Last year, the City of Sydney joined the City of Melbourne and the City of Brisbane in taking legal action against Telstra over the proposed installation of large payphones with advertising panels and 5G cells in our cities’ streets and public spaces.

Under the current Commonwealth Telecommunications Act, Telstra has the power to install payphones anywhere in Australia without council guidance or permission. The City of Sydney believes Telstra is inappropriately exploiting these powers for profit.

We are working to decrease clutter and make the city a more pedestrian-friendly city. It’s vital that we have a city in the approval of any large advertising billboards that will impact on accessibility and amenity.

TOWARD PROPER PLANNING IN PYRMONT

In October 2019, we broadly agreed with the stated outcome of the Greater Sydney Commission’s (GSC) review of planning in the Western Harbour Precinct, including the Pyrmont peninsula. In their report, the GSC called for a more simplified planning framework by using a place-based approach with adequate community and public transport infrastructure, and consistent community and stakeholder engagement.

For too long, the NSW Government has taken an ad hoc approach to the development of Pyrmont and the Western Harbour, proposing development of state-owned land with little consideration for context and transport needs, and with almost no consultation with residents who live in an area which already has high densities.

The City of Sydney looks forward to working with the NSW Government to build on the best qualities of Ultimo and Pyrmont, while developing an innovation corridor in the precinct that delivers more jobs in our already thriving tech and start-up sectors.

LOCKOUT LAWS LIFTED IN SYDNEY

On 14 January this year, the lockout laws in the city centre and on Oxford Street were lifted, a move that we hope will breathe oxygen into the city’s cultural life and eight-hour economy.

The lockouts were an overreaction when what was needed was 24-hour public transport, and a much stronger liquor licensing system that supported well-run venues and penalised rogue ones. We needed an effective approval system to spread venues across the city rather than concentrating them in the one place such as Kings Cross.

In May 2019, Council endorsed our Late Night Trading Development Control Plan (DCP). This allows for up to 24-hour trading across the entire CBD, and until 2am on village high streets, and creates new late-night trading areas in some of the city’s fastest-growing neighbourhoods as well as a new cultural precinct in Alexandria. It also returns venues holding live performances and creative events with an extra hour of trading.

As of December 2019, more than 30 applications for extended trading hours had been approved under the revised DCP and we anticipate many more now the lockouts have been removed.

We are keen to work with the NSW Government and the sector to deliver the live, lively and diverse nightlife Australia’s global cities deserve.

This will include the City of Sydney and an industry representative co-chairing a new forum to manage vibrancy and safety in the city, called the Sydney Liquor and Night Safety Operations Group. The group will comprise representatives from each of the eight liquor accords in our area, two representatives from large hospitality groups, two representatives from non-government organisations including the Safe Space program and Australian Hotels Association, as well as Police Area Commanders, Transport for NSW, and Liquor & Gaming NSW.

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100% RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY TO POWER CITY OPERATIONS

The City of Sydney has been taking action on climate change for more than a decade.

When we endorsed Sustainable Sydney 2030 in 2008, 97 per cent of people told us they wanted action to address climate change. So we set a goal to reduce the City’s emissions by 70 per cent by 2030, wrote masterplans, set targets and worked to achieve them over the past decade. We then set an even more ambitious goal to reach net zero emissions by 2050 following the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015.

We became Australia’s first carbon neutral council in 2007. By 2017 we had reduced emissions from our own operations by 25 per cent and worked with others to reduce emissions city-wide by 21 per cent. During this time the city’s economy grew by 37.5 per cent. If it had been business as usual, greenhouse emissions would have increased by 57 per cent.

In 2011 we launched the Better Buildings Partnership with the owners of over 50 per cent of CBD office space. Its members have collectively reduced their emissions by 53 per cent – saving them $30 million annually!

I recently signed an agreement for the City’s operations to be powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity by July 2020. This means we will achieve our 2030 emissions reduction target by 2024 – six years ahead of schedule. By purchasing power from wind and solar farms in Glen Innes, Wagga Wagga, and the Shoalhaven, the City is supporting jobs in regional areas and saving our ratepayers half a million dollars each year, for 10 years.

This is in stark contrast to our Federal Government’s continued inaction on climate change. Inaction that continues despite the ongoing crisis where lives have been lost, as well as wildlife, farm animals and native bushland in ferocious bushfires unprecedented in NSW. The science is clear that climate change is supercharging natural disasters and we need urgent, coordinated and global action now more than ever.

In this issue of Sydney City News, we’ll update you on some of the action we have taken as part of our Resilient Sydney work and tell you about how we are drought-proofing the city.

CREATING A RESILIENT SYDNEY

Through the Resilient Sydney strategy, the City of Sydney is working with all 33 councils across metropolitan Sydney, as well as state agencies, businesses and the community, to create a connected, inclusive and resilient metropolitan Sydney. A key part of this strategy is getting prepared for acute shocks, such as the current bushfire crisis.

As part of this work, Resilient Sydney has led an innovative project to measure carbon emissions, energy consumption, water use and waste production across all of Sydney. This means that for the first time, each council in metropolitan Sydney is working from the same data, providing us with a standardised evidence base for decision-making and enabling collaboration, advocacy and action.

This vital work was recognised at the 2019 Smart City Awards, receiving the overall award for the Best Smart City Project.

Resilient Sydney also received the Chief Commissioner’s Award at the Greater Sydney Planning Awards 2019.
SUPPORT FOR THE NSW BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

The City of Sydney leveraged the power of New Year’s Eve to raise funds for bushfire relief and recovery. Reminders to donate to the appeal and tributes to firefighters were projected onto the Harbour Bridge pylons and broadcast throughout the ABC’s live coverage. The fundraising drive raised $13.3 million to support the Red Cross’s drought relief and wildlife rescue efforts statewide. When the fires have passed, roads and paths will need to be replaced basic civic infrastructure. We have established an office (the Local Government Bushfire Recovery Support Group) to link offers of assistance from non-bushfire affected councils to communities in need.

This does mean that some City staff and vehicles will be out in other parts of the state for some time, so please be patient if there are small disruptions to City services. We will keep you up to date if that is to happen.

INVESTING IN SYDNEY’S WATER SECURITY

With more than 90 per cent of NSW in drought, including Greater Sydney, it is essential that governments invest in long-term, responsible water infrastructure such as water recycling.

Australia is the driest continent on earth and with our projected population growth and global heating, by 2030, water demand across our city will grow by approximately 30 per cent.

We negotiated with the Transport for NSW light rail contractor to build a continuous recycled wastewater pipe from Circular Quay to beyond Central Station, alongside the light rail tracks. This could enable connection to new or existing wastewater recycling plants and has the potential to provide recycled water to buildings in the CBD and to nearby parks such as Hyde Park. We are looking at the cost of retrofitting our own major properties along George Street, including Sydney Town Hall, so they can be connected to this new recycled water pipe network.

VITAL STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE IN GREEN SQUARE

In November 2019, we officially opened the Green Square stormwater trunk drain. This two-kilometre trunk drain is a critical piece of infrastructure because Green Square is located on a floodplain that used to be a network of wetlands and creeks.

Without this trunk drain to reduce the risk of flooding in the area, our urban renewal of Green Square – which includes the City of Sydney’s $1.3 billion investment in infrastructure like our new library, pool, childcare centre, parks, playgrounds, public art, roads and footpaths – would not have been possible.

The City of Sydney is calling on the NSW Government to scrap ‘retail minus’ and revert to the ‘non-residential prices’ that all other businesses are charged, so we can urgently move to recycling wastewater – particularly in urban renewal areas across Greater Sydney.