

Bring Back Joy - Outcomes of Community Consultation

File No: X002646.001

Summary

On 20 November 2023, Council resolved that the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:

- (i) investigate acquiring the original statue of “Joy” from Macquarie University to be reinstated at the corner of Yurong and Stanley Streets, East Sydney;
- (ii) consult the City’s local East Sydney community and Public Art Advisory Panel on reinstating the statue of “Joy” or a replica to Stanley Street and Yurong Street; and
- (iii) report back to Council with the outcomes of the consultation and the advice of the public art advisory panel and options to bring “Joy” or a replica back to East Sydney.

The statue of 'Joy', sculpted by artist Loui May (nee Fraser), was located on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Street in Darlinghurst for 18 months, from 1995.

The artwork was recommended to Council by the former South Sydney Sculpture Advisory Committee after the artist (who lived locally) approached a member of the committee directly with their idea for the work in that particular location. The proposal to install the statue was contentious and approved initially as a 12-month trial by one vote by the former South Sydney Council.

Once installed, the statue continued to be contentious and divisive, with some residents petitioning Council to remove it, while other residents supported it. The trial was extended after the statue was vandalised.

In April 1997, following return to the artist, 'Joy' was relocated to Macquarie University where the statue is now part of the permanent collection of the University’s Sculpture Park.

Following a petition of over 400 signatures, Council requested that the Chief Executive Officer investigate the return of the artwork, or a replica of it, to the original location in East Sydney and bring options back to Council for their consideration.

The Chief Executive Officer has consulted Macquarie University and the local East Sydney community and is reporting back to Council following this consultation.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) receive and note the Engagement Report - The 'Joy' Sculpture as outlined in Attachment B to the subject report; and
- (B) note that, given the recent feedback from the community, the Chief Executive Officer will investigate feasibility and cost of options to reinstate a replica of 'Joy' by artist Loui May (nee Fraser) on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Streets, Darlinghurst and report back to Council via the CEO update.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Notice of Motion 20 November 2023 - Item 15.6 - Bring Joy Back Home
- Attachment B.** Engagement Report - The 'Joy' Sculpture

Background

1. The statue of 'Joy', sculpted by artist Loui May (nee Fraser), was located on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Street in Darlinghurst for 18 months, from 1995.
2. The proposal to install the statue was contentious and was approved initially as a 12-month trial by one vote by former South Sydney Council the trial was extended after the statue was vandalised.
3. Once installed, the statue continued to be contentious and divisive, with some residents petitioning Council to remove it, while other residents supported it.
4. In April 1997, following return to the artist, 'Joy' was relocated to Macquarie University where the statue it is now part of the permanent collection of the University's Sculpture Park.
5. On 20 November 2023, Council resolved that the Chief Executive Officer be requested to:
 - (a) investigate acquiring the original statue of 'Joy' from Macquarie University to be reinstated at the corner of Yurong and Stanley Streets, East Sydney;
 - (b) consult the City's local East Sydney community and Public Art Advisory Panel on reinstating the statue of 'Joy' or a replica to Stanley Street and Yurong Street; and
 - (c) report back to Council with the outcomes of the consultation and the advice of the public art advisory panel and options to bring 'Joy' or a replica back to East Sydney.
6. On 22 November 2023, the Chief Executive Officer wrote to the Vice Chancellor of Macquarie University, Professor S Bruce Dowton, seeking support to reinstate the sculpture on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Streets should the community be in favour of this.
7. The University responded, noting that while it was unwilling to part with the original artwork, it would support the City by making the original artwork available for the purposes of creating a replica of it.
8. The Chief Executive Officer also wrote to the artist, Loui May (nee Fraser), who confirmed her support for the return of a replica of the artwork to its original location.
9. The City then consulted the local East Sydney community on the return of a replica of the artwork to the original location on the plinth on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Streets, Darlinghurst.
10. The consultation was open from 26 March to 26 April 2024.
11. Residents, owners and businesses located within the boundary of Oxford, College, William and Forbes Streets were letter box dropped with a letter asking for feedback on the proposal online via a brief survey on Sydney Your Say, via phone, email or letter.
12. In addition to this the City contacted key stakeholders that had previously shown an interest in the project, or been opposed to it, inviting their feedback.

13. A decal with a QR code linking to the Sydney Your Say webpage was also placed on the plinth on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Streets, Darlinghurst inviting people to provide their feedback.
14. The City received 256 submissions during the consultation period, with 238 responses from the online survey and 18 written submissions. 1,232 visits to the Sydney Your Say webpage were recorded.
15. Eighty-six per cent of the 256 submissions were in favour of a replica of 'Joy' returning, while 14 per cent of submissions did not support the proposition.
16. Of the responses received 66 people are resident in East Sydney, and of these 71 per cent were in favour of a replica of the artwork being reinstated and 29 per cent were not. Further details of the consultation are included in the consultation section of this report below.
17. Given the outcome of the community consultation it is proposed that the City now consult the artist, Loui May (nee Fraser) in line with moral rights requirements, to develop options for the installation of a replica of the work to bring back to Council for consideration. The artist owns the copyright to this artwork and the City must have the artist's permission and a licence to reproduce this work.
18. The City will test the feasibility and cost of these options in consultation with the Public Art Advisory Panel and report back to Council with options and a recommendation.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

19. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 3 - Public places for all - The consultation of the East Sydney community regarding the return of a replica of the artwork 'Joy' seeks to support the design of public spaces for all through listening to community regarding proposals for the public open space in their local neighbourhood.
 - (b) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - The support for the proposal to return a replica of the artwork 'Joy' depicting a sex worker demonstrates the community's support for representation in our public spaces of those who have traditionally been marginalised.
 - (c) Direction 7 - Resilient and diverse communities - Resilient and diverse communities can be represented through artworks in public spaces that reflect that diversity and resilience. The story of 'Joy' and the shift in some areas of the community to supporting a return of a replica of the artwork demonstrate the support for an outward expression of this resilience and diversity.
 - (d) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life - The community's participation in the discussion about the return of a replica of the artwork 'Joy' to the corner of Stanley and Yurong Streets invites debate and engagement with the cultural and creative life of the City.

Organisational Impact

20. The investigation of the feasibility of the project will be undertaken by the City Design Unit in consultation with the artist Loui May (nee Fraser) and the City's Public Art Advisory Panel, this further investigation will better determine organisational impacts.

Financial Implications

21. The feasibility and cost associated with any potential options will be now assessed and reported back to Council.

Relevant Legislation

22. The process of investigating the return of a replica of the artwork 'Joy' to its original location and any options proposed to Council will be done in accordance with Moral Rights legislation and the Local Government Act 1993.

Options

23. At this stage no options are proposed, given the outcome of the community consultation it is recommended that the City proceed to investigate the feasibility and cost of a variety of options to reinstate a replica of 'Joy' by artist Loui May (nee Fraser) to the original location in Darlinghurst, in line with moral rights obligations to the artist and in consultation with the City's Public Art Advisory Panel and report back to Council through a CEO update..

Public Consultation

24. The City consulted the local East Sydney community on the return of a replica of the artwork to the original location on the plinth on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Streets, Darlinghurst from 26 March to 26 April 2024.
25. The majority of those consulted support the return of a replica of the artwork to the original location on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Streets.
26. Residents, owners and businesses located within the boundary of Oxford, College, William and Forbes Streets were letter box dropped with a letter asking for feedback on the proposal online via a brief survey on Sydney Your Say, via phone, email or letter.
27. In addition to this the City contacted key stakeholders that had previously shown an interest in the project, or been opposed to it, inviting their feedback.
28. A decal with a QR code linking to Sydney your Say was also placed on the plinth on the corner of Stanley and Yurong Streets, Darlinghurst inviting people to provide their feedback.
29. The City received 256 submissions during the consultation period. 238 responses to the survey and 18 written submissions. 1,232 visits to the Sydney Your Say webpage were recorded.

30. Eighty-six per cent of the 256 submissions were in favour of a replica of 'Joy' returning, while 14 per cent of submissions did not support the proposition.
31. Of the responses received, 66 people are resident in East Sydney, and of these 71 per cent were in favour of a replica of the artwork being reinstated and 29 per cent were not.
32. Reasons for support: 209 people supported the proposition in the survey, and 192 of these people supplied a reason for their support. Ten people supplied written submissions outlining the reasons for their support. The primary reasons mentioned were as follows:
 - (a) That the artwork recognises the history of the area (74 per cent of survey and 40 per cent of written submissions).
 - (b) That the artwork recognises sex workers and sex work (42 per cent of survey and 60 per cent of written submissions).
 - (c) That the artwork promotes inclusion and diversity (27 per cent of survey and 50 per cent of written submissions).
 - (d) That the artwork is of high quality (14 per cent of survey and 40 per cent of written submissions).
 - (e) That the artwork increases female representation in the public eye (40 per cent of written submissions).
33. Reasons for opposition: 29 people opposed the proposition in the survey, and 25 of these people supplied a reason for their opposition. Eight people supplied written submissions outlining the reasons for their opposition. The primary reasons mentioned were as follows:
 - (a) That it is inappropriate to recognise sex workers and sex work (28 per cent of survey and 38 per cent of written submissions).
 - (b) That a new work should be commissioned rather than a replica of an existing artwork (28 per cent of survey submissions).
 - (c) That the subject matter of the artwork is not appropriate for the general public (20 per cent of survey and 25 per cent of written submissions).
 - (d) That the artwork is aesthetically unappealing and lacks artistic merit (20 per cent of survey and 13 per cent of written submissions).
 - (e) That the money could be better spent for the community (16 per cent of survey submissions).
 - (f) That the sculpture could encourage more antisocial behaviour (25 per cent of written submissions).

- (g) A more nuanced memorial is required (13 per cent of written submissions).
 - (h) Original should be reinstated rather than a replica (13 per cent of written submissions).
34. The feasibility work proposed to be undertaken by the City will consider the detail of the community's feedback in presenting options to Council.

KIM WOODBURY

Chief Operating Officer

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