

Item 13.6

Notices of Motion

Unlocking Our Public Spaces

By Councillor Worling

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) a growing number of Short Term Rental Accommodation (STRA) hosts are relying on external lockboxes or key safes to facilitate guest access, and many of these devices are being attached to public infrastructure such as street signs, poles, fences, railings, bike racks, trees as well as on heritage items within the City of Sydney area;
- (ii) the City of Sydney is a predominantly high-density municipality, with 97% of all dwellings being medium or high-density. This intensifies pressure on the public domain and increases the importance of keeping shared spaces uncluttered, navigable, and safe;
- (iii) lockboxes on public assets can obstruct pedestrian paths when being accessed, compromise mobility, interfere with maintenance operations, create visual clutter, and contribute to safety concerns when visitors access devices at unusual hours;
- (iv) publicly located lockboxes are vulnerable to theft and code-sharing, increasing risks of unauthorised entry to rental STRA properties, apartment buildings in which STRA is located and compromising neighbourhood safety;
- (v) there is no reliable way of determining how many of the lockboxes attached to public infrastructure are actively being used for short-term rental access, as opposed to those that have been abandoned or left behind by previous operators; and
- (vi) the City's Public Domain Policies aim to ensure public spaces remain safe, accessible, uncluttered and equitable, yet there is no explicit provision addressing lockboxes attached to City-owned or managed infrastructure;

(B) Council also note that:

- (i) similar practices have been prohibited in Melbourne, where councils have taken decisive action to ban lockboxes on public infrastructure due to safety, access, and misuse of public assets for private gain;
- (ii) other global cities have adopted alternative key-handover models that avoid placing lockboxes on public assets, such as private providers who offer secure, shop-based or 24-hour locker-based key exchange points used extensively by Airbnb hosts and property managers; and

- (iii) in Madrid, STRA hosts commonly use key-exchange points such as convenience stores, petrol stations, cafés, or staffed retail outlets to facilitate guest access, avoiding the need for public-domain lockboxes;
- (C) Council's position is that STRA lock boxes should not be placed on council property including, but not limited to, trees, tree guards and council fences due to issues of public safety and impact on and damage to council property; and
- (D) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
 - (i) investigate options, in line with Council's stated position, for removal of these items, including allocation of enforcement resources and a public education campaign prior to the undertaking of any enforcement action; and
 - (ii) report back to Council detailing the recommended approach.

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