

Resolution of Council

12 May 2025

Item 3.2

Vale Commander Peter Poland OAM

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I wish to inform Council of the passing of Commander Peter Lawrence Poland OAM, naval historian, conservationist and community advocate, in February 2025.

Peter Poland was born in 1932 into a naval family. He began his naval career at the age of 13 in the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth where he joined 20 other members of the Poland family including his father and grandfather, who served in the Royal Navy between 1846 and 1976.

During his 30-year career Peter commanded 4 ships, including the frigate HMS Zest, which he brought into Sydney Harbour in 1968. During a 2-year tour of duty with the Royal Australian Navy in the 1950s, he met June Anderson at a Christmas party. They were married in December 1956 and moved to Britain, where they raised their 3 children. June studied Georgian architecture and collected and restored antiques, a passion Peter came to share.

Peter retired from the Royal Navy in 1971, and the family returned to Australia, settling in Rose Bay, where Peter worked for 15 years with a major retailer as General Manager Personnel and Industrial Relations.

June became active in the National Trust of Australia, assisting them in surveying Georgian houses in North Parramatta, Marrickville, Newtown and Balmain to expand the list of heritage-listed buildings. She also worked with Professor Max Kelly and Woollahra Council in surveying all terrace frontages in Paddington and Edgecliff to facilitate restoration to their original style.

In 1983, June began a campaign against the commercial development of the First Government House site on the corner of Bridge and Phillip streets. She and Peter became founding members of the Friends of First Government House Site and threatened to stand in front of the bulldozers to save the land. The campaign succeeded and the site was secured.

In 1985, Peter and June became founding members of the Woollahra History and Heritage Society, established to promote understanding and preservation of Woollahra's rich natural and cultural heritage, together with the area's impact on wider historical events. Peter subsequently served as the Society's President.

I first met Peter and June Poland after I was elected Member for Bligh in March 1988. Peter and June were then campaigning to save Strickland House and its land which I was pleased to support. The NSW Government had closed the house and was planning to sell it to developers, despite evidence which showed that a previous government had purchased the house and surrounding land in 1914 to be dedicated as foreshore parkland. With Peter's support, June sought to ensure the sandstone Victorian house and its 4.9-hectare harbour foreshore grounds were listed on the national and state heritage registers.

In recognition of their contribution to heritage preservation, Peter and June received Woollahra Council's Citizen of the Year Award in 1995 and the NSW Government Heritage Volunteer Award in 2005.

In retirement Peter carried out his own research and writing, publishing *The Right Honourable George Rose* in 1989, after whom Rose Hill and Rose Bay are named. That was followed by *The Travels of the Timekeepers* in 1991 and *The flag's up: the first 20 years of the South Head Lookout Post 1790-1809*, in 2013.

Peter transcribed his father Albert's WWII notebooks, detailing his experiences during the 8-month Siege of Tobruk, and published them in 2019 as *Tobruk and Beyond: War Notes from the Mediterranean Station 1941–1943*, including additional primary sources.

In June 2015, Peter was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to heritage preservation, and to the community of Woollahra.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor

Moved by the Chair (the Lord Mayor), seconded by Councillor Miller –

It is resolved that:

- (A) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate the life of Commander Peter Lawrence Poland OAM and his significant contribution to heritage preservation and naval history;
- (B) Council express its condolences to Peter's children, David and Suzi and his 9 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to convey Council's condolences to Peter's family.

Carried unanimously.

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Note – All Councillors, staff and members of the public present stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect to Commander Peter Poland OAM.