

## Resolution of Council

**27 October 2025**

### **Item 10.8**

#### **Helping the Community Stay Cool - Opening Up Community Spaces During Hot Days This Summer**

Moved by Councillor Ellsmore, seconded by Councillor Kok –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) climate change is leading to an increase in extreme weather events in our cities;
- (ii) due to its position, Australia, and the Greater Sydney Region are particularly impacted by extreme weather events such as prolonged heat waves, an increase in extreme fire weather and an increase in flooding. Under projected emissions, Sydney could experience an increase of extreme heat days (over 35°C) by 10 to 18, annually by 2050;
- (iii) heatwaves are Australia's most deadly natural disaster, claiming more lives than any other natural hazard in the country;
- (iv) heat risks are highest for some groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, older people, those with chronic health conditions, and young children;
- (v) the health risks associated with climate are closely linked to socio-economic status. The increasing occurrence of heat waves is an equity issue;
- (vi) renters and public housing tenants are at particular risk, where they live in housing that is not well insulated or airconditioned;
- (vii) the City of Sydney has the highest proportion of renters in NSW (60.7%). Many renting and public housing households do not have adequate options for cooling their homes. A recent report found 75% of renting households report cutting back on cooling to reduce energy costs due to the cost of living; and

- (viii) in heat emergencies, access to safe and accessible spaces to stay cool is crucial to help people stay healthy;

(B) Council further note:

- (i) the City of Sydney adopted the *Resilience Strategy 2023-2028* in November 2023. The Resilience Strategy:
  - (a) reports that during shocks, including extreme weather, some people feel safe at local council facilities (including community centres, libraries and aquatic centres), indoor air-conditioned spaces and at local green spaces. This is particularly the case for groups who don't live in safe, secure or airconditioned homes; and
  - (b) includes actions to support the local community to cope with increased heat, and to enhance community facilities to assist priority communities who require additional support during shock events;
- (ii) the City of Sydney's community centres and libraries already operate as Cool Spaces during opening hours, and everyone is welcome. During heat events, staff increase space by opening up unbooked spaces so more people can cool down in air-conditioned spaces. Staff also provide cool water along with health information;
- (iii) City staff are also developing cool spaces resources as part of the communications to support the community on hot days;
- (iv) as part of the NSW Government's Heat sub-plan, the City is also assisting the Premier's Office and the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, to understand the logistics of Cool Centres, what is needed to develop them and what support local government needs to implement them. Recent preliminary research has shown that:
  - (a) Cool Centres need to be safe, appropriate and take into consideration people's health needs and be able to accommodate pets. Staff need specialist training to identify heat injury and potentially provide mental health support as we know that the heat can impact mental health and the effectiveness of certain mental health medications;
  - (b) in the United States, Cool Centres are considered a place of last resort because asking people to travel during a heatwave is not recommended unless absolutely necessary;
  - (c) any use of community facilities for Cool Centres would need to take into account location and community demographics, size and capacity, accessibility, appropriate cooling, staff training and so on; and
  - (d) draft Guidelines have been released on 24 October 2025, and City staff will prepare feedback by 14 November 2025;

- (v) the City of Sydney has a range of other programs and initiatives to support people at risk in extreme weather events and hot days, and advocates for cooler homes, including:
    - (a) the award-winning Mobile Cooling Hubs, a program to support people sleeping rough, which is delivered in partnership with St Vincent's Health Network, Sydney University and the University of Technology Sydney;
    - (b) the Inner City Emergency Response Protocol for People Sleeping Rough, a partnership between the City, Homes NSW and St Vincents, that is activated during extreme weather. The protocol ensures a coordinated response from services, which can range from providing water, sunscreen and information about local cool spaces and the mobile cooling hub, to emergency accommodation, depending on the severity of the event;
    - (c) heat preparedness programs for social housing residents in Forest Lodge and Glebe, codesigned with the community and Red Cross and Inner City Voice. The program helps community members to plan where they would go in heatwaves and residential fires. Planning kits are also distributed at events for communities vulnerable to heat for priority communities such as Pet Day; and
    - (d) supporting the [Healthy Homes for Renters](#) campaign, which is working towards minimum energy efficiency standards for rental homes, to protect renters from extreme heat. The City is supporting research by encouraging local residents to participate in research; and
  - (vi) the City of Sydney has recently trialled keeping libraries open later for students studying for their HSC in 2024 and 2025, funding for which was included in the adopted Council 2024/25 and 2025/26 budgets; and
- (C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) continue using appropriate air-conditioned and accessible indoor community spaces (such as a library or community centre) as heat relief spaces over the summer;
  - (ii) keep Council informed of heat responses in the City of Sydney area and the City's feedback on the NSW Government's draft Cool Places Guidelines via the CEO Update; and
  - (iii) if required, investigate the budget implications of extended and night-time opening hours for staffed libraries and community centres (as heat relief spaces) for Council's consideration as part of the preparation of the 2026/27 Budget and Operational Plan.

Carried unanimously.

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