

Item 12.16**Notices of Motion****Urban Billabongs and Additional Water Play Areas**

By Councillor Weldon

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) with climate change increasing the frequency and severity of extreme heat events, accessible public spaces to cool off in summer are vital for community safety and wellbeing;
- (ii) there is a growing national and global trend for incorporating open and free swimming areas, splash pools, and water play areas into public space design to promote cooling and to enhance liveability;
- (iii) the City of Sydney is committed to providing more opportunities for casual swimming, in addition to operating 6 high-quality and well-utilised public lap pools and aquatic centres;
- (iv) this includes working with Sydney Water to restore local waterways and improve water quality, with the long-term aspiration of creating more locations for safe harbour swimming, as identified within Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050; and
- (v) there is significant community interest in open and free swimming areas, demonstrated by the popularity of the new harbourside swimming area at Marrinawi Cove and the water play area at Pirrama Park;

(B) Council also note:

- (i) urban billabongs are shallow man-made lagoons designed to provide a safe and accessible place for people of all ages to take a quick dip and cool off in summer;
- (ii) urban billabongs could be integrated with the restoration of Sydney's waterways by tracing historic routes and implementing Aboriginal-led design principles that recognise the cultural and ecological significance of these places – a priority aspiration of the First Peoples Dialogue Forum in 2019; and
- (iii) the concept could also allow for water to be drained in cooler months to support other community uses, including as a gathering space and a site for cultural activations and community events;

- (C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate the budget implications of undertaking a feasibility study as part of the preparation of the 2026/27 Budget and Operational Plan which would include the costs, and potential locations for establishing up to 5 new urban billabongs and/or water play areas within the City of Sydney for Council's consideration. The investigation should:
- (i) prioritise locations in neighbourhoods without public pools or harbour swimming opportunities, including:
 - (a) Alexandria, Erskineville and Sydney Park;
 - (b) expanding existing water features at Redfern Park and Green Square Plaza; and
 - (c) incorporating an urban billabong and/or water play area into the vision and plan for the redevelopment of Wentworth Park;
 - (ii) include, but not be limited to, analysis of:
 - (a) site suitability and integration with existing parks and open space;
 - (b) public safety and accessibility requirements, including provisions for lifeguard supervision, regular water testing and maintenance;
 - (c) detailed financial estimates for the design, construction, provision of accompanying amenities (e.g. showers, change rooms and shading) and ongoing operational costs; and
 - (d) the role of these facilities as local heat refuges and their contribution to reducing the urban heat island effect through evaporative cooling; and
- (D) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to include the potential provision of urban billabongs and additional water play areas in the upcoming Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs review.

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