

Resolution of Council

28 October 2019

Item 12.7

Vale Ray Richmond

Moved by Councillor Phelps, seconded by the Chair (the Lord Mayor) -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) Reverend Ray Richmond, pastor and former Chief Executive Officer of Wayside Chapel sadly passed away in September 2019:
 - (a) Reverend Ray Richmond first worked at Wayside Chapel as a young man in the early 1960s;
 - (b) he continued his commitment to community development by working with and training new generations of community workers during his work in Spain, India, West Samoa, Indonesia and in particular with Indigenous communities in Australia and Papa New Guinea;
 - (c) in 1991, Reverend Richmond came back to Wayside Chapel 28 years later to become it's pastor and Chief Executive Officer and served in that position for 13 years; and
 - (d) during that time he oversaw the launch of the Hands-on-Health Clinic, Bath House and Youth Space, a program focused on youth most at risk in the community;
- (ii) in 1999, 1,116 young Australians died from a heroin overdose, and throughout the late 1990s, Kings Cross was in the midst of a drug epidemic, which was destroying the strong sense of community in Kings Cross and creating a public health disaster;

- (iii) devastated by the loss of life and inaction from Government, in May 1999, Reverend Richmond became the informal leader of a group of community members who engaged in an act of civil disobedience by opening the 'Tolerance Room' a safe supervised injecting facility at the Wayside Chapel in Sydney;
 - (iv) despite being charged with aiding and abetting the self-administration of a prohibited drug (the charges were later dropped), the threat of jail and backlash from the Government, Reverend Richmond's commitment to creating a place free from judgment and showing compassion to those facing addiction changed the face of addiction policy in Australia and across the world;
 - (v) the 'Tolerance Room' galvanised the community and Government into action and led to the first medically supervised injecting centre not only in Sydney but the entire English speaking world. Reverend Richmond's courageous action saved hundreds of lives, cleaned up needles left on the street and reduced the impact of HIV and Hepatitis in the community;
 - (vi) despite the controversy, injecting centres are now accepted as a lifesaving facility and an important health and community service and is the fastest scaling harm reduction strategy in the world;
 - (vii) Reverend Richmond's actions sent the message to the Government and the community that people struggling with addiction were human beings and their lives had value; and
 - (viii) Dr Alex Wodak has described him as a "thoroughly decent, modest, selfless and humble man";
- (B) the Chamber observe one minute's silence to honour the contribution of Reverend Ray Richmond to the Kings Cross community and the City of Sydney; and
- (C) a letter, under the Lord Mayor's signature, be conveyed to Reverend Richmond's family expressing Council's sincere condolences.

Carried unanimously.

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