

Resolution of Council

29 June 2026

Item 15.1

Bringing the AIDS Quilt Project to Sydney Town Hall

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

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the HIV/AIDS pandemic which emerged in the early 1980s and continued into this century was one of the greatest challenges ever faced by Sydney's gay male community, demanding strength and resilience at a time when many people were experiencing grief and loss;
- (ii) key to the community's response was finding creative and compassionate approaches to dealing with this grief;
- (iii) AIDS Memorial Quilts are poignant tributes to people who have died of AIDS-related illnesses. The quilts are large, made up of rectangular panels, typically measuring around 2 metres by 1 metre, representing the dimensions of a grave plot. The panels include dedications and personal items often made by partners, family members and friends of people who have passed away;
- (iv) Australian traveller Andrew Carter OAM saw the American Quilt during its 1988 US National Tour, and upon his return home he was inspired to found the Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt Project with Richard Johnson in Sydney (also known as The Quilt Project - An Australian AIDS Memorial);
- (v) the project was launched on World AIDS Day, 1 December 1988 by Ita Buttrose, Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee on AIDS (NACAIDS). The founding 35 memorial panels were displayed that day in Sydney with visiting panels from the American Names Project;
- (vi) since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, more than 10,000 people have died of AIDS-related illnesses in Australia, with the peak of the crisis in the 1990s;

- (vii) in 2007, the Australian Quilt Project made the Powerhouse Museum the custodian of the, then, 97 blocks of the Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt, giving it a permanent home;
 - (viii) there are now approximately 125 quilt blocks in the collection, made up of 8 panels measuring 4 by 4 metres. They are currently stored at the Powerhouse Museum in Castle Hill, Sydney, and visits to view specific blocks can be arranged by appointment. The blocks have also been digitised and made available on the [Museum's website](#);
 - (ix) local groups of The Quilt Project exist in states and territories across Australia, and the Australian Memorial Quilt remains the largest outside the USA;
 - (x) while The Quilt Project began as a memorial, it has become one of Australia's most valuable resources for promoting a thoughtful, compassionate and educational dialogue about AIDS within Australian communities;
 - (xi) it has been some years since the entire Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt has been exhibited publicly. The last time it was unfurled was in 2002 as part of the Gay Games VI. Because of the quilt's scale and age, it is now primarily cared for in museum archives, with smaller regional blocks exhibited during World AIDS Day (1 December) and special events;
 - (xii) the 50th Anniversary of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras will take place in 2028, marking half a century since the historic first march and rally on 24 June 1978;
 - (xiii) during the 1980s, Mardi Gras played a major role in the community's response to HIV/AIDS by supporting HIV/AIDS education initiatives and contributing to community resilience and solidarity; and
 - (xiv) given this, the 50th anniversary of Mardi Gras would be an ideal time to showcase the Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt Project and it is paramount that this takes place in the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA), given the City's proud LGBTIQA+ community;
- (B) Council also note:
- (i) the City has been a long-time supporter and sponsor of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival and since 2014 has provided more than \$4.65 million in cash and value-in-kind funding to this world-renowned event, which brings local and international LGBTIQA+ visitors to Sydney and celebrates the diversity of the community; and
 - (ii) the City of Sydney is committed to the ongoing visibility, diversity and inclusion of LGBTIQA+ communities;
- (C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
- (i) investigate the feasibility of having the AIDS Memorial Quilt Project exhibited at a venue within the City of Sydney LGA, or digitally projected onto Sydney Town Hall, as part of Mardi Gras' 50th Anniversary in 2028; and
 - (ii) consult with key stakeholders, including Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, ACON, Bobby Goldsmith Foundation and Positive Life NSW, along with The Powerhouse Curatorial team, to see this exhibition fulfilled within our LGA, and report back via the CEO Update on considerations; and

- (D) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to The Powerhouse's Lisa Havilah (CEO), Dr Jacqui Strecker (Head of Curatorial), Matthew Connell (Director, Curatorial, Collections & Programs) and Anni Turnbull (Collections Curator) expressing the City of Sydney's interest in partnering with The Powerhouse Museum to exhibit the AIDS Memorial Quilts within the City of Sydney LGA, during Mardi Gras' 50th Anniversary in 2028.

Carried unanimously.

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