

Resolution of Council

19 August 2024

Item 11.3

Incentives for Sustainability

Moved by Councillor Weldon, seconded by Councillor Jarrett -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the City has measured, reduced and offset its operational greenhouse gas emissions since 2007. We were the first local government administration to achieve carbon neutral certification from the Australian Government. We have maintained this certification and continue to reduce and offset our operational emissions;
- (ii) the City is committed to achieving net zero emissions across our entire local government area by 2035, as outlined in the Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 strategy. The City leads and partners with key business sectors, industry associations and government to drive collective action to meet environmental targets for our local area;
- (iii) the City has made significant progress with initiatives such as the Building Better Partnership, the Sustainable Destination Partnership, our performance standards for net zero energy buildings, CitySwitch and targeted grants for sustainability focussed projects;
- (iv) led by the City, the Better Buildings Partnership aims to address the challenges facing the commercial property sector and drive sustainability. The Partnership comprises 99 buildings and 55 per cent of commercial office space in the city centre. Collective emissions have been reduced by over 60 per cent;
- (v) similarly, the Sustainable Destination Partnership, brings together hotels, entertainment venues and cultural institutions to decrease emissions, increase building ratings, procure renewables and reduce food waste. The partnership covers more than half of hotel rooms in the city centre;

- (vi) the City introduced planning regulations in 2023 that require new office buildings, hotels, and shopping centres, as well as major redevelopments of existing buildings, to comply with minimum energy ratings and achieve net zero energy output by 2026;
- (vii) the City is a national coordinator of CitySwitch which is supporting Australian office-based businesses on a pathway to net zero emissions. Member councils include City of Melbourne, City of Adelaide, North Sydney Council, Port Phillip Council and Yarra Council. More than 10 per cent of Australian office space is captured in the program which has seen a 58 per cent reduction in emissions intensity (since 2022) and 47 per cent total electricity is now renewable;
- (viii) the City has worked with over 280 apartment buildings providing NABERS ratings and tailored energy action plans which include EV charging and electrification feasibility assessments. This information has enabled strata schemes to invest \$4,299,834 in building upgrades, delivering significant savings across their lifespan (reducing running costs by \$11,224,423) and avoiding 61,488 tonnes of carbon emissions;
- (ix) since 2015, the City of Sydney has supported 464 applications through the Green Building Program for a total funding amount paid of \$5,327,270. These grants have supported apartment buildings and hotels to decarbonise (grants cover NABERS ratings, energy action plans or net zero plans, electrification and EV charging feasibility assessments). Since 2016 energy action plans delivered through grants have enabled \$2.3M of community investment which has unlocked \$6.9M in savings from apartment building upgrades;
- (x) since 2016, the City has funded sustainability focused projects through the cross-pillar Innovation and Ideas Grants, with over \$990,000 cash to support 37 environmental initiatives;
- (xi) following a Lord Mayoral Minute in August 2021, the City ran a GreenPower campaign between May and November 2022 encouraging residents and businesses to switch to GreenPower by shopping around to find the best deal. The evaluation of the campaign found that:
 - (a) 33 per cent of people don't have GreenPower because they didn't know about it, and almost 50 per cent believed a carbon neutral plan was a renewable energy plan and compounding this some energy retailers made it difficult to switch to GreenPower; and
 - (b) the administrators of GreenPower were not able to provide data about how many people in the City of Sydney transitioned to GreenPower because they only required energy retailers to provide data at a state level;
- (xii) many owners and renters in many apartment buildings cannot switch to GreenPower, because they are locked into dirty energy contracts because of deals the developers have done with the operators of embedded networks to supply the entire development;
- (xiii) the Lord Mayor wrote to the NSW and Australian Governments in March 2024 and the Australian Energy Regulator, calling for the Australian Energy Regulator to review the regulatory framework for embedded networks to require 100 per cent renewable energy and be more equitable;

- (xiv) the City continues to promote GreenPower, a government accreditation scheme, through all our partnerships and programs and have developed a master class series and resources on renewables procurement for businesses. The City has a dedicated GreenPower website which is tailored for renters and apartment dwellers;
 - (xv) there are a range of complementary programs at local, state and federal government levels to empower and incentivise the adoption of sustainable practices and stimulate investment in sustainable technologies;
 - (xvi) household and property environmental and energy efficiency upgrades are cost effective and deliver ongoing savings. However, these measures often require an upfront which is a barrier for some; and
 - (xvii) the City of Adelaide's Incentives for Sustainability program provides capped rebates to households, businesses and community group for a range of environmental and energy efficiency upgrades including the installation of solar panels, insulation, electric vehicle charging, and appliance electrification. At latest report, the program has invested over \$1.6 million dollars into over 750 projects and leveraged \$8.37 of community investment for every dollar spent, achieving significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) consider the feasibility, costs and potential social and environmental benefits of establishing an Incentives for Sustainability program referring to the City of Adelaide's program or other programs, including additional incentives for switching to a 100 per cent accredited GreenPower electricity plan as part of the development of the next Environmental Strategy 2025-2029; and
 - (ii) provide advice to Council on the next steps for a second phase of a GreenPower Campaign via the CEO Update; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write again to relevant NSW and Australian Ministers calling on them to request the Australian Energy Regulator to expedite their review of the regulatory framework so that new embedded networks use 100 per cent renewable energy and allow customers of existing embedded networks to switch to GreenPower.

The motion, as varied by consent, was carried unanimously.

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