

Resolution of Council

27 October 2025

Item 3.2

Vale Tuisina Ymania Brown

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

The international LGBTIQ+ community lost a fierce advocate with the passing of Tuisina Ymania Brown in Berlin on 15 September 2025. Those of us who attended the City's LGBTIQ+ Community Safety Summit in February 2024 had a personal experience of her advocacy when she delivered one of the Summit's 2 keynote speeches.

Ymania was born on 11 September 1963 and grew up in Samoa and New Zealand. She later moved to Australia and then lived for some years in Europe. In the early 1990s she returned to New Zealand, enrolling in a Bachelor of Business Studies (Accounting / Commercial Law) at Massey University, graduating in 1995. Between February 1993 and November 1994, she served as President of the Massey University Students Association.

An extensive career in the private sector followed, initially in finance, then human resources, and finally law, specialising in intellectual property. These moves were augmented by further study, which include her obtaining an MBA from the Australian Institute of Management, a Master of Laws in Applied Law (In-house Practice) from the College of Law, Sydney, and a Master of Intellectual Property Law from the University of Technology Sydney.

A proud trans fa'afafine woman, Ymania combined her corporate career with passionate activism, driving change in the Pacific and beyond. She changed adoption laws in Samoa to become a mother, set a new standard for passport regulations in New Zealand to bring her children to Australia, and advocated for birth certificate reform for the trans community in Queensland.

Along the way she served in numerous leadership positions in Australia, the Pacific and internationally. She served as Technical Director of the Samoa Fa'afafine Association, a non-governmental organisation that represents indigenous lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex citizens of Samoa. Between 2016 and 2021, she was Co-Chair of the International Trans Fund, while working as Principal Attorney for Brown Trademarks and IP. This was followed by her being project lead and strategic advisor for the 2023 Sydney World Pride Human Rights Conference, Chair of TransEquality and taking up a senior position at Equality Australia.

In July 2024, Ymania was appointed Executive Director of the trans advocacy organisation, Transgender Europe (TGEU), based in Berlin. In accepting the position, Ymania said:

“I’m honoured to be joining TGEU as Executive Director, bringing with me a deep commitment to advancing the rights of trans and gender diverse people not only in Europe and Central Asia but globally as well. My own journey from Samoa and Australia to the global stage has been driven by my resilience and my absolute belief that we not only deserve to live in a world where we are free and equal citizens, but that we are deserving of the same chances as everyone else to be a part of, and contribute to as members of our equally diverse communities. Together at TGEU, we will continue the work to end violence and discrimination and create a world where we, as trans and gender-diverse people, can thrive.”

While Ymania’s time in this last role was short, her impact was strong. In announcing her passing, the statement by TGEU’s staff and Board continued:

“Ymania was more than a compassionate leader; she embodied trans resilience, wisdom, and transformative power. Ymania’s uplifting, creative and powerful personality touched everyone who knew her. Her leadership was visionary because it was grounded in lived experience, cultural wisdom, and an unwavering commitment to collective liberation. Ymania understood that trans leadership means lifting others as we climb. She spent her life creating pathways for those who would follow.

“She consistently demonstrated that our power lies in our ability to transform systems from within while never forgetting where we came from.

“Perhaps most importantly, Ymania embodied the principle of collective care that is vital to our movement. She was a trans activist, a mother, grandmother, and mentor who understood that our strength comes from taking care of one another. She showed us that it is possible to transform pain into power, isolation into community, and struggle into leadership for systemic change.”

In her call to action at last year's Summit, Ymania said:

"The tapestry of human rights is woven with threads of diversity, acceptance, and respect for every life to be equal, and freedom. To deny one thread is to unravel the entire fabric of our humanity.

"In the symphony of life, every voice deserves to be heard, every note cherished. LGBTIQ rights are the melody that fills the air, reminding us that diversity is the key to harmony."

These inspiring words should continue to guide us in the actions we take, and if we succeed, we can all claim the Polynesian wisdom Ymania identified: "Tautai A'e!" "We Did It!"

THE RT HON CLOVER MOORE AO

Lord Mayor of Sydney

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

It is resolved that:

- (A) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate the life of Tuisina Ymania Brown and her significant contribution to human rights and the international LGBTIQA+ community, particularly in Australia and the Pacific;
- (B) Council express its condolences to Ymania's mother Lea'ana Pekina Gabriel, her children Conrad, Luigi, Romero, Grace and Ronnie, her grandchildren and her many nieces and nephews; and
- (C) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to Ymania's family to convey Council's condolences.

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 Tuisina Ymania Brown.