

Resolution of Council

8 April 2019

Item 11.7

Preserving the History of our City's Labour Movement at the Eveleigh Locomotive Workshop

Moved by Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Thalís –

(A) Council note:

- (i) the Eveleigh Locomotive Workshop has a rich social, cultural and industrial history;
 - (a) the site was acquired by the NSW government in 1879 and operated as one of Australia's largest and most advanced locomotive workshops for over 100 years, from the 1880s to 1989;
 - (b) the Workshop provided employment to thousands of working class people in the inner-city during this time, including women in a diverse array of roles, local Aboriginal people and, from the 1950s onwards, large numbers of new migrants to Australia;
 - (c) multiple generations of families worked alongside each other at the Workshop, and many people were employed there for their entire working lives. This, along with strong ties to local trade union and Labor and Communist Party groups, created a strong sense of community at the Workshop; and
 - (d) few workers could afford to buy or even rent their own homes prior to the 1950s, and lived in boarding houses in nearby Eveleigh and Darlington;
- (ii) the Workshop was a hub for industrial activism and the labour movement in Sydney;
 - (a) eight strikes were conducted at the site between 1915 and 1917 to protest poor conditions and declining wages;

- (b) the Great Strike of 1917 began at the Workshop, when along with 1,100 men at Randwick Tramway Depot, 3000 workers at Eveleigh downed tools and led a General Strike which lasted 82 days;
 - (c) local trade union groups campaigned for equal pay for women workers and fair treatment of migrant and Aboriginal workers; and
 - (d) a number of workers at the Workshop went on to become as key figures in the 20th Century labour movement in NSW, including Joseph Cahill, James McGowen and William McKell, all of whom went on serve as the Premier of NSW;
- (iii) the Eveleigh Locomotive Workshop site was sold by the NSW Liberal state government to private developers in late 2015;
- (iv) on 22 February 2019, State Significant Development Applications 8849 and 8517 for the site were approved by the Independent Planning Commission, with the condition that a Stage 2 Heritage Interpretation Plan be completed for the site;
- (v) City staff have done significant and important work in raising the heritage features and social history of this site and in making detailed submissions at various stages of this project. There will be limited capacity for members of the public to provide feedback on this plan once it is completed, and therefore the City of Sydney plays an important role in ensuring that the views of community members , the labour movement and heritage groups are carried across in all stages of this project;
- (vi) a number of concepts to preserve the heritage and social history of the site have been proposed through the consultation process for the Stage 2 Heritage Interpretation Plan, including:
 - (a) storytelling about the continuity of 130 years of blacksmithing at the site, unionism, Aboriginal activism, strike action, the role of women and migrant workers and the activities at the site during World War II;
 - (b) improvements to the Blacksmith workshop site;
 - (c) interpretation of various important machinery like the Davy Press, the in-situ Guillotine, the steam hammers and other moveable heritage on site;
 - (d) heritage exhibition and interpretation spaces with a rotating curatorial program;
 - (e) pump house and boilers interpretation;
 - (f) interpretative and architectural lighting;
 - (g) educational programs linked to the NSW syllabus to create shared understanding of Aboriginal cultural values, historical values and constructs linked to the broader Australian Technology Park precinct; and
 - (h) a Vivid-style lighting installation of a 'Worker's Wall' to capture the significance of the workers in a commemorative format;

- (vii) both the material and social history of this important site for the labour movement and workers in our City should be preserved and celebrated. As a part of this preservation, any 'Worker's Wall' on the site should be a permanent physical installation, not a temporary light installation;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
 - (i) advocate strongly in all appropriate forums for both the material and social history of the Eveleigh Locomotive Workshop to be preserved and celebrated at the site, including advocating for a permanent, physical 'Worker's Wall' feature to be part of any development of the space;
 - (ii) advocate for further public consultation to be undertaken on the completed Stage 2 Heritage Implementation Plan before it is submitted to the NSW state government for approval; and
 - (iii) facilitate a meeting between relevant City staff and representatives of the labour movement, heritage groups and local community groups to hear their views; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the NSW Premier, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Robert Stokes MP, as well as the NSW Acting Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage, the Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC, and the Shadow Minister for Planning, the Hon. Tania Mihailuk MP, as well as the Chief Executive Officer of Mirvac expressing this view.

Carried unanimously.

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