

Mayor's Christmas Speech - 9 December 2013

Introduction

Welcome to all – to Mosman residents and friends of Mosman - to our end of year party. A special welcome to ex Mayors Barry O'Keefe and Virginia Howard. I also welcome Helen Claringbold, who is representing Tone Abbott, our local Federal Minister and of course PM, who could not be here tonight.

I would especially like welcome to our Local Member, Gillian Skinner. I would like to say how fortunate we are in Mosman to have such a conscientious and caring local member.

This is my opportunity to thank those who have contributed to our community in the past year. I wish to thank in particular the many in our community who provide voluntary services, my fellow councillors for their various services and the Council staff, especially the senior staff, for all their work in 2013.

Acknowledgements

Before I make these thanks I would like to start with three acknowledgements.

First I wish to recognise the traditional inhabitants of this land, the Cammeraigal and Borogegal peoples, and to pay respect to Aboriginal elders past and present.

In this regard, I was delighted a few weeks ago that the Mosman Reconciliation Committee brought to my attention the beautiful publication "*Aboriginal Heritage of Mosman*" which was actually published initially in 2010. Council can purchase this for about \$2 per copy and I am pleased to say that I will be presenting a copy of this to everyone who becomes an Australian Citizen in Mosman (about 200 people each year).

Second I wish to thank the Mosman High School Jazz Band, led by Todd Hardy from the school, who are entertaining us tonight. Our schools are an essential part of our community and Mosman High is a hugely successful and popular school

drawing people from far and wide – due in no small part to its liberal traditions and its excellence in the arts. Council will provide each band member with a 'small token of appreciation' after the performance. But I should like to ask all here to show your appreciation *now* for their contribution to tonight's party.

My third introductory acknowledgment is very different but no less meaningful to me and I believe to us all. I should like to acknowledge and pay tribute to one of the great human beings of our age, Nelson Mandela. As Malcolm Fraser wrote in the Herald on Saturday "He (Nelson Mandela) had a sense of charity towards everyone. He did not harbour grudges about past injustices or wrongs, but was concerned only to find a way forward."

This is a wonderful message and one that I believe all here would support. Differences of views and indeed of interests are inevitable in any community but I am sure that I speak for all here tonight that we should be fully mindful of the legacy of Nelson Mandela and that we should all work together in the coming year with a great feeling of compromise and charity for the well being of our whole community.

Thanks to volunteers

It is therefore with very great pleasure that I acknowledge the many contributions of our volunteers to our community. These include volunteers working in the community and volunteers who work with Council. It is not possible to thank everyone individually tonight, but I would like to mention a few highlights.

Volunteers in the community in Mosman,

- In Mosman, we have 61 organisations run by volunteers including 25 sports groups and clubs
- During 2013, the Mosman Home Gardeners Society celebrated its 70th anniversary
- And Mosman Community Gardeners opened their gardens in celebration of Grandparents Day

- In November this year, Mosman Rotary sent 214 Shelter Boxes to the Philippines to aid those made homeless after the earthquake in October and the typhoon in November
- I would also like to acknowledge the students of Queenwood and Mosman High who have developed active volunteering programs. Queenwood students visit residents in Glengarry and Mosman High students entertain Community Restaurant patrons with regular musical performances.

Volunteers who work with Council

In Mosman we have over 400 volunteers working with council. These volunteers range from people in their teens to people in their nineties.

This is an exceptionally high number of volunteers both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the community. As I pointed out in submissions to the Independent Panel reviewing local government, this is a far higher proportion of the community than in larger municipalities.

I would especially note and thank those volunteers who received a Long Service Award for 20 or more years of service to the community, namely Don Berckelman, Frennie Beytagh, Khine-Man Chan, Henny Charlton, Pip Friedrich and Gill Peck.

I would also acknowledge and give thanks for the new volunteering programs at Mosman Council in 2013: the Justice of the Peace Program, the Mosman Youth Forum, Vocal Rewind and Youth Sustainability.

Councillor contributions

I would like to mention some of the contributions of councillors. All councillors contribute in various ways in debate and in representing Council.

But perhaps I can highlight some less known contributions via Council committees. Council has 10 active committees, many with community members, several of which have been established by the present council. I will not take up

your time with a comprehensive review of all these committees, but just mention some highlights.

One of our most important committees is our **Audit Committee**, which oversees governance and financial reports. A related committee is the more recently formed **Expenditure Review Committee**. The Deputy Mayor, Cr. Roy Bendall is an active member of both these committees. I thank Roy for these and other contributions to our community, including the many times he has so willingly represented me at community functions.

Another important committee is the **Traffic Committee**. Cr. Peter White is Chair of this committee and has had a particularly challenging time all over the suburb but especially in meeting the challenges thrown up by the Government's decision to leave open the Beauty Point area to the morning peak hour traffic from the Northern Beaches.

Another group of committees is our social service committees, namely the **Access & Mobility Community Consultative Committee** and the **Youth Forum**. Here I would particularly acknowledge the work of Cr. Carolyn Corrigan who has a special interest in and commitment to social services.

A further group of committees is the art and culture group: including the **Arts & Culture Community Consultative Committee**, **Visual Amenity - Signage & Advertising Community Consultative Committee** and the **Shorelink Library Network**. Cr. Libby Moline is a member of each of these committees and I would especially like to acknowledge Libby's contributions to these committees.

I should also mention the **Committee for an Independent Mosman**, chaired with great energy by Peter White. I am delighted to say that the Minister for Local Government has responded to our and many other representations by announcing quite emphatically that the Government will not force any local government amalgamations. I believe that this is a great result for our community.

On a somewhat related matter, although we do not have a formal council planning committee, councillors have been heavily engaged both in reforming our own planning processes and in our response to the Government's proposed legislative

changes to the planning system. Cr. Tom Sherlock is our lead councillor in this area and has contributed hugely to both our internal and external endeavours in this field and I wish to acknowledge Tom's work and thank him for this.

Contributions by Council Staff

Turning to our staff, I must start with noting the huge contribution of the retiring **General Manager, Viv May**. Viv worked with Mosman Council for an extraordinary 45 years including 27 years as GM. Viv recognised that the new Council would have some different priorities and always gave us considered and experienced advice. We wish Viv well in retirement.

I also welcome the new GM, **Veronica Lee** who started with us in September. Veronica has a great athletic record as a sprinter and has started off with all the enthusiasm and energy of a champion sprinter. We hope that she can maintain this pace over what is more like a 10,000 metre race, if not a marathon!

Di Lawrence the Director, Community Development has had a busy year. I would like to thank Di especially for her assistance in the many times that she acted as the General Manager and for her work on Mosplan and the many Council committees. Di oversees the areas that manage community services, the Library and the section that conducts Council events including the successful Mosman Festival.

Max Glyde the Director Corporate Services has a broad portfolio of less visible responsibilities. Max oversees the engine room of Council and provides a number of the services that assist all the departments including Finance, Governance, IT, Records and Customer Service. Max has also coordinated the monthly Council agendas.

Unfortunately **John Carmichael, Council's long serving Director, Environment and Planning**, was in poor health for most of the year and passed away after a battle with illness on 26 November 2013. John was an exceptionally well-informed, conscientious and respected Director of Environment and Planning.

Craig Covich has therefore been Acting Director Environment and Planning for most of 2013. We are fortunate that Craig is another highly capable Council officer. Craig has major responsibility for all engineering and traffic matters. Craig has achieved significant government funding for Mosman (for instance the major roadworks in conjunction with North Sydney Council in Spofforth Street) and has overseen the major foreshore restoration works at Balmoral. He has also overseen the contentious matters associated with maintenance and use of sporting fields and more recently with planning matters.

In summary, I would like to acknowledge two highly positive features of all the senior officers: their high sense of duty and conscientious performance of all their functions and their loyalty to Mosman and our community. This is quite essential to the effective working of our community. Would you please publicly acknowledge with me the work of our Council officers.

Final anecdote

I recall how in the early 1970s, Professor Harry Edwards resigned from the economics department of Macquarie University (where I was working) to become a Liberal member for an upper North Shore constituency of the Federal parliament.

On one of his early days in parliament an old Liberal member stopped Harry just outside the parliament and asked him “Do you want a friend?” Harry responded naturally “yes, of course”.

To which the old member replied: “In that case, you’d better get yourself a dog!”

I can understand this sentiment but I am pleased to say that I haven’t yet felt the need to get a dog. And I don’t think any of the councillors have dogs!

I have nothing against dogs (indeed until recently our family had a much loved dog), but I do hope that our community will not feel that we all must have dogs because we cannot work for, and love, each other.

I again thank all here and indeed all our volunteers for all the ways in which you work voluntarily to support our community. Thank you for the time and love that you give to our community.

And with that positive message let me raise a Christmas Goodwill Toast:

Here's to Best Wishes for our Community for 2014.