

Item 6.

International Travel - RC21 Conference 2026

File No: X014468

Summary

RC21 Conference 2026

The RC21 Conference on Urban and Regional Development is titled 'Inequalities and the City' (Old Issues, New Challenges).

RC21 is a committee of the International Sociological Association, focused on urban and regional development, and challenges for cities. It was established in 1970. Its activities include an international annual conference every year attended by around 1,000 academics, researchers and policy makers. Its focus areas include housing, urban planning and equality in cities.

On 13 March 2026, Councillor Sylvie Ellsmore co-hosted (with the Henry Halloran Urban and Regional Research Initiative (HHURRI) at the University of Sydney) the NSW Local Government and Affordable Housing Forum: examples, pathways, and opportunities.

Following the forum, a paper proposal by Councillor Ellsmore, Professor Nicole Gurran and Dr Greta Werner from the University of Sydney was accepted at the RC21 conference 2026, following a competitive process.

The RC21 conference is being held from 18 to 23 July 2026, in Vienna, Austria.

The session is titled 'Research co-design for housing justice with the Local Government Sector in NSW, Australia' and is scheduled to be presented on Wednesday 22 July 2026.

It is proposed that Council support Councillor Ellsmore's attendance at the conference, so that the City of Sydney is officially represented and the work of the City can be promoted and discussed.

The Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy (adopted by Council in December 2024) requires that overseas travel for Councillors be approved by Council on an individual trip basis.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council endorse Councillor Sylvie Ellsmore in representing the City of Sydney at the RC21 Conference from 18 to 23 July 2026 in Vienna, Austria;
- (B) Council note that Councillor Sylvie Ellsmore will provide a report to Council after the travel; and
- (C) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to authorise minor variations to travel plans including dates and costs as required (increase of up to \$1,000 including GST).

Attachments

Nil.

Background

1. RC21 is a committee of the International Sociological Association, focused on urban and regional development, and challenges for cities. It was established in 1970. Its activities include an international annual conference every year attended by around 1000 academics, researchers and policy makers. Its focus areas include housing, urban planning and equality in cities.
2. The RC21 Conference 2026 will be organised and hosted by the University of Vienna.
3. The RC21 Conference on Urban and Regional Development is titled 'Inequalities and the City' (Old Issues, New Challenges). The agenda for the conference can be found [here](#).
4. On 13 March 2026, Councillor Sylvie Ellsmore co-hosted (with the Henry Halloran Urban and Regional Research Initiative (HHURRI) at the University of Sydney) the NSW Local Government and Affordable Housing Forum: examples, pathways, and opportunities.
5. The forum included presentations from councils and leading housing researchers about how different councils can establish affordable housing programs, can fund, deliver, manage, own or co-own affordable housing, including buying and co-owning boarding houses, delivery of different kinds of housing including for older women, Aboriginal women, people with a disability and key workers, protecting housing supply including previously unpublished data on short term rentals, and more.
6. Following the NSW Local Government and Affordable Housing Forum, which Councillor Ellsmore organised with HHURRI, a paper proposal by Councillor Ellsmore, Professor Nicole Gurran and Dr Greta Werner from the University of Sydney was accepted at the RC21 conference, following a competitive process.
7. The session is titled 'Research co-design for housing justice with the Local Government Sector in NSW, Australia' and is scheduled to be presented on Wednesday 22 July 2026.
8. Further information can be found in the [detailed program](#) for the conference.
9. As part of the event and in separate meetings Councillor Ellsmore is hoping to organise, she would also have the opportunity to discuss housing programs with housing providers and the council in Vienna.

Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy

10. The Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy (adopted by Council in December 2024) requires that overseas travel for Councillors be approved by Council on an individual trip basis.
11. For overseas meetings, conferences or seminars, a report or relevant material must be prepared for circulation to the Council and review by the public within 6 months of the travel undertaken.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

12. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:

- (a) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - The RC21 conference will discuss and consider:

As urban populations continue to expand, so too do the challenges and risks confronting their inhabitants. Issues emerging at both local and global scales present enduring tests to the sustainability of urban coexistence. Pollution, housing shortages, social segregation, and imbalances of political power are but a few notable examples. Such issues have profound implications for residents' well-being and contribute to deepening inequalities both between cities and within them.

- (b) Direction 10 - Housing for all -Councillor Ellsmore's presentation on supporting housing and local council collaboration aligns with Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050: Continuing the Vision.

Risks

13. This recommendation is within the City of Sydney's risk appetite which states:

- (a) We recognise the significance of our reputation as a valuable asset that influences stakeholder trust, business continuity and the short- and long-term achievement of our objectives.

Financial Implications

14. It is proposed that the City cover air travel, accommodation, ground transport and incidentals, at an approximate cost of \$7,000 (including GST) for Councillor Ellsmore's attendance at the RC21 conference.
15. Funds are available within existing operational budgets, in accordance with the Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy.

Relevant Legislation

16. Local Government Act 1993.
17. Local Government (General) Regulation 2021.
18. City of Sydney Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

19. The RC21 conference is being held from 18 to 23 July 2026.

MONICA BARONE PSM

Chief Executive Officer