

Item 13.2

Meanwhile Use of Student Housing for Transitional Housing and Crisis Accommodation

Notices of Motion

By Councillor Scully

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) under normal circumstances, more than 178,000 international students study in Sydney each year, enhancing global connections in our local communities, contributing to the life and vibrancy of the city and increasing the diversity of our city. They contribute \$5.8 billion per year to the Australian economy, with significant spend by students in our local City of Sydney economy in addition to their contributions as workers in local businesses;
- (ii) as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, many international students returned home in 2020 and fewer have arrived this year due to continued border closures. Student housing in the City of Sydney has been dramatically impacted, with four out of the top five areas with the greatest reduction in international students in NSW being in our Local Government Area. It may be some time before international student numbers return to pre-pandemic levels, with impacts for our education sector, student housing providers, and the many businesses connected to the international education sector;
- (iii) there is evidence that domestic and family violence increases post disaster, as discussed at the City of Sydney's Domestic and Family Violence Forum in May. In the Sydney Local Government Area, there are on average three incidents of reported abuse per day. Services are reporting that there is an increased need for affordable transitional housing for women experiencing domestic violence or at risk of homelessness as a stepping stone to permanent, safe and affordable housing;
- (iv) vacant student accommodation in our Local Government Area presents one potential solution to this increased need for transitional and affordable housing, however, some barriers exist to the "meanwhile use" of student housing to meet this need, such as the need for new models to ensure commercial viability and planning approval conditions which limit use in some cases; and
- (v) discussions with members of the Student Accommodation Association, Women's Community Shelters and City West Housing have led to a proposal for an innovative arrangement to trial the "meanwhile use" of a property in the Local Government Area, for women in need of transitional affordable housing. This may be the prototype of a new model to unlock more student housing for transitional housing and crisis accommodation; and

- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) consider how the City may be able to support this proposed “meanwhile use” of student housing for transitional housing and crisis accommodation, and to assess whether this project is appropriate to be supported with seed funding from the City of Sydney’s Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund;
 - (ii) work with partners to evaluate the viability and impact of this transitional “meanwhile use” housing model and investigate how this model might be replicated, to support the student housing sector while also providing affordable housing for people in need; and
 - (iii) consider whether planning changes or exemptions may be required and desirable to enable “meanwhile use” for other student accommodation sites in our Local Government Area.

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