Item 14.11

Notices of Motion

Cooling Public Housing in the City of Sydney

By Councillor Ellsmore

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note that:

(i) heat and humidity have a significant impact on people in their homes, particularly older people and people with disability or health conditions that affect thermoregulation

(ii) poor thermal safety contributes to heat-related illness, poorer management of chronic disease, hospitalisations and mortality

(iii) residents of public and social housing are among those least able to improve the thermal safety of their homes due to the costs involved and the limitations imposed by tenancy arrangements

(iv) often public housing in the inner city does not have air conditioning, fans or good insulation

(v) in the City of Sydney during summer, it is not uncommon for people who live in poorly insulated or hot public housing to return to rough sleeping or to seek emergency help, because they cannot get respite from the heat in their homes

(B) Council also note that:

(i) there are more than 9,500 public, social and Aboriginal housing dwellings located in the City of Sydney. A substantial number of these are older housing stock, built without modern thermal-safety standards in mind

(ii) the NSW Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative (SHEPI) is a new thermal-retrofitting program for public and social housing in New South Wales, aims to upgrade approximately 24,000 dwellings

(iii) however, the Net Zero Commission, in its *Heat Stress Spotlight Report*, noted that the design of SHEPI and other energy-efficiency upgrade programs that address heat stress "may fail to prioritise the households most at risk of heat stress" because they rely on National Construction Code climate zones that do not incorporate "future climate projections, cumulative heat exposure, or human thermal-safety thresholds"

(iv) other programs to upgrade social housing include the Community Housing Energy Performance Grants program

(v) however, these initiatives are expected to upgrade just over 15% of public and social housing dwellings in New South Wales, leaving the vast majority of residents without access to thermal safety upgrades

(vi) importantly for City of Sydney residents living in public and social housing, the inner city is de-prioritised for insulation and heat upgrades to existing housing. Recent Questions on Notice to the NSW Parliament reveal that, of the 12,090 properties upgraded through SHEPI as of this year, only 2 were in the Sydney area. Both were Aboriginal Housing Organisation properties

(vii) insulation and cooling are also not being prioritised in new public and social housing in the City of Sydney. At the October 2026 Council meeting, the City of Sydney wrote to the NSW Government urgently advocating for air conditioning to be included in the new Waterloo South public housing towers, after it was revealed that air conditioning was only planned in the private housing

(viii) research shows that even simple changes such as standing fan and water spray bottle can significantly decrease heat stress during extreme heat periods

(C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Minister for Housing and the Federal Minister for Housing:

(i) seeking an urgent update about heat mitigation and maintenance upgrades being implemented or proposed for this summer in the City of Sydney local government area

(ii) advocating for increased funding for thermal-retrofitting programs in public and social housing in the inner city and Greater Sydney

(D) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to provide advice to Council about the City's work to support public housing tenants manage heat this summer.

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