

Resolution of Council

17 February 2025

Item 13.7

More Meanwhile Housing for a Modern Sydney

Moved by Councillor Maxwell, seconded by Councillor Miller -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the 2025 Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly will be held from 24 to 27 June 2025 in Canberra;
- (ii) the theme for the 2025 National General Assembly, *National Priorities Need Local Solutions*, highlights the unique role Australia's 537 councils can play in delivering local, place-based solutions that meet the needs of their communities while addressing broader national priorities;
- (iii) meanwhile housing in a Local Government Area can address urgent needs by providing temporary accommodation for those experiencing homelessness, survivors of domestic violence, and vulnerable groups such as youth, seniors, refugees, and people with disabilities. It can also support community engagement through artist residencies, pop-up hubs, and eco-friendly housing while serving as worker accommodation or spaces for trials of innovative housing concepts;
- (iv) the City of Sydney has a history of supporting people fleeing domestic violence as well as vulnerable people more broadly, but the demand for safe housing continues to grow;
- (v) currently there are over 100 Development Applications (DAs) with a residential component currently under assessment including residential flat buildings, shop-top housing, terrace dwellings and alts/adds to existing dwellings in the City of Sydney with approved properties often left vacant before redevelopment begins;

- (vi) Lane Cove Council has adopted a model enabling vacant properties to serve as temporary shelters for people fleeing domestic violence, in collaboration with housing agencies and nonprofits, ensuring no costs or liabilities for property owners;
 - (vii) Homes NSW and Bridge Housing are successfully using a 17-unit building in inner Sydney for short-term accommodation, demonstrating the model's scalability and suitability for Council-led initiatives;
 - (viii) in December 2024, the NSW Government introduced exempt and complying development pathways to make it easier for vacant properties to be repurposed for crisis housing without requiring a Development Application (DA), expediting access to temporary accommodation;
 - (ix) as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the number of international students in Sydney, in July 2021, Council resolved to work with organisations to support the “meanwhile use” of vacant student housing for transitional housing and crisis accommodation. Later that year, Council provided an Ad Hoc grant of \$118,540 to Women’s Community Shelters for Abercrombie House, which unlocked underutilised student accommodation to provide single women at risk of homelessness or leaving Domestic or Family Violence with affordable housing and support for a 12-month period; and
 - (x) in July 2024, Council resolved that the Lord Mayor be requested to host a roundtable with Community Housing Providers, Metropolitan Councils, Homes NSW, the Tenants’ Union of NSW, Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, the NSW Rental Commissioner and peak bodies about protecting and increasing safe and secure affordable rental housing, which will be held later this year;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate how Council can work with existing organisations to encourage and facilitate the use of vacant properties for meanwhile housing, including opportunities for financial or in-kind support, and report back to Council via the CEO Update;
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Paul Scully, requesting information be provided on the NSW Planning Portal to notify applicants about opportunities available through the new exempt and complying development pathways for the meanwhile use of their vacant properties for crisis accommodation; and
- (D) Council endorse the following motion for submission to the 2025 Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to advocate to relevant state and territory governments to consider introducing exempt and complying development pathways to enable the meanwhile use of vacant properties for crisis accommodation and to implement a notification process to applicants.

Carried unanimously.

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