

Resolution of Council

10 December 2018

Item 3.1

Vale Peter Johnston

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

I inform Council of the death of Peter Johnston, Principal of Bourke Street Public School, on Thursday 15 November 2018.

When Peter took up his post as Principal in 2008, after teaching at Casula and Forest Lodge, the school had 56 children enrolled, cared for by just five staff. A decade later this increased to 450 children and 30 members of staff.

While this dramatic increase could be explained by the growing number of families with young children choosing to live in the inner-city, it also reflected Peter's strong belief that "school" was an integral part of "community", and he worked vigorously and imaginatively to foster both. Peter went out into the community, reaching out to parents and families, encouraging them to send their children to Bourke Street. By January 2014, enrolments had increased to 230 children and the school had three new classrooms to accommodate this growth.

This increase reflected the many inspiring changes he made.

One early initiative was the introduction of a school music program with the enthusiastic support of parents. In 2012, the school's P&C decided that its fundraising would be directed primarily towards establishing the music program. By September 2013, every child had a recorder, the school enjoyed monthly concerts and was building up a band program.

As a long-time local, I saw first-hand the changes Peter brought to Bourke Street School and what an important part of our community he became. As Lord Mayor, I worked with Peter in his efforts to connect the school to the community.

He was a strong supporter of cycling and enthusiastically embraced the City's bike policy. The school installed bike parking, paid for by the City, and children were encouraged to ride to school, often with their parents. Peter believed this was good for their health and the health of the environment. Ride2School Day at Bourke Street became an opportunity for the school to celebrate what 80 per cent of pupils did all year round. Peter was also a strong supporter of our active transport policy and installing shared zones. He was involved in developing the plans for the Bourke Street Cycleway and Wimbo Park.

Under his leadership, children at Bourke Street also became involved in designing our playgrounds and parks. These include Chelsea Street Playground, which is now built, and improvements to Shannon Reserve planned for the coming year.

They were not limited to their local area. Sixty students recently came to Cook and Phillip Park to share how they felt about the park now and their ideas for what could happen there in the future. A few days after Peter passed away, year two students helped us design the new playground that will go there.

His daily interactions with his pupils will be remembered. One parent recently recalled how he calmed an excited rabble of children with a well-timed "Good Morning Bourke Street Public Schoooooool" in the style of a slightly muted Robin Williams.

Peter's legacy is a school that is now an established community institution. An equally significant legacy will be found in the lives and futures of the children nurtured under his care.

I extend the City's condolences to Peter's mother, his sister and brothers and his extended family, and to the staff and pupils of Bourke Street Public School.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) all persons present in the Chamber stand for one minute's silence to mark the life of Peter Johnston and his outstanding contribution to Bourke Street Public School and the inner-city community; and
- (B) a letter, under the Lord Mayor's signature, be conveyed to Mr Johnston's family expressing Council's sincere condolences.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor

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

That the minute by the Lord Mayor be endorsed and adopted.

Carried unanimously.