

Item 3.

Grants - Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund - Women's Housing Company

File No: S095194.009

Summary

The City of Sydney's Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund program supports community housing providers and other organisations to develop and manage a range of affordable and diverse local housing.

As set out in the Grants guidelines, the program prioritises projects that provide support and are led by our priority communities, provide services to residents, demonstrate best practice in quality housing including access to safe, secure places that promote wellbeing and social cohesion, and demonstrate financial or in-kind contributions from other sources. Funding for each project is available up to a maximum of \$4 million or 30% of the total cost.

The City has received a grant application from Women's Housing Company Ltd; a community housing provider and registered charity that provides safe social and affordable housing and homelessness solutions for women and their families. The grant application seeks a cash grant to support the purchase and refurbishment of the property described in Confidential Attachment B to provide supported, trauma informed transitional homes for women exiting crisis accommodation.

This report recommends Council approve a cash grant to Women's Housing Company for the amount stated in Confidential Attachment A to the subject report for the purchase and refurbishment of a building to provide crisis and transitional housing for women subject to conditions and noting the departure from some of the program requirements in the Grants Guidelines.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve a cash grant to Women's Housing Company Ltd (ABN 38 002 704 056) for the amount stated in Confidential Attachment A to the subject report, to support the purchase and refurbishment of the property described in Confidential Attachment B to the subject report for the provision of crisis and transitional housing to women at risk of or experiencing homelessness subject to the following conditions:
 - (i) approval of the cash grant will be withdrawn if:
 - (a) the project materially changes from the current proposal as outlined in recommendation (A)
 - (b) Women's Housing Company Ltd does not complete its purchase of the property at Confidential Attachment B to the subject report by 30 January 2027
 - (ii) a covenant must be registered on the title to the property outlined at Confidential Attachment B to the subject report within 3 months of the transfer of the property to Women's Housing Company Ltd to protect the land use remaining crisis and transitional housing, managed by a registered community housing provider, in perpetuity
 - (iii) the grant funds will only be paid in respect of the proposed acquisition and refurbishment of the property outlined at Confidential Attachment B to the subject report, and only after all the following are met to the reasonable satisfaction of Council:
 - (a) Women's Housing Company Ltd has provided Council with evidence of a legally binding agreement to purchase the property, at a price consistent with the project budget, as outlined at Confidential Attachment B
 - (b) Women's Housing Company Ltd has demonstrated that funding is or will on settlement be available for the cost of the acquisition and works to make the property fit for its intended purpose, noting this could be in the form of other grants, debt finance or partnerships
 - (c) Women's Housing Company Ltd has agreed to and signed the covenant required by recommendation A(ii) in a form that will enable the City to lodge the covenant for registration on the title to the property following transfer of ownership
 - (iv) the City will require the grant to be repaid in full indexed annually by CPI if:
 - (a) Women's Housing Company Ltd does not complete its purchase of the property at Confidential Attachment B to the subject report by 30 January 2027 or

- (b) the covenant as contemplated by recommendation (A)(ii) is not registered on the title to the property in the required timeframe or
 - (c) the project materially changes from the current proposal as outlined in recommendation (A) prior to the covenant contemplated by recommendation (A)(ii) being registered on the title to the property
 - (v) acquittal of the grant is to be provided by way of evidence of registration of the covenant required by recommendation A(ii)
- (B) Council note that the grant amount is exclusive of GST
- (C) Council note that the cash grant is for an amount higher than 30% of the total estimated project cost
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to:
 - (i) finalise negotiations, execute and administer the grant agreement with the Women's Housing Company Ltd in accordance with this report
 - (ii) otherwise administer all matters relating to this grant.

Attachments

Attachment A. Financial implications and assessment (Confidential)

Attachment B. Women's Housing Company - Letter of request (Confidential)

Background

1. Women's Housing Company Ltd (ABN 38 002 704 056) is a Tier 1 community housing provider and registered charity that provides safe social and affordable housing and homelessness solutions for women and their families. It has been a community housing provider for 12 years.
2. In 2025, according to their annual report, Women's Housing Company managed 1,213 properties, had 2,207 women and children access their housing and homelessness services and managed 1,383 tenancies.
3. The proposed project involves a partnership between Women's Housing Company and Haymarket Foundation Ltd. The Haymarket Foundation Ltd (ABN 24 001 397 986) is a registered charity that is dedicated to supporting individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness and harm related to drug and alcohol use.
4. Haymarket Foundation will provide support services including specialist homelessness holistic case management, health and alcohol and other drug support, accommodation assessments and post-exit outreach. This is in addition to support services to be offered by Women's Housing Company.
5. The project is the purchase and refurbishment of a building in the City's local government area that would accommodate up to 9 single women (up to 3 of which are working to gain access rights to their children) exiting crisis accommodation for up to 3 years while their long-term housing solution is secured. Existing commercial spaces on the ground floor of the building would be retained to generate revenue to cross subsidise the costs of providing housing and support services.
6. The proposed project and a budget breakdown, including the other funding sources, is included in Confidential Attachment B to the subject report plus details of the building to be purchased.
6. Women's Housing Company has advised it has secured the property however the cash grant sought from the City is needed to ensure the viability of the project.
7. Assessment of the proposal has been completed by City staff and is included at Confidential Attachment A.

Strategic alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

8. 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 grant is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 6 – An equitable and inclusive city. The proposed purchase and refurbishment will provide transitional accommodation that will support people experiencing domestic violence and potential homelessness.

- (b) Direction 7 - Resilient and diverse communities. Women's Housing Company has a long history of providing support to women in crisis and experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence. This property will enable women, including women with young children, to live in the city close to public transport and with services available to support transition into long term accommodation.
- (c) Direction 10 - Housing for all – The purchase of this building will increase the availability of accommodation for women, including women with children, that need transitional housing. Accommodation will be provided in the form of self-contained units, including some 2 bedroom units. While services will not be onsite, they will be available to all tenants.

Risks

- 9. Any identified risks arising from the recommended grant are within the City's risk appetite, which states:
 - (a) We make decisions that align with our corporate objectives, policies and strategies and are committed to conducting our activities in full compliance with applicable laws, regulations and relevant industry standards.
 - (b) We acknowledge that some financial risks may be necessary to achieve our goals, particularly when investing in new initiatives that align with our strategic objectives. We carefully evaluate financial options and risks and consider the potential impact on our financial position, cash flow, and overall stability and;
 - (c) Our risk philosophy is centred around achieving a balance between innovation, community and user satisfaction and risk management, ensuring that we meet our strategic objectives to provide the levels of service that are both affordable and considered appropriate by the community.
- 10. Additional risks associated with this specific grant are included at Confidential Attachment A.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 11. As outlined in the City of Sydney's social sustainability policy, A City For All - towards a just and resilient Sydney, the provision of innovative approaches to addressing homelessness like those outlined in the subject report are essential to aid in preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping in our city. In addition, this project will improve community safety through collaboration with government and non-government organisations to deliver improved services, programs and initiatives.
- 12. The Women's Housing Company in partnership with Haymarket Foundation will provide specialised support services to the tenants of the building. Both organisations have a long history of providing these services to people experiencing homelessness and associated experiences that require specialist support such as people who have co-occurring mental health issues, harm related to alcohol and other drugs and/or lifelong trauma and disability.

Financial implications

13. Approval of the grant will reduce the affordable and diverse housing fund internal cash reserves by the amount set out in Confidential Attachment A to the subject report.
14. Payment of this grant will need to be made within the 2026/27 financial year.
15. The 2026/27 operating budget includes an allocation of \$3 million, of which \$300,000 has been allocated in the current financial year. While sufficient funding is available in future years, it is proposed the budget is not amended at this stage. However, financial performance will be closely monitored, should additional budget be required, a budget adjustment will be reported to Council through the relevant quarterly budget review process.

Relevant legislation

16. Section 356(1) of the Local Government Act 1993 states that a council may, in accordance with a resolution of the council, contribute money or otherwise grant financial assistance to persons for the purpose of exercising its functions. Public exhibition of this sponsorship is not required because the funds are being paid to a not-for-profit organisation that is not operating for private gain.
17. Local Government Act 1993 - Sections 10A and 10B provide that a council may close to the public so much of its meeting as comprises the discussion of information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
18. Attachments A and B contain confidential commercial information which, if disclosed, would prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it.
19. Discussion of the matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because it would compromise Council's ability to negotiate fairly and commercially to achieve the best outcome for its ratepayers. The reasons supporting this are that disclosure of information provided as part of the grant application and information relating to the transaction would prejudice the commercial position of the applicant that supplied it.

EMMA RIGNEY

Executive Director City Life

Sam Wild, Manager Grants