Item 14.8

Notices of Motion

Supporting Menstruation and Reproductive Leave in Our City

By Councillor Ellsmore

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

(i) most women will experience around 400 to 600 periods over their lifetime. On average, a woman menstruates for about 3 to 7 days per month, which totals roughly 39 to 91 days per year

(ii) research confirms that, for the majority of women, periods often have significant negative impacts on overall wellbeing, most commonly on the first 2 days of bleeding a month

(iii) endometriosis and Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) are among the most common reproductive health conditions in Australia, contributing to significant chronic health impacts, financial costs, and infertility. They effect approximately one in 7 (around 14%) of women and girls assigned female at birth

(iv) endometriosis is a leading cause of non-fatal disease burden among women, with both endometriosis and PCOS often involving debilitating symptoms and significantly impact quality of life, fertility, and participation in education, employment, and social activities

(v) in 2022, the World Health Organization recognised menstrual health as a human rights issue and called for greater institutional responsibility to support menstrual health and wellbeing

(B) Council further note:

(i) because of the frequency and severity of impacts associated with periods and conditions like endometriosis and PCOS, women often do not have sufficient sick or personal leave to allow them to take the time off they need from work, and are forced to take unpaid leave instead or work while experiencing significant symptoms

(ii) Endometriosis Australia has reported that 70% of women take unpaid time off work to manage symptoms associated with endometriosis, one in 3 have been passed over for promotion, and one in 6 have lost their job as a result of the condition

(iii) ‘menstrual leave’ is workplace leave that allows employees to take time off work when they experience symptoms associated with periods, or from chronic health conditions such as endometriosis and PCOS, where these impact their health and ability to work

(iv) ‘reproductive leave’ is a form of paid leave which includes menstrual leave. Reproductive leave is designed to support employees of all genders to manage menstruation and chronic health conditions such as endometriosis and PCOS, as well as the impacts of fertility treatments and related procedures, including IVF

(C) Council further note:

(i) the City of Sydney has a strong commitment to gender equality. The proportion of women employed by the City increased from 29% in 2005 to 43% in 2022. Women now make up two-thirds of the City's senior leadership team and half of all team managers

(ii) according to the City of Sydney Award 2025, employees currently receive 10 days of personal/carer's leave on commencement and 18 days on completion of each subsequent year of service, while employees under the City of Sydney (South Sydney) Award 2025 receive 15 days of sick leave

(iii) in 2017, the Victorian Women's Trust became the first organisation in Australia to introduce paid menstrual leave, providing employees with up to 12 days per year. Data collected by the Victorian Women's Trust found that the policy was not misused and that employees used an average of 6 days of menstrual leave annually

(iv) in April 2024, the Victorian Government introduced an additional 5 days of paid menstrual and reproductive leave for public and community sector employees

(v) internationally countries including Indonesia provide paid menstrual leave entitlements to employees

(vi) in 2025, the United Services Union launched a campaign advocating for improved workplace rights and protections for workers experiencing reproductive health challenges, including access to 10 to 12 days of paid reproductive health leave and stronger flexible work arrangements

(vii) organisations that have adopted menstrual and reproductive leave policies have reported positive outcomes including improved employee wellbeing, retention and productivity

(D) Council provide in principle support for the introduction of paid menstruation and reproductive leave for City of Sydney employees

(E) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:

(i) investigate options for the introduction of a paid menstruation and reproductive leave for City of Sydney employees

(ii) also consider changes to policies or flexible work arrangements to specifically recognise that people experiencing menstruation, menopause, endometriosis, PCOS or related reproductive health symptoms may wish to work from home on particular days

(iii) include consultation with staff, unions and relevant workplace stakeholders

(iv) report back to Council with advice, budget and operational impacts, and recommendations about next steps.

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