

**Item 13.12****Notices of Motion****Vale Ann Weldon AM**

By Councillor Weldon

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

- (i) the recent passing of Wiradjuri Elder, Ann Pauline Weldon (née Coe) AM;
- (ii) Ann devoted her life to advancing the cause of Aboriginal people and was instrumental in establishing Redfern's revolutionary Aboriginal organisations;
- (iii) born in 1952 in a segregated section of Cowra Hospital, Ann was the second and eldest surviving child of Lindsay Augustus Coe and Frances Rita Coe (née Wedge). Growing up on the Erambie Mission, known as '32 Acres', Ann was surrounded by a strong and loving family community steeped in Wiradjuri culture;
- (iv) the warmth of family stood against the harsh conditions of the mission, where food was rationed, child removal was prevalent, and authorities exercised absolute power in sustained efforts to suppress Aboriginal culture. Ann's family fought tirelessly to protect their children, ensuring they received an education and held onto their cultural heritage;
- (v) the Kalare (also known as the Lachlan River) was a place of much joy for Ann and her family, but it was also the scene of tragedy. At age 7, Ann's life changed instantly when her father, Lindsay, tragically drowned. Following the passing of her grandmother, Edith, Ann was raised by her grandfather, Paul Coe, and her aunt, Pauline Coe;
- (vi) Ann attended Cowra High School where she excelled in her studies and was a talented athlete in running, basketball, and netball. While she was among the first students to navigate the challenges of non-segregated schooling and the racism that came with it, she was never alone; her siblings and cousins remained fiercely devoted to looking out for one another;
- (vii) in 1968, while attending an Aboriginal education camp in Lane Cove, Ann met George Weldon, a Wiradjuri man with links to the Murrumbidgee River. They later settled in Sydney, initially with family in Enmore and Alexandria, and were married in 1971;

- (viii) in 1975, Ann and George purchased their family home in Dulwich Hill where they raised their 3 daughters: Yvonne, Paula, and Anita. Ann also carried the silent heartbreak of losing 6 sons to miscarriage. Despite initially facing a petition by a neighbour to stop them from moving in, they made a home that became a sanctuary for extended family and many others. Ann lived by the mantra that "there was always room for one more," fostering children moving to Sydney, providing shelter to those in need, and helping to reconnect separated families;
- (ix) following the 1967 referendum, Redfern was a hotbed of political activism. Despite the positive referendum result, racism persisted and many in the community saw little immediate change. An influx of migration to the area led to overcrowding, exacerbating existing problems like poverty and unemployment, and police discrimination and brutality were widespread. These conditions were the catalyst for the Aboriginal self-determination movement, which Ann and her family were deeply involved in;
- (x) Ann was a foundation member of the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS). She served as company secretary and eventually took on the CEO role. She formed productive 2-way working relationships with the ALS solicitors and would often write the briefs for the barristers;
- (xi) Ann was a founding member of the Redfern Aboriginal Children's Service, established in 1975, and later served as its director. She also supported the establishment of the Aboriginal Medical Service in 1971 as an inaugural member;
- (xii) when the NSW Aboriginal Land Council was formed in 1984, Ann was a key member of the founding staff and later became its inaugural CEO. She was also a longstanding board member of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council;
- (xiii) Ann served as a member of the Aboriginal Housing Development Committee and was the inaugural chair of the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office board from 2000 to 2007;
- (xiv) for many years, Ann chaired the Marrickville Aboriginal Consultative Committee, providing a forum for advice to Council on employment strategies and cultural recognition. She was also a foundation member of the Inner West Aboriginal Community Company;
- (xv) Ann was elected to the Sydney Regional Council of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) for over 10 years, serving as councillor, deputy chairperson, and chairperson. She was also a member of the National NAIDOC Committee from 2010 to 2017;
- (xvi) over this time, Ann held roles with the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and she served as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer with the Public Service Association from 2015 to 2022;
- (xvii) in 2015, the NSWALC recognised her as a founding member of the ACS and ALS and for her long involvement in Land Rights. In 2020, she was named the Dreamtime Elder of the Year at the National NAIDOC Awards. In 2025, she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her dedication and significant service to the Aboriginal community; and

- (xviii) Ann is remembered as a trailblazing leader who lived life with courage, compassion and a radical generosity. She balanced her work with an unwavering love and devotion to her family. A beloved wife, mother and "Nin" to her 11 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren, she leaves behind a void that her family and community feel profoundly;
- (B) the Lord Mayor be requested to write to the family of Ann Weldon AM expressing Council's condolences; and
- (C) all persons attending this meeting of Council observe one minute's silence to commemorate the life of Ann Weldon AM and her significant contribution to Aboriginal self-determination.

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