

Item 3.2

The Water City - Collaborating with Sydney Water to Improve Our Water Management

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

On 9 August 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its sixth assessment report on climate change. The report makes for grim reading, as it further confirms that some of the impacts of climate change are now inevitable.

The City has been responding to the challenge of climate change on multiple fronts.

As a leader in this space, the City of Sydney is not only aiming for the bold emissions target of Net Zero by 2035, but we're also implementing infrastructure roadmaps that will make Sydney resilient to changing climate.

One great example of climate resilient infrastructure that will be essential to adapt to climate change are the corridors of green spaces. Greening reduces the impacts of urban heating, helps remove pollutants and boosts mental health. The City of Sydney recently committed to greening 40 per cent of its local area by 2050.

The City of Sydney led with the development of our Decentralised Water Master Plan ten years ago.

The Sydney Park Water Harvesting Scheme was originally completed in 2015. In 2017, the original water treatment plant at Sydney Park was removed to accommodate changing land use resulting from the NSW Government's WestConnex road project.

This required the City to build a new fit-for-purpose stormwater recycling treatment plant, so we could continue to utilise recycled water in and around Sydney Park. The new scheme harvests stormwater from Munn Creek catchment, diverting up to 840 ML per year. It is pivotal in topping up the Sydney Park wetlands and irrigating the 44-hectare park and our Nursery Depot. While Sydney Park is our most significant project, the City has also installed or upgraded alternative water sources in over 20 parks. We have also installed over 250 rain gardens that clean stormwater runoff.

The Green Square Town Centre Water Re-Use scheme is another successful program that supplies recycled water for non-potable uses to 1,500 apartments currently, which is expected to rise to 4,000 apartments when the town centre is completed.

The City also committed to drought-proofing the CBD by installing recycled water pipelines in George Street and the Wynyard Walk during the construction of the Light Rail. This will take a significant step forward next month, when the City of Sydney partners with Sydney Water on an Expression of Interest to engage private recycled water operators across the city to supply recycled water to city buildings and parks.

I am heartened that Sydney Water are keen to collaborate with the City of Sydney supporting our aspirations for recycled water. The focus of the City aligns with Sydney Water's strategic objective of "Thriving, Liveable and Sustainable Cities".

The collaboration with Sydney Water is occurring on multiple fronts. It includes Sydney Water working with the City's Sustainability Programs team to help building owners reduce water waste and improve water efficiency, recommending to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment that Sydney Water would like to see recycled water use and dual plumbing in Waterloo Estate.

Sydney Water will be hosting the inaugural Sydney Water Innovation Festival from 18 to 20 October 2021. This event is modelled on the successful Northumbrian Water Innovation Festival which is now in its fifth year.

I am pleased to have been invited to open this online Festival, which is intended to bring together water industry, research and academia, key private sector stakeholders, the Indigenous and wider community to showcase leading-edge innovation, and address key water management challenges.

I am encouraged to see the new Managing Director, Roch Cheroux and his Executive Team at Sydney Water focused on innovation and sustainability. This approach will be critical to strengthen Sydney's position as a leading water-wise city and also to protect and clean-up our Sydney Harbour.

Greater Sydney Harbour is one of the world's greatest Harbours and is a state, national and global asset. It stretches from its upper tidal limits on the Parramatta River downstream to the ocean entrance between North and South Head. Its catchments are the home of 3.07 million people (projected to go to 4.35 million by 2041). It has been a magnet for tourists the world over and a source of great ecological diversity.

However, its waters have also been home to industry and pollution – most sediment contaminants entered the Harbour prior to 1970, when industry practices were poorly regulated. While we have seen some improvement, our Harbour is continually threatened by possible adverse impacts of population growth and development. It is also susceptible to the impacts of climate change including high rainfall intensity and resulting catchment runoff. In order to make the Harbour swimmable, it will require a whole of government approach.

Our focus on water recycling and stormwater management is a key ingredient in improving the quality of water in the Harbour.

The City is reducing stormwater pollution entering into the Harbour by installing and maintaining stormwater treatment systems such as Gross Pollutant Traps (GPT), raingardens, wetlands and swales in our stormwater network. The City's 250 raingardens and 47 Gross Pollutant Traps prevent hundreds of tonnes of litter from entering our waterways.

The City is also a leader in integrating water sensitive urban design (WSUD) in all urban development. Sydney Water's renewed focus on Liveability is makes them a great partner in focusing on aspects of our city that makes it enjoyable for residents and visitors, such as a clean and swimmable Sydney Harbour.

The idea of a clean and swimmable Harbour has been long held vision of The City. When the City built Pirrama Park, we future proofed this possibility in its design and construction. In 2019, the City commissioned an architect to look at options for bringing to life a swimmable Harbour – and highlighting what is possible in iconic parts of Sydney Harbour. There is growing community interest in this, and I would like to acknowledge the representations I have received from the Millers Point Community Residents Group and Pyrmont residents on this issue.

This vision rests on improving water quality, and the City will continue to play its part to make this happen through our stormwater management initiatives, and through our growing collaboration with Sydney Water.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council commend Sydney Water for its focus on innovation, sustainability and liveability;
- (B) Council note that Sydney Water are partnering with the City of Sydney on an Expression of Interest to be released to the market in October 2021 engaging with private recycled water operators across the city and how they might to supply recycled water to city buildings and parks;
- (C) Council note that the Lord Mayor will open the Sydney Water Innovation Festival, which is intended to bring together water industry, research and academia, key private sector stakeholders, the Indigenous and wider community to showcase leading-edge innovation, and address key water management challenges; and
- (D) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the Premier to advocate for a whole of Government approach to making swimming possible in iconic parts of Sydney Harbour.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor