

(Item MM4/24) Commemorating 150 Years of Burwood

File No: 24/27462

Mayoral Minute by Cr John Faker (Mayor)

Summary

This year marks the 150th anniversary of Burwood Council, which was incorporated by proclamation in the Government Gazette on 27 March 1874. The first Council was elected on 9 June of that year, and the newly elected Council met for the first time on 24 July 1874, 150 years ago to this very day, in the St Paul's School Hall located on Burwood Road.

At that time, Burwood was a quiet village with only 1,200 residents and around 300 buildings. It had no sealed roads, public buildings or parks, and no electricity, but was already connected to Sydney and Parramatta by Sydney's first passenger railway line. The newly proclaimed Municipality's southern boundary was Liverpool Road, beyond which lay the even more sparsely populated village of Enfield, which later became part of the Burwood Municipality in 1949.

Despite raising just \$256 in rates revenue in its foundational year, the Council of 1874 approached their duties with determination and foresight. Their efforts, along with those of subsequent Councils, have shaped the Burwood we know today - a place we all cherish and proudly call home.

Background

Burwood's Story

Burwood's story is a testament to the resilience, unity and spirit of its people. Throughout our history we have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to progress, inclusivity and shared values. From the careful stewardship of the Wangal Clan to the challenges of colonial settlement, the growth of the twentieth century, and the dynamic social and cultural changes of the twenty first century. Ours is a special history and each one of us contributes our own part to it.

Born and raised in Croydon, I have personally witnessed the transformation of our community. I fondly remember my childhood days, working alongside my father in our small convenience store in Croydon, and my adventures riding up and down Murray Street on my bike – the street where my family first lived when they migrated to Australia from Lebanon.

I often admired the beautiful Federation and Victorian houses with their character and charm, matched only by the local people whose love of the area inspired my deep passion for the community.

Burwood has always exhibited a strong sense of community, demonstrated through its wartime efforts, its adaptability to change and progressive ideas, its warm welcome to newcomers and the way we support each other to thrive, demonstrated most recently during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Again together, we ensured our most vulnerable residents remained safe and connected, and worked tirelessly to see our community bounce back and recover, and once again thrive.

Transformation and Today

Since its formation in 1874, the Burwood Local Government Area has undergone remarkable transformation and growth. In 2024, Burwood's population has surpassed 42,000 and is projected to exceed 73,000 by 2036.

Over the past 150 years, Burwood has evolved from a secluded 'rural retreat' into a vibrant and colourful multicultural hub, pulsating with energy and optimism thanks to our budding night time economy and renewed arts and cultural scene.

Burwood has been shaped by successive waves of migration from around the world. Following World War II, many migrant families from Europe and Great Britain came to the area via Woodstock Villa in Burwood (now the Woodstock Community Centre) which served as a Migrant Hostel. More recently, newcomers from South-East Asia, the Indian subcontinent and other regions have settled here, alongside the more established European communities, creating the diverse cultural melting pot that is Burwood today.

Today, we are the fifth most culturally diverse community in Australia, with 58% of residents born overseas and 63% speaking a language other than English. We are renowned as a destination for our rich cultural diversity and distinctive dining experiences. We have more than 100 dedicated community, sporting and faith based organisations that support and cultivate our rich community life. Burwood also boasts some of the best schools and educational institutions in the country, and thousands of businesses who are the lifeblood of our City Centre and neighbourhood centres. Importantly, we have also embarked on a journey to connect with country and learn about the stories of our Aboriginal past and present as we walk towards reconciliation.

Remarkably, we survived the amalgamations of 2016 and continue to stand strong as a modern and forward thinking Council with effective partnerships with all levels of Government, our neighbouring councils, local business and the community.

With the impending arrival of the Sydney Metro and our vibrant economic growth, Burwood has cemented a strong position within global Sydney, embracing a progressive outlook for the future. We continue to adapt to the evolving needs and aspirations of our community, earning us the reputation as the city of transformation. Over the next 3 years, we will deliver over \$100 million in community infrastructure, building on our legacy for future generations.

While much has changed since 1874, when the first council under the leadership of Mayor Richard Wynne was formed, our commitment to conserving our heritage remains strong. We continue to honour and protect our unique heritage, character and rich history, and importantly the stories of our community's progress.

Commemorating 150 Years of Burwood

To commemorate 150 years since the formation of Council, we have been leading a yearlong series of special events and projects to mark this important milestone in our history. The Burwood 150 Years Program has united the community in celebration, ranging from intimate events of reflection to the Burwood Street Party, which drew a crowd of 20,000 people. New public artworks, special commissions, exhibitions and historical tours have shared the stories of Burwood's places, people and cultural icons. It is evident that the spirit of past milestone anniversaries in 1924 and 1974 have been matched in 2024.

I would like to recognise and thank the Burwood 150 Years Anniversary Steering Committee, who worked alongside Council staff to bring these initiatives to life.

Tonight's Special Council Meeting continues our celebrations. It gives me great honour to officially launch the *Pictorial History of Burwood* by Roger Coombs, and published by Catherine Warne of Kingsclear Books. Commissioned by Council, this book chronicles 150 years of Burwood's development with over 180 carefully selected photographs, keeping our history alive and accessible to our community. I would like to express my gratitude to Roger, Catherine and the Council staff who worked on this project for their dedication to sharing Burwood's history.

I am also proud to unveil the *Mayors of Burwood* portrait series by artist Suzanne Dias, presented at the rear of the Conference Room tonight. While the portraits feature only some long-serving or distinctive Mayors, it is important to acknowledge all 62 Mayors who have served Burwood since its formation. Some of our past Mayors are present tonight or represented by their families, and we are honoured to have you here.

Equally, I am pleased to open the *Grand Homes of Burwood* exhibition tonight, soon to be enjoyed in the Community Hub.

As the longest serving Mayor of Burwood, I take great pride in commemorating 150 years of the Burwood Municipality tonight, and thank my fellow Councillors for their support. May we reflect on the achievements of the past, celebrate the vibrancy of the present, and embrace the great opportunities that lie ahead.

Operational Plan Objective

A.28 Undertake events and activities which celebrate Burwood's Sesquicentenary.

I therefore move that Council:

1. Acknowledges and celebrates the 150th anniversary of Burwood Council, recognising the significance of this milestone in our history and commending the united efforts of generations of Mayors, Councillors and residents who have shaped Burwood into what it is today.
2. Acknowledges and thanks the General Manager, Tommaso Briscese and Council staff for delivering the successful Burwood 150 Years Program and for their ongoing service to the Burwood community.
3. Recognises and thanks the Burwood 150 Years Anniversary Steering Committee and our key partners for their dedication and commitment to supporting the Burwood 150 Years Program.

Attachments

There are no attachments for this report.