

Resolution of Council

28 April 2026

Item 13.9

NSW and Australian Government Support for Non-Resident Rough Sleepers

Moved by Councillor Worling, seconded by Councillor Ellsmore –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) housing and responding to homelessness are the responsibility of the NSW Government but the City does everything in our power to get people who are sleeping on the streets the help they need. This includes \$2.4 million annually for specialist homelessness services and daily check-ins to link people sleeping rough with health and other services and organisations that can assist them further. The work the City does, and funds, complements the services delivered and funded by the NSW Government;
- (ii) on 20 April 2026, the Guardian reported the [tragic death of Bikram Lama](#), who came to Australia from Nepal as an international student, one of about 40,000 students from Nepal who come to study in Sydney each year. Bikram was found dead in December 2025 in the bushes above the St James Train station tunnel, where he had been sleeping rough:
 - (a) Bikram's death highlights the glaring gap in state and federal responses to homelessness. People without residency status are ineligible for social housing and Centrelink services. It is very challenging for this cohort of rough sleepers to access crisis and temporary accommodation. They cannot get Centrelink payments or, in most cases, access public health care;
 - (a) the City works closely with the Haymarket Foundation, a crisis housing service in our Local Government Area (LGA) that does support non-residents who are experiencing homelessness;
 - (b) we don't know exactly how Bikram came to be homeless but we do know international students like Bikram are highly vulnerable without the housing and other supports available to people who come to Australia legally but lose their visa status or never obtain permanent residency;

- (c) it is also devastating that Bikram's family cannot afford to bring his body back to his home village and perform the last rites according to Nepali traditions; and
 - (d) in a country as wealthy as Australia, it is shocking that a person who comes here to study can slip through the cracks so easily. It is even more devastating when we learn Bikram's family sold land and sacrificed a significant part of their own financial security to send him here for a better life. Questions need to be asked about the systems and supports the universities and international education sector have in place to monitor the welfare of students and, if necessary, connect them with support;
- (iii) around 20% of people sleeping rough in our local area are not Australian residents. These increasingly vulnerable non-residents do not have a pathway to housing and support:
- (a) in 2020, the City and St Vincent's Health co-founded the Non-Resident Working Group and Non-Resident Case Coordination group in response to increasing numbers of non-residents sleeping rough in the City of Sydney as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic;
 - (e) since then, the City has consistently asked state and federal governments to review their homelessness policies and give people who are not residents access to crisis shelters and housing options; and
 - (f) despite strong advocacy at a state and federal level over the past few years requesting the need for dedicated funding to work with non-residents, currently no such services have been funded and non-residents remain without any preventative measures to avert them from entering into homelessness;
- (iv) each year there is a memorial to commemorate and honour all people who have died while experiencing homelessness in the past year. For many people experiencing homelessness, this is their only commemoration. And yet in NSW, we don't track the number of people who have died while sleeping rough; and
- (v) on 24 April 2026, the Member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich, wrote to the NSW Attorney General requesting a coronial inquest be held into the death of Bikram Lama and the gaps in support that could have prevented his death to help the community understand how the system let Bikram and other homeless people down, and what we can do better;
- (B) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate the life of Bikram Lama, and the lives of all the other people who have died while experiencing homelessness in our city; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to:
- (i) the Consulate of Nepal to NSW to convey Council's condolences;
 - (ii) Bikram's family, via the Consulate of Nepal to NSW, to convey Council's condolences to Bikram Lama's family;
 - (iii) the NSW Minister for Homelessness and the Federal Minister for Housing and Homelessness calling on the NSW Government and Australian Governments to fund Specialist Homelessness Services to provide housing pathways for people facing homelessness who do not have residency status and so slip through the cracks of support; and

- (iv) the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, requesting the Australian Government work with the Consulate of Nepal to NSW and NSW Police to support logistically and financially the repatriation of Bikram's remains to his home village in Nepal.
- (v) the NSW Attorney General, formally requesting a coronial inquest be held into the death of Bikram Lama and the gaps in support that could have prevented his death, backing Alex Greewich's request.

The motion, as varied by consent, was carried unanimously.

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Note – All Councillors, staff and members of the public present stood in silence for one minute as mark of respect to Bikram Lama.