi) the campaign's demands are to:
 - (a) end rent hikes and cut rents with a national two-year rent freeze and rent reductions;
 - (b) investigate and punish dodgy landlords who provide substandard rental housing and exorbitant rents;
 - (c) ban unfair evictions so no one is forced to leave their homes at short notice;
 - (d) provide affordable student housing by capping student housing at 30 per cent of income and abolishing the market in private student accommodation;
 - (e) take emergency action to house international students who are arriving in Australia without a place of their own to stay;
 - (f) raise the rate of welfare for Youth Allowance, Austudy and Jobseeker recipients to meet the rising cost of living;
 - (g) build public housing to fill the massive shortfall in demand by 2027; and
 - (h) expropriate investment properties so no one can profiteer from housing while the needy go without shelter; and
 - (vii) the campaign is led by the National Union of Students and has been endorsed by the UTS, the USyd and the UNSW Student Representative Councils, as well as USyd Welfare Action Group, UTS Education Action Group, and UNSW Education Collective; and
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to:
- (i) write to the NSW Premier and the Prime Minister of Australia, to highlight the need for urgent action be taken to address the housing affordability challenges faced by students and young people; and
 - (ii) write to University Vice-Chancellors of Universities within the Local Government Area and surrounds to express the City's concerns over the sale of University-owned student accommodation to private providers, and to urge Universities to develop action plans to address affordability challenges faced by students.

The substantive motion was carried on the following show of hands –

Ayes (7) The Chair (the Lord Mayor), Councillors Davis, Ellsmore, Kok, Scott, Scully and Weldon

Noes (2) Councillors Gannon and Jarrett.

Amended motion carried.

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