

## Item 13.3

### Notices of Motion

#### Removing Barriers to Solar Our Schools

By Councillor Scully

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) Australian Parents for Climate Action (AP4CA) are a network of 14,000 parents across the country working to reduce the carbon footprints and power bills of Australian schools and early childhood centres through the 'Solar Our Schools' campaign ("the campaign");
- (ii) the campaign calls on the Federal Government to provide economic-stimulus, infrastructure investment and batteries for all schools and early childhood centres that do not yet have them. The campaign is also requesting that state governments come to an agreed position in allowing all schools and early childhood centres to take part in a "virtual power plant" (VPP) so they can trade their excess solar power with the community. In order for schools to become VPPs, they first need the financial and capacity support to get solar and battery systems installed, and often they need administrative and practical barriers removed;
- (iii) research conducted by Beyond Zero Emissions and provided by the Australian Parents for Climate Action suggests that these initiatives would deliver significant energy and cost savings, as well as new employment opportunities. The research indicates that large schools and centres would save over \$100,000 in annual energy bills and the initiative would create more than 7,000 jobs in the solar and battery industries plus an estimated 4,000 jobs would be created in schools;
- (iv) current state and territory grant programs only fund some state schools to get solar and batteries and preclude these schools from getting solar on lease or finance model. Furthermore, these grant programs don't provide funding for non-government schools;
- (v) the City of Sydney is a participating member of Solar My School, a program founded by Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra Council which supports schools in accessing solar to schools in Sydney on behalf of Ausgrid. A number of schools in our local government area have received assistance through the Solar My School program, however none have progressed to completion. Access to finance is only one of the several barriers that schools in the local government area are experiencing when it comes to implementing solar;

- (vi) these barriers prevent our schools from being able to decarbonise and reduce their costs and undermine the realisation of the Australian Parents for Climate Action campaign. Some of the barriers that have been identified by schools in the local government area include:
  - (a) heritage buildings with electrical or building issues which require Department of Education support to be resolved prior to solar being installed;
  - (b) renewables not being prioritised in budgets for school redevelopments led by the Department of Education and School Infrastructure NSW, or where provision has not been made for solar by way of roofing design and materials; and
  - (c) school communities experiencing challenges in fundraising to cover costs or in navigating the installation of solar;
- (vii) in June 2019, the City of Sydney declared a Climate Emergency. The Climate Emergency response, endorsed in February 2020, sets out a series of principles, goals and priorities to reduce the impacts and increase the resilience of our communities to climate change. These include:
  - (a) Goal 7: Support the community to take further action to address the climate emergency;
  - (b) Goal 8: Help the community access onsite and offsite renewables, including 100 per cent Green Power; and
  - (c) Goal 11: Collaborate with allies to drive change to state and federal policies and regulations to transition to a zero-carbon economy, and ensure sustainable waste and water policies;
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to invite the NSW Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning to meet with the representatives of the City of Sydney Parents and Citizens Associations and representatives from the Australian Parents for Climate Action, to discuss the barriers which prevent schools from implementing renewable energy initiatives and to identify potential solutions for overcoming these barriers;
- (C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to contact eligible schools in the City of Sydney Local Government Area, to provide information on accessing grant opportunities and navigating pathways to implement renewables, such as Solar My Schools; and
- (D) Council endorse the objectives of the Solar Our Schools campaign, and promote the campaign through the relevant channels.