

Resolution of Council

17 March 2025

Item 13.9

Building New Harbour Swimming Spots

Moved by Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Miller –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) that a swimmable Sydney is one of the Transformative Project Ideas in the Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Plan;
- (ii) the longstanding commitment the City has shown to the restoration of our waterways to provide more locations for communities to swim and cool off as global temperatures rise;
- (iii) the success of restoring Barangaroo's Marrinawi Cove in providing a sustainable location for communities to gather and relax;
- (iv) that due to climate change, the average surface air temperature in Australia has increased by 1.4°C since 1910, and the temperature of Sydney's metropolitan area is projected to increase by 1.8°C in 2050;
- (v) the City of Sydney and Sydney Water, along with a growing number of global cities, like Copenhagen, Boston and Paris, have started the process of restoring polluted waterways to provide suitable locations for communities to swim and cool down;
- (vi) that working with Sydney Water to rehabilitate the harbour to provide suitable locations for swimming is one of the key pillars of the City's 2050 plan;
- (vii) that restoring Sydney's waterways through Aboriginal-led designs, drawing on the expertise of the Traditional Custodians of the land, is a priority aspiration of the First Peoples Dialogue Forum 2019; and

- (viii) that restoring Sydney's waterways so they are swimmable will require collaboration across all levels of government and significant investment by Sydney Water and the NSW Government;
- (B) Council further note that:
- (i) water testing by Sydney Water and the City of Sydney in Elizabeth Bay, Glebe and Pirrama Park, Pyrmont indicate these sites are not currently suitable for recreational swimming;
 - (ii) the water quality is significantly compromised by sewer overflow outlets and pollutants that run off land and sewers not controlled by the City of Sydney;
 - (iii) Nawi Cove at Barangaroo is managed by Placemaking NSW;
 - (iv) the Lord Mayor met with CEO of Sydney Water Roch Cheroux in June 2023, who advised that the water quality at Johnston's Bay at Pirrama Park is not suitable for swimming because there is not enough sea- water flushing; and
 - (v) given the age of pipes in the inner city, and pollution levels from past industrial uses, fixing water quality will require significant investment by Sydney Water and the NSW Government;
- (C) the City of Sydney is now testing water quality near the Tide to Tide sculpture in the north of Pirrama Park hoping to find a place that can be declared safe for swimming;
- (D) the City of Sydney has a duty of care to provide safe swimming spots, and until Sydney Water and the NSW Government commit significant additional resources to rehabilitating the harbour, it would be premature to develop plans for infrastructure to provide harbour swimming;
- (E) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Minister for Water, Rose Jackson, and the CEO of Sydney Water, Roch Cheroux, to:
- (i) reaffirm the City's commitment to rehabilitate Sydney's waterways in accordance with the City's 2050 plan;
 - (ii) outline the work the City has already undertaken in support of this goal;
 - (iii) request that the NSW Government commit resources and funding for the construction of a new public harbour swimming spot at Nawi Cove when water testing results show it is safe for swimming;
 - (iv) request that the NSW Government commit funding to upgrade stormwater infrastructure, including sewage pipe outflows, to improve water quality in Sydney Harbour; and
 - (v) request that the NSW Government and Sydney Water develop a comprehensive plan, in collaboration with local communities and local Councils, to restore Sydney's waterways, such as Blackwattle Bay, Rozelle Bay, Elizabeth Bay, Johnstons Bay, Walsh Bay and Rushcutters Bay, so they are swimmable; and

- (F) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to publish a summary of water testing results on the City of Sydney website, and provide advice to Council on what further steps the City can take to achieve our goal of a swimmable Sydney by 2050, including, but not limited to:
- (i) identifying other potential harbour locations that could be suitable for swimming or floating swimming pools within the Local Government Area; and
 - (ii) the further naturalisation of Johnstons Creek, the Alexandria Canal, and other waterways in improving harbour water quality.

Carried unanimously.

X113760