

## Item 12.4

### Notices of Motion

#### Vacant Homes in a Housing Crisis

By Councillor Ellsmore

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the City of Sydney is in the midst of a housing affordability crisis. While much of the public debate has focused on how to build new homes, failure to use vacant homes that exist and loss of existing affordable, public and social homes, are part of the problem;
- (ii) on 29 August 2023, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released new research using administrative and electricity data to estimate how many homes showed no sign of recent use. The ABS research found that there are 3,568 dwellings not in use in Sydney, making up 3.1 per cent of the Local Government Area;
- (iii) the NSW Government has been progressively reducing the number of public housing dwellings in the City of Sydney Local Government Area. According to the most recent Housing Audit conducted by the City of Sydney (2022), there were 158 less social (including public) housing dwellings in the Local Government Area in June 2022, compared to ten years ago (9,849 dwellings in 2012);
- (iv) the NSW Government announcement for the redevelopment of Waterloo South is estimated to only deliver 150 new social housing homes, over the next five to 10 years. This would not even make up what has been lost;
- (v) public housing dwellings are being left vacant, including because basic maintenance has not been done, or because it is common for tenants to be moved out years before redevelopment or renovation is to be undertaken;
- (vi) for example, apartments in the 40-year-old public housing complex at 82 Wentworth Park Road have been left vacant for extended periods, including apartments that recently received new carpets and painting. Two remaining households are currently facing eviction, although no development approval has yet been granted for the property;
- (vii) increased vacancies in public housing is a national and state trend. The Australian Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services reports on the number of public housing vacancies. Data included in this report shows that since 2018 public housing vacancies in NSW have more than doubled, with an average vacancy rate of four per cent;

- (viii) the City of Sydney has also identified the loss of boarding houses, and the increasing number of dwellings being used for short term rental accommodation (such as AirBnB) as potential issues impacting housing availability and affordability; and
  - (ix) Council supports stronger regulation of short-term rental accommodation. In May 2023, Council resolved to investigate commissioning a study on the impact that short-term rental accommodation is having on rental affordability and availability and tourist accommodation in the Sydney Local Government Area, and report back to the City's Housing for All Working Group with the findings and recommendations. Council is also currently reviewing boarding house policies; and
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Minister for Housing and Homelessness:
- (i) expressing concern about reports that public housing is being kept untenanted for extended periods;
  - (ii) requesting information in relation to the number of vacant public housing dwellings in the City of Sydney Local Government Area; and
  - (iii) seeking urgent advice as to what action is being taken by the NSW Government to ensure public housing is not being left vacant, including when a potential renovation or redevelopment will take place at some future period.

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