Item 13.15

Notices of Motion

Ensuring Liveable Homes for Renters

By Councillor Thompson

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note that:

(i) renters, social, community and public housing tenants across Australia and in the City of Sydney consistently experience:

(a) intolerable temperatures and extreme heat during the summer months

(b) persistent mould, damp and draughts during winter months

(ii) these repeated exposures to unsafe thermal conditions in people's homes are causing physical and mental health harms that particularly affect older people and people with chronic health conditions

(iii) research and consultation, including that commissioned by the City of Sydney, conclude that poor quality housing and badly designed urban infrastructure are the main causes and that these issues are concentrated in low-income areas, social and community housing, and rental dwellings

(iv) renters, who form the majority of City of Sydney residents, often have little capacity to implement passive cooling measures such as insulation, ventilation, window awnings, draught-proofing and flyscreens (unlike home owners)

(v) social and community housing residents and other renters experiencing financial hardship often lack the means to use costly air-conditioning or install renewable energy systems that typically reduce energy costs

(vi) these impacts are likely to worsen given the increasingly severe housing, climate and energy crises that are affecting our communities and which exacerbate housing insecurity and the cost of living

(B) Council further note that:

(i) the City's Environmental Strategy 2025-2030 makes supporting renters' access to energy efficient and climate resilient homes a priority for the City, and aims to target priority communities (including low-income, renters, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, those with disability and those experiencing homelessness)

(ii) the City of Sydney made a strong case for the implementation of Minimum Energy Rental Efficiency Standards and supportive policies and programs in its May 2026 submission to the NSW Government

(iii) however, the City's submission envisaged a limited role and few changes in the work of councils

(iv) given that the City's Smart Green Apartments Program has been taken up in just 200 apartment buildings, there is an opportunity for the City to do more to improve the thermal comfort of low-income renters

(C) Council further note that:

(i) in 2022 Newtown MP Jenny Leong advocated for energy efficiency standards in rental homes calling for the NSW Government to introduce better minimum standards in rental accommodation

(ii) other organisations have provided the evidence base, consulted and advocated strongly and for minimum energy efficiency rental standards, including the NSW Tenants Union, Sweltering Cities, Solar Citizens, Energy Consumers Australia, Renew, House You, Better Renting, and the Sydney Alliance as well as several university research centres

(iii) due to this advocacy, the NSW Government is currently exploring minimum energy efficiency rental standards (MEERS) following consultation earlier this year. However, no implementation date has been announced

(D) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the Minister for Climate Change, Energy, Heritage and the Environment, the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, and the Minister for Housing and Homelessness requesting:

(i) an update on these reforms

(ii) an approach to MEERS that is enforceable for all renters, supported by robust compliance measures

(iii) protection for renters against MEERS-related rent increases or evictions

(E) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:

(i) report back to Council on the City's response to 2 research studies it co-funded in 2024/255, reported as "Too Hot To Be Home, NSW renters' experiences of summer heat in apartments and high-rise buildings; and The Power of People: revolutionising environmental monitoring through Citizen Science"

(ii) report back to Council on other measures successfully used elsewhere such as an opportunity for renters to access energy efficiency assessments of their homes to identify passive cooling measures that could be taken without landlord approval (e.g. retractable fly screens), and with landlord co-operation (e.g. insulation), accompanied by a small grants program for low-income renters.

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